

Fuel stations: More than pumps and prices - brand temples for CX

By [Adrian Whines](#)

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For many, a fuel station represents nothing more than a quick pit stop — a place to refuel and stretch your legs. However, delve a little deeper, and you'll realise the potential these establishments hold. They are, in essence, brand temples where design, function, and branding can play pivotal roles in defining the customer experience (CX).



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Adrian Whines of Brand DNA Brandspace Activation, says fuel stations are brand temples that play pivotal roles in defining the customer experience

Fuel retail brands are 24-hour experiences that never sleep, from the macro to the micro, they need to be immediately recognisable.

The Emergent Trend

As the fuel retail sector continues to evolve, brands that understand the power of design and branding will undoubtedly lead the pack.

In an industry that can often seem mundane and utilitarian, there's ample room for creativity, innovation, and differentiation. After all, a fuel station can be more than just a pit stop; it can be an experience, a statement, and a destination.

The emergent trend in fuel retail, for some time, is a convenience offering where you can shop, get a coffee, and also refuel your vehicle, the residual trend was a place to refuel and perhaps pick up a snack.

Because of this trend, and the current expectation from customers, most fuel companies are embracing the concept, but have realised that food retail is a different discipline.

They either outsource and partner with existing coffee and grocery brands that have parity and equity with themselves, or they establish a stand-alone offering in-house, specifically with coffee.

This way, customers are drawn to sites through the strength of two or more strong brands that resonate with them.



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4 Tips for fuel stations to stand out

There are four ways for fuel stations to stand out. First, through recognisable and ownable colours which should be identifiable from kilometres away, especially at night, then the form language and identifiable icons, and the site offerings, specifically in the food retail arena.

1. The art of attraction

First impressions count. The initial appeal of a fuel station largely depends on its design and branding. Consistent signage is paramount.

When a brand maintains a consistent look across all its outlets, it's not just providing directions; it's creating trust.

This consistency reassures consumers that they'll receive the same quality of service and products at any of their stations. That sense of familiarity can be a beacon in the dark, quite literally.



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2. Stand out in a sea of sameness

In an industry where the core offering — fuel — is largely undifferentiated, how can one brand distinguish itself from another? The answer lies in brand visibility and differentiation.

Think of the iconic designs of certain global tech stores or coffee chains. They're instantly recognisable, and even if there are many others in the vicinity, you're drawn to them. A fuel station, when effectively branded, can do the same.

Incorporating functional designs that make refuelling easier, or even eco-friendly materials that align with a brand's sustainable vision, can make all the difference.

Take, for instance, canopies designed to collect rainwater or solar panels integrated into the station's design. These are not just functional additions but also brand statements that broadcast a company's values and vision.

3. Beyond fuel: Designing destinations

A well-branded fuel station is more than just pumps and prices; it's a destination.

Modern fuel stations are evolving into mini shopping hubs, offering gourmet food, artisanal coffee, and even boutique shopping experiences.

These offerings are not merely value-adds; they play into the brand narrative.

A fuel station that sells organic snacks and has a cosy, wood-themed cafe corner is making a statement: "We care about quality and the environment." This can create a strong pull for a certain demographic, making them loyal patrons.

The choice of corporate identity, form language and colour should be unique, and evoke simplicity and confident immediacy.

This gives customers the comfort of quality and professionalism in the fuel they put into their cars. Often fuel brand colours and icons are not suitable for their convenience stores, so names and colour references are better suited to food and beverages.



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4. Safety, regulations, and material choices

Designing a fuel station isn't just about aesthetics; it requires meticulous planning and adherence to safety regulations.

Material choices, for example, are not merely design decisions but are rooted in safety considerations. Non-flammable materials, clear emergency signage, and spill management systems are crucial.

However, these functional aspects can be seamlessly integrated into the branding. A visible emergency assembly point, marked with the brand colours, not only serves a functional purpose but also reiterates the brand's commitment to customer safety.

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