

A STRATEGIC PLAN TO INCREASE EMEX-PL's CLIENT BASE



ASHESI UNIVERSITY

A STRATEGIC PLAN TO INCREASE EMEX-PL's CLIENT BASE

Undergraduate Applied Project Submitted to The Department of Business Administration,
Ashesi University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of Bachelor of
Science Degree in Business Administration.

BSc. Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own work, and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.



Candidate's signature.....

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Date.....23rd...April..2021.....

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the Applied Project were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of Applied Project laid down by Ashesi University.

Supervisor's Signature:

Supervisor's Name:

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

EMEX-PL Ghana Limited is a privately owned limited liability company that specializes in the sale of petrol and petroleum products to the public. Founded in 2017 by Mr. Jonathan Sekyi and Mr. Felix Dehye, the vision and goal of EMEX-PL is to grow and expand the company, as well as their overall market share in the market in the long run. EMEX-PL is currently working on expanding its retail filling stations and customer base. They however face the issue of the lack of a strong presence in the market, as a result of the current challenges and difficulties they face as a start-up oil company.

The purpose of this project is to establish the problem faced by the company in achieving their set goals through research, and suggest solutions that would help EMEX-PL address this problem. EMEX-PL wishes to grow its customer base to achieve its long term goals of business expansion.

The solution provided is tailored to engage active customer service strategies and marketing strategies that would attract EMEX-PL's target customers, increase the chances of brand recognition of the company's brand and develop a loyal customer base for EMEX-PL over time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Explanation
AOMC	Association of Oil Marketing Companies
BOST	Bulk Oil and Storage Transportation
BDC	Bulk Distribution Company
GNPC	Ghana National Petroleum Corporation
NPA	National Petroleum Authority
OMC	Oil Marketing Company
OTC	Oil Trading Company
TOR	Tema Oil Refinery

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

Petroleum is a national security and resource priority for every country. From transportation sectors to mining and construction sectors, all the way down to the basic consumer day-to-day activities and operations, fuel serves a great level of importance towards the sustenance of any and every country. The PESTLE Analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental Factors) tool and Porter's Five Forces Framework tool would be used in analysing the industry of operation of EMEX-PL in this chapter. This chapter aims to help EMEX-PL better understand their position in the market, and the petroleum industry of Ghana, mainly the downstream petroleum sector.

1.2 Company Profile of EMEX – PL

EMEX – PL Ghana Ltd is a Limited Liability Company founded and owned by Mr. Jonathan Sekyi and Mr. Felix Dehye. EMEX - PL is located in Dzorwulu, and currently has a working staff of 42 employees. The company was incorporated in August 2017 and is licensed as an Oil Marketing Company (OMC) under the laws of Ghana (Company code, 1963 (Act 179)) by the Ghana Petroleum Industry. As an Oil Marketing Company (OMC), EMEX – PL distributes fuel and petroleum products to consumers within various sectors of the market, through the different distribution outlets they have created. EMEX – PL Ghana Limited offers the following petroleum products for sale amongst which include : Automotive Gas Oil, Premium Motor Spirit, Lubricating Oil and Greases.

EMEX-PL Ghana Ltd came into being by acquiring Ghana Standards Petroleum Limited (GSPL), an Oil Marketing Company (OMC) which had been in operations since 2013, up until their acquisition in 2017. As an Oil Marketing Company, EMEX-PL is granted the license to sell fuel to the general public through distribution outlets that meet the standards and specifications of the National Petroleum Authority(NPA). EMEX-PL strategically positioned themselves to include bulk fuel distribution to their operations. Focusing more of their efforts into on-site refuelling services, which is the bulk distribution aspect of their business. The bulk distribution aspect of their business model had a faster turnover rate, was deemed less stressful and more straightforward, as compared to the retail distribution aspect of their business. Hence, a more compelling reason to begin with the bulk distribution aspect of their business model as a start-up. Retail filling stations came with more costly demands, which included capital intensive stations construction, constant repairs, stricter operating regulations, expansion costs, marketing needs and more. EMEX-PL's plan was to work on their bulk distribution channels and outlets first, before venturing into retail distribution of fuel. Three years into the business, and EMEX-PL now feels ready to expand their operations into the retail market.

1.3 Mission

For our clients:

We aim to create sustainable and superior value in all our business relationships and transactions.

For our People and Our Company:

We aim to become the employer of choice through firmly established cultures of openness that fosters people development, professionalism and sustainably contribute to long-term individual and organizational goals.

For the Community:

We aim to be a socially responsible company, investing a fixed portion of our profits in community – based projects in community – based projects in the Health and educational sectors.

1.4 Our Vision

To be a leader in oil trading, distribution, and related services in Ghana and by this vision we seek to provide a strong sense of identity and a compelling image of a preferred future.

1.5 Our Objectives

To invest in Technology and Strategic infrastructure that will ensure we are the most reliable and efficient trading company in the supply of petroleum products and all our service offerings.

1.6 Core Values

At EMEX – PL we believe in teamwork, mutual respect, efficiency, quality, integrity and strict code of ethics.

1.7 Brand Stance

EMEX – PL is focused at providing its customers with the best of services that can be trusted, at competitive prices they can afford.

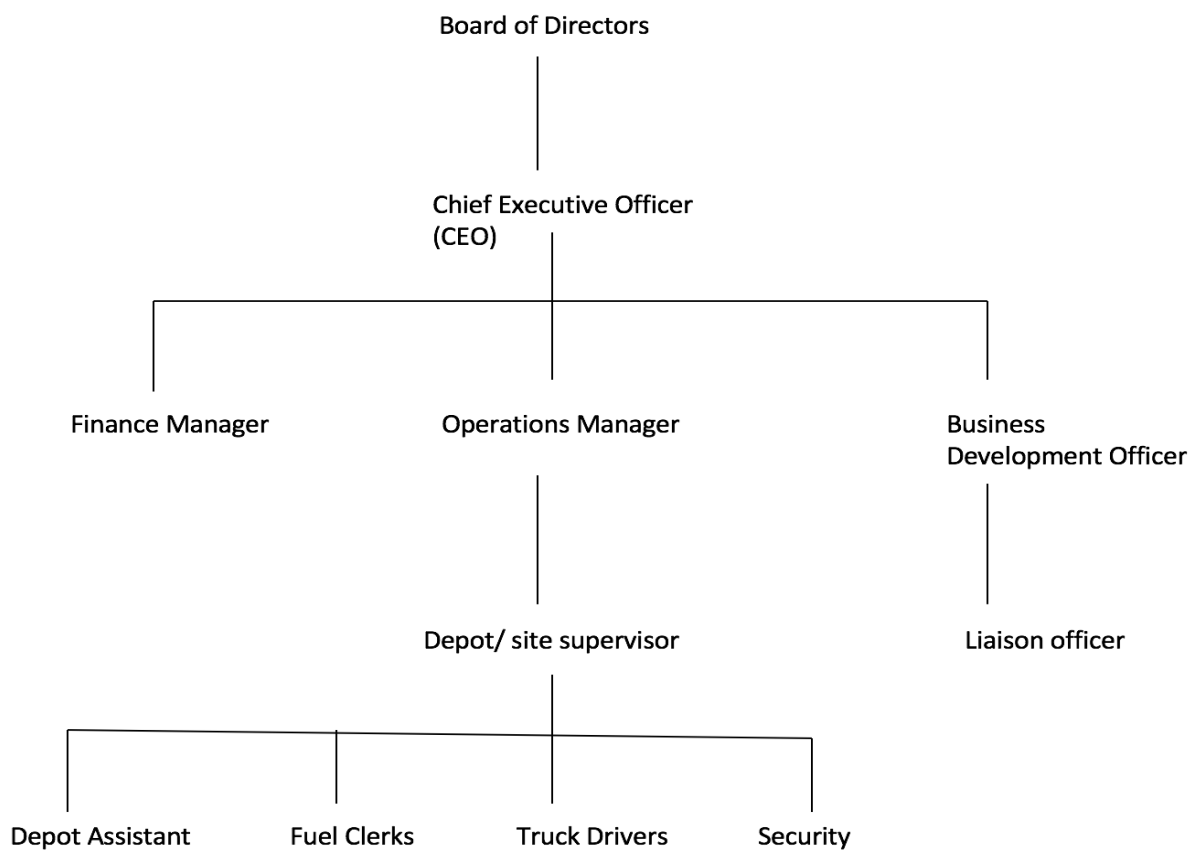
1.8 Rationale for selecting EMEX – PL

The petroleum industry is a very lucrative, and well-structured industry. By selecting EMEX-PL as a capstone project, I present myself with the opportunity to learn more about the petroleum industry, and gain a hands on experience collecting data and interacting with people with experience in the industry.

1.9 Organizational Structure Of the Company

Figure 1

Company Organogram of EMEX-PL



1.10 SWOT ANALYSIS OF EMEX – PL

Strengths

Competitive Pricing

EMEX-PL can afford to price competitively because the company has lower overhead costs as compared to other companies. Having been fortunate enough to acquire a company with little to no debt problems, maintain relatively low staff numbers and low overhead costs, EMEX-PL can afford to set competitive market prices in the market.

Flexibility in service offering

EMEX – PL has done quite well in expanding their service offering beyond just retail distribution of fuel through filling stations. Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are mostly known to focus operations only on retail distribution of fuel. According to Mr. Sekyi, there are just a few Oil Marketing Companies who are using the two-model approach towards the market; which is the bulk distribution market and retail market. EMEX-PLs operations in both bulk distribution and retail distribution gives them an advantage over the other competing companies who cannot apply the two-model approach towards the market.

Availability of fleet of distribution trucks

EMEX – PL has full control over its distribution trucks, hence reducing operational costs that come with truck rentals. They are more readily available to serve the needs of their customers as mobility is simpler and faster with easy access and control over vehicles needed to move fuel from one location to another.

24/7 service offering availability

Providing 24/7 services to their customers also comes as an added strength to EMEX – PL, as this requires strategic planning for both bulk distribution operations and retail operations. EMEX-PL comes off as more reliable and dependable to customers.

Product Quality

EMEX – PL makes sure to provide the best product quality when it comes to the products and services they offer. For example in lubricants selection, the nature of work for which the lubricant is to be used matters. With CIL (Carbon – In – Leach) plants used for gold extraction, lubricants need to be of the best high-grade heat tolerant nature to work efficiently. EMEX – PL has access to testing facilities to tests the tolerance of these lubricants to ensure they are up to par with high quality standards and expectations.

Weaknesses*Inability of EMEX-PL to market under the EMEX-PL brand*

As a result of the acquisition of Ghana Standards Petroleum Limited (GSPL) by EMEX-PL in 2017, EMEX-PL is yet to receive permission from NPA (National Petroleum Authority) to brand or market under their brand name EMEX-PL. Since EMEX-PL finds it costly to market a brand they have acquired only to change it when given final permission to use their brand name, EMEX-PL has not initiated any marketing attempts since inception, neither do they have a marketing plan in place at the current moment. This is currently EMEX-PL's biggest barrier to marketing.

Opportunities*Improved Technology*

EMEX-PL plans to invest in technology that would make work more efficient and easier for them in the future. With new and improved technology introductions, EMEX-PL can invest in more sophisticated equipment's and machineries that would fast track operations.

Expand Filling Stations

Expanding the number of filling stations under EMEX-PL would help bring a higher level of brand recognition and awareness to the company. The more people see and recognize EMEX-PLs branded filling station, brand awareness and recognition is achieved. EMEX-PL would also be able to make more sales.

Online Website

Developing a website, would help EMEX-PL increase brand awareness on an easily accessible platform which is the internet, creating an online presence for the business.

Threats*Highly Recognized Brands*

Highly recognized brands such as Total, pose a threat to companies such as EMEX -PL in their effort to establish a brand and market. The petroleum industry is such that customers work with brands, and may turn down your services just because you are not a brand they recognize. This can be seen more at the retail end, with customers choice of filling stations.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Secondly, the current COVID-19 pandemic has indeed proven to be much of a threat to the petroleum industry, and the players involved. As a result of the pandemic, and the new change in lifestyle, income that used to come mainly from sectors such as the transportation sector and aviation sector have been cut down tremendously due to travel bans and restrictions, shift from day-to-day travelling on road to school to online learning, and other new adaptations as a result of COVID-19.

Table 1

Table summary of SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive Pricing • Flexibility in Service Offering • Availability of fleet of distribution trucks • 24/7 service offering • Product quality 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability of EMEX-PL to market under the EMEX-PL brand
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved technology • Expanding Filling Stations • Online Website 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Recognized Brands such as Total • Current COVID – 19 Pandemic

1.11 Overview of the Petroleum Industry in Ghana

The petroleum industry is divided into the upstream, midstream and downstream sector. These three sectors mark in summary the supply chain of the oil and gas industry from discovery to when it reaches the final consumer. For each sector and area of operation

within the petroleum industry, there are guidelines to direct activities and levels of investments needed.

The Upstream sector

The upstream sector of the oil and gas industry involves discovery, exploration and production of oil from the bottom. "It covers all activities associated with trying to find, recovering, and producing oil and/or gas from underground or underwater fields. This sector covers drilling of exploratory wells, and subsequent drilling and, operating the wells that recover and produce the crude oil or raw gas to the surface". (Gabrielson, 2015). The upstream sector relies heavily on investment in research and development, and expertise in handling the needed technologies and equipment. The arena is usually occupied by foreign companies. Amongst which include Tullow Oil, Aker Energy, Kosmos Energy, ENI, Springfield. "One fundamental feature of the petroleum industry is that oil belongs to the state. The State then invites investors to bring in their money to explore and find the oil, produce and distribute. For instance in Ghana, all petroleum operations are governed by the Petroleum Law of 1984, which sets out the policy and framework for participants within the industry. According to the Law, all petroleum found in its natural state within Ghana is deemed to be national property and is to be developed on behalf of the state. So while the state requires the rent for the use of its resources, the investors are interested in the returns on their investment without which the oil of the State will continue to be beneath the oceans." (Adams, 2009). "Ghana discovered oil in commercial quantities in the Deep Water Tano (DWT) and West Cape Three Points (WCTP) blocks. Coinciding with Ghana's jubilee anniversary upon turning 50 years of independence in 2007, the oil field is named the Jubilee Field. The first production and lifting of oil in commercial quantities was made in November 2010

and the operators of the field called the Jubilee partners comprise Tullow Oil, Kosmos Oil, Anardako Oil, Sabre Oil and the Ghana National Petroleum Company (GNPC)". (Etornam, 2015). Ghana is still however very much dependent on oil imports, amidst oil discoveries. "Despite producing 100,000 barrels of crude oil per day, the country depends on imports of oil (net importer) to meet its petroleum requirement, which have grown at an exponential phase due to growth within the economy". (Acheampong & Ackah, 2015)

The Midstream sector

The midstream sector connects the downstream sector to the upstream sector, it includes the pipelines, transport systems and operations needed to be put in place for the movement of crude oil extracted to the refineries.

The downstream sector

The downstream sector involves, "the refining of the crude oil and/or raw natural gases obtained in the upstream sector as well as selling or distributing of the products obtained. This includes facilities such as petrochemical plants, oil refineries, natural gas distribution companies, retail outlets (i.e. gas stations), etc." The midstream sector is considered as a part of the downstream sector. In the past, Ghana's oil industry was more centred around the downstream sector, until oil discoveries in large quantities in 2007. "According to Ghana Statistical Service (2015) the GDP of Ghana had recorded double-digit growth (14%) in 2011 after two years of exporting oil, thus from a single-digit growth (4.8%) in 2009." (Abudu & Rockson, n.d.). EMEX – PL as an Oil Marketing Company falls within the downstream sector. Key players in Ghana's Downstream Petroleum sector include:

- **Ministry of Energy and Petroleum:** Supervises activities concerning policy formulation and monitoring, as well as sustainable energy supply within Ghana and beyond.
- **Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC):** Regulator for the Upstream sector of Ghana.
- **Bulk Oil Storage and Transportation Company Limited:** Maintains and preserves Ghana's reserve stocks, as well as develops a network of storage tankers, pipelines and large – scale transportation infrastructure for the country.
- **Bulk Distribution Companies (BDCs) and Oil Trading Companies (OTCs):** BDCs are given the mandate to import crude oil, store, and sell Petroleum products mainly to OMCs. OTCs supply to BDCs. "Oil trading companies (OTCs) import but cannot store or distribute, and therefore do so on behalf of bulk distribution companies (BDCs)." (Oxford Business Group, n.d.) BDCs store and distribute crude oil and imported finished products to the OMCs.
- **Oil Marketing Companies:** OMCs obtain oil and petroleum products from BDCs to distribute to consumers and the general public through retail outlets. In 2003, the Association of Oil Marketing Companies was established to serve as a mouthpiece for OMC operators within the industry.
- **Tema Oil Refinery:** Currently the only refinery in Ghana. "The Tema Oil Refinery has a total crude oil storage capacity of about 285,000 cubic metres , which is about 2 million barrels and covers a total area of 440,000 metres". (Etornam, 2015). The Tema Oil Refinery is considered one of a kind as it is the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, according to Etornam (2015), The Tema Oil Refinery is the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the only refinery hub in Ghana at the current moment. It is located in Tema.

1.12 Industry Analysis of the Downstream Petroleum Industry

In analysing the petroleum industry, I would make use of the PESTLE analysis and Porters Five Framework tools.

1.12.1 Industry Analysis I – PESTLE

The PESTLE tool is an analysis tool used to assess and explore the macro-environmental factors that affect a company's operations within a particular industry. PESTLE is short form for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.

Political:

- i. Government price deregulation policy allowing for independence and competition in the petroleum industry:

Over the years, efforts have been invested into giving the industry more independence, especially through price deregulation efforts implemented on the 16th of June 2015. “Under the new system announced in June 2015, the government will no longer set prices for consumer fuels every two weeks, instead leaving Bulk Distributing Companies (BDCs) and Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to do so, albeit according to the existing formula that NPA has used.” (Ghana's Government liberalizes Downstream markets”, 2016). The goal of this decision, was to allow OMCs and BDCs become more profitable, eliminate NPA's interference in pricing and government subsidies on fuel prices.

- ii. The role of regulators in the petroleum industry as representatives on behalf of the government:

National Petroleum Authority (NPA), which is the main regulator for the downstream petroleum industry performs the following and more:

- i. Monitoring and regular inspection of Petroleum Product Retail Outlets including LPG filling plants
- ii. Permit licenses for operations
- iii. Provide guidelines for establishing and operating fuel farms
- iv. Provide construction permits required by OMC/ BDC operators.
- v. Authorization for setting up an oil refinery, a liquefied petroleum gas depot, petroleum products storage depot and pipeline, petroleum products retail stations.
- vi. Inspection of petroleum product quality and quantity standards and more.

Regulators ensure that the players within the industry are qualified by all standards and government policies passed down are implemented.

Economic:

The petroleum industry is extremely sensitive to economic factors such as inflation rate, changes in exchange rates and interest rates, unemployment rates as well as changes in consumer income.

- i. Relationship between Oil prices and Inflation

“Oil prices and levels of inflation are often seen as being connected in a cause-and-effect relationship. As oil prices move up, inflation which is the measure of general price trends throughout the economy follows in the same direction higher. On the other hand, as the price of oil falls, inflationary pressures start to ease.” (Lioudis, 2020). Oil prices affect levels of inflation by increasing the cost of inputs. For example the production of rubber, requires bi-products from petroleum, people use gas for cooking in their home and petrol to fuel the movement of their cars. As a

result of the repetitive use of these input of products related to oil and gas, a spike in oil practically affects these related products and services.

ii. Impact of the exchange rate on oil prices

Exchange rate play a very important role in setting oil prices. Oil imported is bought on the international market in US dollars and sold in the country of the buyer in the currency of the buyer's country. "Crude oil traded in world markets is priced in dollars. Oil importers who do not use the dollar as currency must, in effect, obtain dollars to purchase oil." (Trehan, n.d.). If the value of the currency in which oil is imported depreciates against the dollar, exchange rate fluctuations (losses) would be felt by the buyer as these fluctuations eat into profit margins. The value falls as a result of depreciation of the buyer's currency against the US dollar on the international market. The effect of exchange losses is felt most by those at the immediate receiving end (importers). OMCs avoid losses from exchange rate fluctuations by hedging against the dollar.

iii. International Market Price Fluctuations

Price changes on the international market, affect price changes in Ghana. "In Ghana, increases in the world price of crude oil are transmitted into the domestic economy through increases in the domestic prices of the petroleum products in the country." (Awunyo-Vitor et al., 2018). Price fluctuations on the international market greatly affect oil prices on the Ghanaian market. Ghana cannot avoid being vulnerable to the price blows of crude oil in the international market, as it is still a large importer of Crude oil.

iv. The impact of oil prices on economic growth (GDP)

The discovery of Ghana's oil in 2007, came as celebratory hope for the country as it meant the ability of the country to export its own oil would increase revenue and gains from country's exports. Fast forward to today, oil plays a now more important role in Ghana's economy and is a huge contributor to Ghana's GDP growth. Laying more emphasis on petroleum as a national security to the country and the reason why the petroleum industry is tight and heavily regulated. "Ghana experienced one of the strongest growth numbers in the world at 14.4% in 2011 up from 8% in 2010, according to the Ghana Statistical Services (GSS). Ghana's GDP growth hit 8.5% in 2017, attributed to strong performance in the oil and gas sector as well as significant growth in the country's industrial sector". (Aidoo, 2019)

Social:

i. New ride-hailing culture taking over

The introduction of ride-hailing services such as Uber, Yango, Bolt amongst others in Ghana have increased demand for fuel to power these vehicles. These ride-hailing services have found their way into the heart of Ghana, and are slowly taking market share that used to belong to the traditional public means of transportation amongst which include "trotro", taxis, public transport buses and more. Consumers who find the price offer cheaper and more favourable than others tend to make use of these services more and more over time. Demand has increased for these ride-hailing services. As well as preference levels for these vehicles over crowded public transport buses or less attractive taxi prices. Taxi drivers are still however in use and demand, but now with the ride-hailing services slowly taking over, what this means is that private car owners who use their vehicles for these ride-hailing services now spend

more time on the road, spending more fuel than they would have before, adding to the already existing public transportation options available that are in operation.

- ii. Increased preference to own private vehicles as a social upgrade by the up and coming younger generation

With the current increase in the younger population, have come quite pricy consumer demands for flashy cars and the desire to own private vehicles. increasing the ratio of private vehicles to public vehicles usage, as well as the fuel usage demands that come with this lifestyle. “ Total number of registered vehicles population in Ghana in 2015 stood at approximately 1,952,564. The Greater Accra Region has the highest number of registered vehicles of about 1,164, 942, followed by Kumasi with just 269,689. The remaining regions recorded about 517,933 registered vehicles. The vehicle population ratio in Ghana has been growing steadily from about 50 vehicles per 1000 population in 2010, to about 70 vehicles per 1000 population in 2015”. (Essel, 2016).

- iii. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on demand:

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on the petroleum industry. Not only has demand for oil dropped, forcing industry operators to reduce their prices, and lower profit margins, but also the closure of borders greatly affected movement of products, including the importation of oil into the country, and increased costs involved as well. Consumers are now cutting down on fuel budgets as a result of reduction in activities and movements due to the pandemic. Schools closing down are a great example of fuel cuts from the educational sector. School buses are not in operation, parents are not taking their kids to school on a day-to-day basis as before.

Technology:

- i. Automation of back-end services to improve front-end activities through cloud computing and the Internet of Things (IoT).

The benefits to be gained from cloud computing in the industry include easier analysis of real-time information, more efficient marketing through in-built customer relationship software amongst others. Companies in the petroleum industry should look at the introduction of the IoT (Internet of Things) and cloud computing into their day-to-day business operations. These systems are quite costly, capital intensive and require a certain level of expertise to manage, however they are beneficial in the smooth running and upgrade of business operations.

- ii. Technological automation in the downstream sector: A case of Self-serving filling stations

There is much room for technological innovations and upgrades in Ghana and Africa as a whole. For example, in countries such as the United States and other developed countries, fuel stations are technologically designed to be self-serviced. Introduction of such innovations in Africa can be weighed from two perspectives. It is beneficial to a company to be able to cut down costs of paying fuel attendants, but it also would affect employment rate in the country. The main reason why concepts like this work abroad is because of the prioritization of automation and technology. This is not the same in Africa. Taking South Africa as an example, as they have openly discussed the idea of self-serving filling stations, we see their thoughts leaning closer to the argument of the impact, innovations like this can have on third world countries such as Ghana. “ In South Africa, the main priority of the government is job creation and poverty alleviation. It is therefore unthinkable that it will support a policy that would

encourage massive job losses and we can assume that prices of fuel service will remain the same across all petrol stations. There is therefore no incentive for an oil company to install self-service pumps unless all other companies do the same – few consumers will choose to fill their own tanks if it costs the same to let someone else do it”. (“self-service pumps”, 2013).

- iii. Technological innovations through the introduction of solar-powered and gas- powered vehicles.

We can look at the culture and use of fuel-consumption cars in Ghana, and the usage ratio of public vehicles to private vehicles. Current innovations abroad, are pioneering and introducing the use of solar-powered, gas-powered, less fuel-burning consumption cars, environmentally friendly cars. Whilst these innovations are a move in the right direction, this also means a drop in demand for fuel-powered vehicles. These innovations are currently in the pipelines. However, in relation to the impact of these foreign-based innovations on the petroleum industry of Africa, they are less likely to take effect now, probably in the nearest future. As Africa is more positioned towards the use of fuel-consumption cars and quite behind on the technological achievements and exploration map. What this however means for operators within the industry is the need to innovate. Fuel as a natural source and product cannot be fully replaced. Mainly because of the different purposes it serves, but its demand would fall with the introduction of new solar-powered, gas-powered improvements in the future to come. Fuel providers need to have a plan by then that accommodates these changes.

Legal:

- i. Association of Oil Marketing Companies propose price fixing to control anti-competitive violations.

With price deregulation came the freedom for Oil Marketing Companies to have control over setting prices, and also allowed room for competition. Before, the National Petroleum Authority (NPA) set a fixed price for all Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to work with. This did not allow for competition and creativity in the market. As companies who had worked hard to establish their brand in the market were forced to price the same as others, even start-up companies. By encouraging price fixing as is being suggested by the Association of Oil Marketing Companies (AOMC), effective competition cannot take place. “ Competition or Anti-trust regulations prohibit price-fixing because firms have different cost structures and by allowing market operators to fix or agree on prices or take any concerted action on prices, reduces competition and innovation in the market and consumers are made worst off”. (“NPA urged to investigate”, 2020).

- ii. Law to ban importation of salvaged cars

Due to the increased dumping rate of old, used, salvaged vehicles into Africa, the Government of Ghana has come up with a law to ban the importation of salvaged vehicles. The road dangers that come with these salvaged cars have attracted much concern and the need for Government intervention. The policy is to take effect from the 1st of November 2020. “ Parliament in March passed the Customs (Amendment) Bill, 2020 an amendment of the existing customs Act, 2015 (Act 891). The amendment banned the importation of accident and salvaged motor vehicles

comprised of wrecked, destroyed and those physically damaged by collision, fire, water or other occurrences into the country.” (“No salvaged car importation”, 2020)

Environmental:

The nature of the petroleum industry is one that calls for extreme caution and care in handling products involved as a result of the damaging effects products and activities can have on the environment if not handled with care. With the upstream sector, concerns are mainly around safety, environmental and health factors involved in the extraction of oil from the ground, the release of dangerous gases into the air, and pollution of water bodies, oil spills on the road and more. Regulations such as the Clean Air Act, the use of environmental permits amongst others are put in place to monitor operations. With the downstream sector, concerns are mainly around siting of filling station, protective practices by fuel attendants, environmental permits to operate, siting of safety information and environmental pollution reduction. The Environmental Protection Agency is the regulator mainly in charge of environmental concerns within this industry.

- i. National Petroleum Authority (NPA) launches a new policy known as the Cylinder Recirculation Model.

The National Petroleum Authority recently launched a new policy concerning a more efficient and safer means of gas distribution. Affecting mainly OMCs (Oil Marketing Company) and LPGMC (Liquefied Petroleum Gas Distributors) known as the Cylinder Recirculation Model (RCM). According to MyJoyOnline, the goal of the policy is to “increase usage of LPG from the current 25% to 50% by 2030 and institute more safer means of handling gas cylinders” (MyJoyonline, 2020). In light of NPAs attempt to reduce risk involved in gas explosions and damages. LPG Cylinders

would not be filled at gas stations with the consumers present as before, but would now be handled by LPG Bottling Companies under more safer and stricter conditions.

Table 2

Table summary of PESTLE Analysis of the Downstream Petroleum Industry

PESTLE TOOL	FACTORS	IMPORTANCE TO ORGANISATION
POLITICAL	Government price deregulation policy allowing for independence and competition in the petroleum industry	High Price deregulation allows EMEX -PL to set their own prices.
	The role of regulators in the petroleum industry as representatives on behalf of the government	High EMEX-PL must always be in line with regulators policies and regulations to avoid fines and penalties.
ECONOMIC	Relationship between Oil Prices and Inflation	High Higher prices passed down to consumers as a result of inflation affect consumers oil purchases.
	Impact of the exchange rate on oil prices	Low EMEX-PL hedges against exchange rate losses.
	Impact of International Price fluctuations on oil prices	High Higher prices passed down to consumers affect consumers oil purchases.
	The effect of oil prices on economic growth (GDP)	Low Higher GDP doesn't directly affect EMEX-PL

SOCIAL	Ride-hailing culture taking over	High More cars using fuel increases fuel demands.
	Increased preference and number of private vehicle owners	High More cars using fuel increases fuel demands.
	Impact of COVID-19 on consumer demands	High Fall in consumer fuel demands as a result of COVID-19 affects the business.
TECHNOLOGY	Cloud computing and the Internet of Things	Low Allows for faster, more organized and efficient operations.
	Technology automation through self-serving filling stations	High Would be beneficial to EMEX-PL as this means they can save up on costs in having to pay fuel attendants.
	Future innovations into solar-powered and gas-powered vehicles	High Drop in fuel demand in the future would affect sales.
LEGAL	Association of Oil Marketing Companies (AOMC) propose price-fixing	High Price-fixing would take away EMEX-PLs power to set prices.
	Law to ban importation of salvaged vehicles	Low Increased fuel consumption by salvaged cars does not affect fuel demand to a large extent.
ENVIRONMENTAL	Cylinder Recirculation Model	Medium EMEX-PL already follows the necessary environmental regulations. The model

		just allows for safer operations.
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1.12.2 Industry Analysis – Porters Five Forces

The Porters Five Forces Framework seeks to determine the competitive environment and attractiveness of an industry with respect to the profitability of firms. Factors of high importance are said to affect the profitability of firms operating within the industry of interest on an appreciable level, whilst those of low importance do not affect the firm's profitability as much.

The Threat of New Entrants

- i. Ability of New entrants to steal market share

The threat of new entrants looks at how new entrants in a market threaten the profitability of already existing companies within the market. With the petroleum industry, new entrants do not pose that much of a threat to already operating firms.

This is because new entrants must first establish a brand that can be trusted to be able to affect the consumer market on an appreciable scale. New entrants cannot price their fuel products or services as high as brands such as Total or Goil, or else they would lose customers. Impact on profitability is low, as new entrants do not necessarily influence prices or profit margins of already existing operators within the industry.

Threat of Substitute

The threat of substitute looks at how the availability of substitutes within an industry affect firms profitability within the industry. Such that companies are forced to reduce

their profit margins to avoid customers switching from their services to that of competitors.

i. Low switching cost

With the petroleum industry, product substitution is a very likely event to occur. A customer can easily replace one service provider with another, as products offered within the industry are homogeneous. There is virtually little to no cost involved for customers in switching from one brand or operator to another. Differentiation through quality service provision and customer service must be sought after to increase brand loyalty in customers and the chance of them easily switching to other brands.

Bargaining Power of Customers

i. Consumers can afford to cut down on fuel costs

In the petroleum industry, it can be argued that customers do have some amount of bargaining power to affect prices and profitability of the firms in the industry. When fuel prices are too high, customers often take to platforms such as radio, social media and even at times Television to air their concerns. They would often retaliate by cutting down their cost with concerns to transportation by opting for public transportation, and this would automatically affect sales of industry operators. However before it reaches this level, National Petroleum Authority (NPA) as a regulator puts in place price levels beyond which OMCs cannot sell and Consumers of Petroleum association, on behalf of consumers place pressure on OMCs to price their services fairly. The bargaining power of customers within this industry can be said to be high as they also have quite a number of options in purchasing services.

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

- i. Low bargaining power due to high competition and product homogeneity

Suppliers within this industry can be said to be highly competitive. As they reap profits from high economies of scale. Bulk suppliers of fuel try to keep their prices as competitive as possible. As a result of the homogeneous nature and similarity of products offered, suppliers can be easily replaced as long as quality is assured and prices are favourable. Hence bargaining power of suppliers are low due to high competition between suppliers and product homogeneity.

Competitive Rivalry

- i. Competitive rivalry deals mainly with good branding skills and winning consumer's trust

With concerns to competitive rivalry within the industry highly recognized brands such as Total and Goil have an upper hand in the competition, as compared to lower or less recognized brands. Those within the industry with a stronger presence have a higher marketing advantage compared to rival companies with less forthcoming brands.

Table 3

Table summary of the Porters Five Forces Framework

FORCES	REASON	IMPACT ON PROFITABILITY
Threat of New Entrants	Ability of new entrants to steal market share	Low New entrants cannot affect profitability of already existing companies as they have to establish a brand first and then grow their market share.

Threat of Substitute	Low switching costs.	High Low switching costs makes it easy for customers to switch fuel providers and hence can affect profitability.
Bargaining Power of Customers	Consumers can afford to cut down on fuel costs	High As a result of the ability of consumers to affect fuel expenditure, they can affect firm's profitability on an appreciable level.
Bargaining Power of Suppliers	Low bargaining power due to high competition and product homogeneity	Low Suppliers keep their price competitive, hence their profit margins do not eat into the profit margins of Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)
Competitive Rivalry	Competitive rivalry deals mainly with good branding skills and winning consumer's trust	High Competitive rivalry affects profitability

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter would focus on identifying the difficulties and problems faced by EMEX-PL in their line of business, through data collection and extensive research to be conducted on the company. The chapter would further outline the research methods and tools used, as well as the findings collected from the research. "A needs assessment seeks to collect information about an implied or expressed need. It is a desire to rectify a deficiency or improve current performance by developing a plan of action". (Bhasin, 2019). The main objective of the needs assessment include:

- i. To assess the company's efforts in increasing their current client base, and the results it has yielded.
- ii. To identify any challenges or weaknesses preventing EMEX-PL from growing their current client/ customer base.
- iii. To map out a strategic plan that the company can adopt.

2.1 Problem Statement

EMEX-PL since 2017, have been unable to create a significant presence or identity in the market in which they operate. They want to come up with solutions and ideas that would help enhance brand awareness of their brand and increase their current customer base.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology aspect of this chapter will focus on the selected research methods used in conducting the needs assessment, the advantages and disadvantages presented by these methods, as well as how they would affect the outcome of results at the end

of the day. Qualitative research would be employed in collecting the necessary data, alongside sources gathered from secondary research.

“Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth knowledge into a problem or generate new ideas for research”. (Bhandari, 2020). Qualitative research allows you to make use of interactions, responses and even reactions from your participants in collecting information. It allows you to go in-depth with your participants, and work with data beyond surface knowledge.

As a result of its in-depth nature, qualitative research when compared to quantitative research helps you get more defined insights into a situation or conversation. It allows participants some extra freedom in being open and expressive about questions asked. Questions can be open-ended and the human experience factor of participants is taken into consideration. Whereas, responses required for quantitative research may be more straight-forward, closed-end or lacking room for opinions. Quantitative research, on the other hand, allows for larger sample numbers and easier analysis of the data provided. It is straightforward and often involves simple-natured questions. Whilst both methods each on their own have disadvantages and advantages, the qualitative research method was preferred over the quantitative method, because of its ability to provide in-depth insights and knowledge into the research. To understand the company's operations, activities and efforts in maximising their customer base.

Secondary research involves collecting data from already existing documents and information made available through the internet, libraries with data records

company databases, paper works and more. Information from secondary research would be included in data to be collected from research conducted.

2.2.1 Qualitative Research

Observation

The naturalist observation method will be employed in collecting data through observation. Participants would be observed within their natural environment, without fore-warning or prior information that could influence their behaviour in any way. Notes taking will be used in recording the data collected.

Data will be collected over the span of two weeks, at four different petroleum stations. None of these filling stations belong to EMEX-PL, as EMEX-PL's stations are currently work in progress and located quite far from Accra. The goal is to observe how filling stations are run, and factors that influence customer's buying decisions.

Interviews

In-depth interviews will be used in conducting the research, specifically semi-structured interviews. "Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail" (Gill et al., 2008). In selecting participants to interview, the purposeful sampling method would be used. "Purposeful sampling is a sampling technique that qualitative researchers use to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. It is highly subjective and determined by the qualitative researcher generating the qualifying criteria each participant must meet to be considered for the research study." ("Qualitative sampling

techniques", n.d.) In as much as semi-structured interviews, make room for flexibility, and allow interviewees to go in-depth with providing information, data collected can often be quite hard to collate and place under common themes.

Interview guide can be found in the appendix.

2.3 How data would be collected.

Data collection would begin with observation at selected filling stations and would span over the course of two weeks with repeated visits to the selected filling stations. The goal of the observational research is to understand the factors that influence customer's buying decision to purchase fuel from a particular filling station. For the interviews, an interview guide would be prepared and submitted to the Ashesi IRB board for approval. After which permission to go ahead with the interviews must be granted to begin the interview process. Interviews would be scheduled at times agreed upon by participants, and a consent form would be provided to participants to gain their full approval with the interviews before proceeding. Interviews are expected to last between 30 minutes to 1 hour per person. Interview participants would include employees of EMEX-PL. Purposeful sampling would be used as the sampling method to select research participants. With the permission of the research participants, the interviews would be recorded, and transcribed after for easier analysis of collected data. In collecting data for my secondary research, I would focus on the aspects of my research not fully covered or lacking in the primary research phase.

2.4 Findings from Data Collected

2.4.1 Observation

Observations conducted over the course of two weeks, starting on Monday 1st March 2021, begun at the different filling stations, during the early hours of the day to late afternoon. Filling stations selected were selected based on the brand under which they belonged to and the existence of supermarkets, food areas, or shopping marts in or around the stations and the locations of these filling stations (i.e. whether or not they were on the main road).

Stations with shopping marts, or body work stations

Filling stations with supermarkets, food courts or shopping marts within attracted more customers, especially owners of private vehicles to their stations. These cars would often stop to buy something at these marts and choose to fill up their cars.

Filling stations on the main road or located close to bus stops

Filling stations located on the main road, had customers drive by to fill up their cars whilst waiting in line (traffic). Filling stations located closer to bus stations or 'trotro' drop off points were advantaged to also have customers pass by to purchase fuel, more often than the other stations.

Filling stations with functioning camera surveillance systems

75% of the filling stations visited had proper functioning camera surveillance systems in place, and in these stations workers were more conscious of their environment and behaviour on the job. Workers were in their prescribed uniforms and protective gears. However, in the filling stations with poor functioning camera surveillance systems, work discipline seemed to be lower. The workers were often chatting or idling around, taking breaks and walks to stores nearby and back. This was less likely in

occurrence at the filling stations with proper functioning camera surveillance systems and stricter protocols in place.

Filling stations with known brands vs. less-known brands

On average, filling stations with more popularly known brands amassed a higher amount of customer purchases as compared to lesser brands.

2.4.2 Interviews

Interviews conducted with the CEO of EMEX-PL and selected employees of EMEX-PL helped reveal the following information and data collected in line with research objectives set.

Growing their current client base: The Bulk End

EMEX-PL currently has no marketing plan in place with concerns to the retail aspect of business, they are currently making plans to move into. However, when it comes to the bulk end of business for EMEX-PL, getting or securing new customers is more defined and dependent on government regulations. Securing a customer can take a while, as long as two years, as is in the case of one of EMEX-PL's current customers. EMEX-PL performs its due diligence on the companies they plan to approach first and then work at building or establishing relationships with these target bulk customers before discussions concerning fuel arrangements begin. EMEX-PL must inform NPA of their interest to work with the new client, and gain permission from NPA to do so. The client in question must be able to prove the need for the fuel and also gain approval from NPA to be supplied before any further arrangements can continue. At times the direct approach towards customers may not work and OMCs result to bidding for new customer contracts. Bulk customers publish a tender inviting OMCs (Oil Marketing Companies) to submit bids. They set down the criteria,

examples of common criteria include; Bringing a credit bond guarantee of about Fifty Thousand Ghana Cedis, a list of current suppliers and credit arrangements, financial statements for the last three years, size of company assets amongst others. The winning bid takes the contract to supply the client/ customer. Bids come up every two years. Every two years you have to retender with the same company even if you may have won the contract initially.

Growing their current client base: The Retail End

The retail end of business is very different from the bulk end. Regulations are more focused on price disparities, the setting up and maintaining of the filling stations. Wherein players such as the; National Petroleum Authority (NPA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Town and Country Planning, Ghana Standards Authority, Ghana Highways Authority, Electricity Company of Ghana, Ministry of Labor, Ghana Water Company Limited and Ghana National Fire Service must all be involved before a filling station can be erected and considered safe and accessible to use for the general public. Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are given the flexibility to come up with their own marketing strategies in gaining customer market share.

EMEX-PL has revealed that when it comes to customers in the bulk end of their business model, getting new customers is more dependent on performing due diligence, establishing relationships with potential customers prior to working with them, bidding for contracts and getting approval from NPA to contract with new clients. The process and steps taken are very well defined. However, it is with the retail end that EMEX-PL is yet to fully venture into that requires assistance. EMEX-PL has no marketing or branding strategies in place, except for the normal branding of filling stations.

Branding Issues

Currently, EMEX-PL has had to hold off on branding and marketing plans because they are waiting for approval from NPA (National Petroleum Authority) to brand under EMEX-PL. EMEX-PL acquired Global Standards Petroleum Limited (GSPL) in 2017, and changed the name from GSPL to EMEX-PL. However, this change is yet to be approved and recognized by NPA. EMEX-PL does not want to deal with the issue of brand conflicts in the future, should they decide to brand GSPL now and change to EMEX-PL when authorization is given. Hence, the reason EMEX-PL has focused mainly on the bulk end of service provision, since that aspect does not require branding approval from NPA. The current filling stations EMEX-PL is running would remain unbranded, as NPA has given them the permission to operate these filling stations.

Service Quality

When it comes to service quality, EMEX-PL does not compromise on delivering the best. Considering the fact that the nature of the products sold by EMEX-PL is homogeneous to that of their competitors, EMEX-PL aims to differentiate itself on the market through improved service quality, effective branding, great customer service and product marketing. They go as far as to test the products they send to their customers every month at the labs for moisture content and particle content as well as any other content requirements, to ensure that the products they are providing to their customers is consistent with what they have asked for. EMEX-PL also sends end of year hampers to their bulk customers to appreciate a good service year together.

2.4.3 Secondary Research

The secondary research aspect of the data collection process was made available through the help of the internet and access to the latest edition of the 'Association of Oil Marketing Companies (AOMC) training documents and materials in fuel and LPG station management', provided by the company to assist with the research. Data collected focused on the different business operating models involved in running filling stations.

In choosing to develop or build your filling stations as an Oil Marketing Company (OMC) it is important to understand the different ways to go about this, and which options may be the best for your company.

- i. COCO (Company Owned Company Operated): With this type of business operating form of running filling stations, the company/ OMC owns the filling station and invests the needed capital to set up the station from scratch. It also handles the management and running of the filling stations from supervision of staff to managing operational costs. Profit margins are fully secured by the OMC.
- ii. DODO (Dealer Owned Dealer Operated):

The dealer, which often at times could be an individual who has invested money into setting up a filling station, runs and manages the filling station. They go to Oil Marketing Companies (OMC) to get a franchise. Higher profit margins are consumed by the dealer as compared to the CODO partnership. The dealer handles the operational costs, stock control, direct staff supervision, setting of staff salaries and conditions, site lease and more. They have more control than the OMC in this type of partnership. They also take away from the OMC the headache of having to involve themselves in the day-to-day running and operation of the site.

iii. CODO (Company Owned Dealer Operated):

In this type of partnership, the company/ OMC owns the filling stations, however it is operated by a dealer selected by the OMC. The OMC has more control in this type of partnership as compared to the DODO. Wherein, the OMC owns the site assets, the site lease, takes charge over staff appointment and setting of salary and conditions, stock control, operational costs.

EMEX-PL's seven filling stations are currently all running on the DODO model, as it is the least capital intensive model. Though the DODO model benefits EMEX-PL as a start-up in terms of cost, it has the disadvantage of the issue of working with dealers who have more of the majority of control of these filling stations. Since they built these stations, and are only branded under the OMC's and provided fuel by the OMC. EMEX-PL would have to strike a collaborative effort with their dealers to ensure that matters concerning staff recruitment, training and management, as well as customer service are handled well. Since the brand and image of the OMC would be affected and not that of the dealer, if these aspects are not handled well.

Staff Recruitment

Staff Recruitment in running filling stations is very important. This is because customer's perception of customer service is highly influenced by the treatment they receive from staff at filling stations. Hence selection and recruitment, as well as management and training of staff to include: Site Manager, Site Supervisor, Fuel Attendants/ Forecourt Attendants, Shop Attendants and Lube Bay Attendants is very important and dependent on the type of partnership the OMC has with its dealer.

With the DODO, the OMC has no control over recruitment, training and management of the staff.

2.5 Analysis of Data Collected

In analysing the data collected, information coding was used to organize the data collected from interviews and secondary research into common themes. A breakdown of the key problems identified from the data collected helped provide the information needed for the construction of the Ishikawa (Fishbone) Cause and Effect Diagram in a more organized form and manner. The points (key problems) identified were first organized into a tabular form as seen below, and then reorganized into common main themes for the fishbone diagram. For example, in the fishbone diagram we identify EMEX-PL's lack of a marketing plan or strategy in place, as a contributing factor to their customer base problem. This point connects to branding limitations placed on EMEX-PL and a lack of a marketing team as identified in the tabular breakdown provided.

2.5.1 Breakdown of Key Problems Identified

Table 4

Points Identified	Cause/ Contributing Factors	Importance	Effect
EMEX-PL has no marketing or branding strategies in place, except for the normal branding of filling stations.	EMEX-PL is yet to develop a marketing team to focus on developing helpful marketing strategies.	Having an effective marketing plan at all times, helps you improve your business reputation and increase customer awareness, as well as drive competition.	Currently since EMEX-PL is yet to go into the retail space where branding and marketing is really needed, they haven't yet felt the impact of a lack of an effective marketing plan.

The type of business operating model that EMEX-PL selects to run its filling station can affect customer service.	The type of investment placed in by the dealer and the OMC	The type of business operating module determines who has control over the staff and workers. The staff and workers are the main face of customer service for any organization.	EMEX-PL is currently running the DODO business operating module. This would mean they do not have direct control over staff and workers, as the dealers do.
Sales at filling stations can be improved upon with favourable siting and location	Favourable siting such as siting in urban areas, next to bus stops, close to highly populated areas or traffic areas increases chances of higher sales.	Favourable siting, makes filling stations conveniently accessible to the public, making it easier for customers to buy fuel there.	If filling stations are not cited at favourable locations they have to depend more on marketing and advertisement to get more customers.
Sales at filling stations can be improved with the provision of extra services such as lube bays, car wash, shops and restaurants.	Extra services at filling stations make these filling stations more attractive to the public	Extra services provide the opportunity to make extra income, and enhance customer service offerings at filling stations.	Extra services boost sales, however EMEX-PL cannot benefit from providing extra services at their current filling stations because of the DODO model they run. Such services will belong to the dealer. They would however still make the station attractive.
Filling stations with well-known brands experience more customers	Well-known brands have spent time, often years to establish their brand names	It is important to build and establish your brand to differentiate yourself from the competition.	Less known brands do not enjoy the large market shares well established brands enjoy. In EMEX-PLs case branding limitations placed on them is hugely affecting their ability to establish a presence in the market.
Supervision at filling stations enhances service quality	Good Supervision practices is influenced by the dealer or OMC in charge and the policies,	Good Supervision ensures staff are productive and efficient at work, and the	Poor Supervision at the filling stations could result in poor customer services given to customers, stealing, poor management of filling stations. With the

	principles and rules they put in place to be implemented by the Supervisor.	filling stations are run efficiently.	DODO module EMEX-PL intends to run, risk of experiencing this is higher, when the dealer does not take Supervision on site seriously.
Use of functioning camera surveillance enhances service quality	Camera Surveillance equipment are for monitoring activities on the stations.	Staff are more aware of their actions and activities, customer interaction and engagement.	Staff do not misbehave on site, as they know their actions can be traced. Stealing is reduced, as staff fear being caught in the act.

2.5.2 Fishbone Diagram

The Fishbone Diagram was created by Kaoru Ishikawa, and is also known as the cause-and-effect diagram because it allows you to pin down to the root cause of an event, and establishes a relationship between the resulting effect/ outcome of an event and all the possible factors that contributed to the outcome. The contributing factors/problems (causes) labelled in the Ishikawa diagram below were obtained from the table breakdown above, and reorganized into main themes. The fishbone diagram focuses on the problem of EMEX-PL's need to grow a customer base, specific to the retail industry in which they operate. They lack a market presence in the retail space, as a result of branding limitations placed on them by the National Petroleum Authority (NPA), they lack a customer service engagement strategy/ plan, and are currently new entrants in the retail space, hence they find it difficult to compare to already established brands.

Figure 2

Fishbone Diagram



2.6 Conclusion

The needs assessment exposed EMEX-PLs desire to grow their current customer base in the retail end of their service provision. Whilst the bulk end of EMEX-PLs service provision model is heavily regulated by the National Petroleum Authority (NPA), when it comes to customer acquisition, we can say the company has gained more experience in defining a process for that. However, when it comes to the retail end of service provision, EMEX-PL can be described as new entrants in the space, and with the lack of a marketing department at the current moment, and delays for approval to brand from NPA, the company needs a structured plan that would help improve their current position and increase their chances of growing their customer base.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Chapter Overview

The chapter above focused on identifying the difficulties and problems faced by EMEX-PL in their line of operation and desire to expand their customer base. Now with the company's problems clearly identified, this chapter would focus on providing a better understanding of the role of an efficient marketing mix in one's business model and the role of a service blueprint in defining your service offering.

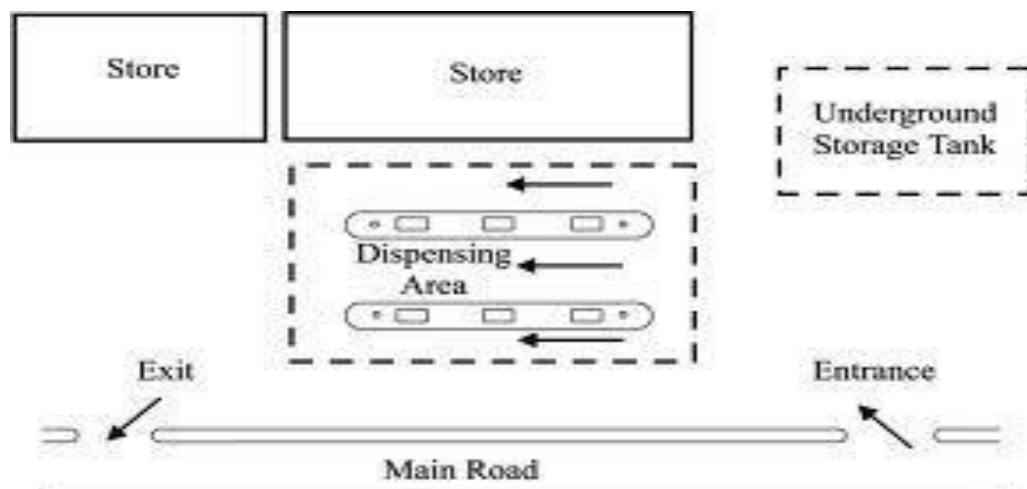
1.2 The Retail Space: Fuel Filling Stations

The fuel retail industry focuses on the supply of fuel and fuel products through filling stations (retail units) to the general public. Currently the retail space of the downstream petroleum fuel industry has grown quite competitive over the years, especially after deregulation policies put in place by the government in 2015.

Below is a basic layout of the retail filling station

Figure 3

Basic Outlay of the Retail Fuel Station



Source: Association of Oil Marketing Companies (AOMC) Training Session in Fuel and LPG Station Management.

1.3 Problems Identified and Relevance of the Project

EMEX-PL needs help to grow its customer base, and hence the purpose of this project is to develop a creative and strategic solution grounded on research to help solve their problem.

1.4 Marketing

The Marketing Orientation theory, basically underlines the importance and purpose of Marketing. “To be successful, businesses should determine customer’s needs and wants, and satisfy them more effectively than their competitors”. (mywebwriters, 2013). Marketing allows you to improve and differentiate the way you deliver a particular service to a customer. Marketing in itself refers to “any actions a company takes to attract an audience to the company’s product or services through high-quality messaging.” (Forsey, 2021). Good marketing gives your business a competitive edge and an opportunity to become a preferred option to your competitors.

1.4.1 Marketing Models: The 7Ps of the Marketing Mix

The goal of the marketing mix is to help companies better understand their product offering to their customers, and plan a successful product offering to market.

Figure 4

The 7Ps of The Marketing Mix



Source: (Langford, 2019)

Product: In developing your marketing strategy, you must make sure to ensure in your strategy that the product meets or exceeds the expectations of your target customers.

Place: Where do your customers have access to your products, how can you enhance the location or place of purchase to incentivize buying in your customers.

Price: How much does your product cost, the price you set should be within the perceived value of your product by your customer.

Promotion: “Promotion refers to your advertising, marketing and sales techniques. This could mean traditional advertising, via TV, radio, billboards, etc.”. (Langford, 2019).

Physical evidence: Looks at the physical aspects of your business that your customers can point to or interact with to show your business actually exists.

People: “There’s no use in creating a great brand, innovative products or amazing social media presence if you don’t have the right people behind you. It’s integral to the survival of your business that you make sure that all of your employees, no matter how behind-the-scenes or customer-facing they are, have fair training and a considerable understanding of their role and the impact that it has within the company” (Langford, 2019).

Processes: “Process describes a series of actions that are taken in delivering the product or service to the customer. Examining the process means assessing aspects such as the sales funnel, your payment systems, distribution procedures and managing customer relationships.” (Langford, 2019). The methods you use to develop your processes should be such that they focus on minimising cost and maximising value.

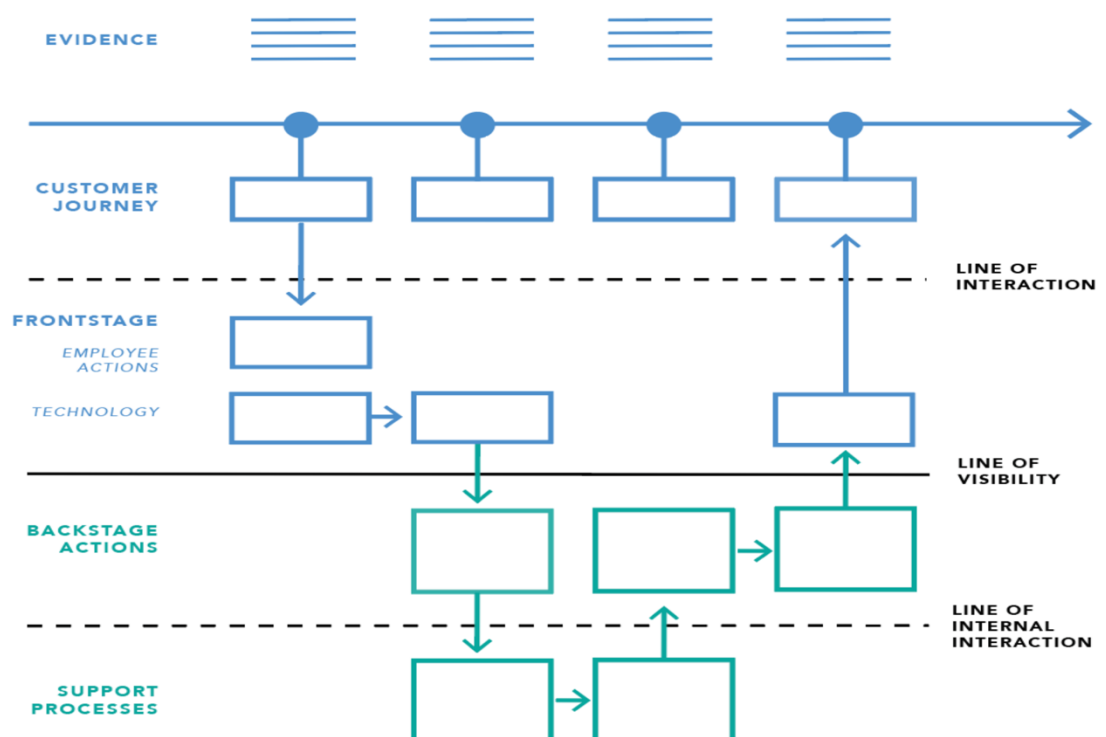
1.5 Customer Service: Service Blueprint Model

“Service blueprints visualize organizational processes in order to optimize how a business delivers its customer/ user experience. It is a primary mapping tool used in the service design process to explore the relationships between different service components, people, props (physical or digital evidence), and processes, that are directly tied to touchpoints in a specific customer journey.” (Gibbons, 2017).

Service blueprints help us identify the pain points and gain points experienced by customers that can be improved upon or enhanced upon to make the customer's service experience better.

Figure 5

Service Blueprint Model



A service blueprint comprises of the following elements:

- i. Customer Journey: The customer journey stage of the service blueprint model identifies and maps out the customer's process from when they engage with your service.
- ii. Front-stage activities: The front stage activities make up the activities that are visible to the eye of the customer, and are performed by the contact employees of the companies or frontstage actors of the company. The front-stage activities of the service blueprint model covers the human-to-human interactions of the company, as well as human-to-computer interactions of the company that occur within the customer's view.
- iii. Back-stage activities: These are the activities that happen behind the scenes to support the front-stage activities.
- iv. Support Processes: They are the internal activities that must be performed to support the employees providing the services.

CHAPTER 4: SOLUTION & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

4.1 Chapter Overview

“OMCs cannot survive just by adding their distribution outlets but rather by the adoption of holistic marketing programs and strategies. Hence, the petrol selling companies are now doing a lot of activities such as petroleum product branding, value added services, innovative retailing, advertisement & sales promotion, consumer behaviors & marketing research as part of gaining more market share other than focusing only on distribution outlet increment.” (Musa, 2020)

4.2 Proposed Solution

An innovative service blueprint for the delivery of an enhanced customer service experience at EMEX-PL's filling stations.

The proposed solution seeks to:

- Strategically position EMEX-PL in the market through differentiation of its customer service experience at its filling stations.
- Help grow EMEX-PL's customer base, through word of mouth advertisement and referrals from customers who experience EMEX-PLs customer service at its filling stations.
- Improve and Increase EMEX-PL's customer retention ratio with time, to help the company grow a loyal customer base over time.

4.3 Marketing Objectives

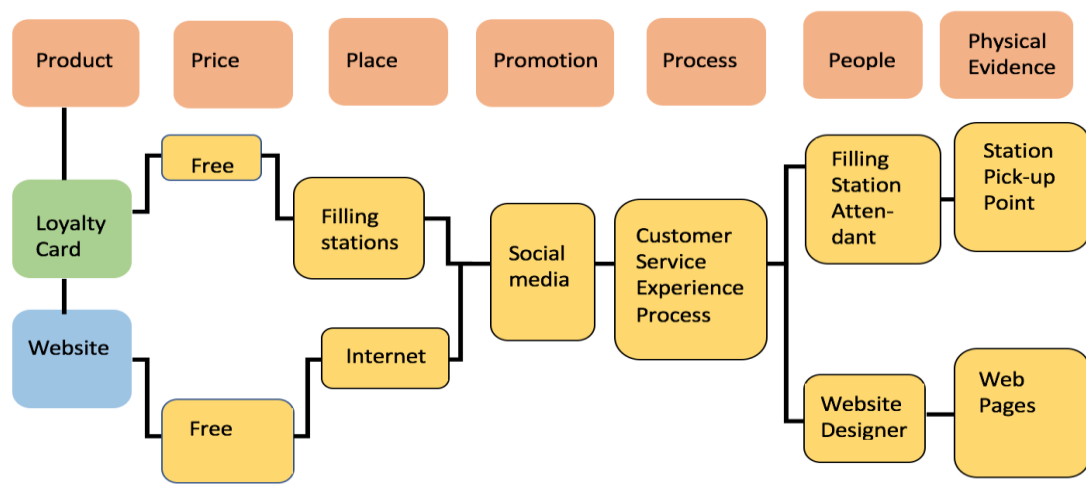
- i. To increase EMEX-PLs customer share in the market by 10 to 15% within a year of the full implementation of the proposed strategic plan, after NPA approval is given.

- ii. To increase customer sales at filling stations by 30 – 45% within a year of execution of the proposed solution, after NPA approval is given.

4.4 Marketing Mix

Figure 6

A Marketing Mix for EMEX-PL



The aim of a marketing mix is to come up with a strategy for your business, that would cause customers to choose your products or services over that of your competitors. The introduction of a loyalty card and website into a customer service experience process to be adapted by EMEX-PL is aimed at strategically positioning EMEX-PL in the market as a customer-service oriented brand. A company that looks out for the overall customer experience of their customers. Taking a service approach strategy towards the market, would help EMEX-PL build a loyal customer base with time.

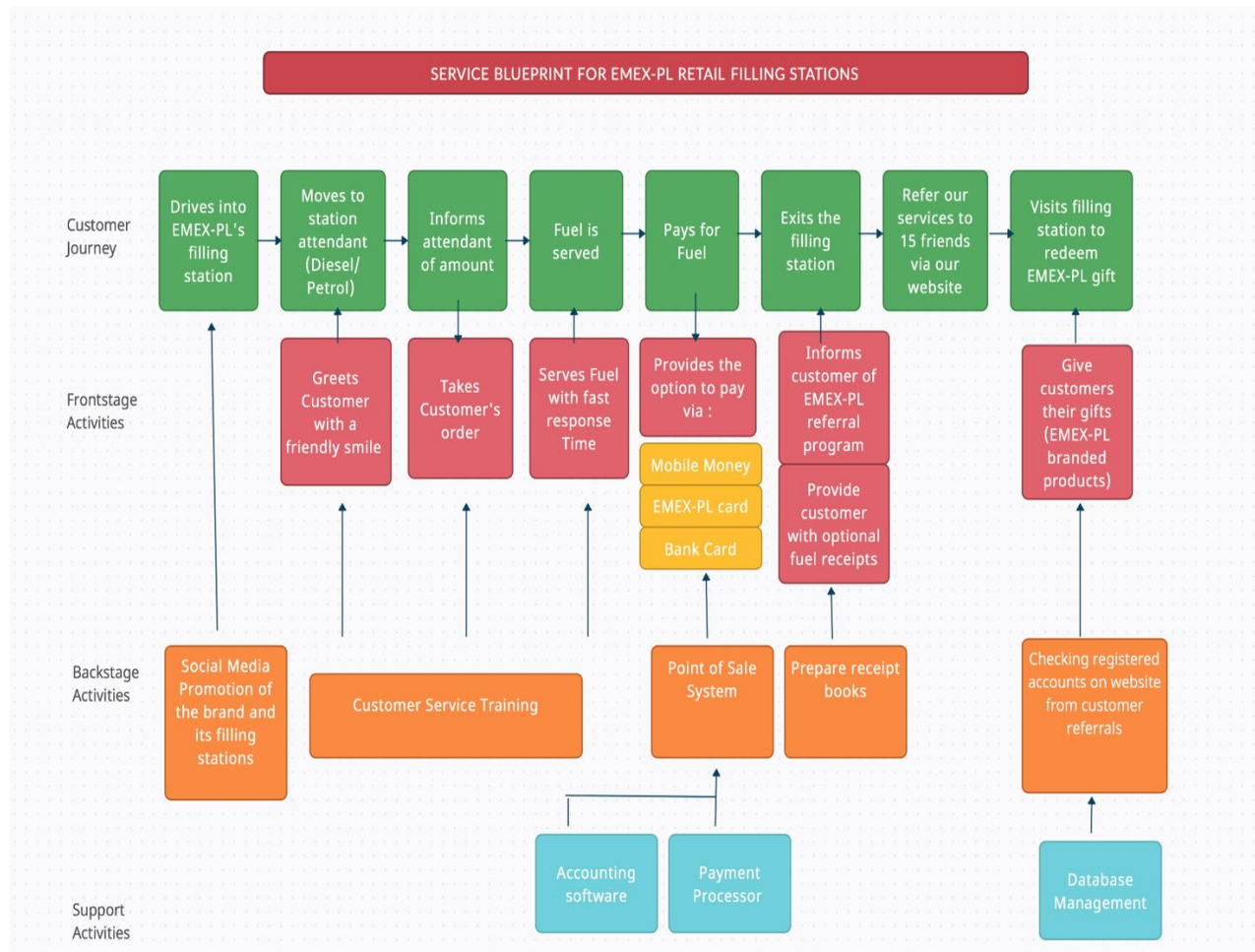
The customer loyalty card would allow customers who reach the loyalty status to be able to store up credit points on the card that can be used to purchase fuel at EMEX-PLs filling stations. “Customer Loyalty Programs help build a more engaging

customer experience. And 75 percent of customers base purchasing decisions on their experience, according to our 2021 Customer Experience Trends Report. Half of customers we surveyed also said that customer experience is more important to them now compared to a year ago.” (Black, 2020). With the customer loyalty card, customers can enjoy discounts provided by EMEX-PL via the card. The loyalty card, acts as a customer retention strategy to grow customer loyalty, as well as encourage customers to purchase from the brand to reach loyalty status, and hence EMEX-PL's customer base in the long run. The loyalty cards are free, and can be collected at any of EMEX-PL's filling stations.

Every business needs a website, which acts as a forefront. People looking for information about your company can visit these websites to find out more about the services you offer. The look, quality and professionalism of your website says a lot about your brand. As most first impressions are created there. The design of the website must display the brand colours of EMEX-PL, which is orange and white, provide information about the company, the services they offer, interesting projects they have undertaken, their social media engagements and more. The website helps to increase the company's reach, as well as customer visibility and recognition of the brand. The use of EMEX-PL's website would also be free.

4.5 Innovative Customer Service Blueprint

The innovative customer service blueprint designed for EMEX-PL integrates within it aspects of the marketing mix above. The goal of the customer service blueprint is to position EMEX-PL strategically in the market, through differentiated customer service experiences at their filling stations. To keep customers coming back and increase word of mouth marketing and customer referrals for the company.

Figure 7**Service Blueprint for EMEX-PL Retail Filling Stations**

EMEX-PL's filling stations must always be neat and presentable. The customer drives into an EMEX-PL filling station, and is greeted by one of EMEX-PL's attendants with a smile and friendly engagement. The customers tells the attendant his purchase order, and the attendant serves the customer his order. The attendant gives the customer the option to pay via mobile money, cash, bank card or the EMEX-PL Loyalty Card. The attendant briefly tells the customer about EMEX-PL's referral program, wherein for every 15 friends that they recommend EMEX-PL's services to, they can redeem their gift at any of EMEX-PL's filling stations. The customer drives off after service is fully rendered and payment has been made.

Customer Service Training Programs would have to be organized for fuel attendants and service personnel to enhance customer friendly engagements with customers at all EMEX-PL filling stations, as this aspect of service delivery is where emphasis is laid most. EMEX-PL would have to come to an agreement with their dealers, that would allow them to be more hands on with service personnel's. The availability of different payment options at EMEX-PL's filling stations helps to further enhance customer's experience, as this means customers can now use different payment methods available to them to purchase the same services. And finally with EMEX-PL's referral program, EMEX-PL would be able to encourage word of mouth advertisement from their customers and customer referrals. Branded EMEX-PL gifts e.g. T-shirts, key holders, stickers, calendars, office book holders .etc to be given out, would also go a long way to enforce the brand in the mind of target customers. As customers who use these branded products, advertise the brand wherever they go. Active social media promotions by the company would also go a long way to spread the word on EMEX-PL's defining customer service experience.

In summary, EMEX-PL's customer service experience at its filling stations include, great customer service engagements with customers by service attendants, flexibility with payment options at EMEX-PL's filling stations, EMEX-PL's loyalty program for its loyal customers, as well as its rewarding referral program.

How EMEX-PL's customer referrals would work

The EMEX-PL referral program would run on EMEX-PL's website. Customers create customer accounts with EMEX-PL using their emails. With these customer accounts, EMEX-PL can send automated emails, newsletters, customer birthday wishes amongst others to their customers to keep real contact with their customers,

and grow their customer base as well as sieve feedback from customers through customer feedback forms.

Figure 8

EMEX-PL's customer referral page on its website.

The image shows a web form for signing up for an EMEX-PL customer account. The form is set against a light blue background. At the top, there is an orange header bar with the text "SIGN UP FOR YOUR EMEX-PL CUSTOMER ACCOUNT". Below this, the form fields are arranged vertically: "First Name", "Last Name", "Date of Birth", "Email", "Password", and "Confirm Password". Each field has a white input box. Below the password fields, there is another orange header bar with the text "Who referred us to you?". This is followed by three fields: "Name", "Email", and "Skip". Each field has a white input box. At the bottom of the form, there is an orange button with the text "REGISTER MY ACCOUNT". Below the button, there is a small line of text: "Enhance your customer experience with us."

Customers register their details, and if EMEX-PL was referred to them by a friend, they input his or her name and email account details. This way, EMEX-PL can track its customer referrals to determine if they make the 15 referrals per gift/ reward.

4.6 Implementation Plan

This section focuses on the timelines, activities, personnel required and estimated costs of the proposed solution. The proposed solution is customer-centric and focused at establishing good customer relationships with customers, through

training of EMEX-PLs staff to provide good customer service. Currently, EMEX-PL faces the issue of obtaining branding rights from the National Petroleum Authority (NPA), to brand their filling stations. The implementation plan of the proposed solution would be divided into two to allow EMEX-PL implement some aspects of the proposed solution now, whilst they wait for branding rights from National Petroleum Authority (NPA). The first part of the implementation plan would take into consideration the current limitations on EMEX-PL to not brand their filling stations, whilst the latter would be implemented once branding rights have been given to the company.

BEFORE BRANDING RIGHTS

This aspect of the implementation plan would focus on the development of EMEX-PL's website, customer training for EMEX-PL staff and attendants, and the inclusion of Mobile Money and Bank Card options to payment options at EMEX-PL's filling stations. Social media efforts, the use of the EMEX-PL card, the EMEX-PL referral program and gift giveaways of EMEX-PL branded products would be executed when branding rights have been given to the company.

Table 5

Implementation Plan before Branding Rights

Timeline	Person Responsible	Details/ Activity	Estimated Cost (Cedi)
Feb 2021 – June 2021	Mr. Sekyi	<p>EMEX-PL Website The EMEX-PL website is very important and should be prioritized. Mr. Sekyi has already begun arrangements on EMEX-PL's website.</p> <p>The referral page of the website would be included in the design of the site, however it would not be used or</p>	Estimated Website Development Fee – GH12,500.00

		advertised until the company has branding rights.	
July 2021	Mr. Sekyi, Filling Station dealers	Customer Service Training Program Training staff and workers at EMEX-PL filling stations is very important in bringing back business. Customers who have a memorable experience at EMEX-PL's filling stations are more likely to come back. It must be performed periodically, from time to time. Finding a trusted training agency with whom to build a lasting relationship with, would prove helpful.	Varies
Aug 2021 – Nov 2021	Mr. Ben (Financial Officer)	Payment Options: Introduce Mobile money Option EMEX-PL can begin testing and the integration of Mobile Money and Bank Cards into their payment options at their filling stations.	Varies

AFTER BRANDING RIGHTS

After branding rights have been granted by National Petroleum Authority (NPA) for EMEX-PL's filling stations, EMEX-PL can focus their energy on pushing their brand out through social media, the referral program in its service experience process, and brand identifying tools/ resources to include, the EMEX-PL Loyalty Card and EMEX-PL branded gift giveaways. Active promotion and branding efforts need to be complimented with identifiable EMEX-PL stations, to avoid customers confusing EMEX-PL's stations for possibly other unbranded stations or finding difficulty identifying EMEX-PL's stations. Hence the reason why marketing intensive aspects of the proposed service experience solution for EMEX-PL's stations are to be executed after branding rights have been granted.

Table 6

Implementation Plan after Branding Rights

Timeline	Person Responsible	Details/ Activity	Estimated Cost (Cedi)
[This activity can only begin after NPA approval is given]	Marketing Manager/ Personnel or team [To be hired by EMEX-PL]	Social Media Marketing and Management Setting up EMEX-PL social media pages, growing followers and engagement with users through content creation and effective posting strategies.	No cost involved, except for cost involved in paid ads which vary.
[This activity can only begin after NPA approval is given]	Marketing Manager/ Personnel or team [To be hired by EMEX-PL]	EMEX-PL Customer Referral Program The implementation of EMEX-PL Customer Referral Program can begin. Training attendants/ staff on how the program runs or works needs to be considered in planning out the program. As these individuals are at the forefront of customer interactions.	Cost involved in designing branded products e.g. T-shirts, keyholders, office mugs etc. vary.
[This activity can only begin after NPA approval is given]	Mr. Eric Asante (Business Development Officer)	EMEX-PL Loyalty Card EMEX-PL can introduce its loyalty card, to motivate customers to want to reach loyalty status to access the card and the benefits that come with the card.	GH 2294 per 2000 cards
[This activity can only begin after NPA approval is given]	Mr. Ben (Financial Officer)	Payment Options: Introduce EMEX-PL Loyalty Card as a Payment Option EMEX-PL can introduce the EMEX-PL Loyalty card as part of the payment options for customers to purchase fuel.	Varies

Breakdown of projected estimates are available in the Appendix.

4.7 Monitoring and Control

The table below summarizes the Key Performing Indicators to be used by EMEX-PL in measuring and assessing the company's progress in executing the proposed solution.

Table 7

Monitoring and Control: Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	How	Frequency
Sales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of units sold per week. 	Go over daily accounts and financial records. Check fuel amounts sold to make sure fuel purchases are in sync with total amounts of units sold per week. The fuel amounts tell you the number of litres sold in the week.	Weekly basis
Employee - Customer Relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Satisfaction 	Get feedback from your customers on how satisfied they are with your services.	Quarterly basis
Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media/ brand awareness rate 	Social media growth and following Increase in social media engagement, reposts, likes, shares and mentions.	Monthly basis
Customer Loyalty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Purchase frequency 	Customer receipts from fuel purchases	Two to Three times in a year
Customer Acquisition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Referrals 	Count customer accounts and visits made from customer referrals	Monthly basis

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter aims at giving a general conclusion to this project, recommendations, limitations and challenges faced, as well as lessons learned over the course of the project.

5.2 Limitations and Challenges

A limitation faced during the data collection process was time delays from the IRB board affecting the submission of a follow-up questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data on what customers look out for in purchasing fuel from a filling station or staying loyal to a particular brand. This limitation faced was however mitigated with the help of secondary data collected on previously researched insights into customer expectations and observational research conducted.

5.3 Recommendations

EMEX-PL should invest time, energy and effort into understanding their position in the market to be able to fully project the impact of implementing the suggested solutions within the period of time or time frame they find themselves in.

Secondly, EMEX-PL intends to build more stations with time in the future, from research conducted in the earlier stages of this project, the siting of one's filling stations and extra service additions at one's filling station can help boost and increase sales. Hence, EMEX-PL could take these factors into consideration when building future filling stations

5.4 Lessons learnt from the Project

I have had the chance to explore customer service concepts within the fuel industry, and how OMCs can work at improving their brand position in the market. This project has provided me with the opportunity to learn a lot about an industry I have always found rather rigid and boring, and definitely changed my perceptions on the area to a more positive outlook.

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APPENDIX

6.1 Interview Guides

Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topic: A strategic Plan to increase EMEX-PL's client base

Research objectives:

General Objective: To determine the current issues and difficulties faced by EMEX-PL as a company in achieving their goal of increasing their client base.

Specific Objectives:

- i. To assess the company's efforts in increasing their current client base, and the results it has yielded.
- ii. To identify any challenges or weaknesses preventing EMEX-PL from growing their current client/ customer base.
- iii. To determine what influences EMEX-PLs target customer's preferences in choosing a petroleum brand.
- iv. To map out EMEX-PL's approach towards customers in the retail end and bulk end, in getting them to engage with their services.

Consent form is signed before proceeding with the Interview process.

Interview questions with Off-site employees:

Introductory questions

1. Hi, my name is Manuella Sekyi, and you are Could you tell me a bit about yourself?
 2. How long have you been working at EMEX-PL
 3. How would you describe your working experience here with EMEX-PL so far
 4. What do you think about EMEX-PLs current mission statement as a company?
 5. Do you think EMEX-PL as a company should be focusing on increasing its current client/ customer base and why?
 6. What has been your current working experience in line with this goal (increasing customer client base) , whether directly or indirectly depending on your field of operation.
-
1. How has EMEX-PL as a company placed in efforts to increase their current client base.
 2. What difficulties in your opinion, has the company faced in its attempt to increase its client base.
 3. Have any of these difficulties been tackled so far, and how did EMEX-PL go about it.
 4. Are any of these problems mentioned peculiar only to EMEX-PL as a company in any way?
 5. How does EMEX-PL assess the growth of its client base?
 6. Do you think their current methods of assessing client growth is effective and what are your reasons for your response?
 7. In your opinion what do you think your target customers look for in a petroleum brand before making a purchase from them.
 8. Do you think advertisement is important in getting new customers, both with the retail and bulk end of your service provision?
 9. How does EMEX-PL go about promoting and advertising its brand.
 10. How effective are these promotional and advertisement strategies in your opinion, in promoting EMEX-PL's brand in the market.
 11. How does EMEX-PL assess the impact of its promotional and advertisement strategies in the market.
 12. I. Do you think there can be more that can be done to help promote EMEX-PLs brand at the current moment?
II. Why do you think so?
 13. Do you think improving EMEX-PL's brand would impact EMEX-PL's attempt to increase its client base in anyway.

Interview questions with On-site employees:

1. Are customers in the retail sector treated differently from those in the bulk sector of operations in your opinion?
2. Are there any reasons for this?
3. How do you run operations on site in dealing with bulk customers? Could you kindly take me through a step by step process?
4. Do customers in the bulk sector have different preferences from those in the retail sectors? Could you name a few examples.
5. Do you think EMEX-PL needs to work on increasing its current customer base and why?
6. Does EMEX-PL have the staff strength on site at the current moment to handle an increase in customers/ clients.
7. What do you do as part of customer service to keep your current customers coming back.
8. How has EMEX-PL as a company placed in efforts to increase their current client base.
9. What difficulties in your opinion, has the company faced in its attempt to increase its client base.
10. Have any of these difficulties been tackled so far, and how did EMEX-PL go about it.
11. Are any of these problems mentioned peculiar only to EMEX-PL as a company in any way?
12. How does EMEX-PL assess the growth of its client base on site?

6.2 Consent Form**Consent Form****Consent for participation in a research interview**

I agree to participate in a research project led by Ms. Manuella Efua Sekyi from Ashesi University, Ghana. This research is aimed at helping to identify the problems and challenges EMEX-PL as a company currently faces in its attempt to increase its current client base. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project:

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me, and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. I have the right not to answer any of the questions, If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session. I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
4. If I have any questions of concern I am entitled to ask.

I hereby give my permission to proceed with the interview.

----- ----- Participant's Signature	----- ----- Date
----- ----- Researcher's Signature	----- ----- Date

For further information you can contact my supervisor Dr. Kwami Justina Morris via mail at kjmorris@aucampus.onmicrosoft.com. This study and consent form has been reviewed by Ashesi IRB for Human Subjects Research. For further information contact the committee through irb@ashesi.edu.gh.

6.3 Projected Cost Estimates

Website Development

Website Developer Fee – GH 10,000 – GH 15,000 (rounded to GH 12,500)

Search Engine Optimization Plugin – GH 711

Google Analytics – FREE

Landing Page Plugin - FREE

Social Media Integration Plugin – GH 115

Chat Feature Plugin – GH 1731

Estimated Total: GH 15,057

Loyalty Cards

Vistaprint Customer Loyalty Cards Printing Cost – GH 2294

(\$400 per 2000 customized printed cards)

6.4 EMEX-PL Loyalty Card



6.5 Examples of EMEX-PL branded products

