

“Come and Visit Us!”

The Effects of Factory Tour Participation on Customers

Schäfers, Tobias; Hülsebusch, Daniela; Cziehso, Gerrit

Document Version

Final published version

Published in:

Industrial Marketing Management

DOI:

[10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.01.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.01.004)

Publication date:

2025

License

CC BY

Citation for published version (APA):

Schäfers, T., Hülsebusch, D., & Cziehso, G. (2025). “Come and Visit Us!”: The Effects of Factory Tour Participation on Customers. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 125, 169-178.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.01.004>

[Link to publication in CBS Research Portal](#)

General rights

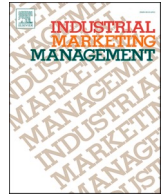
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us (research.lib@cbs.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 22. Apr. 2025





“Come and visit us!”: The effects of factory tour participation on customers

Tobias Schaefer^{a,b,*}, Daniela Hülsebusch^c, Gerrit Cziehso^d

^a Copenhagen Business School, Solbjerg Plads 3, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark

^b Bielefeld School of Business, Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Interaktion 1, 33619 Bielefeld, Germany

^c TU Dortmund University, Otto-Hahn-Str. 6, 44227 Dortmund, Germany

^d ALDI Global Data & Analytics, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Factory tour
Commitment-trust theory
Relationship marketing

ABSTRACT

As part of their relationship marketing efforts, B2B manufacturers regularly invite customers for factory tours. Despite its widespread use, however, there is a lack of research on the economic consequences as well as the underlying customer relationship process. We present the results of two studies conducted in collaboration with an industrial manufacturer, allowing for detailed analyses of the effects of factory tours on B2B customers. Based on sales data spanning 23 years, we find that customer participation in a factory tour leads to economic benefits, as a substantial increase in annual revenues across multiple subsequent years is evident. A second study, using survey responses from customers before and after participation in a factory tour, not only confirms the economic benefits of factory tour participation. It also shows that customers' trust and commitment act as the underlying process variables. On a theoretical level, our research contributes by showing the applicability of commitment-trust theory for a specific and widely used instrument of relationship marketing. For B2B companies, our findings show that inviting customer representatives for a visit is an important instrument of improving the customer relationship with regards to both, customer attitudes and purchases.

1. Introduction

Purchasing processes and relationship marketing in B2B settings often involve some form of personal contact between a manufacturer and its customers because products are more complex and more technical and thus need more intensive personal interaction (Heirati et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2024; Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2024). One very common way of facilitating such personal interaction with existing and potential B2B customers are factory tours, which can be understood as an organized tour through the production of a company (Chen & Morrison, 2004; Upton & Macadam, 1997). Such visits to a factory allow B2B customers' representatives a personal look behind the scenes of their supplier's operations. This personal observation at the point of production is used by manufacturers to provide a rich experience (Österle et al., 2018) with the goal of establishing or intensifying business relationships. Therefore, such factory tours are widespread in B2B relationship marketing practice and “site visits between user and producer—ideally throughout the entire acquisition process—[are] absolutely crucial for ultimate success” (Gertler, 1995, p. 16).

For B2B customers, participating in a factory tour can serve different purposes. First, they provide opportunities for learning and exchanging

information, especially when remote contacts and exchanges between customer and producer pose challenges (Gertler, 1995; Goodson, 2002). For instance, factory tours can allow customers to experience a production process or a product first-hand or provide them hands-on training, addressing the notion that there is “no substitute for seeing things happen in practice” (Upton & Macadam, 1997, p. 99). This may address the goals of generating knowledge about a supplier by directly assessing their manufacturing processes or products (House, 2023; Mooney, 2018; Upton & Macadam, 1997). Second, a factory tour can serve the purpose of personal communication and building a relationship with a supplier (Gertler, 1995; House, 2023; Mooney, 2018). This may include on-site meetings with manufacturing staff or interacting with members of different organizational units at a supplier.

From a supplier standpoint, factory tours are regarded as an important relationship marketing instrument (Farrell, 2021; Gertler, 1995; House, 2023; Mooney, 2018). Many manufacturers therefore regularly invite customers for a visit and invest in extensive facilities to deliberately manage the customer experience during a visit. For instance, agricultural machinery manufacturer *Fendt* recently announced plans to open a customer experience center at its U.S. factory in Jackson, MN, to offer factory tours and dealer meetings (Businesswire, 2023). In general,

* Corresponding author at: Copenhagen Business School, Solbjerg Plads 3, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark.

E-mail addresses: ts.marktg@cbs.dk, tobias.schaefer@hsbi.de (T. Schaefer), gerrit@cziehso.de (G. Cziehso).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.01.004>

Received 22 March 2024; Received in revised form 25 November 2024; Accepted 6 January 2025

Available online 11 January 2025

0019-8501/© 2025 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

factory tours are viewed as an important element for customer acquisition and retention (Littmann, 2003), which is why manufacturers are increasingly creating what Österle et al. (2018) theme as “brand worlds” to allow for various forms on-site experiences in relationship marketing.

Despite the common practice of factory tours in B2B marketing, however, the existing literature has largely neglected this phenomenon. On the one hand, a few studies have investigated factory tours in B2C settings, by consumer brand manufacturers. These studies show that positive experiences are beneficial, as they increase the willingness to recommend a brand or to revisit the site of a consumer brand’s factory tour (e.g., Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Mitchell, 2006; Sun et al., 2022). On the other hand, insights from B2C factory tours may not be directly applicable to B2B contexts, given, for instance, the more complex and lengthy purchasing processes and decisions. Moreover, B2C and B2B factory tours are hardly comparable due to the differences on the customer side. In contrast to consumers in a B2C context, who are more leisure-oriented, B2B customers are more information- and knowledge-oriented (Frew, 2000). These differences warrant studies into the specific effects of B2B factory tours.

We address the outlined research gap by investigating the customer relationship consequences of factory tours in a B2B manufacturing context. To this end, we take a relationship marketing perspective and consider the extent to which factory tours increase customers’ trust and commitment—two key constructs of relationship marketing (Brown et al., 2019; Lyons & Brennan, 2019; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Zafari et al., 2023)—as well as their purchases. We report the results of two empirical studies that we conducted in collaboration with a manufacturing firm in the construction industry. The first study, based on an analysis of 23 years of sales data, supports the notion that factory visits increase revenues. Second, to examine the underlying process of this effect, we conducted a survey-based field study with 65 customers who participated in a factory tour. This allowed us to test assumptions about the mediation that explains the economic benefits of factory tour participation on purchasing behavior, while controlling for a variety of customer characteristics. The results confirm the positive outcome of factory tours, and that customers’ trust and commitment mediate this effect.

2. Factory tours

2.1. Definition and delineation

A factory tour describes an in-person presentation of a production process (Yale, 1991) to visitors who are not involved in this process but may use or consume the product later (Frew, 2000). Thus, a factory tour includes a visit to the production area and explanation of different production steps, so that visitors can see parts of or the whole manufacturing process (Frew, 2000; Littmann, 2003). In manufacturing settings, factory tours take place in the plant or factory area itself, where tangible products are produced. Visitors can experience these production activities first-hand (Chen & Morrison, 2004; Upton & Macadam, 1997) and thus receive background information not available during regular product usage. Based on the outlined definition, factory tours exclude customer visits to locations without manufacturing facilities (Chen & Morrison, 2004), such as general customer meetings.

In the context of B2B factory tours, the aspects of understanding the production in detail, building a relationship, and the personal contact are more pronounced than in B2C settings (Goodson, 2002; Österle et al., 2018), as B2B customers focus more on obtaining detailed information compared to consumers, who focus on entertainment (Frew, 2000). B2B customer representatives visit their existing and/or potential suppliers for a combination of business and personal knowledge purposes (Otgaar, 2010) and intend to get to know the company and obtain information about the brand and the products (Goodson, 2002). A factory tour should address these motivations by providing relevant information, while at the same time creating positive encounters during

the tour. Therefore, the content of the tour should address customers’ expectations and encompass contextual and individualized experiences (Österle et al., 2018). Furthermore, visitors who experience positive emotions after the tour may better remember and understand the information and content provided, which may lead to enhanced relationship building with the company and its employees (Österle et al., 2018). A factory tour therefore has the potential to lead to better customer relationships due to the first-hand interaction with employees (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002).

2.2. Research on the effects of factory Tours

In the following paragraphs, we summarize existing empirical research about factory tours. Table 1 provides a structured overview of the extant studies in both B2C and B2B marketing, as well as how our research contributes over and beyond existing work.

Although limited attention has been devoted to better understanding customers’ factory tours, a small number of studies have investigated the phenomenon in B2C settings. For instance, Dodd (1994) investigated purchase behavior among consumers who had visited a winery, with survey results showing that environmental attributes (i.e., cleanliness, pleasantness of the environment, perceived attractiveness) and service quality perceptions significantly influence post-visit purchase behavior. Furthermore, a significant relationship was evident between a visitor’s involvement during the visit and subsequent purchases (Dodd, 1994).

After a series of qualitative interviews with visitors to Australian wineries, O’Neill et al. (2002) conceptualize and empirically test a model about the impact of service quality measures on purchase behavior. Their findings reveal that service-related cues, such as the responsiveness of staff, increase purchase likelihood after a visit.

Mitchell and Hall (2004) surveyed participants of winery tours and found that a high share conducted purchases in the six to eight months following the visit. Moreover, the authors found a high propensity for brand loyalty as well as for word-of-mouth among visitors.

Mitchell (2006) found, again in a wine context, that frequent visitors are more likely to make post-visit purchases. The product price had only a small effect on purchase behavior, whereas the service and the memory of the visit were the most influential variables, reflecting a high relevance of the degree of satisfaction with both the product and the experience (Mitchell, 2006).

More recently, Sun et al. (2022) reported the findings from two field experiments, which varied the extent of B2C customer education during a university tour and compared perspectives of customers after completion of a factory tour to those of customers before having participated. The results indicate that word-of-mouth and purchase intentions are higher among customers who participated in a factory tour and among customers who received a higher degree of educational information.

Taking a more general perspective of factory tourism, Chen and Morrison (2004) report the results of a survey among industrial companies offering public tours to visitors. As the main benefits, these companies report improved company image, reinforced brand loyalty, and the possibility of promoting products. Additionally, improved morale among staff involved in the tours are highlighted.

In contrast to studies in B2C contexts, research in B2B marketing has almost completely neglected the topic of factory tours. As the notable exception, Österle et al. (2018) describe factory tours as one element of what they call “brand worlds” in B2B branding. Based on a series of expert interviews, the authors examine how B2B companies apply experiential techniques in the creation and operating of brand worlds, which represent the tangible embodiment of a brand. By providing interactive product experiences, manufacturers enable a transfer of knowledge through the transformation of experiences. According to Österle et al. (2018), direct personal experiences—such as the possibility to touch and test products, or participation in factory tours, in which the production process of a company is presented—leave deep impressions

Table 1
Overview of empirical studies on factory tours.

Publication	Findings for the effects of factory tour participation in B2C and B2B contexts	Self-reported measures ¹	Observational measures ²
B2C context			
Dodd (1994)	Product characteristics (e.g., quality, smell) and attitude towards the company directly influence purchase intentions in a wine context. Environmental and service attributes positively influence purchase behavior as well as customer involvement during the tour.	✓	✗
O'Neill et al. (2002)	Service-related cues (e.g., responsiveness of personnel) increase likelihood of purchases after a visit.	✓	✗
Mitchell and Hall (2004)	Winery tour participation leads to purchases in the six to eight months following the visit, as well as to increased brand loyalty and higher word-of-mouth.	✓	✗
Chen and Morrison (2004)	Benefits of factory tourism to companies include improved company image, reinforced brand loyalty, product promotion, and stimulated staff morale.	✓	✗
Mitchell (2006)	Frequent visitors are more likely to purchase products after a winery tour.	✓	✗
Sun et al. (2022)	Participation in a company tour increases word-of-mouth and purchase intentions, with enhanced customer knowledge and enjoyment as underlying process variables.	✓	✗
B2B context			
Salminen (2001)	Value of a reference visit for a potential B2B customers is driven by the possibility to evaluate a supplier, to build trust, and to see and try equipment in real working circumstances	✓	✗
Österle et al. (2018)	Brand worlds explored as an instrument of branding that employs experiential marketing techniques in a B2B context. Manufacturers aim for providing live product experiences to explain products and for creating product awareness. B2B visitors expect visits to support in their own business activities.	✓	✗
This study	Effects of B2B customers' factory tour participation on customer purchases, mediated by trust and commitment, combining an observational and a survey-based study.	✓	✓

Notes: ¹ Self-reported measures in the listed studies include purchase intentions and attitudes. ² Observational measures refer to observation of actual customer behavior, such as purchases.

on visitors.

Although not focused on customer visits to a manufacturer's site, the case study by Salminen (2001) provides related insights. The author examines reference visits (i.e., a potential customer visiting an existing customer initiated and guided by the manufacturer/supplier) and identifies several aspects that determine value for potential customers, such as being able to see equipment in action. Based on a case study, Salminen (2001) views reference visits as a way to drive sales.

Overall, existing research provides first insights into the potential

benefits of customers' factory tour participation. However, the overview in Table 1 reveals three important shortcomings. First, the phenomenon has almost exclusively been examined from a B2C angle. Second, extant studies relied on self-reported evidence about the effects of factory tours. Third, information about the process underlying possible positive outcomes of factory tour participation is missing. Therefore, our study addresses a relevant research gap by examining factory tours as an instrument of relationship marketing. We empirically analyze the influence of factory tour participation on the subsequent purchases that customers in a B2B context make (i.e., economic impact), as well as the mediating roles of customers' trust and commitment (i.e., underlying psychological process), while controlling for several customer-related characteristics to rule out alternative explanations.

3. Hypotheses development

Companies use factory tours as an instrument for direct economic benefits, but also for creating and strengthening customer relationships (Mooney, 2018; Sun et al., 2022). As such, inviting customers for a factory visit represents an instrument of relationship marketing, which is defined as "all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 22).

3.1. Economic benefits of factory Tours

Repeat purchases, and thus the manifestation of a customer relationship, was found to be influenced strongly by educational, stimulating, relevant, and authentic experiences that customers make (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Sun et al., 2022). Therefore, we assume that factory visits, which represent personal and direct experiences that customers make, also influence existing customers' likelihood of repeat purchases. The underlying notion is that factory tours provide first-hand information about a supplier, product quality, used materials, or the production process (Goodson, 2002; House, 2023; Otgaar, 2010; Sun et al., 2022; Upton & Macadam, 1997), which allows customers to reduce risk in subsequent purchase decisions. We thus hypothesize that factory tours in a B2B context create direct economic benefits for suppliers:

H1. Customer participation in a factory tour leads to increased purchases.

3.2. A commitment-trust theory perspective on factory Tours

In addition to the direct economic benefit of increased purchases, suppliers likely pursue more varied underlying goals at the level of the individual participants as well. Here, the practitioner perspective offers a more nuanced picture. For instance, House (2023) points to establishing trust by verifying a supplier's capabilities and having personal interactions with representatives. Moreover, the personal experience and direct communication are viewed as contributing to customers feeling a closer connection with a supplier (Mooney, 2018). The process assumed to underlie such relational outcomes can be explained by commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It proposes that trust and commitment represent the two key mediating variables explaining successful relationship marketing. The theory has been widely applied to analyzing the creation and development of customer relationships, as well as the effectiveness of different relationship marketing instruments (e.g., Heirati et al., 2019; Palmatier et al., 2006; Zafari et al., 2023).

Based on commitment-trust theory, we propose that in addition to direct effects on purchasing behavior, factory tour participation influences customers' trust and their commitment to the supplier. Trust is defined as the "perceived credibility and benevolence of a target" (Doney & Cannon, 1997, p. 36). It represents "an important concept in

understanding expectations for cooperation and planning in a relational contract” (Dwyer et al., 1987, p. 18). According to Doney and Cannon (1997), trust requires courtship by a supplier, which is directed at allowing a customer to learn more about the supplier. Trust should grow when supplier and customer share a variety of experiences, as these improve the latter’s ability to predict the former’s behavior, directly influencing credibility and benevolence as core characteristics of trust. In a similar vein, Eisingerich and Bell (2008) show that educating customers about important information leads to higher trust.

Commitment is the second key mediator variable underlying customer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It indicates the attachment that customers establish to a brand or company, which develops through personal involvement with a firm (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bansal et al., 2004; Evanschitzky et al., 2006). The more extensive of an experience a customer has, the higher their commitment towards the brand or company will be (Iglesias et al., 2011). Moreover, a greater degree of social bonds between suppliers and customers was found to enhance customer commitment (Cater & Zabkar, 2009).

Building on commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) as well as existing general empirical evidence (Palmatier et al., 2006), we thus hypothesize the two constructs as key mediators underlying the economic benefits of customers’ factory tour participation. We argue that a factory visit represents an intense, first-hand and shared experience (Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2024; Österle et al., 2018), where multiple experiential cues—such as interacting with company representatives or seeing production processes up close—should affect customers’ trust and commitment.

Feelings of attachment to a brand or firm contribute to a partnership between the customer and the brand (Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2024). This should explain an individual’s increased intention to purchase from a supplier after a factory tour. Customer commitment should thus act as a process variable mediating the relationship between trust—developed from direct and shared experiences—and a participant’s purchase intent, as demonstrated after a factory tour.

Overall, as illustrated in Fig. 1, we thus assume that an increase in purchases among customers who participated in a factory tour can be explained by higher levels of trust and, in turn, commitment. Due to the focus on individual perceptions (i.e., trust, commitment) and the empirical setting of Study 2, in which we test this hypothesis, participants’ stated purchase intent is investigated rather than a customer organization’s actual purchases (which we focus on in Study 1). We formally hypothesize as follows:

H2. Customer participation in a factory leads to (a) increased trust, and (b) increased commitment, both of which serially mediate the positive effect of factory tour participation on (c) purchase intent.

We test the hypothesized effects in two studies. In Study 1, we establish the economic benefits of factory tour participation, based on an analysis of over two decades of B2B supplier’s sales data. Study 2 then complements these findings by providing additional support for H1 based on factory tour participants’ purchase intent and by revealing the underlying process via increased trust and commitment.

4. Study 1: Economic effects of factory Tours

4.1. Setting and data

To test the economic consequences of existing customers’ participation in a factory tour at a supplier’s factory, we obtained customer-level revenue data from a medium-sized German industrial manufacturer (approx. 500 employees). The firm produces components used in industrial high-temperature manufacturing processes (e.g., cement oven parts). In 2021, the company’s sales amounted to around 550 million Euros.

We were provided with annual total customer-level revenues for the complete set of the company’s 97 German customers, covering the 23

years from 1996 until 2018. The manufacturer started offering factory tours in 1998, and throughout the years, the general setup of the factory tours remained largely unchanged (e.g., welcome presentation followed by a guided tour of the plant). During the observation period, employees of 47 different customers visited the factory between this year and the end of the observation period, while no visit occurred for the remaining 50 customers. Importantly, no customer participated in more than one factory tour during the observation period. We had to exclude six customers due to inconsistent or missing revenue information, leaving an analyzable dataset of 91 customers. The average annual revenue per customer was 74,005 EUR (SD = 168,799).

The available data thus allowed us to analyze within-customer differences before and after participation in a factory tour as well as between-customer differences for customers that did and did not participate in a factory tour. Before examining the findings, however, it is important to consider two possible sources of bias. First, a possible overall increase in the company’s revenues over time (e.g., due to inflation or overall general growth of the company) may represent a source of random error. However, as the factory tours of the different customers occurred at very different points in time within the observed 23 years, such a trend is unlikely to systematically bias the findings of our analysis.

Second, the results could be biased by reverse causality, such that customers with higher revenues and growth potential may be more likely to be invited for a factory tour. To rule out this source of error, we examined revenues in the two years before the start of factory tours (i.e., 1996 and 1997). Customers that generated revenues in these years and that later participated in a factory tour ($n = 32$) did not show significantly higher revenues in 1996 than those that never participated in a visit ($n = 15$): $M_{\text{tour}} = 145,968$ EUR; $M_{\text{no tour}} = 241,997$ EUR; $p = .630$. The same result emerged for revenues generated in 1997: $M_{\text{tour}} = 146,782$ EUR; $M_{\text{no tour}} = 79,462$ EUR; $p = .115$. Overall, we interpret this as an indication that reverse causality does not pose a substantial threat to our findings.

A notable peculiarity of the focal manufacturer is that factory tours have always been offered towards the end of each year. However, because the available data do not provide information about which part of the annual revenues were billed before or after the visit, we excluded the year in which the factory tour took place from the analysis. Instead, for a robust assessment, we used the year prior to the one in which a factory visit occurred as the baseline period and compared it to the revenues that occurred in the years following the year of the tour. As some customers participated in a factory tour towards the end of our observation period, the analyzable samples differ depending on the respective time windows. Revenues in the year after the factory tour were available for 40 customers. For the time windows of two, three, and four years after the factory tour, revenues were available for 38 customers.

4.2. Results

To examine the economic effects of participating in a factory tour, we performed a within-customer analysis and then conducted a more comprehensive examination that also considers differences between customers who did and did not visit the factory. First, to analyze within-customer revenue effects, we conducted one-sided paired-samples t -tests among those customers who participated in a factory tour. This allowed us to estimate whether revenues generated in the year before a customer participated in a factory tour differed significantly from the revenues generated in the four subsequent years.¹ The detailed results for four different time windows are shown in Table 2.

¹ As a robustness check, we extended the baseline period to the two years prior to the year in which the factory tour took place. The results remain substantively the same.

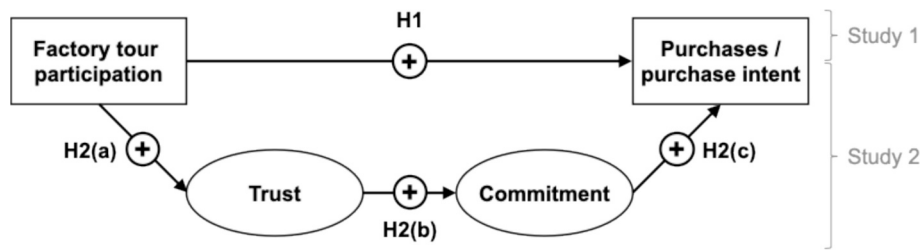


Fig. 1. Model and hypotheses.

Table 2
Study 1: Paired-samples *t*-test results.

Comparison period for revenues after factory tour	Average annual revenues per customer in EUR (SD)		Δ in EUR	Δ in %	n	p
	Before factory tour	After factory tour				
The year after the factory tour	126,209 (150,141)	155,846 (195,495)	29,637	23.48 %	40	0.053
The two years after the factory tour	132,827 (151,198)	172,851 (204,757)	40,024	30.13 %	38	0.015
The three years after the factory tour	132,827 (151,198)	167,533 (191,599)	34,706	26.13 %	38	0.020
The four years after the factory tour	132,827 (151,198)	164,846 (186,367)	32,019	24.11 %	38	0.031

Notes: Due to the directional hypotheses, one-sided *p*-values are shown. Average annual revenues before the factory tour differ, because the first comparison is based on 40 customers, for which revenues in the year after the factory tour were available within the study period; for the two-, three-, and four-years' time windows, the comparisons are based on 38 customers, for which revenues were available.

The analyses show that among customers who participated in a factory tour, annual revenues generated before the year of the visit were on average 29,637 Euros lower than in the year after the visit, although the difference is only marginally significant (i.e., *p* = .053). The positive effects of a factory tour on revenues become clearer for longer time periods of the customer relationship. In the two years after the factory tour, customers generate an average of 40,024 Euros in additional revenues, which represents an increase by 30.13 %. The increase amounts to 34,706 Euros or 26.13 % for the three subsequent years. For both time periods, the increase compared to the year before the visit is significant. This effect becomes attenuated to an average increase of 32,019 Euros or 24.11 % when extending the focal time window even further to the four years after the factory tour. Overall, this first set of analyses provides support for the assumed revenue increase after participation in a factory tour (H1).

The outlined analyses were based on only those customers that participated in a factory tour. However, the findings may be reflective of a general growth for each customer over the course of their relationship with the supplier. Therefore, for a more robust test of H1, we included the customers that did not participate in a factory tour in our second analytical step.

To account for the hierarchical nature of the data, with yearly revenues nested within customers, we estimated a multilevel mixed-effects linear regression model (i.e., two-level random intercept, random slope model) using Stata 18. The estimation was based on the following regression equation:

$$Revenue_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 YEAR_{ij} + \beta_2 TOUR_{ij} + u_{0j} + u_{1j} YEAR_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

In the equation, *i* denotes the year in which the revenue occurred, and *j* denotes the customer. The fixed portion of the model estimates the intercept β_0 , the trend effect of revenue changes over time (i.e., β_1) for $YEAR = [1, \dots, 23]$, and the effect of participation in a factory tour (i.e., β_2) for the dummy-coded variable *TOUR*, which captures different time windows after customer *j* participated in a factory tour, as described in detail below. The random portion of the model accounts for differences between customer by estimating the customer-level random intercept u_{0j} as well as the random slope u_{1j} for the trend variable *YEAR*.

Identical to the within-subjects analyses presented above, we estimated the mixed-effects model for different time windows, using different coding for the *TOUR* variable (e.g., to estimate two-year effects, *TOUR* = 1 in the two years after a factory tour by the customer took place and *TOUR* = 0 in all other cases). The results of these different estimations are shown in Table 3.

Similar to the within-customer analysis results, participation in a factory tour does not result in significantly higher revenues in the following year ($\beta_2=17,406.80$, *p* = .181). When considering the two years following a factory visit, however, a significant increase in revenues by, on average, 28,326.48 Euros is evident (*p* = .023). Extending the time window further to three years (23,147.38 EUR) and four years (20,287.29 EUR) reveals an attenuated effect that is still statistically significant. In total, these results offer further evidence for H1.

4.3. Discussion

Based on observed purchase data, Study 1 results support our hypothesis that participating in a factory tour is beneficial to a customer relationship as it leads to subsequent increases in purchases. Importantly, these findings appear to be robust across different time windows and when accounting for customers who never participated in a factory tour.

An interesting finding is that the effects of factory tour participation only emerge when considering at least a two-year time window. Taking the specific industry context of our study into account, this finding appears reasonable, as the products sold by the manufacturer usually last two years until a replacement purchase is necessary. Thus, purchases in this industry segment are mostly made biennially. Moreover, as factory tours were offered towards the end of the year, it is likely that customers' budget and purchase plans had already been completed and that purchasing procedure would take a certain amount of time, all of which makes it less likely to observe and immediate revenue increases in year following a factory tour.² As the customer relationships progresses after the factory tour (i.e., at time windows of two, three, and four years), a positive effect on revenues clearly emerges. At the same time, the longer the time window observed after a factory tour, the smaller the revenue increase becomes in magnitude.

A shortcoming of the analysis, however, is that the observational data used for Study 1 do not reveal insights into the process underlying these positive economic benefits of factory tours. The assumed

² We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this additional explanation for the findings.

Table 3
Study 1: Multilevel mixed-effects linear regression results.

Predictor	Model 1 One-year effects		Model 2 Two-year effects		Model 3 Three-year effects		Model 4 Four-year effects	
	Est.	<i>p</i>	Est.	<i>p</i>	Est.	<i>p</i>	Est.	<i>p</i>
Fixed effects								
Intercept	67,179.4	< 0.001	65,784.18	< 0.001	65,470.70	< 0.001	65,259.86	< 0.001
YEAR	541.04	0.231	597.06	0.209	604.24	0.206	604.33	0.205
TOUR	17,406.80	0.181	28,326.48	0.023	23,147.38	0.027	20,287.29	0.030
Random effects								
Intercept	1.32e+10	< 0.050	1.30e+10	< 0.050	1.29e+10	< 0.050	1.29e+10	< 0.050
YEAR	3.58e+07	< 0.050	3.56e+07	< 0.050	3.55e+07	< 0.050	3.51e+07	< 0.050

Notes: Because of the directional hypotheses, one-sided *p*-values are shown.

mediation via customer trust and commitment, which represent attitudinal variables, requires survey data. Therefore, to examine H2, we conducted an additional survey-based study.

5. Study 2: Mediating effects of customer commitment

5.1. Setting, measures, and data

Study 2 was conducted in cooperation with the same B2B company as in Study 1. Around the year 2019, the company substantially increased its activities with regards to factory tours, inviting customers more systematically to participate in a visit. At the same time, the company retained a largely standardized approach to its factory tours, as every visit still consisted of the same elements (e.g., welcome presentation, guided tour). This allowed for an estimation of factory tour participation effects that is not confounded by any kind of customization.

We gathered survey data from customers over a period of three years, from 2020 to 2023. Participating customers came from all over the world, with customer relationships ranging from one to 25 years. Every customer who participated in a factory tour received two questionnaires (in English language). Participants filled out the first questionnaire, lasting 5 to 8 min, one day before they visited the factory, and the second one directly after going through the production building and seeing the manufacturing process. Participation was voluntary and the answers were recorded anonymously. In both questionnaires, the core constructs were the same (see Table 4). Purchase intent was measured with three items based on Maxham and Netemeyer (2002). Due to restrictions regarding the length of the questionnaire that were imposed by the company, we captured trust and commitment each with a single item taken from the multi-items scales used by Bansal et al. (2004). Additionally, the first questionnaire also captured several customer characteristics to be used as covariates. These were company size (i.e., number

of employees), the length of the customer’s relationship with the supplier, the number of purchases conducted within the past five years, and whether the respondent already had personal contacts at the supplier.

In total, 78 customers participated in the survey, of which we had to exclude six due to straight lining answering patterns (i.e., identical response for all items of more than 5 constructs) or implausible responses. Accordingly, the dataset to analyze pre-visit attitudes and intentions consisted of 72 participants of which 65 completed the second, post-visit questionnaire. The size of the visiting customer companies ranged from ten to 5500 employees (*M* = 619.185, *SD* = 1266.464, Median = 160). The length of the business relationship with the supplier ranged from less than one year to 30 years (*M* = 6.754, *SD* = 6.517, Median = 5). Previous purchases within the past five years averaged at 4.59 (*SD* = 3.334, Median = 5), with a range from zero to 15. Out of the 65 respondents, 37 (i.e., 56.9 %) indicated that they had personal contacts within the supplier before the factory tour.

5.2. Method: mediation analysis with repeated measures

As the focal constructs were measured both before and after the factory tour, this study uses a repeated-measures design. At the same time, the goal of the study is to test a serial mediation via trust and commitment. In other words, we measured the dependent variable (i.e., purchase intent) as well as the two mediators twice to understand how variation in the independent variable (i.e., factory tour participation) influences purchase intent through changes in trust and commitment. Such a setting, however, differs from common, cross-sectional mediation analysis approaches, where mediators and outcome variables are measured only once (Hayes, 2022, p. 568).

Therefore, to assess the hypothesized mediation (H2), we analyzed a process model that accounts for the repeated measures, using the MEMORE tool developed by Montoya and Hayes (2017). Designed for analyzing two-occasion within-subjects designs, the tool implements the

Table 4
Items, reliability measures, and descriptive statistics.

	Cronbach’s alpha	Construct reliability	AVE	Factor loadings	Indicator reliability	Mean (SD)
Purchase intent (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002)	0.888 / 0.945	0.892 / 0.945	0.734 / 0.853			
1. In the future, I intend to buy products of [company]. ^a				0.778 / 0.938	0.605 / 0.879	5.877 / 6.000 (1.139) / (1.075)
2. If you need [products] in the future, how likely is it that you will use [products] from [company]? ^b				0.887 / 0.868	0.787 / 0.754	5.662 / 5.908 (1.079) / (1.071)
3. In the near future, I will use [company] as a provider for [products]. ^a				0.900 / 0.962	0.811 / 0.925	5.877 / 5.954 (1.038) / (1.096)
Trust (Bansal et al., 2004)	–	–	–			
I feel that I can trust [company]. ^a				–	–	5.646 / 6.323 (1.484) / (0.812)
Commitment (Bansal et al., 2004)	–	–	–			
I feel emotionally attached to [company]. ^a				–	–	4.615 / 5.215 (1.783) / (1.452)

Notes:^a Measured on seven-point scale, anchored by 1 = “totally disagree” and 7 = “totally agree”; ^b Measured on seven-point scale, anchored by 1 = “highly unlikely” and 7 = “highly likely”. The first value always refers to the survey conducted before the factory tour, the second value to the survey conducted after the factory tour.

method outlined by Judd et al. (2001). Specifically, using a path-analytical framework based on OLS regression, it estimates direct, indirect, and total effects of differences between two measurements of a dependent variable Y and one or multiple underlying mediators, providing confidence intervals for inferences about the indirect effect based on bootstrapping.

5.3. Results

To evaluate the influence of factory visits on customers' purchase intent (H1), as well as the mediation via trust and commitment (H2), we performed three steps of analyses. First, we used paired-samples t -tests to test whether a significant change occurred in each of the focal variables between the pre-visit survey and the post-visit survey. Second, we used repeated-measures analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) to examine these changes while controlling for respondents' company size, relationship length, the number of previous purchases, and the existence of personal contacts at the supplier. Third, we conducted a mediation analysis with repeated measures as described above to examine the hypothesized process.

As illustrated in Fig. 2-A, comparing the mean values obtained in the survey before the factory tour with those reported afterwards reveals that participants' purchase intent significantly increased ($M_{\text{before}} = 5.790$, $SD = 0.971$ vs. $M_{\text{after}} = 5.954$, $SD = 1.026$, $t = 2.120$, $p = .019$), supporting H1. This result is robust when controlling for alternative explanations in an ANCOVA ($F(1,56) = 4.706$, $p = .034$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.078$), while none of the covariates exert a significant influence.³

A pre-post comparison for respondents' trust also shows a significant increase ($M_{\text{before}} = 5.646$, $SD = 1.484$ vs. $M_{\text{after}} = 6.323$, $SD = 0.812$, $t = 5.068$, $p < .001$), as is evident in Fig. 2-B. The effect remains in the ANCOVA ($F(1,56) = 15.395$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.216$), while of the covariates, only the length of the relationship with the supplier exerted a significant influence ($F(1,56) = 5.302$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.101$).

Finally, for commitment as the third focal variable, there is also a significant increase after the factory tour ($M_{\text{before}} = 4.615$, $SD = 1.783$ vs. $M_{\text{after}} = 5.215$, $SD = 1.452$, $t = 3.697$, $p < .001$, see Fig. 2-C). Again, the effect is robust when including the covariates ($F(1,56) = 8.560$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.133$), of which only the existence of a respondent's personal contacts in the supplier organization has a marginally significant influence ($F(1,56) = 3.614$, $p = .062$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.061$).

The mediation analysis results are summarized in Fig. 3.⁴ In line with the first set of analyses, they indicate a significant difference between the pre-visit and post-visit measurements for customer trust ($\beta = 0.677$, $t = 5.068$, $p < .001$). The increase in commitment due to the factory tour is fully mediated by trust, as the latter exerts a direct influence ($\beta = 0.681$, $t = 3.674$, $p < .001$), while the initial repeated-measures effect of factory tour participation becomes non-significant ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 0.718$, $p = .476$). Similarly, when including the two mediators, the increase in purchase intent is explained by commitment ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 2.740$, $p = .008$), while the effects of factory tour participation ($\beta = -0.034$, $t = -0.359$, $p = .721$) and trust ($\beta = 0.142$, $t = 1.420$, $p = .161$) become non-

³ Because four respondents did not provide complete answers to all of the four covariates, the sample used in this and all other analyses involving control variables was reduced to $n = 61$.

⁴ Before conducting the mediation analysis, we checked for possible multicollinearity among the two focal independent variables (i.e., trust and commitment) as well as the covariates. To this end, we estimated a linear regression with the difference in purchase intent (i.e., score reported before the factory tour subtracted from the score reported afterwards) as the dependent variable and the differences in trust and commitment as predictors, alongside the covariates company size, length of the relationship, previous purchases and personal contacts. The variance inflation factor values ranged from 1.179 to 1.288, clearly indicating that multicollinearity is no concern.

significant. An estimation of the indirect effects supports the hypothesized mediation. The indirect effect of factory tour participation via trust and commitment is significant, as the 95 % bootstrap confidence interval (CI) based on 5000 bootstrap samples excludes zero ($\beta = 0.079$, 95 % CI = 0.002 / 0.185). In contrast, the indirect paths via only one of the mediators are not significant (trust: $\beta = 0.096$, 95 % CI = -0.064 / 0.259; commitment: $\beta = -0.024$, 95 % CI = -0.057 / 0.088).

In sum, the findings show that participation in a factory tour enhances purchase intent as well as customer trust and commitment. Additionally, trust and commitment act as mediators that explain the effects of a factory visit on purchase intent.

5.4. Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide further support for the hypothesized positive impact of factory tour participation on customers' purchasing behavior (H1), albeit this study only measured purchase intent instead of actual behavior, as captured in Study 1. Furthermore, the survey-based setting allowed for assessing the assumed mediating effects of customer trust and commitment. In support of H2, the repeated-measured mediation analysis reveals that the increase in purchase intent after a factory visit is explained by an increase in trust, which in turn leads to increased commitment. As such, Study 2 supports the notion of factory tours as an instrument of relationship marketing. Although, in contrast to Study 1, we did not capture long-term effects of factory visits, the comparisons of customer responses before and after taking a factory tour indicate that the two key process variables of relationship marketing success—trust and commitment—are enhanced when customers participate in a visit.

6. Conclusion

Due to the often complex nature of B2B products and services, personal contact, direct interactions, and shared experiences between suppliers and customers are essential for creating and nurturing customer relationships (Heirati et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2024; Krolikowska & Kuenzel, 2024). Personal experiences and direct communication between the involved parties are thus regarded as important factors in B2B relationship marketing (Österle et al., 2018). One common form of such personal interaction in B2B settings is inviting customers to visit the supplier's factory to explain the product as well as product development and manufacturing processes. However, extant research has not sufficiently examined the relational and economic consequences of factory tours. We therefore aim at better understanding the outcomes of participation in factory visits based on two empirical studies.

Using secondary data on 91 customers who participated in a supplier's factory tours over a period of 23 years, Study 1 provides robust support for the hypothesized economic relationship benefits of factory tour participation. Specifically, the results show a clear increase in customer-level revenues after a factory visit. These effects emerge within a two-year time window and become attenuated the more time progresses in the customer relationship after a factory tour.

For more detailed insights into the underlying process, Study 2 employed a survey-based within-subjects design. By analyzing responses obtained from 65 customers before and after their factory tour, we were able to assess effects on purchase intent as well as on trust and commitment. The results again show positive effects of factory tour participation on the customer relationship, as evidenced by increased purchase intent. Moreover, a positive effect on customer trust and commitment and a mediation by these variables were evident.

6.1. Contributions to theory

Our findings add to the existing literature on B2B marketing and relationship marketing in four ways. First, the results across both of our

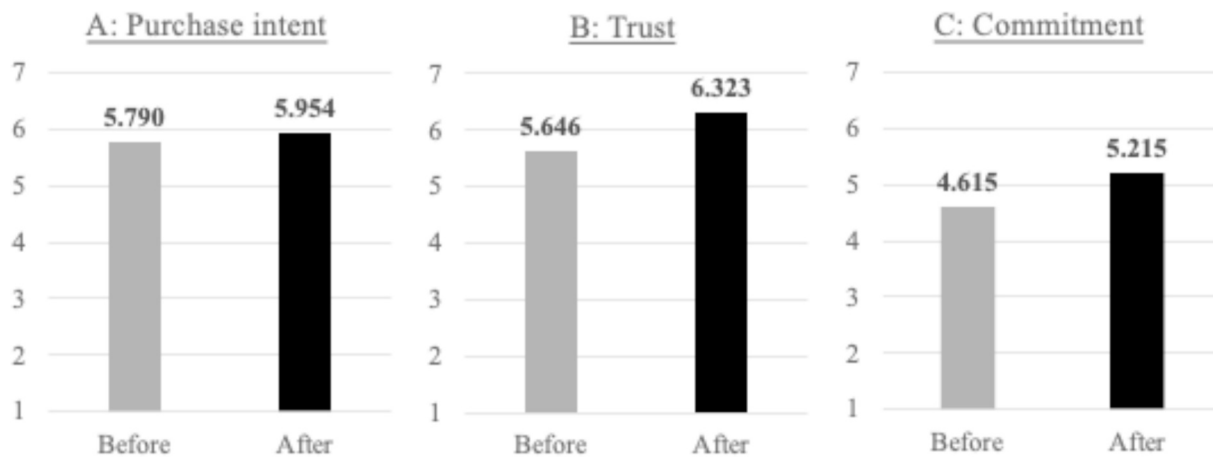


Fig. 2. Study 2: Variable means before and after factory tour participation.

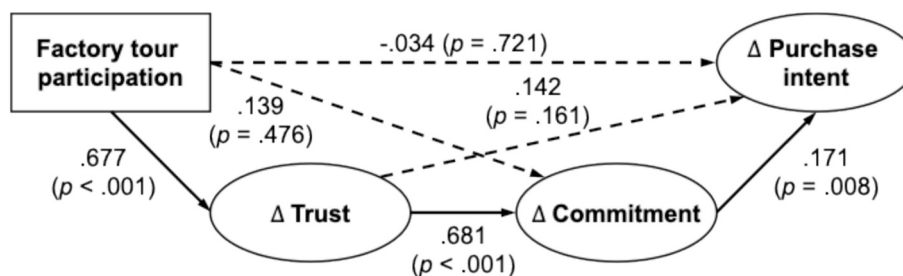


Fig. 3. Mediation analysis results.

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients shown; Δ indicates delta values, i.e., the difference in the repeated measures of each variable captured before and after factory tour participation.

studies show clear economic benefits of having customers participate in factory tours. By being based on behavioral data analyzed for Study 1 (i.e., customer-level revenues from actual orders), our research provides evidence for the efficacy of a relationship marketing instrument that is widely used by B2B companies, but that has not received sufficient attention from B2B researchers. While Österle et al. (2018) point to the importance of factory tours for employing experiential marketing techniques, our study extends this perspective by demonstrating the importance of factory tours for creating and developing customer relationships in a B2B context. Moreover, in contrast to the survey-based findings from existing (B2C-focused) studies (e.g., Chen & Morrison, 2004; Mitchell, 2006; Sun et al., 2022), our findings based on actual revenues adds robustness to the extant body of research.

Second, seeing the production process does not only influence purchase behavior in B2C settings (Mitchell & Hall, 2004; O'Neill et al., 2002) but also has a positive effect on purchases in industrial contexts. Thus, our study expands the existing literature of factory tours from B2C contexts to the substantially different B2B settings.

Third, we contribute by showing the applicability of commitment-trust theory for a specific relationship marketing instrument and by linking the key mediator variables of trust and commitment to purchase intent. In their seminal article, Morgan and Hunt (1994) consider communication between supplier and customer at a general level and operationalize it based on self-reported perceptions (e.g., “In our relationship, my major supplier keeps us informed of new developments.”). Other studies have conducted similar investigations into the effects of general communication perceptions on trust and commitment (e.g., Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Brown et al., 2019; Goodman & Dion, 2001; Palmatier et al., 2006). For instance, Lyons and Brennan (2019) recommend companies to invest in building trust and commitment, without indicating concrete measures. Our study examines one specific

and widely used instrument of relationship marketing and shows that its application, rather than general perceptions of communication, influences purchase intent via trust and commitment.

6.2. Managerial implications

The results of our research show that factory tours offer an opportunity for B2B companies to create and nurture customer relationships. Our findings suggest that inviting customer representatives for a visit increases their trust and commitment, as well as the generated revenues and purchase intent. For the cooperating company that provided the data for our studies, this translated to substantial revenue increases of up to 30 % (see Table 2).

Therefore, based on our findings, B2B companies should integrate factory visits into their relationship marketing activities as an important instrument for increasing sales in the medium and long term. In doing so, companies can also use our findings on the underlying process and focus on building trust proactively during the visit. Our research clearly shows that visitors’ trust is an important lever that leads to commitment and ultimately to purchase intent.

Importantly, however, companies conducting factory tours need to distinguish between short-term and long-term effects on customers. On the one hand, Study 2 reveals that factory tour participation has immediate impacts on customer perceptions and intentions. On the other hand, Study 1 demonstrates that for the economic benefits (i.e., revenue increases) to materialize, it may take substantially longer due to, for example, length specification and purchasing processes or industry specific purchasing cycles. In the setting that we examined it took at least two years before the customer-specific revenue increases occurred. Manufacturers thus may need to take a more long-term perspective when evaluating the efficacy of their customers’ factory tour

participation. To establish meaningful assessment and monitoring time frames, manufacturers should consider the specifics of their industry, business model, and order processes.

6.3. Limitations and future research

The present study provides evidence for positive effect of factory visits on B2B customer relationships. At the same time, the following limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

First, factory tours can serve multiple purposes for customers, such as vetting a supplier's capabilities, collecting information about manufacturing processes or products, or establishing and deepening relationships with supplier representatives. Due to the lack of empirical evidence on customer reactions to factory tours, we focused on the general effects of participation, without accounting for possible differences across customer motives. For instance, it is notable that in Study 2, a few of the customers selected responses at the lower end of the purchase intent scale and for the item measuring trust (i.e., 1–3 respondents). This may be surprising, given that all tour participants were existing customers. Thus, although our results provide empirical support for an effect of factory tour participation that is, on average, positive, there may be more complex effects and underlying motives for certain customers. Future research should consider different kinds of purposes that customers seek to address when visiting a supplier's factory.

Second, suppliers may offer factory tours in various settings and based on different elements. For instance, the number of participants, the background and behavior of a tour guide, the length and content of a tour, and the physical environment may all differ. Again, to first provide a general understanding about the effects of factory tours, we did not consider any of these or other design elements, and factory tours at the collaborating company were largely standardized. Existing theories, however, suggest that such factors exert an influence on customer reactions. Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), for example, proposes that environmental signals influence perceptions and decisions; according to media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), different modes of communication (e.g., face-to-face) influence the effectiveness of interpersonal contacts and persuasion attempts.⁵ We encourage researchers to use these perspectives to examine how the design of factory tours influences customer reactions.

Third, although we find evidence for economic benefits of factory tour participation, our analysis is based on revenue data. As such, we cannot make claims about the profitability of factory tours as a relationship marketing instrument due to missing information on cost of the supplier activities. Therefore, for a more detailed picture, we encourage researchers to include cost assessments and profitability analyses, as these may change over the course of a customer relationship.

Fourth, our investigation was conducted at one medium-sized product manufacturer in a single-industry context, which may limit the findings' generalizability. Future research should extend the focus to other companies, including different sizes and industries. Moreover, it would be interesting to examine factory tour effects outside of product manufacturing, for B2B service firms (e.g., IT providers, engineering services). In product-centric settings, customers may be able to use a product inspection as a substitute for a factory tour. In services, however, as Wirtz and Lovelock (2022, p. 130) explain, the greater importance of intangible elements makes it more difficult for customers to assess service quality, which is why "intangible elements of the service should be made tangible through physical evidence, something customers can see and touch." A service factory tour, such as visiting the testing facilities of an engineering firm, may therefore exert even greater effects than a visit to a manufacturing plant.

⁵ The authors thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting these theories for more detailed investigations into how factory tours influence customers.

Fifth, it is important to consider that parts of the data collection for Study 2 occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which at times created significant challenges for conducting factory tours. While Study 1 provides insights that are not biased by this exogenous event due to the observation period ending in 2018, and although parts of the data from Study 2 were collected in post-pandemic settings, future studies may want to replicate the findings. However, as the restrictions led to fewer individuals participating in a factory tour and sometimes shorter tours, we interpret the findings as a conservative assessment of the effects of factory tour participation. The fact that we found positive effects on purchase intent that are in line with the actual purchase behavior found in Study 1 makes us optimistic that Study 2 provides a valid understanding of the underlying process behind the economic effects of factory visits.

Finally, from a methodological perspective, it is important to note our use of single items to measure respondents' trust and commitment in Study 2 as a limitation. On the one hand, these two constructs could be considered sufficiently concrete to use single-item measures (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). Such a parsimonious approach with regards to questionnaire length is also employed in various other recent studies in the context of industrial marketing (e.g., Arslanagic-Kalajdzic et al., 2020; Keränen et al., 2023; Mora Cortez & Hidalgo, 2022). On the other hand, however, single-item measures for latent constructs may come at the cost of lower validity (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). Future research should therefore use established multi-item scales to assess the relationships examined in our model.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our research offers important insights for academics and practitioners about the economic potential of factory tours as an instrument for driving customer relationships in B2B settings.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Tobias Schaefers: Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Daniela Hülsebusch:** Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Gerrit Cziesho:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

References

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(1), 1–18.
- Anderson, E., & Weitz, B. (1992). The use of pledges to build and sustain commitment in distribution channels. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(1), 18–34.
- Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, M., Kadic-Maglajlic, S., & Miocevic, D. (2020). The power of emotional value: Moderating customer orientation effect in professional business services relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 88, 12–21.
- Bansal, H. S., Irving, P. G., & Taylor, S. F. (2004). A three-component model of customer to service providers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(3), 234–250.
- Bergkvist, L., & Rossiter, J. R. (2007). The predictive validity of multiple-item versus single-item measures of the same constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 44(2), 175–184.
- Brown, J. R., Crosno, J. L., & Tong, P. Y. (2019). Is the theory of trust and commitment in marketing relationships incomplete? *Industrial Marketing Management*, 77, 155–169.
- Businesswire. (2023). Agco's Jackson, Minnesota, Facility to Become Home of Fendt® in North America with the Fendt Lodge Customer Experience Center. Retrieved Nov. 10, 2023, from <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230524005014/en/AGCOs-Jackson-Minnesota-Facility-to-Become-Home-of-Fendt-in-North-America-with-the-Fendt-Lodge-Customer-Experience-Center>.
- Cater, B., & Zabkar, V. (2009). Antecedents and consequences of commitment in marketing research services: The client's perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 38(7), 785–797.
- Chen, Y., & Morrison, A. M. (2004). Manufacturing a new source of visitors: A pilot study of industrial tourism in the U.S. In *Paper presented at the new Frontiers in tourism research, Hong Kong*.

- Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554–571.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Sarstedt, M., Fuchs, C., Wilczynski, P., & Kaiser, S. (2012). Guidelines for choosing between multi-item and single-item scales for construct measurement: A predictive validity perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(3), 434–449.
- Dodd, T. H. (1994). *Influences of consumer attitudes and involvement on purchase behavior in an industrial tourism context: Dissertation*. Texas Tech University.
- Doney, P. M., & Cannon, J. P. (1997). An examination of the nature of trust in Buyer–Seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 61(2), 35–51.
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 11–27.
- Eisingerich, A. B., & Bell, S. J. (2008). Perceived service quality and customer trust: Does enhancing Customers' Service knowledge matter? *Journal of Service Research*, 10(3), 256–268.
- Evanschitzky, H., Iyer, G. R., Plassmann, H., Niessing, J., & Meffert, H. (2006). The relative strength of affective commitment in securing loyalty in service relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(12), 1207–1213.
- Farrell, R. (2021). **Four Tips to Help Organize a Fantastic Factory Tour**. Retrieved Nov. 10, 2023, from <https://www.plantengineering.com/articles/four-tips-to-help-organize-a-fantastic-factory-tour/>.
- Frew, E. A. (2000). *Industrial tourism: A conceptual and empirical analysis*. Dissertation. Victoria University of Technology, AU.
- Gertler, M. S. (1995). "Being there": Proximity, organization, and culture in the development and adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies. *Economic Geography*, 71(1), 1–26.
- Goodman, L. E., & Dion, P. A. (2001). The determinants of commitment in the distributor–manufacturer relationship. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(3), 287–300.
- Goodson, R. E. (2002). Read a plant–fast. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(5), 105–113.
- Harrison, P., & Shaw, R. (2004). Consumer satisfaction and post-purchase intentions: An exploratory study of museum visitors. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 6(2), 23–32.
- Hayes, A. F. (2022). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Heirati, N., Henneberg, S. C., Richter, A., & Harste, R. (2019). Differential importance of social and economic determinants of relationship performance in professional services. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 76, 23–35.
- House, L. K. (2023). **Touring Your Manufacturer's Facility: What Are the Benefits?**. Retrieved March 22, 2024, from <https://www.strouse.com/blog/facility-tour-benefits-manufacturing>.
- Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2011). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(8), 570–582.
- Judd, C. M., Kenny, D. A., & McClelland, G. H. (2001). Estimating and testing mediation and moderation in within-subject designs. *Psychological Methods*, 6(2), 115–134.
- Keränen, J., Kienzler, M., Salonen, A., Terho, H., & Totzek, D. (2023). Gain-sharing in performance-based contracting: How risk and fairness drive business Customers' willingness-to-switch to a gain-sharing arrangement. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 115, 172–184.
- Kramer, V., Krafft, M., & Storbacka, K. (2024). A configurational approach to understanding relationship characteristics in differing levels of Servitization. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 117, 42–65.
- Krolkowska, E., & Kuenzel, S. (2024). An attachment theory perspective of professional service Providers' social bonds with their clients. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 118, 136–147.
- Littmann, W. (2003). The production of goodwill: The origins and development of the factory tour in America. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 9, 71–84.
- Lyons, P., & Brennan, L. (2019). Assessing value from business-to-business services relationships: Temporality, tangibility, temperament, and trade-offs. *Journal of Service Research*, 22(1), 27–43.
- Maxham, J. G., & Netemeyer, R. G. (2002). A longitudinal study of complaining Customers' evaluations of multiple service failures and recovery efforts. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(4), 57–71.
- Mitchell, M. A., & Orwig, R. A. (2002). Consumer experience tourism and brand bonding. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 11(1), 30–41.
- Mitchell, R. (2006). Influences on post-visit wine purchase (and non-purchase) by New Zealand winery visitors. In J. Carlsen, & S. Charters (Eds.), *Global wine tourism: Research, Management & Marketing* (pp. 95–109). Oxon, UK: CABI.
- Mitchell, R., & Hall, C. M. (2004). The post-visit consumer behaviour of New Zealand winery visitors. *Journal of Wine Research*, 15(1), 39–49.
- Montoya, A. K., & Hayes, A. F. (2017). Two-condition within-participant statistical mediation analysis: A path-analytic framework. *Psychological Methods*, 22(1), 6–27.
- Mooney, K. (2018). **5 Key Benefits to Taking a Factory Tour**. Retrieved Nov. 10, 2023, from <https://occa-design.com/blog/5-key-benefits-to-taking-a-factory-tour/>.
- Mora Cortez, R., & Hidalgo, P. (2022). Prioritizing B2B marketing capabilities: Crossvergence in advanced and emerging economies. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 105, 422–438.
- Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(3), 20–38.
- O'Neill, M., Palmer, A., & Charters, S. (2002). Wine production as a service experience – The effects of service quality on wine sales. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 16(4), 342–362.
- Österle, B., Kuhn, M. M., & Henseler, J. (2018). Brand worlds: Introducing experiential marketing to B2B branding. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 72, 71–98.
- Otgaar, A. H. J. (2010). *Industrial tourism: Where the public meets the private*. Dissertation. Erasmus Research Institute of Management.
- Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D., & Evans, K. R. (2006). Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(4), 136–153.
- Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. (1978). A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(2), 224–253.
- Salminen, R. T. (2001). Success factors of a reference visit – A single case study. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 16(6), 487–507.
- Sun, X., Foscht, T., Kerschbaumer, R. H., & Eisingerich, A. B. (2022). "Pulling Back the curtain": Company Tours as a customer education tool and effects on pro-brand behaviors. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 21(6), 1307–1317.
- Upton, D. M., & Macadam, S. E. (1997). Why (and How) to take a plant tour. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(3), 97–106.
- Wirtz, J., & Lovelock, C. (2022). *Services marketing: People, technology, strategy*. World Scientific.
- Yale, P. (1991). *From tourist attractions to heritage tourism*. Huntingdon, UK: Elm Publications.
- Zafari, K., Biggemann, S., & Garry, T. (2023). Development of business-to-business relationships in turbulent environments. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 111, 1–18.