

# Resilient Marketing Strategies in the Field of Engineering Services within the Oil Petrochemical Industry

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## Abstract

The oil industry, particularly the petrochemical sector, is one of the important GDP in the country. In the event of crisis in any area within this sector, many issues and challenges arise for the country. Cultivating resilience helps navigate through current turmoil and be prepared to face any other challenges, even transforming threats into opportunities. Understanding this crucial aspect, this study delves into the hot topic of marketing resilience when faced with challenging conditions globally. The current research method is applied research based on the way is gathered through a descriptive method within the documentary branch. As such, by studying documents, articles, and books on resilient marketing, the data were collected, analysed using coding techniques. According to the output of the document analysis, resilient market responses such as emphasis on data, agility, market technology examination and optimization, cost prioritization, exploration of new opportunities, digital marketing, and loyalty programs have been utilized. In this research, we seek to illustrate the characteristics of marketing flexibility based on five elements: mindfulness, self-awareness, goal orientation, positive relationships, and self-care. Additionally, the importance of data and their analysis through artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques for distinguishing key customers vital for the organization's future, staying agile and relevant in the face of uncertainties and market scenarios, is always at the forefront.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Resilient Marketing, Challenges in the Oil and Petrochemical Industry.

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## **Introduction**

The oil industry is one of the leading commercial industries in Iran. Possessing the world's largest hydrocarbon reserves (first in gas and third in oil reserves), Iran has gained an exceptional position in this field (Ghasemi & Naderi, 2016). Parallel to the petrochemical industry, which serves as one of the main downstream of the oil industry, it plays a significant role in the country's (Naeimi et al., 2023). In Iran, the petrochemical industry holds a special position by ranking first in creating value-added and non-oil exports (Haji behrami et al., 2020). The oil and petrochemical industry are considered the largest sector in global trade, interacting with other commercial sectors and exerting influence over them (Doulabi & Arkideh, 1396). With the development of the global economy, market globalization, and the increasing recognition of the importance of knowledge and innovation, competition among producers of goods and service providers has intensified (Danilova & Litvinova, 2022). In these conditions, if the products or services of some companies become highly competitive in the local market, other companies must increase their competitiveness or exit the market (Voronov, 2022). For this reason, adopting the appropriate marketing and sales strategies for oil and petrochemical products by producers and exporters holds special significance. Among these, strategic marketing plays a crucial role in organizations in a dynamic and guiding the development of new products/services for existing markets (Oziyo et al., 2023). On the other hand, marketing, especially in the oil and petrochemical industry in Iran, faces many challenges that, if not addressed could pose threats in this field, necessitating analysis and investigation for prevention, which is the fundamental issue of this article. In recent years, due to the increase in exchange rates and sanctions by the United and Europe, Iran has faced multiple economic problems, and companies, especially those involved in import activities, have been destabilized. Facilitating the supply chain is essential for the survival of any industry. Therefore, in the face of oil, financial sanctions, and economic recession, determining marketing strategies holds special importance (Sohilizadeh, 2021). Among these, the proper implementation of projects in the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries and designing and managing innovative marketing strategies are considered as key solutions. The integrated strategic marketing management system is one of the main infrastructures and elements of the successful implementation of energy industry projects based on cost, time, quality, and efficiency. This system directly affects project objectives, processes, resources, and key performance results of projects and companies. Marketing in the oil and gas industries can be divided into two major sections: pre-project commencement and post-project completion. The initial phase focuses on market development and introducing the company for participation in tenders, while the second phase deals with the sale of oil, gas, and petrochemical products (Yadegar et al., 2006). In the era of digital transformation, businesses are experiencing unprecedented growth and opportunities. From startups to multinational corporations, the digital domain has leveled the playing field, providing access to a wider audience and innovative tools that simplify operations. However, with such advancements, new challenges emerge. Cyber threats, technological disruptions, and rapid changes in consumer behavior have introduced a level of volatility that demands more than just a digital presence; it requires resilience. Delving deeper into the digital age, the ability of businesses to adapt, recover, and thrive amidst these challenges becomes crucial (Gates, 2023). Among these, novel concepts that impact organizations in general and national organizations in particular in the future are of utmost importance; such as the philosophy of resilience in marketing, which is based on maximizing resistance to the leading challenges in the marketing domain, a vital aspect for the

survival of contemporary companies. The global business environment inherently exhibits various signs of disruptions, where uncertainty and severe disorder do not necessarily stem solely from market changes (Heet et al., 2021; Delyus et al., 2021). These challenges may arise from non-commercial, uncontrollable events, and potential circumstances that manifest as long-term adversities (Agarwal & Adartech, 2020; Alvares & Barney, 2020). While many businesses succumb and perish under such destructive conditions, some can courageously act in the face major disruptions and survive (Ibora et al., 2020; Salvato et al., 2020; Venzl et al., 2020; Williams & Shepard, 2021). To counteract external shocks, companies make different decisions compared to normal circumstances (Agard & Nielsen, 2021) and continuously adjust their business models based on new conditions (Liu et al., 2021; Andrews et al., 2020; Amanakha et al., 2021). Resilient marketing is an organization's ability to maintain its primary marketing objective and integrate its marketing in the face of disruptions and challenges. It is about adaptability, agility, and readiness for any adversities and ensures that marketing processes can continue their performance in times of crisis and even progress amidst challenges. Understanding resilient marketing requires formulating a model that can analyze the drivers, key variables, strategies, and consequences. In this regard, the present study aimed to develop a resilient marketing model in the field of engineering services in the oil and petrochemical industry.

## **Research Literature**

### **Marketing**

Marketing is the act attracting satisfaction and retaining customers, which is one of the key components of business and commerce management. Marketing is usually carried out by a seller who is typically a retailer or a producer (Lamb et al., 2016). Products can be marketed to other businesses<sup>1</sup> or directly to consumers<sup>2</sup>(Hester, 2019), and sometimes tasks are outsourced to specialized marketing companies like a media firm, market research agency, or advertising agency. Sometimes, a trade association or governmental organization (such as agricultural marketing services) advertises on behalf of an entire industry or region, often promoting a specific type of food, agricultural product from a particular region, or a city or region.

Marketing is currently defined by the American Marketing Association as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society large." However, the definition of marketing has evolved over the years. The American Marketing Association reviews this definition and redefines it for "marketing research" every three years (American Marketing Association, 2021). The "society at large" interest was added to this definition in 2008 (Parmerlee et al., 2021). The evolution of this definition can be seen by comparing the 2008 definition with the 1935 version of the American Marketing Association's definition: "Marketing is the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers" (Genni et al., 2021). The newer definition emphasizes the increasing prominence of other stakeholders in the new concept of marketing. Recent definitions of marketing place greater emphasis on the relationship with the consumer rather than the mere exchange process. For example, Philip Kotler, a prolific marketing author and professor, has evolved his definition of marketing. In 1980, he defined marketing as "satisfying needs and wants through an exchange process" and in 2018 he

defined it as "a process by which companies engage customers, create strong customer relationships, and create customer value in order to capture value (Kotler, 2018)."

## Resilience

Resilience interventions have gained importance among researchers due to the potential they have for promoting well-being and reducing the prevalence of mental disorders, which has become a growing concern, especially in Western countries due to the associated costs. Resilience emerged as a construct in the physical domain to describe the characteristics of certain materials that allow them to absorb a specific impact energy and return to their original state after being subjected to pressure (Navai et al., 2020). Later, the concept of resilience expanded to other areas of knowledge, including psychology. A probable analogy that can be made across these two domains is to say that the impact or pressure described in physics can be compared to a potentially damaging situation from which an individual can recover and return to a previous functional state (Fria et al., 2021).

The definition provided by the American Psychological Association indicates the connection between these two domains and describes this structure as the ability to "bounce back" in undesired situations (Kamas et al., 2016). However, since psychology is not an exact science, the definition of resilience as a human phenomenon is not very consensual. Some authors define resilience from a more static perspective (Britt et al., 2020) as returning to a previous level of functioning, while other authors, besides this aspect, adopt an evolutionary perspective that seeks a higher level of functioning. (Bonanno, 2004).

By combining some of these perspectives, it can be said that resilience can be analyzed on a continuum (Joyce et al., 2018). The lower level of flexibility is a response that assumes the restoration of functional state after a moderate impact caused by an undesirable event. The moderate level is characterized by a more flexible response, where the impact of the undesirable event is minimal and short-term. Both levels are related to a static type resilience. Ultimately, the highest level of flexibility involves a minimal or fruitless impact from which an individual grows and creates a higher level of performance.

This level of positive psychological growth (Seligman, 2020) is also referred to as evolutionary resilience. However, as some authors argue, can resilience be defined or developed solely as a response to an undesirable event (Pulferman et al., 2020). Resilience has reactive and proactive elements. These elements can be nurtured and trained to elevate resilience to the fourth level called strategic resilience. In this case, an individual can anticipate situations, alter their outcomes, and actively engage in the resilience process. From this perspective, along with the increasing prevalence of harmful and stressful events, resilience interventions become relevant.

The first responders and crisis management agencies have been trained to deal a wide range of incidents, and in modern society, they have evolved into highly technological and complex networks of actors.

However, the incidents and disasters they face have also evolved and likely involve multiple systems, actors, and technologies. Therefore, first responders and crisis management agencies must understand the increasing complexity and have the ability to adapt and coordinate crisis management effectively. This is often referred to as resilience, a concept commonly used in disaster management research (e.g. Birkland

& Waterman, 2009; Boin et al., 2010; Lundberg & Johansson, 2015; Soden et al., 2015; Tranca & Johansson, 2011).

Resilience has gained attention for crisis management agencies due to the increasing frequency and impact of disasters, including natural disasters, pandemics, and terrorism (Kater et al., 2010; Zeng et al., 2014). However, a systematic literature review of the concept of resilience has shown that its definition is notably varied (Bergström et al., 2015; Zartman et al., 2016), with an examination of 440 articles revealing over 300 different definitions of the term resilience (Walters et al., 2015). Therefore, it is still unclear what resilience exactly is and how it can be educated, measured, or assessed in crisis management systems, such as emergency healthcare systems (Jaspen & Veitch, 2020; Wigg et al., 2019).

For the purpose of this study, we define resilience as "the ability to resist, absorb, adapt, and recover from the effects of disruptions and changes promptly and effectively, including through adaptation and reconstruction of essential structures and functions" (Walters et al., 2015).

According to Regmi et al. (2015), most published articles in the literature on resilience have focused on the development of resilience theories. For example, some of this theoretical work, Woods (2015) categorizes resilience based on four different fundamental concepts:

1. Resilience as bouncing back from shock and returning to equilibrium.
2. Resilience as a synonym for robustness.
3. Resilience as the opposite of fragility, meaning as adaptive capacity that challenges the boundaries when surprises occur.
4. Resilience as network architecture that can maintain future adaptability.

Hollnagel and colleagues (2015) describe resilience as consisting of four related and interconnected functions, namely responding, monitoring, anticipating, and learning. Lundberg and Johansson (2015) propose a systemic resilience model called the CIRAS, which includes six functions, in addition to several functional dependencies and event-based constraints, in a cyclical and dynamic model.

As a result of different definitions and theories, resilience as a useful concept in disaster risk reduction has been criticized (for example, Manina, 2006; Son, Sasangohar, Nowell, et al., 2020). One of the critical points is the lack of useful quantitative and operational methods (Sheridan, 2008). In fact, there are methods available to assess resilience, but there is a need for proven and validated methods (see, for example, Cutter et al., 2010; Sumerz, 2009; Son, Sasangohar, Nowell, et al., 2020a).

Analysis of current resilience criteria showed that only 10.3% of the proposed criteria have undergone empirical validation (Kay et al., 2018). Additionally, Weig and colleagues (2020) conducted a recent overview of resilience in healthcare settings and proposed four main research questions to guide future resilience research. One of them is "What is resilience?" meaning which components, individuals, or resources in a system support or create flexibility? This question highlights the need for further empirical

methods to connect resilience concepts to observable behaviors in preferred systems. Weig and colleagues emphasize the need for more thorough empirical work on resilience for developing an empirical and theoretical approach to resilience in healthcare (p. 8).

Based on this, Soon et al., Sassengher, Perz, and colleagues (2020) have studied active incident management teams during Hurricane Harvey and argue for further empirical research at an intermediate level (as opposed to macro or micro) on the flexible behaviors of incident management teams related to resilience theory. A related concept is hospital resilience, which should also be defined in terms of the best measurement approach (Jean et al., 2014; San et al., 2019; Kritin, 2018).

### Marketing resilience

Numerous organizations can thrive when conditions are favorable. However the real test comes when challenging conditions arise. Cultivating resilience helps businesses navigate through current turmoil and be prepared to face anything else that comes their way. the financial crisis of 2008 to the current global COVID19 pandemic, we are amidst one of the most devastating collapses worldwide. In fact, if the World Bank's expectations are correct and the global economy sinks by five percent this year, it will be the deepest recession since World War II (Apire, 2020). For some organizations, navigating these difficulties will be a major test, beyond just sustaining business. A quick response generally reduces substantial costs immediately. Nonetheless, to ensure the long-term progress of your community, you must think more thoughtfully about strengthening your organization's resilience. To do so, you need to understand the current economic scene, both globally and specifically in your industry, and tailor your focus accordingly. You also need to evaluate the changing needs of your customers - much like anticipating demographic shifts - and concentrate on collecting them (Apire, 2020). Marketing resilience is based on five elements: mindfulness, self-awareness, purpose, positive relationships, and self-care. A new interest in resilience has emerged as a response to explicit unusual situations that have provoked particular types of general reactions. More clearly, we are eager to embrace resilience as an "all-encompassing capacity," as this unique capacity distinguishes regional organizations or, conversely, regional organizations that adapt to changes and contingencies in serious arrangements, markets, and compatible mechanics, and related circumstances that shape the transformative elements and directions of the economy of a land or vicinity. Another way to put it is the recovery of a region/domain from shocks to its economy, based on the five elements mentioned earlier (Kumar et al., 2020).

### **Methodology of Research**

In this study, a qualitative method with an explore approach using the tool development model has been employed, and this research is structured in a way that the qualitative section of a systematic study is utilized. Data collection and analysis methods are based on documents and questionnaires, and library studies include the library research process, a step-by-step process used for gathering information for writing a research article, paper, presentation, or completing a project. As you progress from one stage to the next, it is often necessary to support, modify, and add additional content. The most basic part of this research the criteria and components of research conducted domestically and internationally to address the following questions:

- What are the elements and mechanisms of marketing resilience models?
- What is the marketing resilience model?

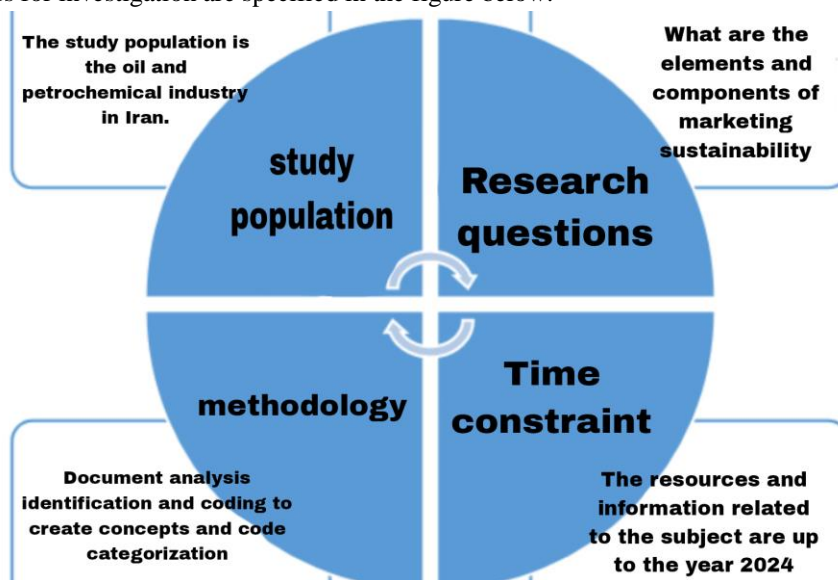
Systematic review is a coordinated effort to systematically identify all research and draw new conclusions from previous research results, examining data from studies of acceptable quality, and, in some cases, analysing them qualitatively and quantitatively using a standard and systematic method to answer a relevant question. For this purpose, all national and international sources, including reputable domestic and foreign scientific websites from 2000 to 2024, such as books, theses, articles, and available resources with keywords related to marketing resilience, were reviewed in a systematic manner, and 50 articles were selected as samples using judgmental sampling.

## Data analysis

### Data Analysis

In this research, existing documents and materials on marketing resilience used to collect data. Qualitative content analysis with a contractual approach was used for data analysis. The present research method is descriptive-analytical in nature, focusing on content analysis. Content analysis is a method that uses any systematic and objective technique to interpret the characteristics of the message.

**First Step:** Setting the Research Question; In this step, as the first stage of the study, the initial questionnaire or criteria is set in the meta-study. To answer the research question in this method, parameters such as; What is the work? What is the study population? What are the time constraints? And finally, what is the proposed method for ensuring the correctness of the meta-study process and the necessary completion of the study should be appropriately answered. The research questions along with the parameters for investigation are specified in the figure below.

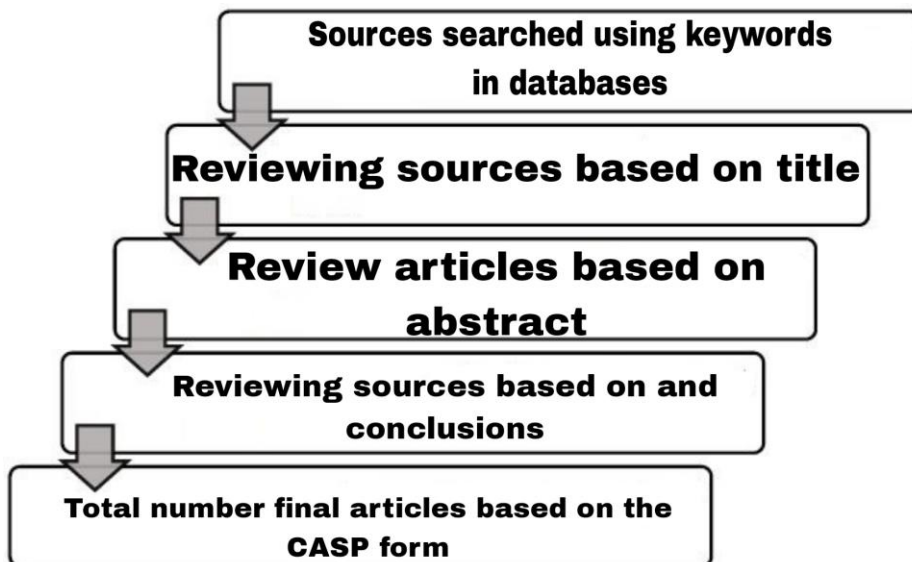


**Figure (1)** Research Parameters and Questions Based on the First Step of the Meta-Synthesis Method

**Step Two:** Systematic Review of Literature; in this step, all texts and articles related to the research question were examined. Suitable researchers were selected to enter into the meta-synthesis analysis, and in meta-synthesis studies, secondary data obtained through qualitative methods in the research topic area are used for data collection. Therefore, the population of this research includes all studies conducted in the research area under consideration. A systematic search of resources was conducted based on the key words "resilient marketing" in domestic and international scientific databases. A diverse selection of keywords was made for further resource retrieval. Based on the extensive search in domestic and international scientific databases, and considering the innovative nature of the research topic, 33 documents were retrieved for the comparative analysis of the research topic and stored. In qualitative research, the sample size continues based on the researcher's expectation until theoretical saturation is reached. In this type of study, reaching a sample size of 20 articles or fewer is typical. However, if the obtained sample is precise and systematically selected and evaluated according to the principles and criteria of qualitative studies, it certainly covers all the information that the researcher is seeking (Guba & Lincoln, 1991).

**Step Three:** Selection of Suitable Articles; in this step, the researcher must evaluate the quality of the stored sources based on comprehensive and blocking keywords in scientific databases. The aim of this step in the meta-synthesis study process, which is also an important step, is to eliminate studies with low credibility.

Figure below shows the algorithm for document selection and the process of refining stored sources and their final selection.



**Figure (2)** Algorithm for Searching and Selecting Suitable Resources for the Current Research

**Step Four:** Extraction of Text Information; in this stage of the qualitative (meta-synthesis) method; the researcher should choose one of the 9 methods of this method based on the nature of the subject and the collected sources. In this research, content analysis has been used as the method for extracting information from the final sources. The table below illustrates the results of the components with a comparative approach:



**Table (1)** Codes and Components of Research Topics After Interview

<b>concepts</b>	<b>Code</b>
Changes in the product	A1
Promotions	A2
Distribution channel	A3
Customer segmentation	A4
Market segmentation	A5
Market research	A6
Market conditions	A7
Political conditions	A8
Technological changes	A9
Economic conditions	A10
Managers' awareness	A11
Self-awareness of capabilities	A12
Correct targeting	A13
Positive supply chain relationships	A14
Capacity management	A15
Emphasis on data	A16
Agility	A17
Market technology review and optimization	A18
Cost prioritization	A19
Exploration of new opportunities	A20
Digital marketing	A21
loyalty programs	A22
Survival in crisis conditions	A23
Turning threats into opportunities	A24
Gaining competitive advantage	A25
Customer-centric approach	A26

**Source:** Research findings

Further, from the integration of indices, the following new codes are extracted:

**Table (2)** Codes and concepts with a comparative approach (second phase)

<b>concepts</b>	<b>code</b>
Background conditions	A1-A3
Top conditions	A4-A6
Intervention conditions	A7-A10
Resilient marketing	A11-A15
Strategies	A16-A22
Consequences	A23-A26

**Source:** Research findings

Based on these, the following paradigm model is formulated:

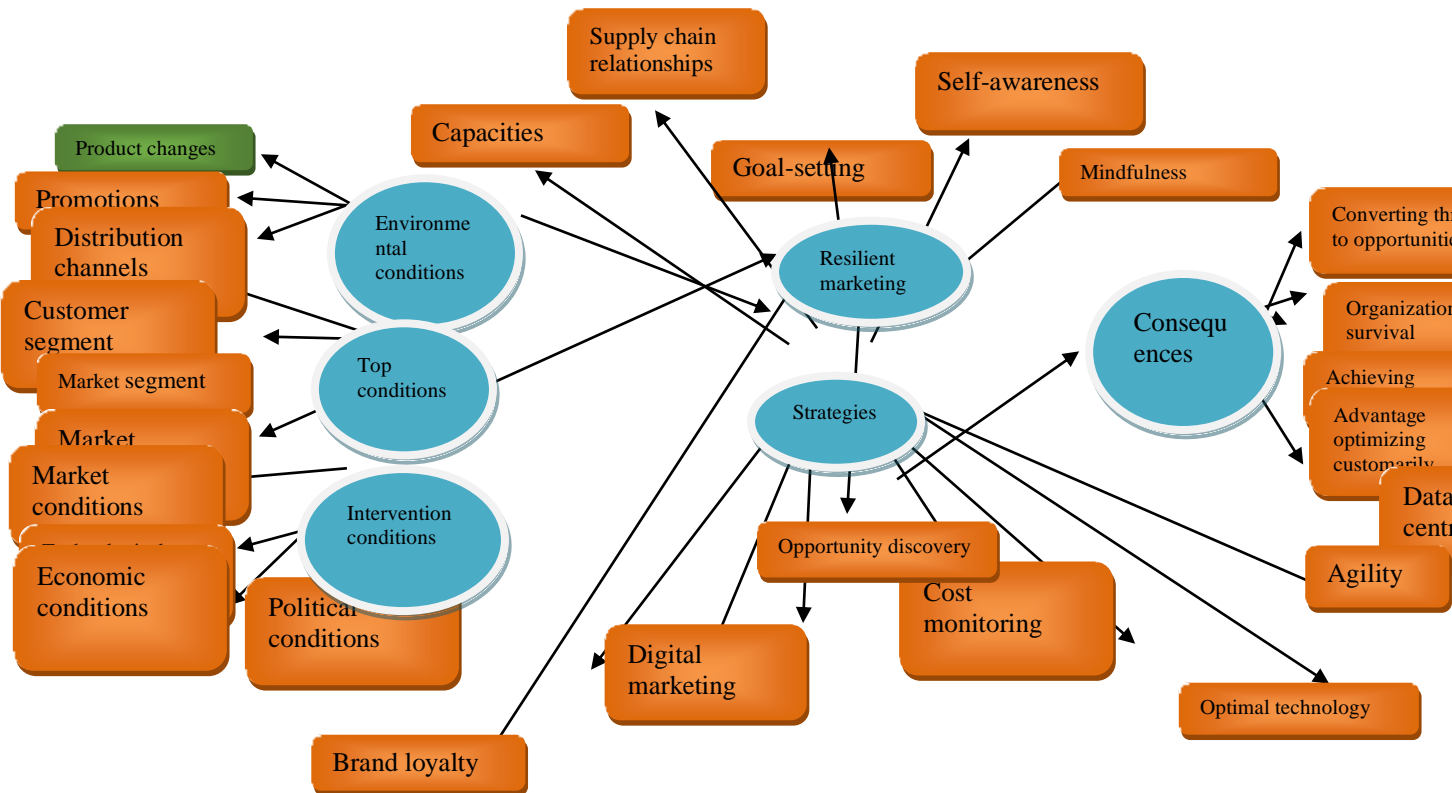


Figure 3: qualitative research paradigm model

### Conclusions

Considering that the oil and gas sector in Iran is 100% government-owned, the majority of projects in this area are undertaken by government employers, with few projects owned by private entities. Due to economic difficulties and the impact of sanctions on the country's economy, the number of active development has significantly decreased, with competition driving companies to implement projects at very low prices, leading to stagnation in this sector and migration of specialists. The company's approach to solving this issue is to enter the international market, highlighting the increasing importance of strategic marketing focus. With over 42 years of experience, the company possesses the technical ability to enter the international arena. However, it faces its own challenges in this field due to sanctions, with the most important being money transfer, leading to the necessity of using intermediaries from foreign companies for transferring funds and closing contracts. It is clear that resilient marketing is essential to adapt to conditions such as sanctions and crises. In this study, we sought to demonstrate the characteristics of resilient marketing based on five elements: mindfulness, self-awareness, goal-setting, supply chain relationships, and utilizing capacities and capabilities. Emphasizing the importance of data and analyzing them using artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to segment vital customers is crucial for the organization's future sustainability and agility in facing market uncertainties and scenarios.

### Emphasis on Data

Project management companies in the oil and petrochemical industry marketing sector must understand that information in any incident is vital, as individuals need to see how the market and customers are positioning themselves. Just like a pilot who, while charting their course, examines changing weather conditions, presenting a comprehensive overview of current conditions must rely on information or data. Without it, it's like flying with impaired vision. Adopting an evidence-based strategy allows project management companies in the oil and petrochemical industry marketing sector to have a 360-degree view of their customers. These facts provide continuous and accurate insights into who the customers are, what their current needs are, and allows individuals to provide them with services that align with more convincing marketing content. Using artificial intelligence (AI) devices and machine learning techniques can help differentiate customers into segments and predict their future behavior, which can aid in targeting and focusing on the organization's most important customers.

### Agility

An agile organization rapidly responds to the fluctuating market and can adjust its marketing priorities accordingly. Resilient organizations, especially project management companies in the oil and petrochemical industry marketing sector, have structures that overcome both internal and external challenges that may potentially disillusion them from cutting through their management to their customers' delight (Shafi, 2007; Lampl et al., 2014; Savalleh, 2015; Ducrocq, 2019). Some research results have shown that resilience hierarchically paves the way for predicting, adapting, and recovering from setbacks (Javier & Steve, 2008). Pin and Furrow (2009), supporting the aforementioned claim, believed that institutions aware of customer needs generally act in such a manner due to their flexible nature. Subsequently, the link between customer and service provider relationships forecasts efforts implementation, employee responsibility, customer retention, and company image in the local community (Adeh & Onimatch, 2018). The customer is king in any business as they decide the survival of any organization on Earth. This indicates that since customers decide about the presence of any effort, it is essential to create plans to retain them, thus customer relationship management must be key to the organization's strategy to empower management to retain them. Regarding the importance of the customer, as organizations must maintain their survival.

### Examining and optimizing market technology

Project management companies in the oil and petrochemical industry marketing sector should understand the use of digital marketing techniques to reorganize customer data and assist in segmenting and targeting customers for appropriate marketing messages through various marketing channels such as Facebook, SMS, etc.

### Cost prioritization

Costs should be prioritized during times of financial uncertainty, and long-term benefits should be considered based on predictive analysis.

## Exploring new opportunities

The new motto is never to stop searching for new customers or commercial investments. It's good to leverage technologies like artificial intelligence and aim for customers with similar spending behaviors. They can transform into potential consumers who engage with the brand, make more purchases, and thereby strengthen the business. Relationships are constantly being created and modified, emphasizing change and requiring broader examples that empower or necessitate change. A methodological social approach, therefore, enhances resilience in situations and strengthens considerations about examples of relationships that reinforce fundamental changes.

## Digital Marketing

With the widespread of COVID-19, consumers are spending more time on mobile and online shopping websites. Therefore, companies can highlight their digital channels and reach customers through social media sites. digital transformation enables companies to gather vast amounts of data for enhancing in commercial sectors, customers, products, and a competitor in four insight advertising sectors (markets, customers, products, and competitors), as well as six data mining models (collaboration, classification, grouping). Through this analysis, projects aim to utilize market intelligence with data mining strategies for better competition (Dam et al., 2019). It is noted that product, customer, and advertisement appear to be more important than cost and location. Accordingly, a call for further research is made here regarding displaying identified insights with cost and location for marketing intelligence (Dam et al., 2019).

## Loyalty Programs

Reward and loyalty programs are perceived as future investments by customers, and they are happy to indulge in more purchases with a brand.

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