

Branding Strategies of Oil Marketing Companies in a Commodity Market: A Qualitative Analysis of Alternative Fuel Adoption using MAXQDA

Prashant Sharma

Sr Area Sales Manager, HPCL

Anita Sengar*

School of Business, UPES

Abstract: This study explores how Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) strategically utilize branding in a highly commoditized fuel market characterized by strict regulatory standards and minimal product differentiation. Employing qualitative content analysis using MAXQDA software to analyze interviews with 20 participants from academia, industry practitioners, and area experts, the research examines how OMCs differentiate themselves despite uniform product offerings, manage heightened consumer price sensitivity, and navigate the emerging market shift toward alternative fuels. Findings reveal that OMCs primarily rely on intangible differentiators such as trust, reputation, and superior service experiences to cultivate consumer loyalty. Frontline employee engagement and internal alignment are critical for delivering consistent brand promises at retail touchpoints. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of transparent communication and robust educational initiatives to justify premiums associated with branded fuels and alternative energy products. OMCs strategically position themselves by integrating credible sustainability narratives and incremental infrastructure investments, thereby addressing consumer skepticism and adoption barriers. Ultimately, the paper argues that comprehensive branding strategies—anchored in trust, clarity, and authenticity—are essential for OMCs aiming to remain competitive while steering consumers toward sustainable energy alternatives.

Keywords: OMC, MAXQDA, Alternative Fuels, Branding

* Corresponding author. Email: anita.sengar@gmail.com