

## **Chapter 4:** **Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

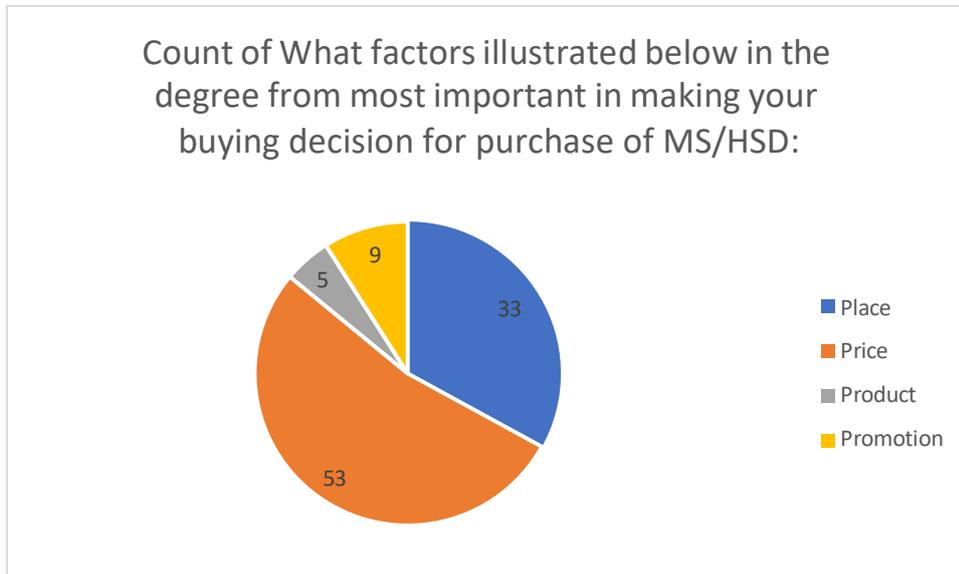
In this section, the purpose of the next discussion is revealed, which is the summary of the offered conclusions and analytical observations. Specifically, the reader is prepared for a deep dive into all the factors and workings that define the consumption process in the context of fuel acquisition. The following exegesis explores a comprehensive analysis of themes established from a secondary analysis, providing a sequential, detailed investigation of given issues relevant to the dynamics of fuel retailing. Expected in the subsequent sections are analyses of thematic aspects crucial for studying consumer behavior in the purchase of petrol and HSD. This extension also includes highlighting the implications of product differentiation based on stores, identifying the outlines of price sensitivity after the APM period, and understanding the impact of value-added services on consumer preferences. By integrating the literature-derived themes in this segment conveys a global orchestration of the dynamics of consumer perception and market forces in fuel retailing. While developing the further analysis, the readers are provided with an opportunity to move through the multifaceted space teeming with valuable insights, and, eventually, arrive at the final destination, which is the coherent comprehension of complex consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions regarding fuel purchases at different formats of retail stores.

From the interviews conducted, the entire primary collected data is been given on the basis of themes, to be more analytical, and derive the findings from the interview and deliver the valuable outcomes from the research.

### **4.2 Primary Analysis:**

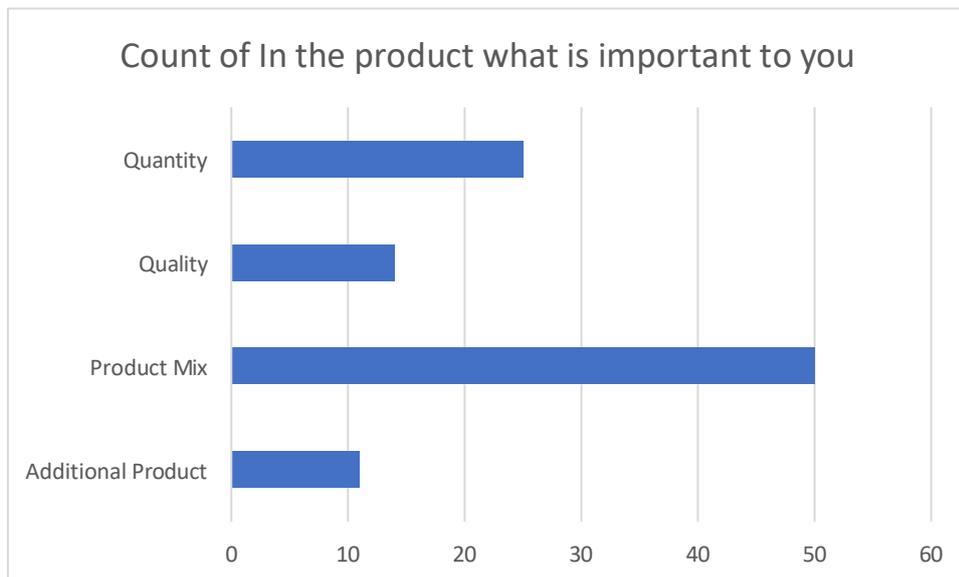
The survey questionnaire was given to 100 respondents to gain the valuable insights of the respondents about the services of petrol pumps in Vadodara city.

**What factors illustrated below in the degree from most important in making your buying decision for purchase of MS/HSD:**



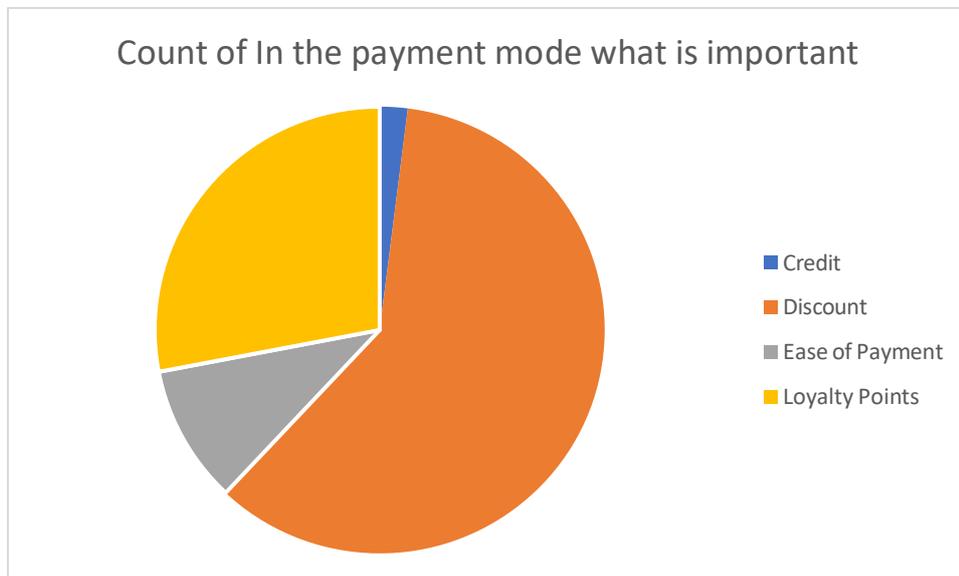
The elements that had an impact on purchasing decisions for MS/HSD (Motor Spirit/High-Speed Diesel) are listed according to their level of significance in the pie chart. Consumers place a high priority on cost when making purchasing decisions, as evidenced by the fact that "Price" is the most important consideration, accounting for 53% of replies obtained. This indicates that location or convenience plays a large role in determining selections, since "Place" comes in at 33%. After that, "Promotion" comes in at 9%, indicating that it has a moderate influence, which may be a reflection of how successful marketing and prices are. At 5%, "Product" is the least important, which suggests that qualities or characteristics of the product have a little impact on the decision-making process. It is clear from this analysis that customer priorities in this environment are mostly determined by practical issues such as cost and accessibility.

## In the product what is important to you



From above, it is interpreted that the characteristics of the product that are highly valued by customers. The phrase "Product Mix" attracted the greatest attention out of all the responses (approximately 50), which suggests that it is essential to have a diverse selection of product possibilities. Following that, "Quantity" receives approximately thirty responses, which indicates that the quantity of merchandise that is now available is also of great significance. It was found that around fifteen of the respondents believed that "quality" was not as significant as they had previously believed it to be, which suggests that the majority of consumers do not place a high value on it. Considering that there were fewer than ten responses, the "Additional Product" category has the lowest relevance, which indicates that more items or add-ons are not very necessary. This investigation reveals that an adequate supply of items and a diverse selection of products are the primary concerns of consumers.

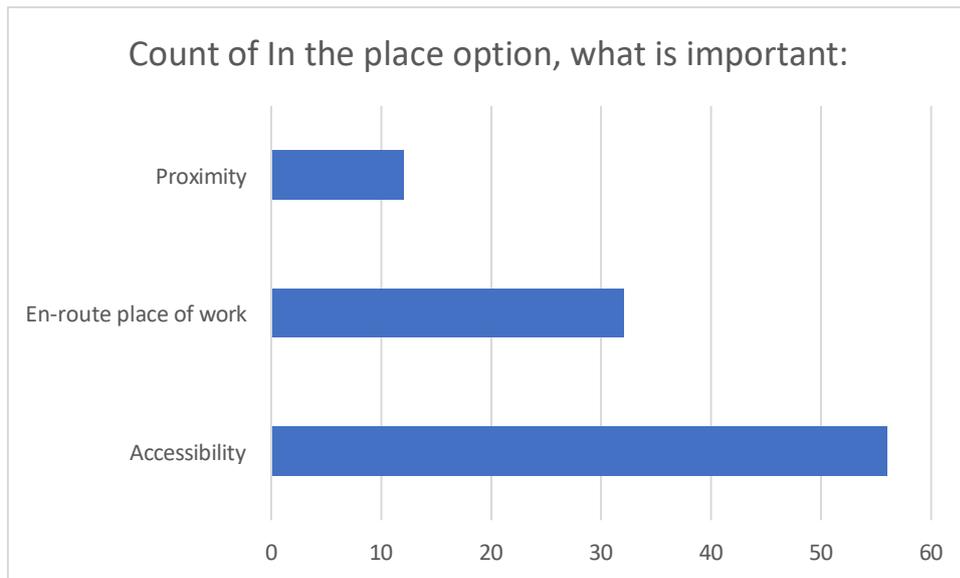
## In the payment mode what is important



The pie chart illustrates the order of importance that customers place on the various methods of payment being accepted. It was reported by the majority of respondents, which was close to sixty percent, that "discount" was the most important feature. The fact that this is the case shows that customers are highly motivated by the possibility of saving money. The fact that "Loyalty Points" comes in second with approximately 25 percent demonstrates how important incentive and reward programmes are to a significant percentage of customers.

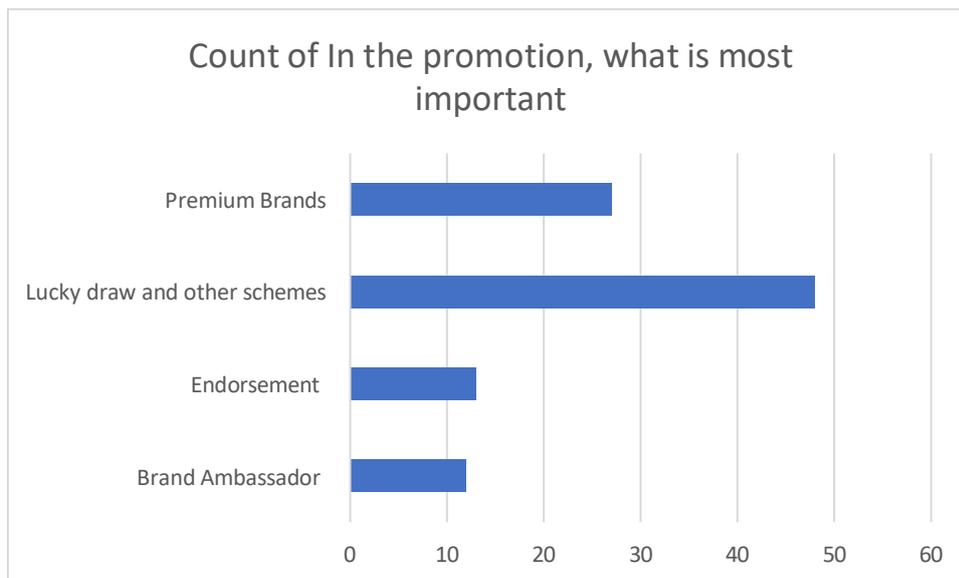
Approximately fifteen percent of the replies were related to the topic of "Ease of Payment," which suggests that individuals are relatively worried about the convenience of the procedure of making a payment. The fact that "credit" was regarded as the least relevant criterion by fewer than five percent of respondents suggests that the majority of customers do not base their decisions largely on the ability to make purchases using credit because of this. The findings of this survey shed light on the extent to which customers are eager to save money and accumulate rewards throughout the course of their use of various payment methods.

**In the place option, what is important:**



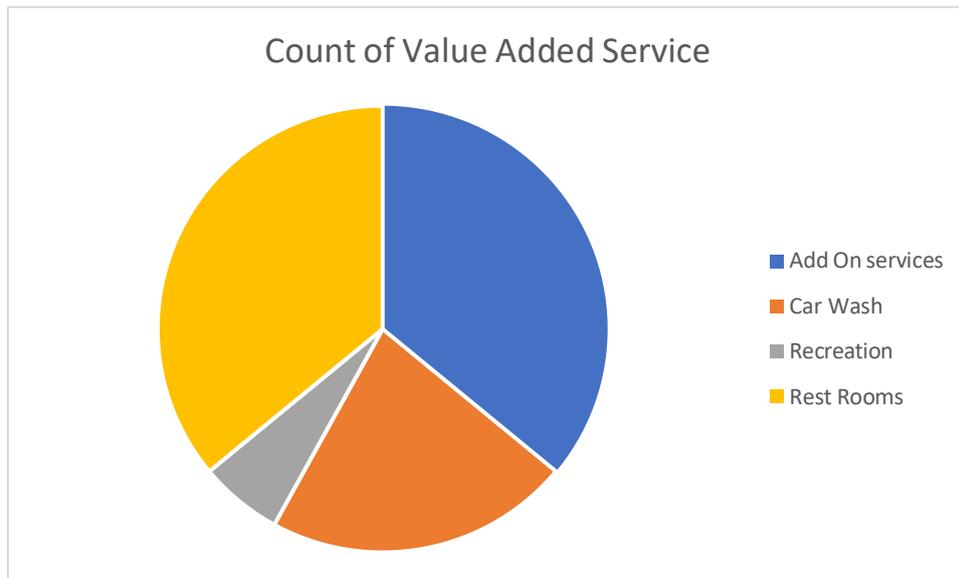
The higher preference is given to accessibility, and the most customers visit the petrol and diesel stations that are accessible, followed by the En-route stations to the place of work. There is no person who has given their opinion towards the stations that are not on the route. These stations should be located on the primary location that attracts the customers and have the highest demands, as people less frequently plan of visiting the station specifically in the other areas.

### In the promotion, what is most important



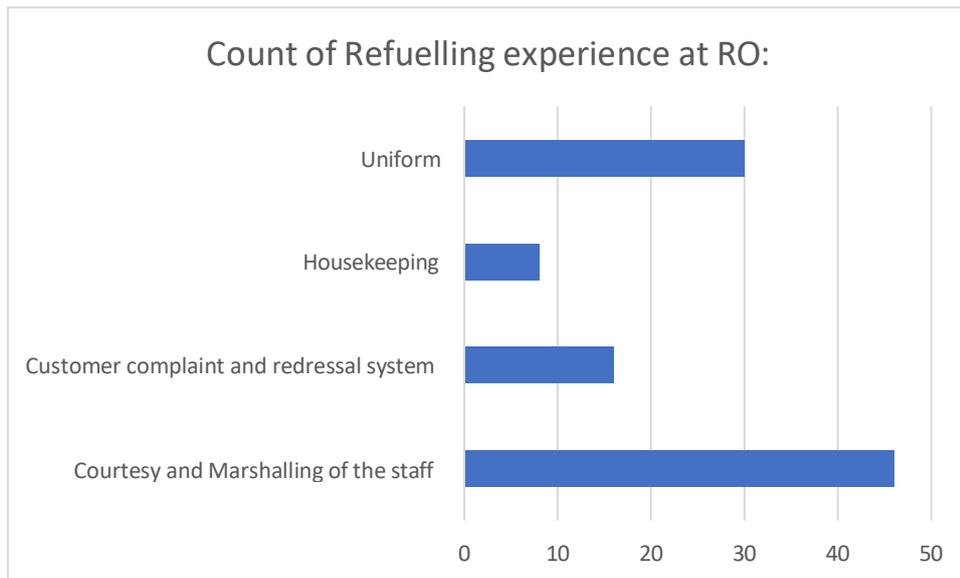
From the above graph it can be inferred that the most of the attractive promotional strategy which includes the lucky draws and schemes that makes people attracted with the gifts and additional offers that might attract more customers towards the petrol or diesel station. The other factor that attracts the customers includes the premium brands which fosters the customer trust and loyalty. The least preference is given to endorsements followed by the brand ambassador as the petrol quality and quantity might not be influenced with it and thus considered to be secondary aspects.

## Value Added Service



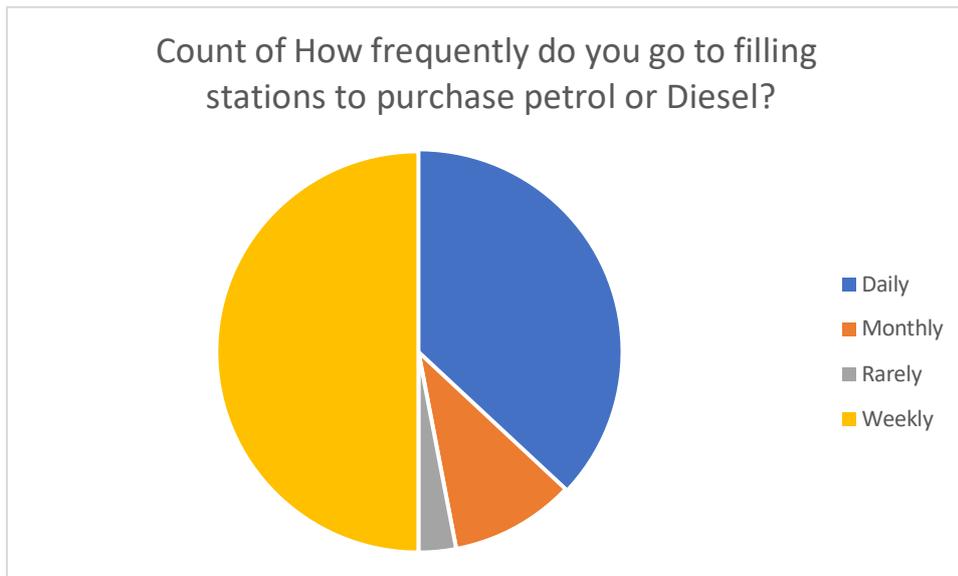
When it comes to choosing a service site, consumers have a wide range of preferences, as evidenced by the examination of place alternatives data. It became clear how important it was to provide guests with hygienic, easily accessible restrooms when it was found that the "Rest Rooms" were the most important component. The category "Add on Services" follows closely behind, signifying that additional features such as restaurants or convenience stores greatly improve the overall consumer experience. Another crucial component is the availability of "Car Wash" services, which shows how much importance people take on keeping their cars. Conversely, "Recreation" and "Value Added Service" had less mentions, suggesting that although additional benefits and recreational possibilities are appreciated, they do not seem to be the main elements affecting the decisions made by consumers. The data presented here emphasises how important consumers find practical and necessary facilities while making decisions.

## Refuelling experience at RO:



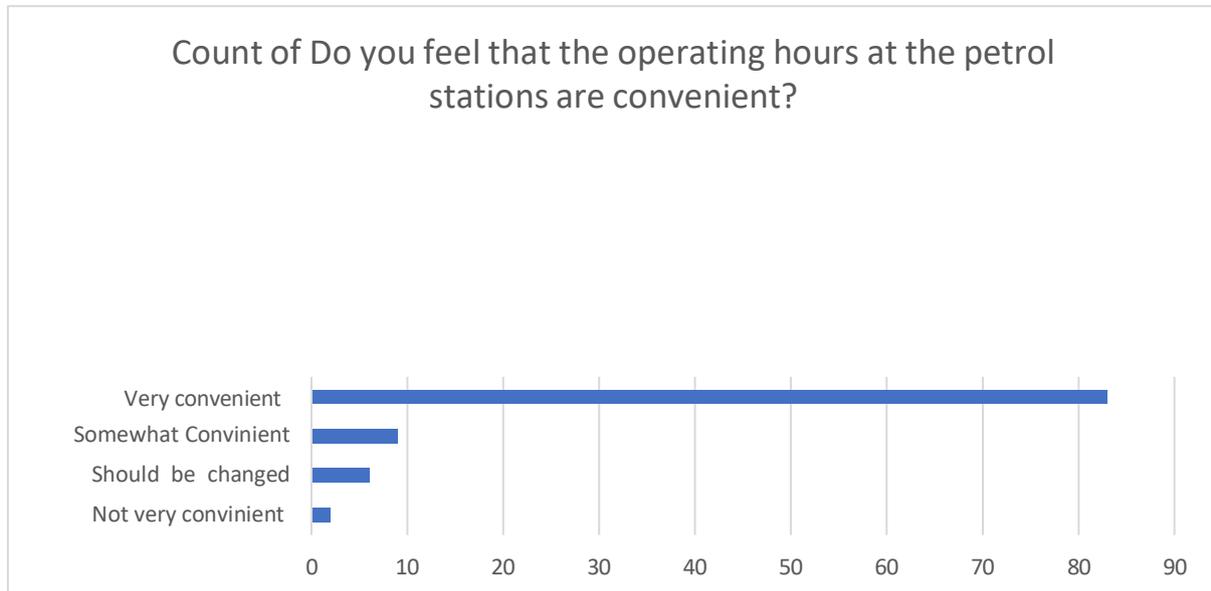
An investigation into the refuelling experience at RO (Retail Outlets) revealed that "Courtesy and Marshalling of the staff" is the most significant attribute to consider. Customer service that is both kind and effective is highly valued by customers, as this indicates. After that, the word "uniform" suggests that the staff's professional demeanour contributes to an improved experience when it comes to refuelling. The "Customer complaint and redressal system" is an additional significant component that highlights the need of effectively addressing conflicts and complaints from customers. It is suggested that although the majority of customers place a high value on cleanliness, it is not their primary concern because the term "housekeeping" is mentioned only about 10 times. This analysis underlines the need of staff who are well-groomed, polite, and able to resolve concerns in a timely manner in order to improve customer satisfaction when replenishing their fuel supply.

## How frequently do you go to filling stations to purchase petrol or Diesel?



An analysis of the number of times that customers visit petrol stations can shed light on a variety of consumer patterns. The most common frequency is "Daily," which indicates that a significant number of customers, most likely as a consequence of intensive use or lengthy commutes, require their automobiles to be refuelled on a daily basis from time to time. The term "weekly" denotes that a significant number of users have a consistent strategy for refuelling, which may be the result of occasional but moderate use. Nearly ten times, the phrase "monthly" appears, which suggests that a smaller fraction of consumers refuel less frequently. This could be due to the fact that they drive fewer automobiles or vehicles that have superior fuel economy levels. People who don't drive very often or who use alternative modes of transportation are likely to make "rare" visits, as the word "rarely" implies that they are infrequent. As indicated by the data indicating that the majority of customers refill their vehicles either daily or weekly, refuelling services are now seeing a continuous demand.

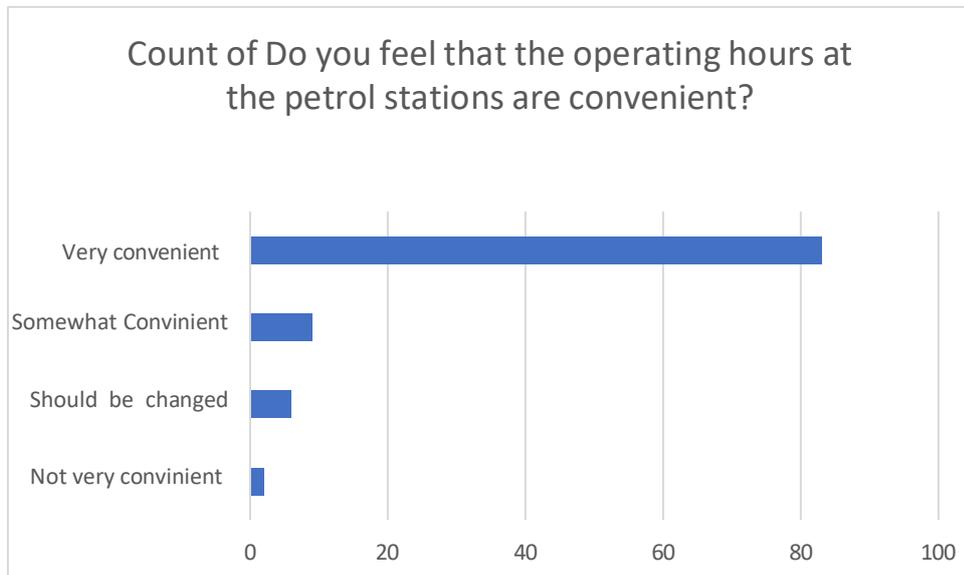
**Do you prefer for convenience to reach petrol station, and prefer to fo for your regular routes?**



Customers strongly value convenience, according to the results of an analysis of their preferences regarding frequent routes and how easy it is to access petrol stations.

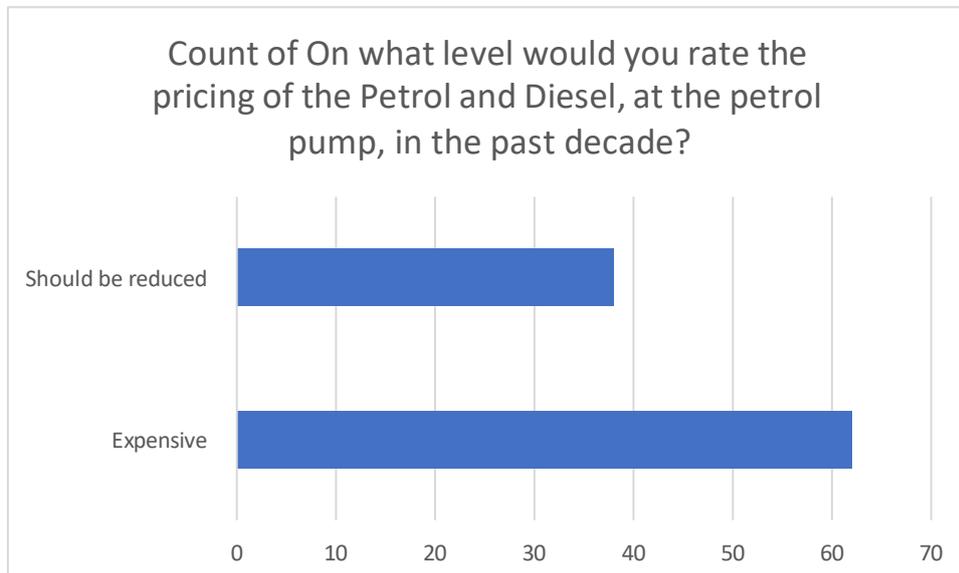
Accessibility and minimal disruption to daily activities are highly valued, as seen by the majority of respondents who find it "Very convenient" to use petrol stations along their regular routes. That's "Somewhat on convenience," meaning that fewer people pick stations along well-traveled routes despite the occasional annoyance. It is evident from these results that most consumers give the convenience of location a high priority and value when choosing petrol stations. Those that fit in well with their usual travel schedules are the ones they pick.

**Do you feel that the operating hours at the petrol stations are convenient?**



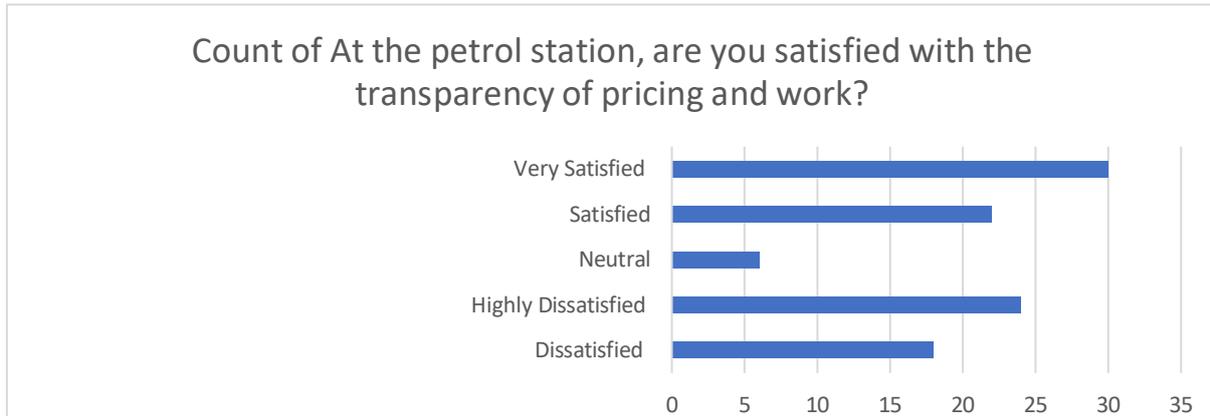
The operating hours are taken to be highly convenient to the customers, and they prefer that this timing is suitable in all aspects, while a few others have mentioned that they are a slight less convenient and shall be changed to the preferences to the customers and be more indicative towards the petrol and diesel stations. The stations are operating on the convenience of the customers across, opening early in the morning and operating till late in night to serve the Vadodara city customers with ease and on their convenience.

**On what level would you rate the pricing of the Petrol and Diesel, at the petrol pump, in the past decade?**



The above analysis how customers have viewed the cost of petrol over the past decade has been carried out, and the findings indicate that the majority of consumers consider petrol to be "expensive." This opinion is a reflection of the widespread dissatisfaction that numerous people have with the current pricing levels. Nevertheless, there are many who argue that prices "Should be reduced," thereby showing the substantial desire for a reduction in the cost of fuel. These findings make it quite evident that the vast majority of consumers are of the opinion that the prices of petrol ought to be lowered and that they are excessively high. When all factors are taken into consideration, the input indicates that there is a potential space for market intervention or policy changes to address public concerns. A significant boost in consumer satisfaction might be achieved through adjustments to pricing.

**At the petrol station, are you satisfied with the transparency of pricing and work?**



There was a wide range of experiences that were suggested by the input that was given, ranging from extremely satisfied to highly dissatisfied, with a few responses that were indifferent. When it comes to the transparency of pricing and the quality of the work, the petrol station appears to have a very diverse collection of delighted consumers. It is possible that instances in which customers felt that prices were misleading or confusing are the cause of high levels of unhappiness, whereas situations in which customers believed that prices were reasonable and transparent are likely the source of exceptionally high levels of satisfaction as well. In certain cases, clients may have had mixed sentiments about transparency, and the answers that are equivocal may represent those scenarios. Ensuring that prices and services are presented in a transparent manner may, in general, contribute to greater levels of trust and satisfaction among customers.

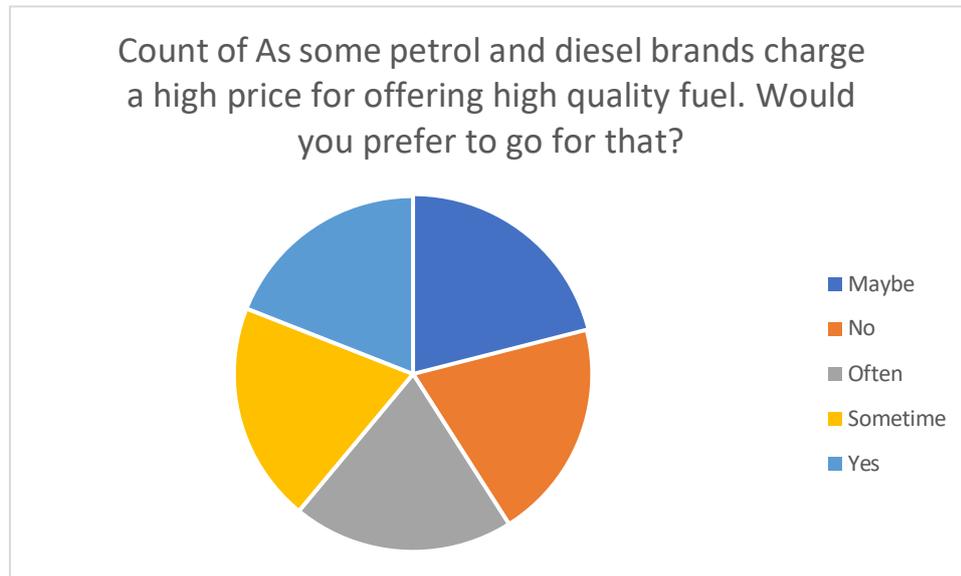
## Would you be happy and preferable to pay higher price for sustainable and eco-friendly fuel?



Because they care about the environment or wish to support the fuel industry's shift to more moral economic methods, some consumers may be willing to pay a premium for ecologically friendly and sustainable fuel. Some people might prioritise cost-effectiveness more than sustainability, which could lead to a "No" answer. The comments ending in "Maybe" suggest that some consumers would think about a number of factors before making a choice. Included in these factors are the perceived benefits of using green fuel and the extent of the price increase. The interests and values of each individual customer play a crucial role in determining whether or not they are willing to pay a premium for sustainable petrol.

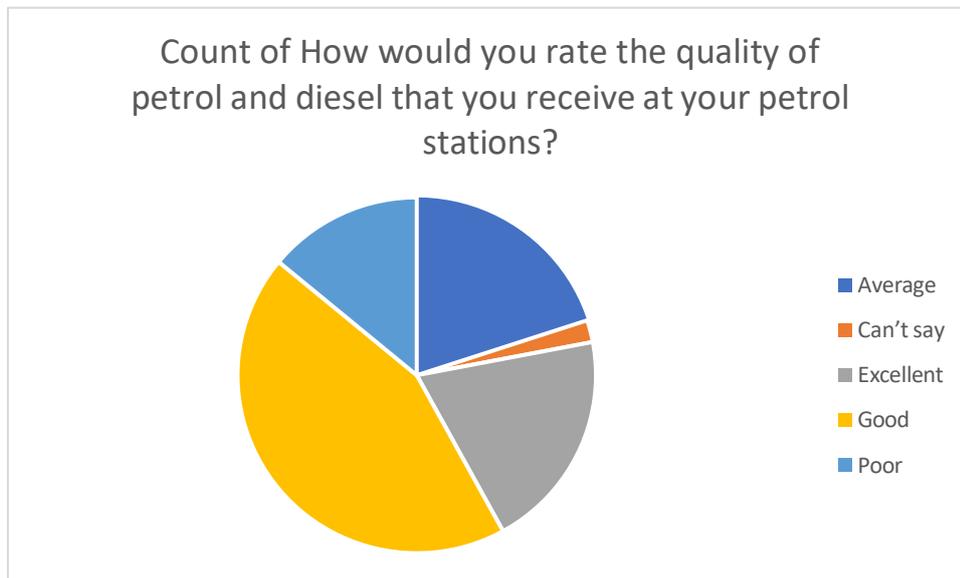
**As some petrol and diesel brands charge a high price for offering high quality fuel.**

**Would you prefer to go for that?**



There appears to be a lack of consensus among consumers on whether they prefer premium petrol or diesel brands, as indicated by the variety of responses received. Respondents who lean "Yes" in this way and respondents who lean "No" in this direction are both included in this range of responses. The responses of "Maybe," "Sometime," and "Often" indicate that the preferences of the customers are extremely disorganised. A multitude of criteria, such as personal priorities, perceived value for money, and budget, are likely some of the reasons that influence these varied responses. Customers are ultimately impacted by their personal choices and circumstances when it comes to making the decision to favour premium fuel over affordable fuel.

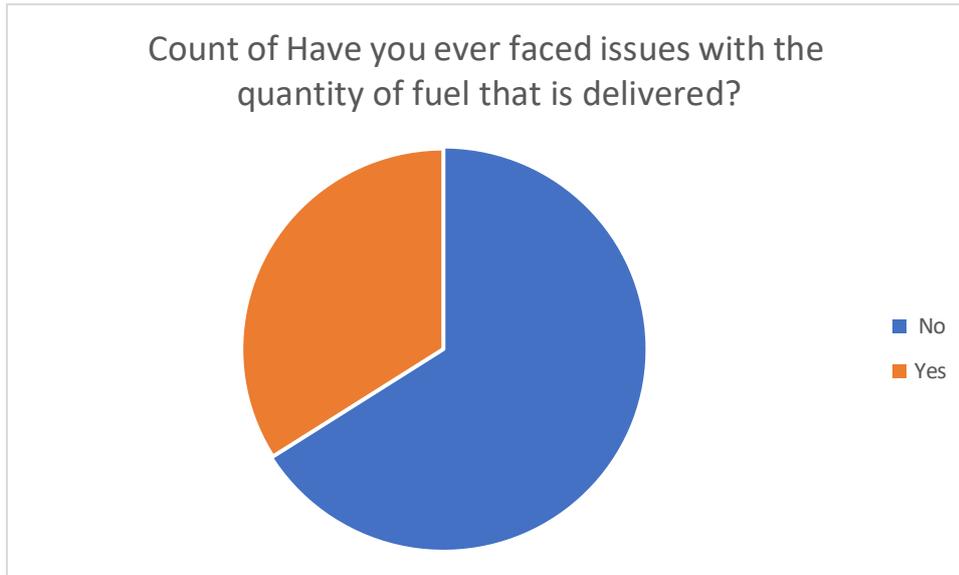
**How would you rate the quality of petrol and diesel that you receive at your petrol stations?**



The above inferred responses, seem to indicate that most people believe the fuel and diesel they buy at petrol stations is of a good quality, while occasionally people will have low and outstanding quality. Unsatisfactory quality has also been reported, though less often. Some of the respondents chose the "Can't say" option in order to avoid having to make a choice. Even if most evaluations are good ("Good" and "Excellent"), there are still several areas that could be improved to guarantee that the calibre of their encounters is constant throughout.

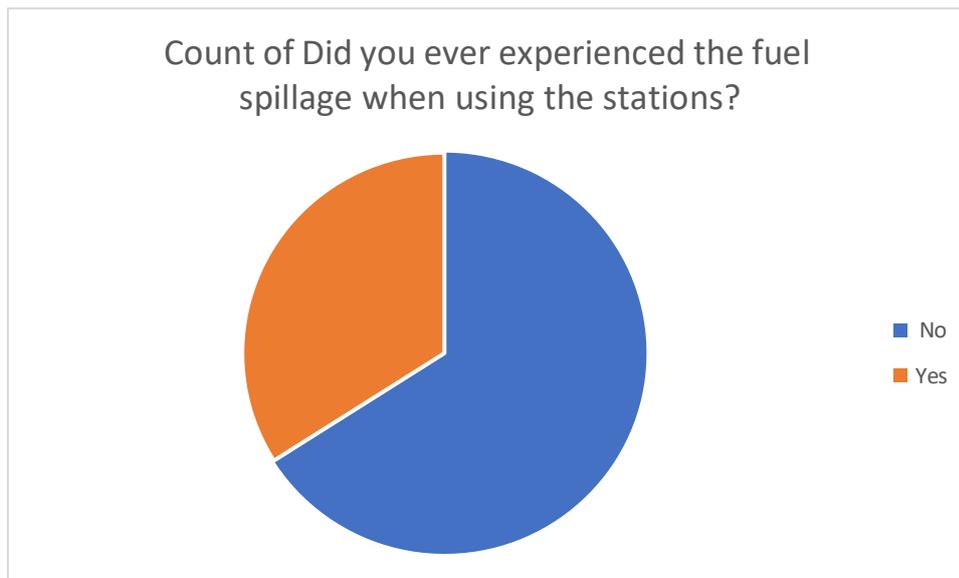
Establishing routine maintenance plans and quality control can help with problem solutions and guaranteeing client satisfaction.

## Have you ever faced issues with the quantity of fuel that is delivered?



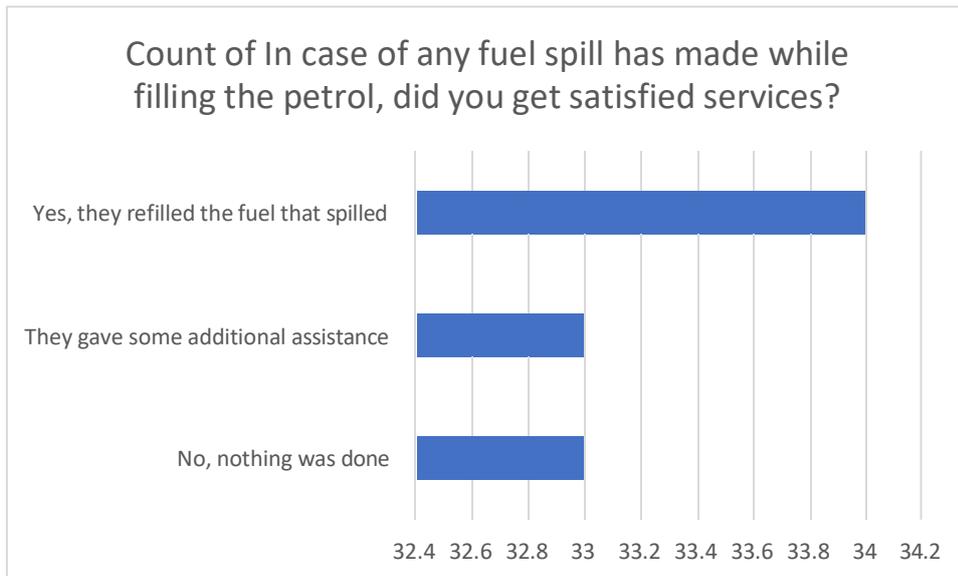
Initial analysis indicates that some customers have experienced issues with the quantity of fuel that has been supplied, while other customers have not experienced any problems with the delivery. All of the responses are split evenly between "Yes" and "No." The fact that the amount of fuel that was provided was inconsistent or that they received less than they had anticipated could have been the cause of the problems that arose. People who have not had any issues, on the other hand, are likely to have received the quantity of fuel that was anticipated during their purchasing transactions. Through routinely evaluating petrol distribution systems and according to industry rules, one may reduce the severity of these issues and ensure that customers are satisfied.

### Did you ever experienced the fuel spillage when using the stations?



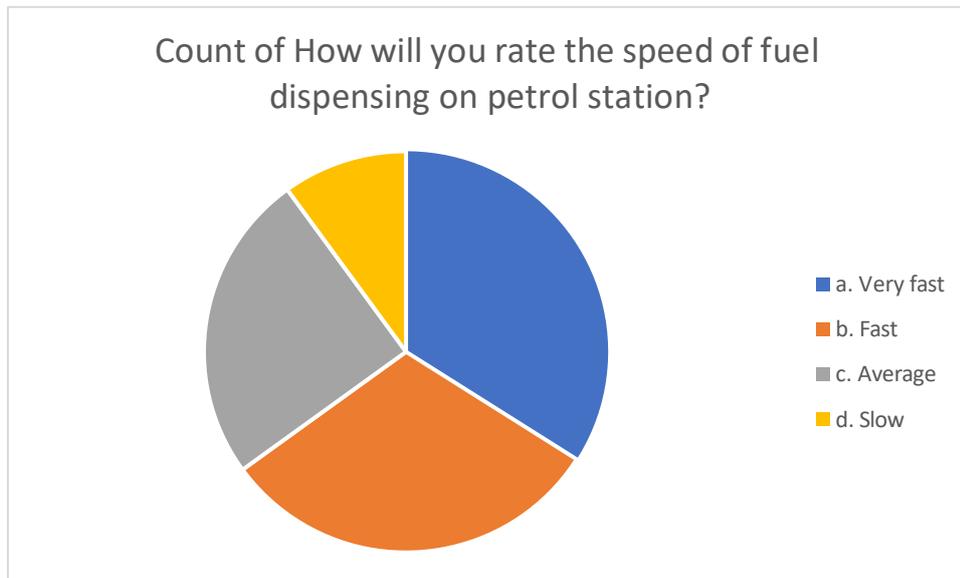
Based on the replies received, it seems that certain customers have experienced fuel spills when utilising the stations, however other customers have not had this problem. Once more, the replies are evenly divided between "Yes" and "No." Customers may have encountered issues including malfunctioning pumps, overfilled tanks, or inadequate equipment maintenance when they have experienced fuel leaks. Conversely, people who have never had a fuel spill are probably the ones who have had more seamless transactions without any spills or accidents. It is crucial to put in place the proper safety precautions, carry out regular equipment inspections, and give staff members intensive training in order to lower the risk of fuel leakage and give customers a safe and efficient refuelling experience.

### In case of any fuel spill has made while filling the petrol, did you get satisfied services?



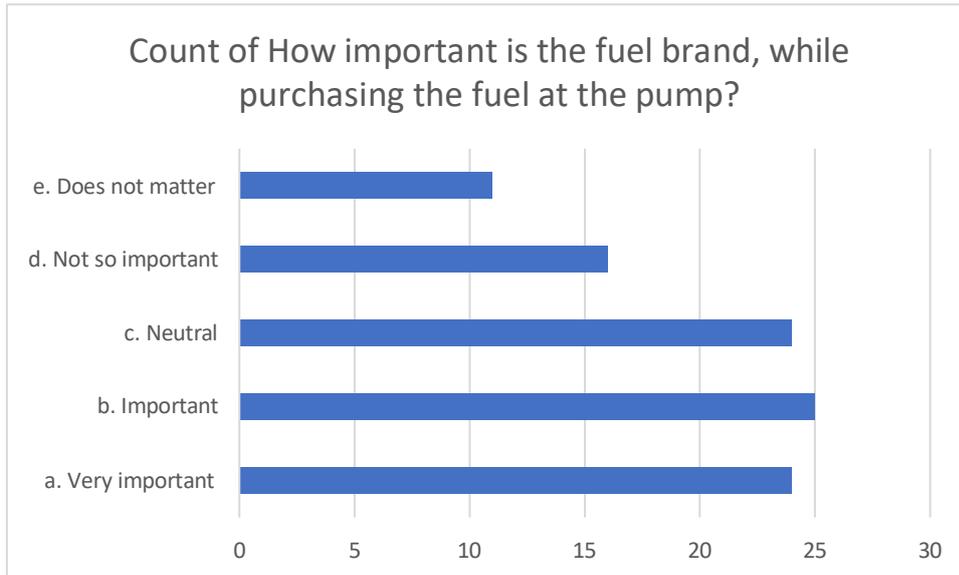
Immediately following a fuel spill, the responses that are given appear to be divided into three distinct categories: "Yes, they refilled the fuel that spilled," "No, nothing was done," and "They gave some additional assistance." Following the leak, the fuel was refilled, according to the majority of the responses. On the other hand, there have been instances in which nothing was done or when further assistance was provided without refuelling those efforts. Overall, the information appears to be contradictory with regard to the manner in which accidents involving petrol spills have been handled. Refilling the fuel that has been spilled is maybe the most rewarding technique for people who want to make sure that they obtain the whole amount that they intended to purchase.

### How will you rate the speed of fuel dispensing on petrol station?



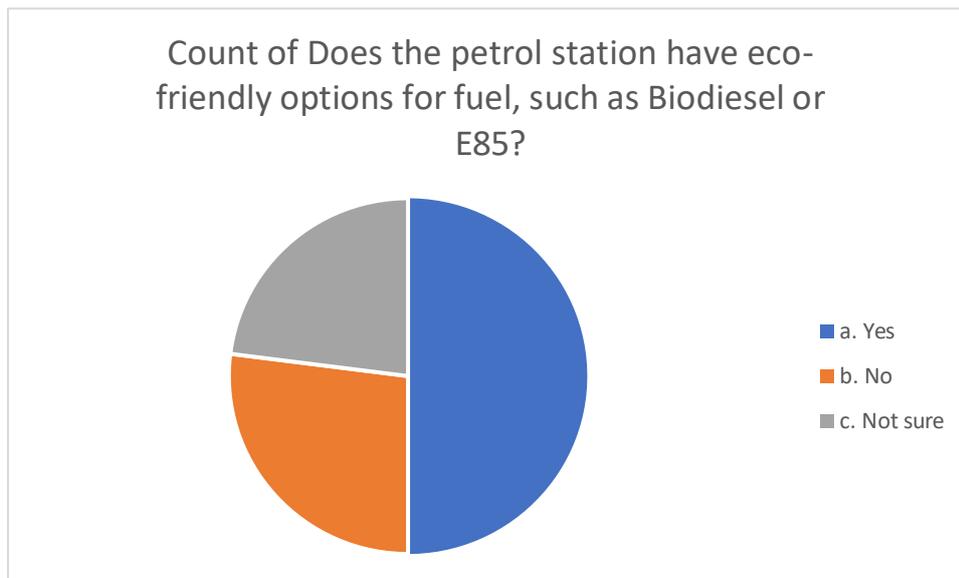
The responses that were given suggest that most people rate the pace at which fuel is distributed at the petrol station as "Very fast" or "Fast," with a small percentage rating it as "Average" or "Slow." Conversely, a great deal of feedback indicates that customers were happy with how quickly the fuel distribution procedure moved along and thought it was a rather quick process overall. This suggests the petrol station runs efficiently and is able to serve customers promptly. Customers do, however, occasionally perceive the dispensing speed as being mediocre or slow. This suggests that there might be room for improvement in the standards of customer service or operational efficiency.

### How important is the fuel brand, while purchasing the fuel at the pump?



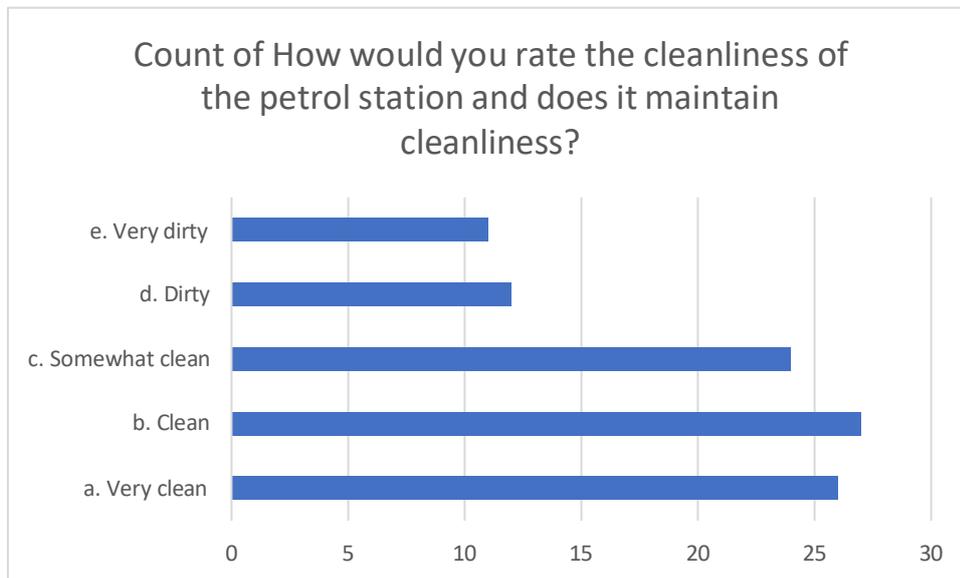
A significant majority of the responses indicate that individuals consider the fuel brand to be either "very important" or "important." This demonstrates that some consumers take into consideration the reputation, quality, and dependability of a brand when making a decision on where to purchase fuel. Customers, on the other hand, may have a conflicted attitude towards the brand or believe that it is not as important as other factors to take into account in certain circumstances. Furthermore, there are consumers who have expressed that they do not care about the brand, which suggests that they focus more on other aspects, such as cost or convenience, than they do on their devotion to the brand. The significance of the fuel brand appears to be fairly up to interpretation, as it is based on individual preferences and priorities.

### Does the petrol station have eco-friendly options for fuel, such as Biodiesel or E85?



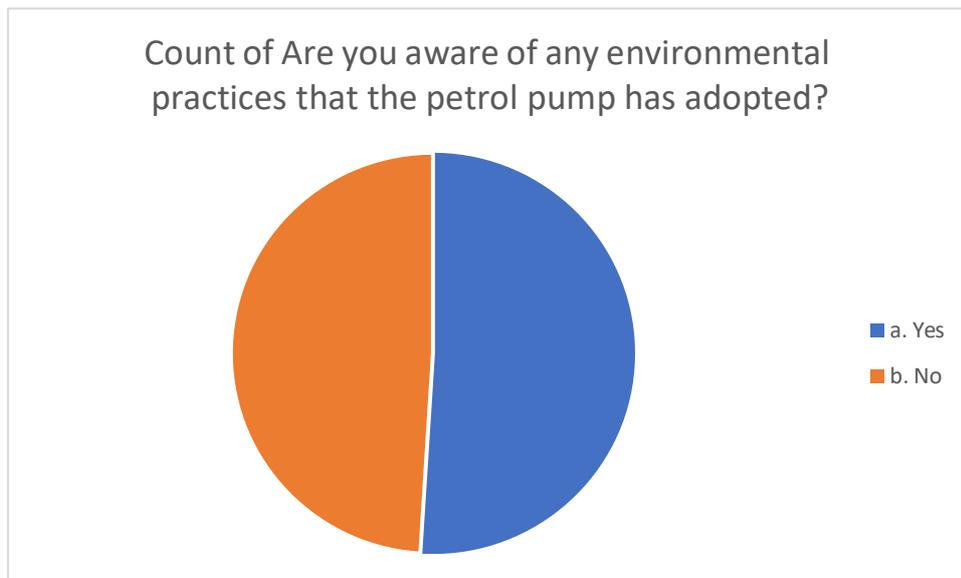
The given responses, as inferred suggest that there may be some confusion over the availability of environmentally friendly fuel options at the petrol station, such as E85 or biodiesel. Selecting "Yes," a small percentage of respondents said they are aware that these options are available at the petrol station; others selected "No" or "Not sure." With that in mind, it seems that the availability of eco-friendly gasoline options at the supermarket may be unclear or inconsistent. It is possible that certain clients are unaware of these services, and that others are unsure of their availability. Promoting ecologically friendly fuel options and maintaining clear communication could help to reduce this ambiguity and encourage more customers to choose sustainable fuel alternatives.

**How would you rate the cleanliness of the petrol station and does it maintain cleanliness?**



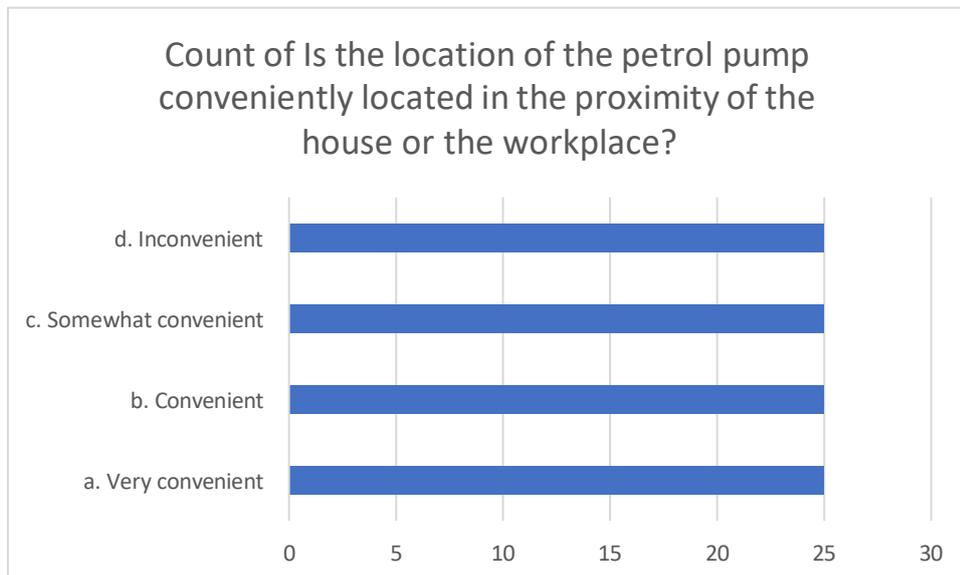
According to the responses that were provided, it appears that various customers have varying experiences with regard to the cleanliness of the petrol station. Some individuals ranked it as "Very clean" or "Clean," while others ranked it as "Somewhat clean" or "Dirty." People's opinions varied regarding the cleanliness of the item. Several customers have expressed a variety of thoughts regarding the cleanliness of the neighbourhood, and the responses are not fully consistent. For this reason, it is possible that certain areas or visits to the petrol station might not always be maintained as clean as they should be. By improving cleaning processes, putting in place regular cleaning schedules, and developing customer feedback channels, it is possible to ensure that all customers are provided with a consistently clean environment.

**Are you aware of any environmental practices that the petrol pump has adopted?**



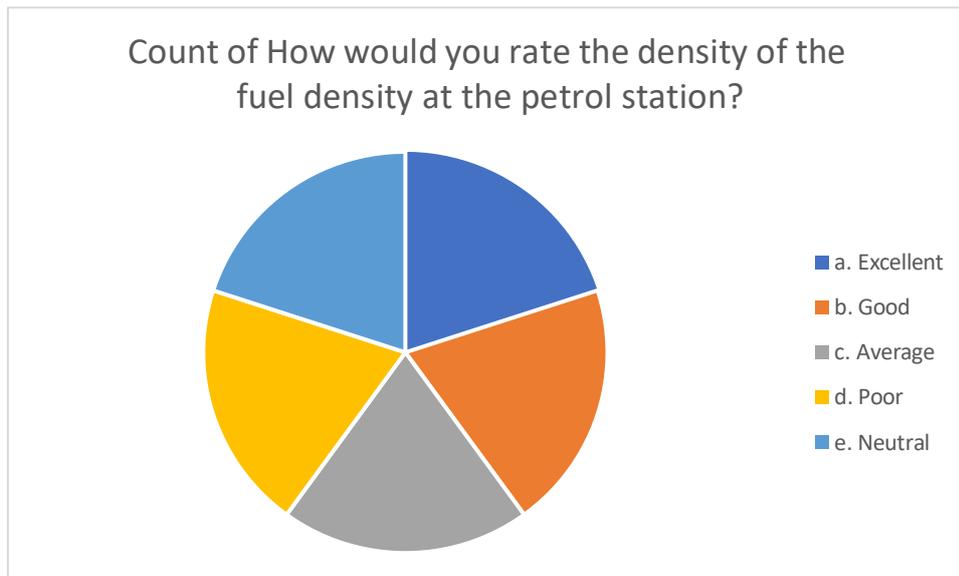
Based on the responses received, it seems that some consumers are unsure about the extent to which the petrol station has engaged in ecologically friendly practices. When asked whether they were aware of environmental practices, some respondents answered "Yes," while others answered "No." Given this, it seems likely that the petrol station is not promoting any form of environmental activity or providing clear communication. If there was greater communication about environmental policies, customers might be made more aware of things like recycling initiatives, energy-efficient processes, or the availability of ecologically friendly fuel options. Support for these initiatives would rise as a result.

**Is the location of the petrol pump conveniently located in the proximity of the house or the workplace?**



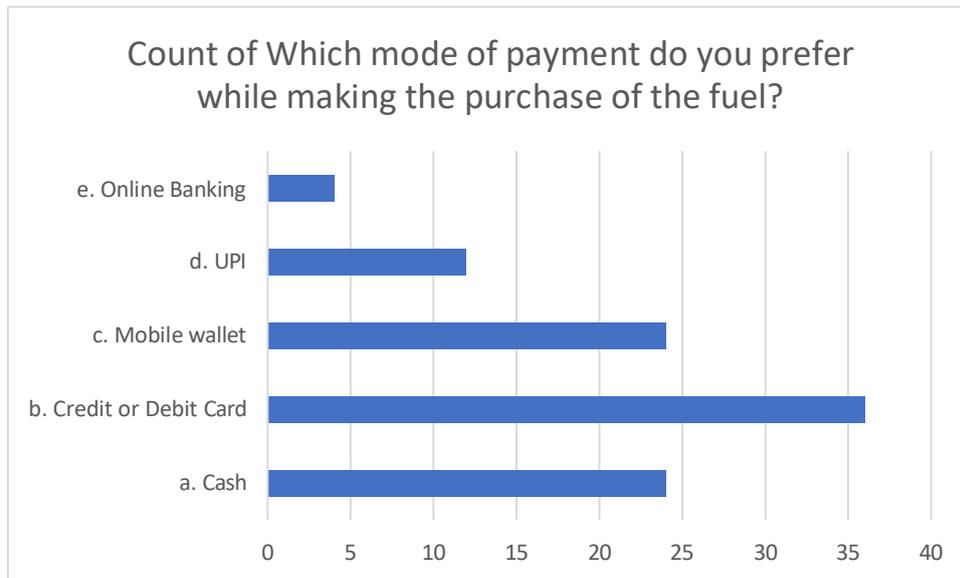
According to the responses, the levels of convenience that different customers experience with regard to the location of the fuel station are diverse. In light of the fact that the majority of respondents ranked the location as "Very convenient" or "convenient," it would suggest that a significant number of customers are content with the proximity of the fuel station to their primary residence or place of employment. In spite of this, there are times when customers regard the location to be either "Somewhat convenient" or "Inconvenient." There are a number of potential factors for this, including accessibility, distance, and traffic conditions. Although the experiences of different people can vary to some degree, it appears that the location of the petrol station is convenient enough to meet the requirements of the majority of customers.

## How would you rate the density of the fuel density at the petrol station?



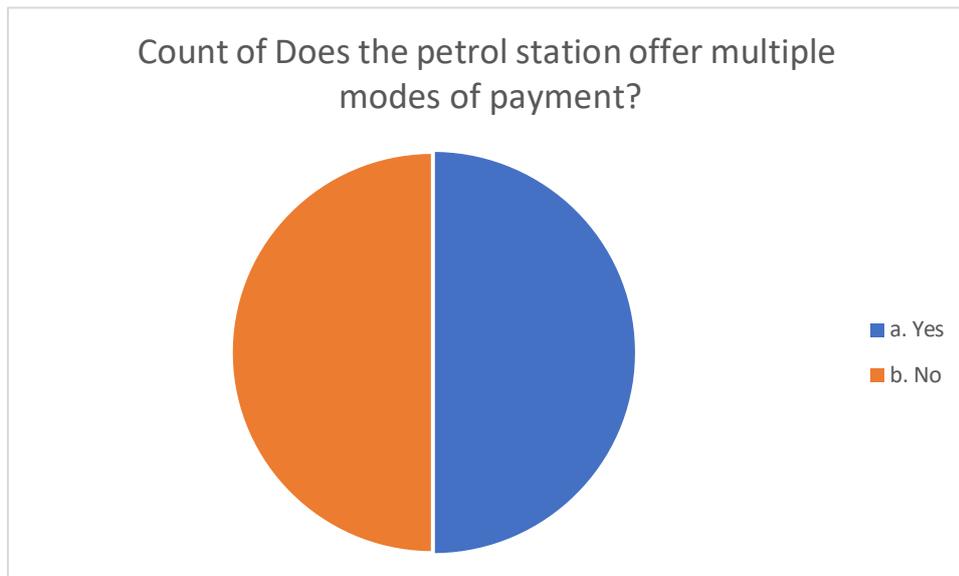
From the responses taken from the respondents, it seems that customers' ratings of the fuel density at the petrol station vary from one to the next. A few respondents rated the fuel density as "Excellent" or "Good," indicating that they were happy with it. On the other hand, several respondents chose "Average," "Poor," or "Neutral." Taking this into account, it would seem that there may be a variety of opinions or experiences regarding the fuel's density that is offered at the petrol station. Many variables, including the calibre of the petrol, the vehicle's performance, and the consumers' expectations, could have an impact on these disparate rankings. It might be advantageous to ensure that the quality of the petrol is constant and address any issues pertaining to fuel density in order to improve customer happiness and their impressions of the petrol station.

### Which mode of payment do you prefer while making the purchase of the fuel?



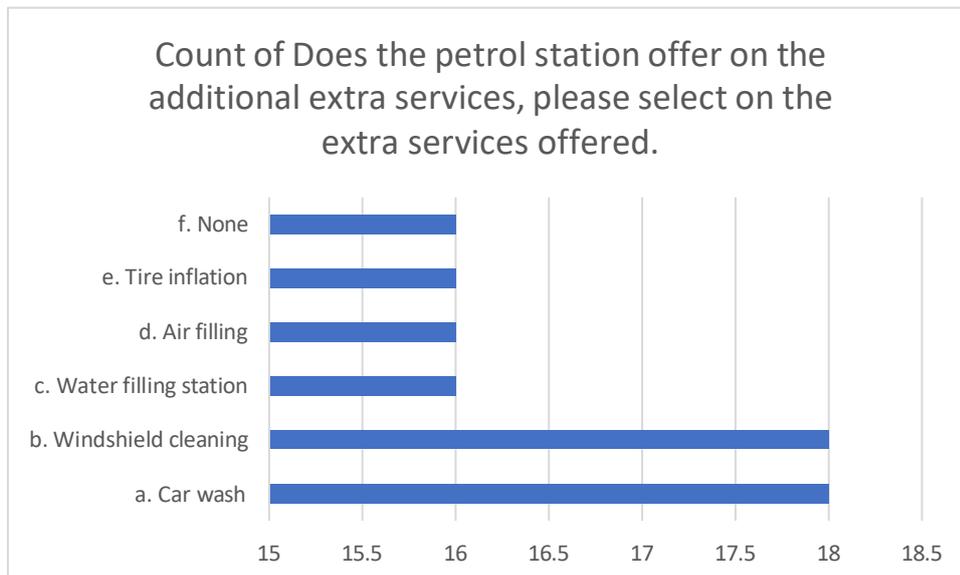
Based on the opinions gained from the respondents, it appears that "Credit or Debit Card" is the payment method that is utilised the most frequently while purchasing petrol. There was a smaller percentage of respondents who favoured "Cash" or "Online Banking," with "Mobile wallet" and "UPI" coming in second and third, respectively. It would appear that digital payment methods are gaining popularity as a result of the fact that they are convenient, secure, and easy to use. By offering a variety of payment options at the petrol station, it is possible to cater to the many preferences of customers and enhance the overall experience they have there.

## Does the petrol station offer multiple modes of payment?



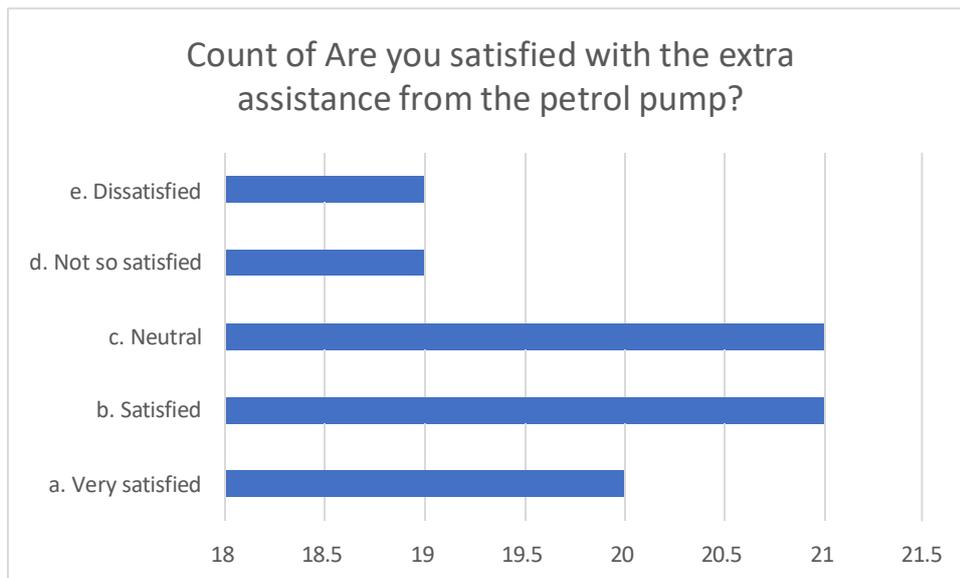
With the advent of technology, the stations are switching towards offering multiple options of payment to customers to have more customers, and stay updated. The "Credit or Debit Card" method of payment for fuel purchases is the most used technique, which reflects a shift towards digital transactions. Customers' worries about ease and security are reflected in this way of payment. Mobile wallets and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have gained widespread acceptability, which is evidence of the growing penetration of digital payment methods in everyday activities such as the purchase of fuel.

**Does the petrol station offer on the additional extra services, please select on the extra services offered.**



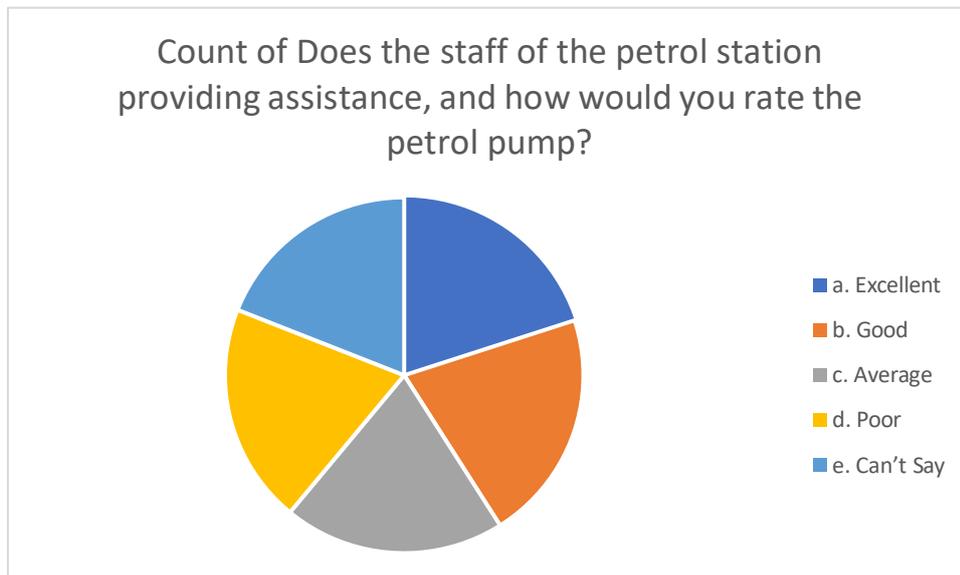
The analysis of responses ascertained that on extra services provided by auto dealerships provides valuable insight into the preferences and expectations of the customer base. There are options for car wash, windscreen cleaning, water filling station, air filling, tyre inflation and none at all, which suggests that there are different kinds of needs. The popularity of car washes and windscreen cleaning services indicates that a considerable portion of customers value the convenience of having a clean car as they leave the station. Services like air filling and tyre inflation are also greatly appreciated, as they serve to further underscore the importance of vehicle maintenance and safety. One could read the presence of a water filling station as an admission that there are needs beyond fuelling that are pragmatic. Conversely, a significant percentage of participants chose "none," implying that some customers would choose prompt refuelling even if it means paying extra. This study underscores the importance of offering a diverse range of services to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of consumers. This ultimately enhances the overall experience and level of satisfaction at petrol stations.

### Are you satisfied with the extra assistance from the petrol pump?



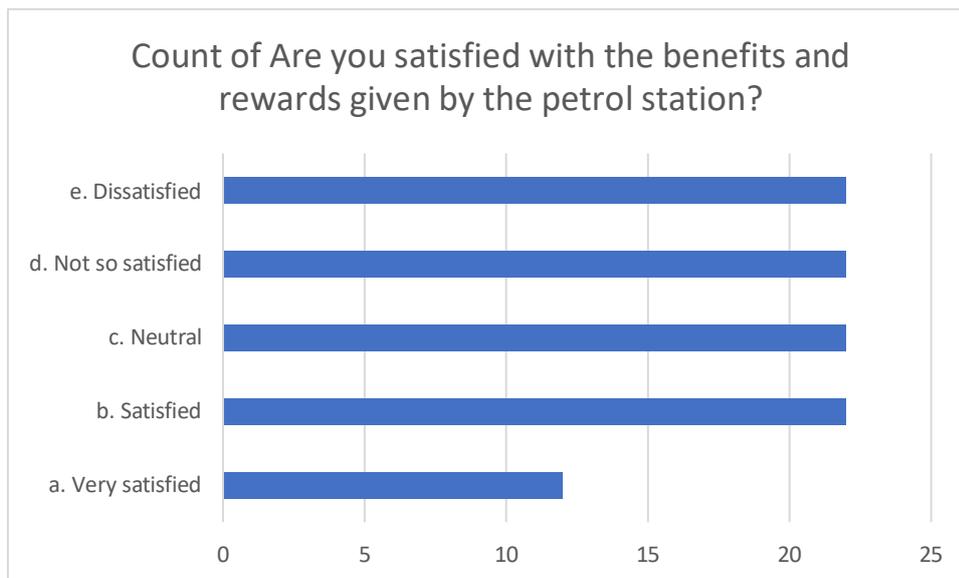
From the survey analysis gathered, it appears that customers tend to be pleased with the additional assistance that petrol stations provide. Significantly more respondents than not reported that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied," which strongly suggests that the additional assistance, which most likely consisted of services such as refilling spilled fuel, was well-received and satisfactory. People may have had a mixed experience or felt unaffected by the assistance they received, as indicated by the number of respondents who selected "neutral" as their response. The absence of comments expressing dissatisfaction (such as "not so satisfied" or "dissatisfied"), on the other hand, suggests that generally speaking, customers tend to be pleased with the quantity of additional assistance that is provided by petrol stations.

**Does the staff of the petrol station providing assistance, and how would you rate the petrol pump?**



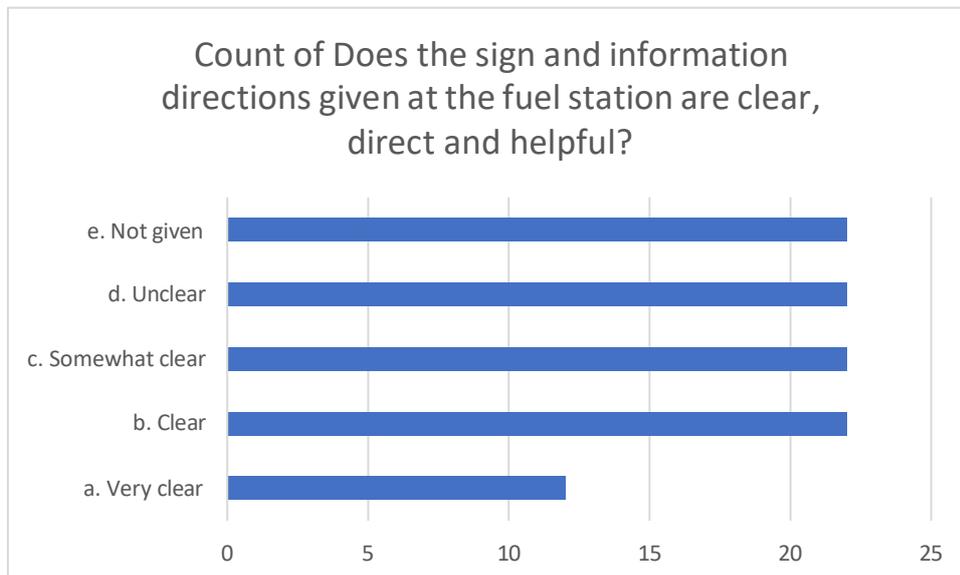
From the above data collected, the analysis can be interpreted as, it would appear that the employees at the petrol station provide support that is satisfactory in general. A significant number of the individuals who provided feedback rated the assistance as "good." However, a large proportion of respondents chose the "average" option, which indicates that even while the assistance that is provided is good, there may be room for improvement in terms of the quality of the service or the efficiency with which it is utilised. This is because the proportion of respondents who chose the "average" option is rather high. Because only a tiny fraction of respondents chose the word "poor," it is probable that there are instances in which the service does not measure up to the standards that were set for it. The ratings indicate that the general performance of the employees at the fuel station looks to be on the favourable side; however, there are some areas that may require attention in order to achieve additional improvement through the improvement of the performance.

### Are you satisfied with the benefits and rewards given by the petrol station?



It seems that most respondents are happy with the benefits and rewards offered by the petrol station, since a sizable portion select the options "satisfied" and "very satisfied." Drawing from the responses gathered, this analysis has been made. This trend indicates that customers view the benefits—which could include rewards points, discounts, or loyalty programs—favourably. Notwithstanding, several respondents marked "neutral," indicating that they lack a firm opinion or awareness of the advantages and rewards. A much smaller percentage of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, which suggests that most respondents think the advantages and incentives are adequate or even superior. Looking at the comments, it seems that the petrol station's attempts to offer incentives and rewards are fulfilling the needs of most customers, which adds to their satisfaction with the service.

**Does the sign and information directions given at the fuel station are clear, direct and helpful?**



According to the responses that were received from the majority of respondents, the signs and information directions at the petrol station are either particularly clear or quite clear.

Therefore, it may be deduced that the station is able to effectively communicate vital information such as the types of fuel, prices, and directions. It was reported by a sizeable proportion of the participants that the signage is either "clear" or "very clear," which suggests that they find it to be straightforward and practical. Some of the respondents, on the other hand, chose the option "somewhat clear," which indicates that there may be room for improvement in terms of comprehensibility or clarity. In general, it would appear from the remarks that the majority of customers who frequent the petrol station believe that the signage and informational instructions that are provided there are adequate and helpful.

### **4.3 Secondary thematic analysis**

#### Theme 1: Analysis of product Differentiation at Retail Outlets

According to Charan, (2023) brand differentiation at the retail level is a significant factor in the petroleum sector where outlets, which obtain their supplies from the same-refining companies, use different means to create a perception in the consumer's mind that the products being offered are unique. This paper seeks to uncover the factors that cause product differentiation specifically focusing on fuel options and understands the consumer response through their purchase behaviors. The core of product differentiation is branding together with the use of additives and other marketing approaches used by oil companies. This makes branding to be a central factor in the determination of the quality, reliability and the value of fuel. Substantial amounts of money are spent by oil companies on their brands, to influence opinions through appeals to brand image, associations and tag lines. When branding, manufacturers want to make brand associations relating to things like reliability, performance, and environmentally-friendly characteristics that would appeal to target consumers and encourage brand loyalty (Devi Natasha Polim and Yuliani Dwi Lestari, 2023).

Another important dimension to product differentiation is Additives, which involve extra ingredients compounded by oil companies to improve fuel attributes that include performance, efficiency, and environmental impact. Some of the common examples of additives include detergents, antioxidants, and lubricants which enhance the clean-burning of an engine, decreased emission rates and enhanced durability of the engine. Fuels are sold as products containing specific «packages» of additives; with such strategies, oil companies bring value added to consumers, thus affecting the choice. Apart from branding and additives, oil companies make use of other techniques to create a niche for their products at the service

stations. These strategies comprise several factors including price, promotion, place, and physical appearance or construct. Other pricing strategies include promotion in form of discounts, using bundle offers and loyalty incentives that are a way of attracting and retaining customers. Marketing communication including advertising, and sponsorships, and partnerships are crucial in increasing brand awareness and consumers' interactions. Another way companies differentiate products is by the packaging and presentation of their products where through well designed fuel dispensers and point of sale items, among others that have been developed with the aim of enhancing the retail experience. In addition, the distribution points like Convenience Stores, Car Washes And service centers are other opportunities to target consumers and sell products (Aisyah, Masa and Setyadi, 2023).

The following are some factors and behaviors that shape the attitude of consumers to product differentiation in the petroleum industry: Empirical evidence has it that consumers consider various factors which include fuel quality, performance as well as the impact on the environment when deciding what to purchase. Other factors that consumers do consider include brand name and image, particularly because people tend to stick with familiar products or those of known quality and reliability. In the matter of price, since consumers look for maximum utility from the products they purchase, they are conscious of the relative prices of the brands in the market. These prejudices are specific to consumers and depend on how loyal a certain consumer is to a certain brand or what kind of additives or features he uses or prefers. The management of fuel retailing, therefore, entails several product differentiation tactics that are designed to systematically alter the way consumers perceive fuel offerings and interact with the product. It is interesting to consider the highly intertwined processes of branding, the use of additives, and the promotion of oils on the market in order to create a competitive advantage for companies and successfully appeal to their target audience (Muduli *et al.*, 2023).

This is because branding is a key concept in the differentiation of products in the market, as it creates a unique image for corporate products. Some brand associations may create particular feelings and attitudes among consumers thus impacting their choices. For instance, a brand that has a reputation of being dependable and efficient will be trusted by consumers and hence the brand will be loyal. Oil firms put much effort and capital on their brand identity by coming up with symbols, mottos and even the images that surround their products. Besides branding, additives are another big aspect in the process of product differentiation in the petroleum sector. Fuel additives are the chemicals that are mixed with fuels in order to improve fuel performance, economy and environmental factor. Some of the widely used additives are cleaners, antioxidants and lubricants in order to enhance engine cleanliness, engine emission and longer engine life respectively. This would mean that the oil companies can add on their additive packages in their fuels hence creating value addition for consumers. Such as, a fuel that contains new generation detergents may be branded as having superior cleaning abilities and will attract those customers who are concerned with their vehicle's maintenance and performance (Sumrit and Sowijit, 2023).

Marketing strategies are also central to product differentiation since they enable firms to inform consumers on why their product is different and why they should choose to buy a particular product. Oil marketing companies for instance employ packaged advertising messages, promos, and sponsorships to draw the attention of customers towards their brands. For instance, an organisation may choose to place an advertisement with special messages on the value of its superior fuel for vehicles and the need to use them. Thus, communicating these benefits to consumers can work as a tool that will help oil companies change the existing perceptions and thus, achieve the goal to increase demand for their products. The identification of the determinants of product differentiation and consumer response is important to oil companies because they will have to employ more effective strategies to better position their products.

First, when a company does market research and looks at trends, it can discover creative ways to differentiate its products from its competitors to better match consumers' wants and needs (Lee, 2023).

Therefore, on the one hand, it is not only meaningful, but indeed essential to construct further innovation and differentiation for the oil business faced to their complex, competitive and dynamically progressing industry. However, in the current world with new technologies, emerging customer awareness and increasing focus on the environment, it becomes necessary for a firm to have the ability to develop new and enhance its products and services to create market space and achieve volume growth. A strategic factor that oil firms must harness to maintain innovation and create a competitive edge is the research and development (R & D) activities. These investments can allow companies to find new technologies and new materials that could be implemented to improve the quality or the efficiency and the resource utilization of fuels offered in the market. For instance, steady research and development may focus on producing better fuel with enhanced efficacy for cleaning the engine, lower emission levels, and potentially, increased fuel efficiency. Thus, both companies get to know the latest discovery in the scientific realm and technological advancement important in fuel solutions while the consumers experience new development enabling their companies to address their needs and expectations (Ishfaq, Darby and Gibson, 2024).

Skills development and differentiation prove that oil companies can effectively adapt to the changes in the market and global trends. For instance, oil companies can transition to new industry prospects such as EVs and government pressure to decrease Greenhouse Gas emissions, biofuels, hydrogen or synthetic fuels. With the right product diversification strategies and a positive attitude towards embracing sustainable energy solutions, corporate entities can effectively adapt to the ever-changing market and energy demands (Tampubolon, Hertati and Sari, 2023).

Innovation and differentiation are recurring processes in organizations, helping them maintain high standards and strive for constant growth. Here are ten tips for companies to support creative thinking and foster innovation throughout the organization: For instance, some organizations may focus on creating innovation laboratories or centers that are meant to develop and support new ideas and technologies, which will create a culture of innovation among employees. Thus, one of the major strategies of implementing innovation process is to provide opportunities for employees to be innovative and to take risk to identify solutions that may help a business to advance. Continuity and product differentiation remain some of the way through which oil firms can create competitive advantage to compete effectively and distinct themselves in the market. Thus, by introducing unique and valuable goods and services, the businesses can provide unique value propositions to the consumers, making the acquisition of their offerings seem more appealing than competitors' products (Jamil Alotoum *et al.*, 2023).

## Theme 2: Price Sensitivity and Market Dynamics

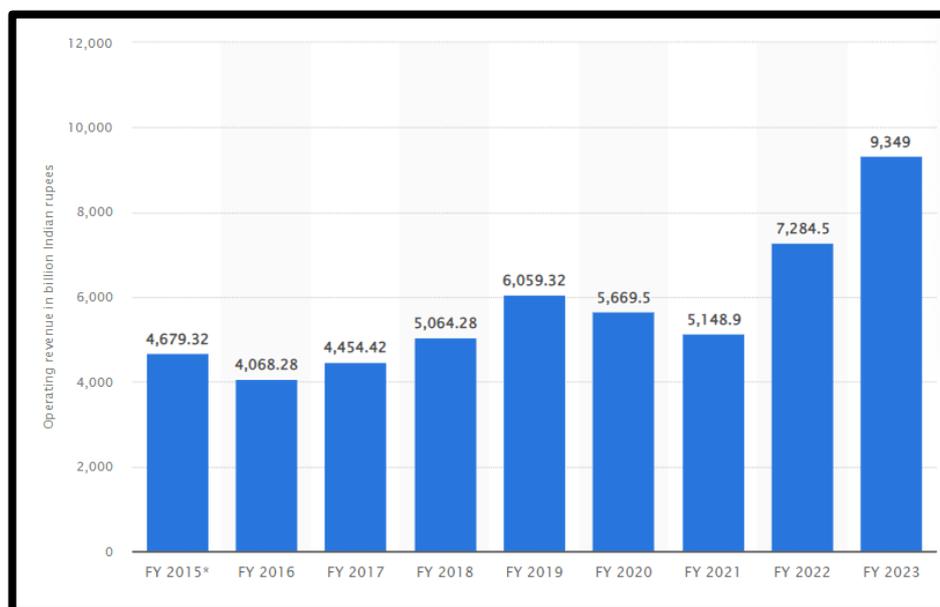


Figure 1: Operating revenue for Indian Oil Corporation

(Source: Statista, 2024a)

As per Cuesta-Valiño et al., (2023) this paper will establish that factors such as consumer sensitivity to price fluctuations and the general market environment are fundamental in influencing consumer behavior and fuel purchasing decisions in the petroleum industry. This paper examines consumer response after the abolition of the APM, the degree of price sensitivity among consumers, and the effects of cartel-controlled pricing on consumer Action. The structural change that occurred in the Indian petroleum industry was the scrapping of the Administered Price Mechanism (APM), this process brought about market liberalization and competition among the oil companies.

As per Swanson, (2023) this deregulation had significant effect to consumer behaviors since consumers became more sensitive towards prices for their fuel. The freedom to set prices also resulted in consumers beginning to monitor the fuel prices more closely and look for and where they could purchase their fuel at a cheaper price. Consumers' price consciousness rose as many of them were willing to explore their options and look for cheaper products. Therefore, fuel outlets were pressured to compete on price hence increasing the level of price transparency and issues of the competition price in the fuel market. Other factor that has also influenced consumer behavior in this industry is the market factors that include cartel- controlled pricing of the petroleum products (Salsabila Cahyani *et al.*, 2023).

Effectively understanding consumer decision-making in a cartel-controlled pricing environment requires an understanding of the decision-making process, which entails more than just price considerations. Though price sensitivity is still a critical attribute, purchasers consider other factors such as brand recognition, time convenience, and perceived relative value in such purchases.

Brand differentiation exercises considerable influence on consumers patronage especially in sectors with cartelized prices. People establish a favorable attitude towards particular brands

and distantly associate it with quality, reliability, and trustworthiness. Thus, some consumers are ready to buy fuel from the brands and participate in cartel-pricing even if the price is higher. To these consumers, they believe that the risk of buying from a brand they are familiar with is less than the risks they stand to face when they consider cheaper brands (Sutanto, Harianto and Balkan, 2023).

Other important factor that consumer considers while operating in cartel influenced pricing structures is convenience. In today's world, people are busy with their schedules and they would prefer to get whatever they need with the shortest amount time possible. As much as consumers get concerned with price manipulation, they do not mind getting their fuel from a station near them or even in routes they frequently use. Consequently, the consumers may choose to buy from the cartel-controlled outlets because it is easy for them do so as compared to accessing other outlets which could be time-consuming or require a lot of effort. It should be noted that perceived value is another key aspect influencing the consumer decision process when faced with cartel-dominated pricing. While some consumers may be willing to pay the higher prices to buy fuel from which they perceive as coming from reputable brands, there are others who may balance the value proposition offered by cartel-controlled outlets. These are factors like the quality-of-service delivery, the facilities, and other related extra services available at the outlet. For instance, consumer may be willing to pay higher prices of fuel from an outlet controlled by a cartel due to perceived quality of service, tidiness or proximity to the next nearest outlet. The general influence of cartel-controlled prices in setting the prices also makes the consumer look for other means of transport or source of fuel as one way of overcoming the manipulation of the prices. As a result of increased fuel prices and suspected fuel price manipulation, some people may turn to other modes of transport like public means, bicycles or hiring vehicles in large groups. Some may continue to seek other options such as

electric cars or hybrid cars as longer strategy to drastically cut the usage of traditional fuels and avoid the consequences of price fixing (Gopal *et al.*, 2024).

Shopping cartelized pricing requires the consumers to be aware of the cartels and fight against them in order to bring the necessary change. The continued increasing consumer awareness of price manipulation especially in the petroleum industry may research more on options fuels, engaging the legislators for change or join boycotts and demonstrations against outlets that are controlled by cartels. Consumer activism can effectively force the management teams of companies and the policymakers into embracing changes that focus on the fight against price manipulation and other vices within the petroleum sector. This paper shows that brand loyalty, convenience, perceived value and awareness on the part of the consumers also play a role in consumer decision making in the context of cartel-controlled pricing. While some consumers need fuel from brand names or nearby stations and would be willing to pay a higher price, other consumers will look for other options convenient to avoid buying from the cartelized outlets. The tendency of cartels to control the price also creates pressure for the consumers to shift to other means of transport or source of fuel to reduce on the effects of high price manipulation (Robbins and Judge, 2023).

### Theme 3: Impact of Value-Added Services

Thus, the influence of value-added services on the purchase decision of consumers in the context of petroleum industry is a noteworthy and relevant area of research. This paper explores the impact of on-court greeting, windshield cleaning, oil change facilities and other related value-added services on the consumers' buying behavior and trend. Further, it analyses these services in relation to their ability to improve the total customer experience and create customer loyalty; and in relation to their contribution to the ability of outlets to offer differential service appeals to customers. The strategy of value-added services is critical in the creation of consumer attitudes towards petroleum brands. The suggested additional services mean that

consumers do not only have to engage in the simple fuel transaction, which would make them happier and even become loyal to the retailer. One of the value-added services that can be offered is the on-court greeting which entails having people to welcome the customers on arrival at the fuel station. The seemingly insignificant action can create a warm and welcoming environment that enables customers to feel appreciated as they engage with the brand.

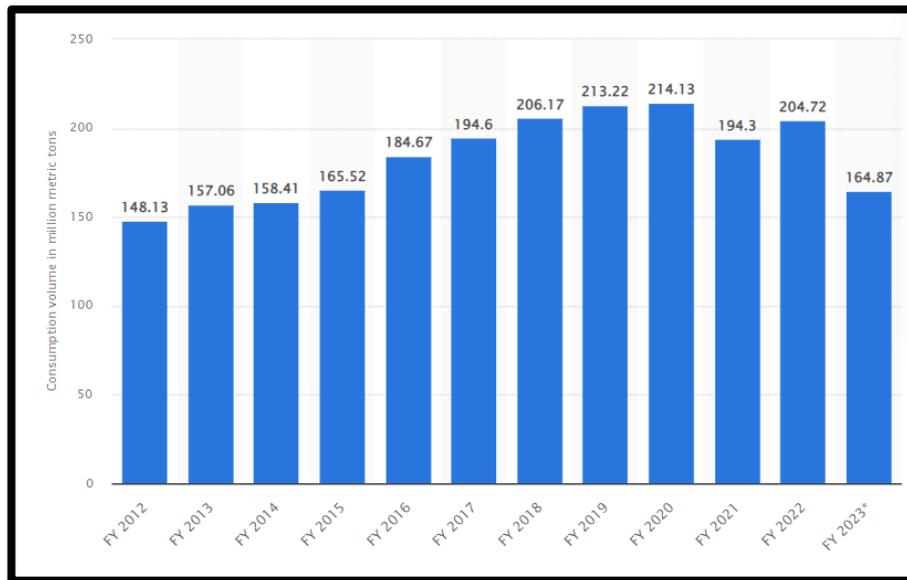


Figure 2: Consumption volume of petroleum products in India

(Source: Statista, 2024b)

As per Hemachandran & Rodriguez, (2023) others such as windshield cleaning services and oil changing services are directly convenient to customers by offering convenience and time saving. For instance, the windshield cleaning services provide convenience for customers in maintaining visibility and safety whenever they are on the road, whereas the oil change facilities provide a one-stop solution for customers who need their vehicles' oils changed. These are services that can be provided on-site, thus making the retailers to offer extra services for fuel, which are not available at the outlets of competitors. Decision making concerning the value-added services influences the purchasing decision by invoking both cognitive and affective responses (Hossain *et al.*, 2023).

In an emotional context, value added services may create positive feelings and perceptions towards the brand which can culminate into brand loyalty and repeat business. For instance, a customer who is greeted and served friendly will possibly be more likely to revisit the same station despite being served by different stations nearby. Likewise, the easily access and dependability of the value-added services can create trust and confidence to the brand and therefore can enhance the loyalty between the customer and the retailer. Among the principal factors to influence the choice of customers regarding the purchasing of products from particular outlets, value-added services are recognized to play a significant role in a competitive retail environment. Since the major portion of the cost structure in the industry under consideration comprises fuel prices which tend to be similar within competitors, value-added services represent the major chance for differentiation and brand building. Therefore, by being able to provide a wide range of services and products that would fit the market demands, the retailers can establish a strategic market position of providing more than just fuel services for the customers. It is hard to overstate the importance of value-added services and its contribution to the consumer buying behavior of petroleum (Gera, Assadi and Starnawska, 2023).

#### Theme 4: Corporate Image and Perception of Product Quality

According to Budianto & Saian, (2023) a corporate image and quality perception play a crucial role in the decisions made by the consumer in the petroleum industry. This study focuses on how corporate image influences the perception of product quality and reliability and consumer attitudes toward PSU as against private players. So, when analyzing the significance of corporate reputation and branding, it exemplifies how these factors influence consumer behavior. This is significant when firms seeking to create trust, create distinction, and establish connection with the customer in the contemporary market environment. Concisely, corporate image and reputations are strategic tools that help create perception and consumer loyalty in the petroleum industry (Zorić *et al.*, 2023).

In the context of the petroleum sector, corporate image was found to be relevant in the perception that consumers have about the quality and trustworthiness of the products. Corporate image can be defined as one's standing, principles, and the perception people have of the company, all of which impact customers' evaluation of a firm's products' quality and durability. For instance, consumers are more likely to purchase products and/or services from a company that has developed a positive corporate image that includes concepts such as transparency, integrity, and commitment towards customers. On the other hand, a firm with a bad, or in other words, a negative corporate image is likely to have low levels of consumer trust and confidence in the products that it has to offer. The social perception of efficiency, accountability and quality of service delivery in the petroleum sector delivery by public sector undertakings (PSUs) as against private players is based on a number of factors. Traditionally, PSUs have been seen as stable and reliable organizations, backed by government support and often endowed with an ethos of service to the nation (Aguilar and Alcalá, 2024).

In the context of the petroleum industry, corporate reputation and branding are essential determinants of consumers' choices as people are inclined to trust brands that have a solid reputation. A corporate reputation which consists of past performance, social activities, and satisfaction of customers can be another significant source of competitive advantage in the current world. Customers prefer to associate themselves with brands that they perceive as being reputable because it increases the chances that they will receive quality goods and services from the company. Other elements of brand communications such as brand storytelling, brand image and brand placement also helps to solidify consumer's perceptions and preferences thereby enhancing brand equity and market share. The business organizations' image and perception on the quality of their products play significant roles in influencing consumer behavior within the context of the petroleum sector. A corporate image affects consumers' perception of high quality and trustworthiness of products, as well as their sentiments on

efficiency and accountability of PSUs compared to private players in terms of service delivery. The analysis demonstrated that the brand reputation is one of the most important factors in determining the consumer choice, loyalty, and market position. This paper argues that an understanding of how branding efforts on behalf of corporations virtually pays off big in regards to the petroleum sector is highly competitive thus the perception of corporate image (Roobins and Judge, 2023).

Business reputations are long-standing, dynamic, reflections of how a company behaves and responds in the marketplace. Another important factor that concerns a firm's past experiences in terms of reliability, consistency, and regulatory compliance has a strong bearing on corporate reputation. Specifically, consumers are more likely to believe in those companies that proved their ability to develop and deliver high-quality goods and services while preserving organizational reliability. Furthermore, the time and resources invested in sustainability, community and social causes, and ethical management all contribute to the company's reputation. Customers are beginning to care not only for the products they are purchasing but also for companies that have a good cause and can contribute to the betterment of the society and environment. Another factor that is important for determining corporate reputation is the satisfaction of consumers. Those businesses that aim at consumers and ensure that they satisfy their consumers' needs well will have high chances of being recommended by the consumer. Positive word of mouth communication and online feedback are also very helpful in increasing a company's reputation since customers are more likely to believe what they are told or read from their counterparts (Dunne, Harris and Kinkela, 2023).

It is important to use the right branding strategies when trying to reinforce the consumers' perceptions and preferences within the petroleum industry. Brand communication, graphic design, and branding are the three concepts that are used in the marketing of a firm's products or services. Brand communication encompasses the process of informing consumers regarding

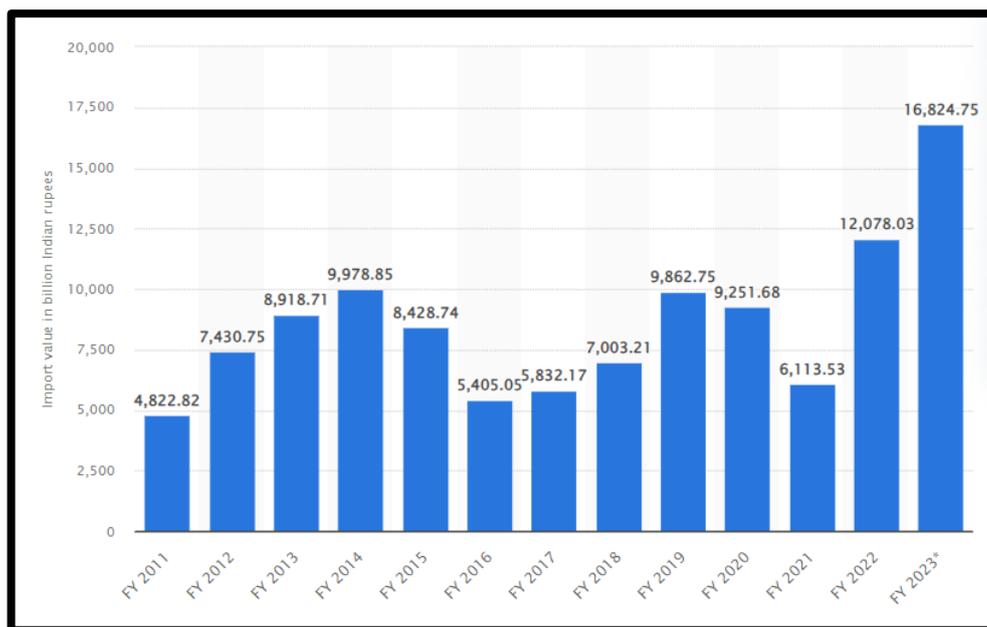
important brand attributes, brand values, and brand guarantees through the use of brand communication vehicles. When the message is crafted well to capture the needs, want, goal or desire of a consumer or group of consumers, an emotional bond between the consumer and the brand is formed and consumers are more likely to remain loyal to the brand. Logos, color schemes, fonts, and images are not merely decorations but essential components that need to be used to strengthen a brand and make it stand out. A good graphical representation helps to establish the brand unique image which makes it easily recognizable in the minds of the consumers. Coherence in the perception of the visual imagery across a range of products and communication channels makes the brand more easily recognizable and more likely to be trusted by the final consumer. Brand positioning can therefore be defined as the process of determining and placing the brand into the right position that consumers have in relation to competition (Timotius, 2023).

According to Heinemann, (2023) the two themes are central to the study of consumer attitudes and their impact on the petroleum industry. Many aspects that contribute to a company's corporate reputation, including previous performance, social responsibilities, and customers' satisfaction, act as a significant competitive edge in the market environment. Brand communications, both verbal and non-verbal, as well as brand positioning and identity consequently enhance the consumers' perceptions and preferences towards the brands hence achieving brand recognition and market domination. Thus, in evaluating the relevance of corporate image as a concept, it is incumbent on organizations to ensure that they improve on their competitive standings and mainstream consumer relations through the cultivation of sound branding initiatives.

#### Theme 5: Retail Visual Identity and Branding Impact

As per Santos et al., (2023) retail visual identity and branding often are the major causes that affect the consumer buying behavior in the global petroleum sector. This paper looks at the

impact of retail visual identity & premium fuels branding, trying to find out how factors like outlet design and signage influence consumers and their buying behavior. Moreover, it is focuses on how branding strategies enhance customers' loyalty and distinguish retail centers in a competitive environment. The Retail Visual Identity (RVI) on the other hand covers all aspects of the layout, designing, signage, and branding, of a retail outlet. They all play a role in helping to create the environment and character of the outlet that directly affects the consumer, forming their perception and subsequent conduct. For instance, a professionally branded and well-organized outlet with appropriate signs that enforce branding can create a positive image of professionalism, cleanliness, and reliability to consumers and hence promote their attendance (Gitelman and Kozhevnikov, 2023).



*Figure 3: Value of petroleum products imported into India*

(Source: Statista, 2024c)

As per Kim & Park, (2023) premium fuels branding also strengthens the retail visual identity by differentiating premium from standard, regular, and mid-grade gasoline types. It is important to note that premium fuels are sold under the banner of several performance, fuel

efficiency, and engine protection benefits which spirited consumers are willing to pay a premium price for. When positioning their retail outlets, incorporation of PRFs branding into the RVI enables the retailers to gain an advantage over competitors by reaching customers looking for increased quality and performance. Promotional elements including the physical design of the outlet, signs, and logos also influence its appeal to customers. Outlet design impacts the character or style of the selling environment and specifically direction of foot traffic, ease of navigation and shopper comfort. Relevant characteristics that include, wide aisles, natural lighting, and convenient outlet facilities help in shaping pleasant shopping experiences that make consumers coming for more and sticking to the outlet. Communication aids; this is through the use of signals where consumers are informed on products, services and promotions through the display formats in the retail setting (Naik *et al.*, 2023).

In a context of the petroleum industry, branding objectives are crucial as they enhance consumer acquisition and promote differentiation among the numerous retail outlets. Retailers know that branding is not simply about getting consumers to recognize your company logo or slogan) it is about establishing a brand that offers consumers something they need and will appreciate for a long time. Establishing brand identity is a key factor; this is a process of clearly identifying and promoting the unique selling proposition of the brand in the market. Whether it's highlighting superior product quality, greater customer attention, or new products, retailers need to communicate their distinctions to develop a brand image that customers would recognize and appreciate (Deng *et al.*, 2023).

Once a brand identity has been developed, retailers should then continue to deepen the brand equity among customers. This entails ensuring that whatever image is being communicated to the consumer is evident in all points of contact that the consumer may have with the product, throughout the purchase process and even afterward. In this way, retailers not only offer tailored experiences to the consumers but also interact with the consumer in a manner that helps

to foster the consumer's emotional bond to the retailer's brand or store. Contemporary and creative promotions should be of paramount concern in ensuring consumers continue to engage with the brand. Whether it is carrying out elaborate ad campaigns and promotions, supporting local events, or making proper use of social networks, the task which retailers face is that of constant search for new ways to interact with the target audiences and remind them about the brand (Mitreğa, 2023).

In the context of the petroleum industry, a phenomenon called Retail Visual Identity (RVI) holds particular importance for individuals when choosing their preferred products. Facility layouts, lighting, and marketing logos and slogans play an essential role in setting up a unique environment in a retail outlet that makes consumers visit the outlet more often. For instance, a good and organized fuel station properly lit and branded with clear markings, indicates professionalism, cleanliness, and quality services to consumers. This first impression would play a central role in shaping the consumer's perception and future patronage of the said fuel station. Thus, it is crucial to continue to focus upon the development of strong and effective branding strategies, and to develop appropriate and attractive store environments in which to sell these products. Comfortable product environment appeals to the consumer and makes them comfortable by having well done and attractive outlook with signs and brand image that is harmonized making the customer comfortable hence loyalty. Appreciating the role of branding and retail visual identity (RVI) helps retailers to define relevant experiences that will have relevance to the consumers, and help position the retailers from their competitors (Colak, Enoch and Morton, 2023).

#### **4.3 Summary**

The petroleum industry is inherently affected by several factors that influence consumer choice and their discretionary power. They also highlighted the role that aspects of the physical store environment such as outlet design, signage and branding of premium fuels, are key factors

which influence consumers' perceptions and behavior in this context. Consumer and operational confidence and satisfaction improved through feature such as well-designed outlets and clear signages the branding of premium fuels creates a perception of differentiated quality for consumer's choice and satisfaction. Brand management and development on the other hand enhances brand identification as well as brand differentiation in the market; this in turn increases brand loyalty as well as competitiveness among brands. In conclusion, a clear overview of the role of RVI and branding has shown that effective implementation of branding strategies is crucial for retailers to design engaging retail spaces, gain a competitive advantage, and build long-term customer relationships and, therefore, thrive in today's competitive retail environment.