

The Role of Handling in The Development of The Activities of Companies Specializing in The Transport of Petroleum Products - A Case Study of The NAFTAL-SNTR Partnership

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Abstract:

The main objective of This study is to identify the reality of subcontracting in southern Algeria through an applied study for Naftal Adrar in the field of petroleum products distribution, considering the subcontracting strategy of the latest aspects of cooperation to develop the activity of small and medium enterprises by identifying the role of handling in the development of these enterprises activity. subcontracting contracts in the distribution of petroleum products in Naftal allowed SMEs specialized in the field of distribution, which benefited from contracts within the framework of the relationship between Naftal Company and the National Land Transport Company Agefal branch to develop its capabilities and allowed Naftal Company to exceed Distribution of petroleum products.

Keywords: subcontracting, Naftal, small and medium enterprises, National Land Transport Company.

Jel Classification Codes: M13, O13.

Introduction

Given the significant challenges posed by international developments, particularly the decline in oil prices and its impact on the economies of countries heavily reliant on the hydrocarbon sector for their revenues, including Algeria, it has become imperative for these large institutions to focus on their core functions and outsource other activities that are best delegated to specialized partners. This involves implementing a subcontracting strategy within the framework of available resources and economic and financial feasibility.

Algeria has recognized the importance of this approach and the necessity of integrating specialized small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to activate complementary relationships between the various units of the industrial sector, which already suffers from numerous problems. While SMEs have assumed a prominent role today, serving as suppliers to meet the needs of large companies, the implementation of subcontracting still faces some difficulties, including those related to its characteristics, mechanisms, and forms.

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Despite this, it is observed that most national industrial complexes allocate a portion of their production plans to foreign subcontracting companies, particularly in the industrial sector, through contracts for the acquisition of goods and services. This practice hinders the development and experience of national small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Given that Naftal, the largest subsidiary of Sonatrach, Algeria's largest company, which relies on hydrocarbons for 98% of its revenue, this research paper will examine the subcontracting practices employed by Naftal in the distribution of petroleum products—the backbone of Sonatrach's operations—and analyze the strategic role that companies tasked with distributing petroleum products under subcontracting agreements with Sonatrach can play within the Adrar region.

Problématique

This is to be used to determine the size of the Sous-Trait Transportation Strategy that forces concurrent support from the Société Nationale des transports terrestres (Naftal) in the cadre of their partners with this dernière.

Importance of the study

This study requires the need to use a special strategy and a division of the company to operate in a large part of the companies and outside the enterprises distributing the specialties. It also includes a number of advances that Naftal withdraws from distribution contracts of petroleum products to private transport terrestrial enterprises.

Objectifs of the study :

- Define the concept of sous-trait;
- Examiner the role of the sous-trait industry in the training of small and small enterprises (PME);
- Analyze the experience of Naftal in the industrial sector's manufacturing environment in the field of contracts of distribution of petroleum products.

Previous Studies

A study by Mariam Ben Daoud and Insaf Kabdi (2013), entitled "The Impact of Subcontracting on Oil Companies: A Case Study of the Berkawi National Hydrocarbons Company (SHDP)," aimed to identify the concept of subcontracting and its importance in the oil industry, as well as to determine its impact on this industry in Algeria. The study concluded that the Berkawi Basin does not use subcontracting contracts in the production sector, with the exception of ancillary activities such as pipeline construction. The study recommended paying greater attention to subcontracting practices within the industry in order to broaden and develop the industrial base (Mariam Ben Daoud, 2013).

- **A study by Zarqani Rabah (2014)**, entitled "Industrial Subcontracting as a Tool for Developing Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Algeria," aimed to identify the concept, forms, and structures of industrial subcontracting. The study concluded that the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remains insufficient due to an unfavorable economic and investment environment, resulting in the loss of significant subcontracting opportunities for various national companies. The study recommended developing subcontracting and partnership opportunities, as well as creating a national council to promote subcontracting and define the relationships between large contracting companies and subcontracting SMEs (Rabah, 2014).

A study by Alwani Adila and Ben Samina Dalal (2018), entitled "The Role of Industrial Subcontracting in SME Development in Algeria," aimed to identify the role of subcontracting in SME development. The study concluded that the measures taken to develop a subcontracting strategy were not keeping pace with international developments. It recommended adopting more ambitious measures and policies and drawing inspiration from best practices (Alwani Adila, 2018).

Study methodology

To address the study's problem, the descriptive and analytical method was adopted, allowing us to deal with this type of subject and to present the experience of the Naftal commercial agency.

1- Concept, Objectives, and Handling Methods

1.1 Definition of Industrial Handling

There is no single, universally accepted definition of industrial handling. However, a comprehensive definition can be proposed, encompassing most existing definitions. It refers to all the cooperative and complementary relationships that develop between two or more organizations during the various stages of the production process. In this context, a service provider contracts one or more specialized organizations (called service providers, handlers, or suppliers) to carry out one or more stages of the production process, in accordance with a predefined and binding contract (Alwani Adila, 2018, p. 193).

In other words, subcontracting encompasses all industrial production processes or services performed according to precise technical standards and specifications defined by the client company, also known as the principal. The companies performing these tasks are called "subcontractors," and the technical standards remain the property of the principal. Even if the subcontractor contributed to the product design, the principal retains the industrial property rights and is therefore legally responsible for any design flaws. The subcontractor, on the other hand, is responsible for any defects in the production process (Zafer, 2000, p. 63).

Subcontracting, as it is understood in the Arab countries of the Mashreq, is defined as a subcontracting agreement (or subsidiary contract) by which a company holding a primary contract with an entity called the "employer" subcontracts all or part of the work to another company or entity, called the "subcontractor" (Bouyaakoub, 2006, p. 06)."

1.2. Reasons and Objectives of Industrial Subcontracting

1.2.1 Reasons for Industrial Subcontracting

Subcontracting represents a significant share of industrial production in industrialized countries, exceeding 15% in the European Union, 35% in the United States, and 56% in Japan (Mariam Ben Daoud, 2013, p. 201).

Numerous factors explain the interest in this type of project, primarily related to its role in various areas of development (Bernouti, 2005, p. 43):

- Increasing capital accumulation and mobilizing national savings.
- Contributing, as a support sector and supplier, to large companies.
- Meeting a portion of domestic demand, particularly for goods that can be produced at a lower cost.

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- A significant source of employment. Small businesses are a major source of jobs. In Western countries, where large corporations dominate, more than 50% of the workforce is employed by small businesses. Studies conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that small businesses create more jobs than medium-sized and large corporations. They contribute significantly to major projects as auxiliary and subcontracting industries. They meet a portion of local market demand, particularly for goods that can be produced at a lower cost.

1.2.2 Objectives of Industrial Subcontracting

These are as follows (Alwani Adila, 2018, p. 189):

- To develop specialization and the division of labor;
- To expand the industrial base;
- To strengthen industrial integration and interdependence;
- To optimize the use of production capacity;
- To promote regional development.

1.2.3 Forms of Industrial Subcontracting: Industrial subcontracting is

characterized by its flexibility and its ability to adapt to market demands, depending on the level and type of tasks that the establishments involved wish to perform. Many forms can be adopted in this area, depending on the strategies implemented by industrial companies. The most important are presented below (Zafer, 2000, p. 85):

A. Production Capacity Outsourcing

This type of outsourcing occurs when service companies, despite possessing the necessary infrastructure, enter into outsourcing contracts with other companies to cope with a temporary increase in demand or a technical breakdown affecting their equipment. It also involves entering into long-term contracts aimed at maintaining high production capacity in a specific sector by utilizing available production capacity in the surrounding environment.

B. Specialized Outsourcing

In some cases, service companies lack the infrastructure, technology, or expertise required to manufacture a specific product. To meet market demand, they engage specialized companies (outsourcing firms) that possess the necessary equipment and technology to manufacture the required product under competitive conditions.

C. Domestic Outsourcing

In this model, the companies that supply and perform the contracted work are of the same nationality and operate within their own country.

D. International outsourcing

In this model, the nationalities of the companies that supply and perform the contract work are different, regardless of where they are located.

1.3. Importance of Industrial Subcontracting Strategy in Business Development

This importance is demonstrated by the following points

- Small businesses produce components or intermediate parts in quantities that meet contractual orders, at a lower cost and with higher quality than large companies (parent companies).
- This system promotes product development and diversification based on market needs. It also contributes to the optimal use of available resources and the modernization of industrial units, thus maximizing their capacity to export their products and compete in local and international markets.
- SMEs benefit from the expertise of their parent company through the subcontracting system, particularly through the acquisition of modern technologies to develop their production methods and management techniques.
- Industrial subcontracting helps strengthen local production and increase production capacity, particularly in terms of equipment, by replacing imports with locally produced goods.
- Optimal use of available resources and precise, controlled management of production methods.
- Developing and organizing production activities within industrial units, improving their productivity and competitiveness, and increasing their contribution to the gross domestic product.
- Indirectly contributing to the employment of the national workforce and reducing unemployment, thereby improving citizens' income levels and well-being.
- Supporting the local industrial base and encouraging industrial enterprises to specialize in modern technologies, which contributes to a more compact and balanced distribution of work among companies and enables the achievement of high production levels and rapid execution, essential for keeping pace with global development and international competition.
- This helps to reduce the outflow of foreign currency used to import products manufactured locally or that can be manufactured locally with high quality.

2- Naftal Company

2.1 Presentation of the Naftal Company

Algeria is heavily dependent on the hydrocarbon sector, as its foreign exchange earnings, representing approximately 97% of national income, come from this strategic and vital sector. Among the most important national institutions that effectively contribute to the dynamism of this sector is the Naftal Company, the national leader in the storage, transport, and distribution of petroleum products and derivatives. Historically, after Algeria's independence, the storage and distribution of hydrocarbons were handled by Sonatrach until Decree No. 80101 of April 6, 1980, created the National Refining and Distribution Company of Petroleum Products (ERDP). ERDP began operations on January 1, 1982, and was subsequently restructured and split into two companies by Decree 189/87 of August 25, 1987 (Agency, 2009).

Naftal is a company specializing in the distribution and marketing of petroleum products and derivatives in Algeria. Its name is derived from "NAFT" (the Arabic word for oil) and "Al" (the abbreviation for Algeria). On April 18, 1998, Naftal became a public limited company (SPA) with a capital of 6.5 billion Algerian dinars (DZD), divided into 665 shares with a par value of 10 billion DZD each. A wholly owned subsidiary of Sonatrach, its capital has since been increased to 1.565 billion DZD. Its headquarters are located in Cheraga, in the province of Algiers, and its logo consists of five lines representing its various business sectors:

fuels, liquefied gas, lubricants, asphalt and tires, and international partnerships and activities (Rabah, 2014, p. 204).

2.2 Naftal's Missions

- Distribution, storage, and marketing of fuels, including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), oils, bitumen, tires, and specialty materials.
- Transportation of petroleum products and derivatives from refining and processing centers to major centers and customers, using available means of transport (pipelines, trucks, ships, and railways).
- Development of storage and distribution infrastructure to ensure nationwide coverage.
- Maintenance of all equipment under its control.
- Monitoring and management of the implementation of annual and long-term plans designed to meet market needs, particularly regarding the use and consumption of petroleum products.
- Conducting all market research, including studies related to the use and consumption of petroleum products.
- Ensure the integration of all national market studies related to petroleum products;
- Ensure the improvement and monitoring of production volumes;

2.3. Naftal Adrar Sales Agency

The Naftal Adrar Sales Agency was established in January 2008 by General Management Decision No. 767R18M1, dated 2007, and attached to the Ghardaïa marketing district, as part of Naftal's restructuring.

- At the end of 2008, the CDD distribution center was attached to the Adrar Sales Agency.
- In 2009, the sales department was created, responsible for monitoring the management of service stations. Subsequently, the finance department was established, with the primary mission of ensuring the application of financial management procedures.
- In 2010, the technical department was created, responsible for equipment repair and various technical interventions. - In 2011, the industrial safety department was created. Its main mission is to develop laws and regulations related to industrial safety in the storage and distribution of petroleum products. Subsequently, the human resources department was created to implement employee motivation systems, such as promotions and bonuses, and to design and implement training programs tailored to the company's needs.
- In 2016, an LPG/C cylinder assembly center was established. This center, the third of its kind in the Ghardaïa province, installs and maintains LPG cylinders for various vehicles.

2.3.1 Sources of petroleum products

- Diesel and regular gasoline come from the Sebâa Adrar refinery.
- Premium gasoline comes from various refineries, including Arzew, Skikda, and Hassi Messaoud.
- LPG comes from the Béchar distribution center.

Table 1: Average daily quantities of fuel sold by the Naftal distribution center (m³)

Total	LPG	Diesel	unleaded gasoline	petroleum product Service Stations
671	83	515	683	(Distribution Stations (GD), (PVA
205	00	201	04	Gross Consumer Price
1486	83	716	687	Total

Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

The table shows that average fuel sales volumes are concentrated among customers directly managed by Naftal GD and PVA-approved outlets, compared to major consumers such as Shell, PB, and Total.

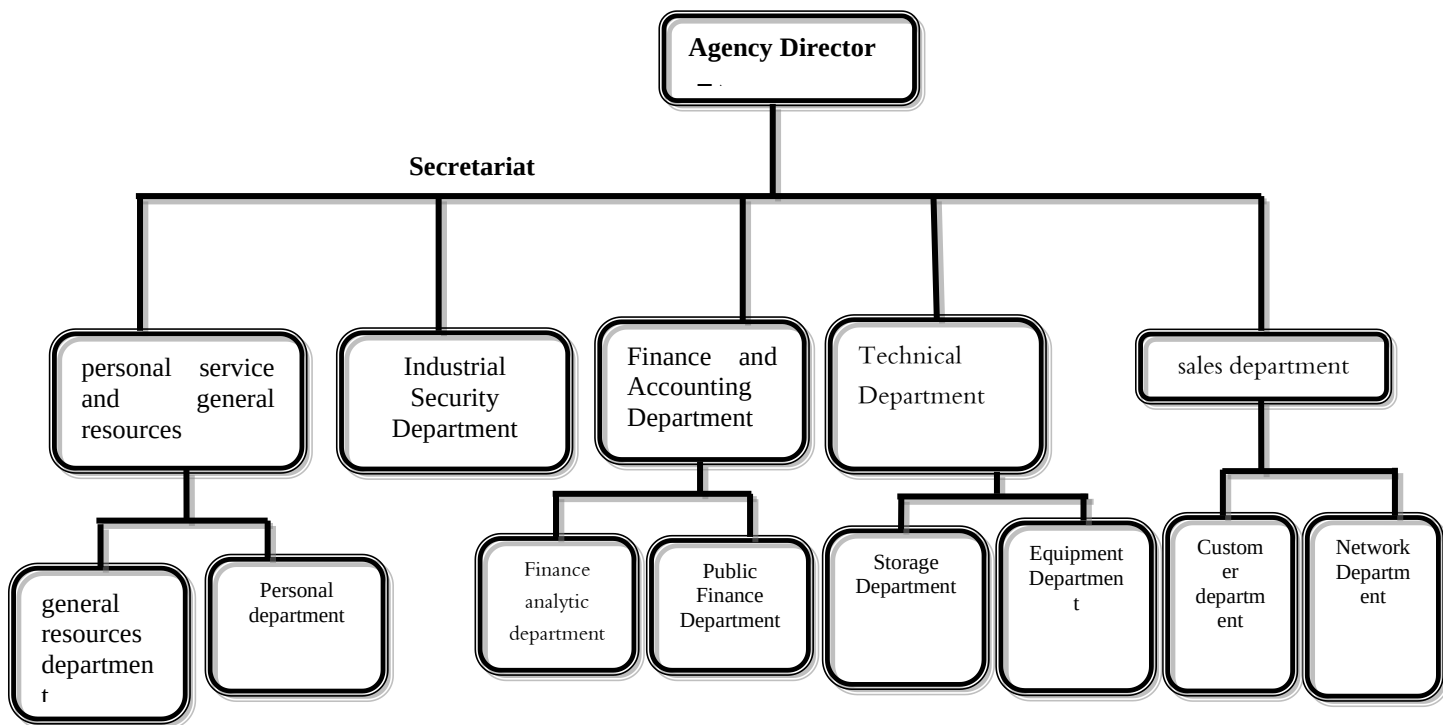
Table 2: Daily fuel sales volumes at the various distribution stations of the Adrar Commercial Agency (m³)

Total	LPG	Diesel	Unleaded Gasoline	Petroleum Products Stations
541.24	1.24	197	343	Direct Drive (GD) Stations
854.83	3.83	464	387	Authorized (PVA) Stations
1396.07	5.07	661	730	Total

Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

Directly operated (GD) service stations are establishments managed directly by Naftal, without intermediaries. PVA service stations are authorized agents, private establishments linked to Naftal by a specific commercial contract.

Figure 1: Organizational chart of the Naftal Adrar commercial agency



Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

3- Subcontracting at Naftal (Distribution):

3-1 The Legal Framework for Subcontracting in Algeria

To facilitate coordination and cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), strengthen their capacities and development, and large companies and institutions, it was essential to establish a legal framework to regulate and promote subcontracting practices (Official Gazette, 2001).

3-1-1 Subcontracting in Algerian Legislation

Subcontracting is currently a priority for the Algerian government, as it is considered the preferred tool for strengthening the SME sector (11, 2017). Subcontracting allows the State to benefit from numerous advantages, particularly those related to the use of modern technologies that meet required quality standards.

The quantities of petroleum products distributed by the Asbâa and Remchi refineries will be analyzed, broken down by product type, for the last three years and for the year 2019 up to September.

The Algerian Civil Code and the law on public procurement contain provisions relating to this issue:

Between 1963 and 1988, subcontracting did not receive sufficient attention from the State, due to the nature of the prevailing economic system, which did not offer small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), except those in the public sector, the opportunity to subcontract. This is all the more surprising given that the 1974-1977 Four-Year Plan had already taken into account the role of subcontracting as a means of standardizing the production of capital goods and processed products. The Civil Code of September 26, 1975, also addresses subcontracting in general terms within the framework of employment contracts (Mariam Ben Daoud, 2013, p. 21).

- Starting in 1988, the State began restructuring national institutions and implementing economic reforms through the promulgation of Law 88-25 of July 19, 1988, concerning investments (88-25, 1988).

In the early 1990s, the Public Procurement Law of November 9, 1991 (No., 1991), was promulgated and amended by Decree 03-301 of September 11, 2003 (03-301, 2003), which incorporated provisions relating to subcontracting. Following this, the Algerian Subcontracting and Partnership Exchange was established on December 11, 1991, in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

3-1-2 Framework Law for the Promotion of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

The Ministry of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises promulgated Law No. 18-01 of 27 Ramadan 1422 (corresponding to December 12, 2001) (01-18, 2001), which comprises three chapters and six articles. What interests us here is the third chapter relating to the final provisions, and more particularly Article 20, which stipulates that "subcontracting is considered the preferred tool for strengthening the fabric of small and medium-sized enterprises and therefore benefits from a policy of promotion and development aimed at improving the competitiveness of the national economy", and Article 21, which stipulates that "a national council is established in charge of the promotion of subcontracting, chaired by the minister in charge of small and medium-sized industries and composed of representatives of the administrations, institutions and associations concerned with the promotion of subcontracting".

In accordance with this law, the State has implemented procedures to promote and regulate subcontracting. These procedures have resulted in the creation of a network of subcontracting platforms and the establishment of the National Council for the Promotion of Subcontracting, pursuant to Executive Decree 03-188 of 20 Safar 1424 (corresponding to April 22, 2003), which stipulates the composition and operation of said Council (03-188, 2003).

3-2 Petroleum Product Transportation Process by Agefal's Subsidiary under the Subcontracting Agreement with Naftal

In this context, "large consumers" refers to foreign companies operating in the exploration fields of the Adrar province or the distribution stations located in this province. These entities place orders for petroleum products. After the purchase order is signed, invoicing is carried out. The invoice is then sent to the Tililan storage center, which falls under the Béchar Regional Unit. The order is then forwarded to the National Land Transport Company, and more specifically to its subcontracting subsidiary, Agefal.

Petroleum products are shipped from the Asba refinery. In the event of a shortage, the Remchi distribution center is mobilized to compensate for the lack of supply from the Tililan storage facility. It should be noted that large consumers benefit from discounts on the unit price due to the significant volumes they purchase.

Although Naftal has its own fleet of trucks dedicated to distribution, its number is limited. If Naftal were to handle the distribution of petroleum products itself, it would incur additional transportation costs, including driver and assistant salaries, maintenance, and spare parts. However, if the distance to the distribution stations located within the province is less than 250 km, Naftal covers the transportation costs.

It is also worth mentioning that, in some cases, when consumers use their own equipment to transport petroleum products, they receive a full discount on the transported cargo without affecting the unit selling price.

Table 03: Petroleum products distributed to the state of Adrar in 2023 (Unit M³)

Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

Total	December	November	October	September	August	July	June	May	April	March	February	January	Months	
1628968	173458	144847	112578	173481	212425	137894	116578	115640	114876	117421	119802	119968	Naftal Trucks	Unleaded gasoline
242774906.1	33344612.4	26998085	21618170	23714261.2	28199220	28640970.8	23065311	16157020.5	8995936	7394157.4	8200648.8	16446513	Land Transport Company Trucks	
320787.55	30867.75	23880.73	31672.95	26058.08	25973.77	22712.472	24830.09	26056.92	30167.6	32383.32	22876.49	23307.34	Naftal Trucks	Diesel fuel oil
1001946.6	129470	112489	140480	145879	57849	51245	117570.6	75418	83150	45879	23587	18930	Land Transport Company Trucks	

The table indicates that in 2023, the subsidiary AGEFAL transported 242,774,906.1 m³ of unleaded gasoline, compared to 1,628,968 m³ transported by Naftal using its own equipment. Thus, Naftal was 99.33% dependent on the subsidiary AGEFAL for the distribution of unleaded gasoline. Regarding diesel fuel, the subsidiary AGEFAL's contribution to transport amounted to 75.74%.

Table 04: Petroleum products distributed to the state of Adrar in 2024 (Unit m³)

Total	December	November	October	September	August	July	June	May	April	March	February	January	Months	
2164539.44	234168.3	202785.8	151980.3	239403.78	265531.25	186156.9	155048.74	151488.5	143595	152647.3	137772.3	143961.6	Naftal Trucks	Unleaded gasoline
308540063.63	40013534.8	33477625	28319802	30828539.5	36658986	36946852.33	30215557.4	19873134	11784676	9612404.6	10250811	20558141	Land Transport Company Trucks	
389617.17	38276.01	28895.68	38007.54	31530.27	34025.63	28390.59	31534.21	32831.71	37407.82	39831.48	22875.24	26010.99	Naftal Trucks	Diesel fuel oil
1571497.26	156658.7	138361.47	169980.8	176513.59	104128.2	122988	176355.9	117468.8	149670	96345.9	68376.2	94650	Land Transport Company Trucks	

Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

In 2024, the table shows that Naftal relied almost entirely on specialized transport companies. For unleaded gasoline, the subsidiary AGEFAL transported 308,540,063.63 m³ (99.30%), whereas Naftal transported only 2,164,539.44 m³ using its own trucks. Regarding diesel, Naftal transported only 389,617.17 m³ by truck, compared to approximately 1,571,497.26 m³ by the subsidiary AGEFAL, representing 80.13%.

Table 05: Petroleum products distributed to the state of Adrar in 2025 (unit m³)

Source: Naftal Adrar Commercial Agency

Total	December	November	October	September	August	July	June	May	April	March	February	January	Months	
2190231.78	216822.5	178161.81	136219.38	206442.39	263407	170988.56	143390.94	139924.4	138999	164389.4	287524.8	143961.6	Naftal Trucks	Unleaded gasoline
292761102.4	40013534.8	32667682	25509440	28694256	33557071.8	35228394	27678373.2	19388424	11106500	9094813.6	10086798	19735815	Land Transport Company Trucks	
401103.96	37040.4	28656.8	38007.54	31269.7	30694.5	27936.2	34762	32050	36201.12	39831.4	32027.1	32630.2	Naftal Trucks	Diesel fuel oil
1373183.1	155364	134986.8	165766.4	172137.2	104128.2	102490	142260.4	92764.1	99780	68818.5	58967.5	75720	Land Transport Company Trucks	

The table shows that the total volume of unleaded gasoline transported by Naftal in 2025 via trucks belonging to its subsidiary AGEFAL amounted to 292,761,102.4 m³, or 99.25%, compared to 2,190,231.78 m³ transported by Naftal with its own trucks. Similarly, regarding diesel fuel, the company transported significant quantities (1,373,183.1 m³, or 77.39%) using handling companies, while 401,103.96 m³ were transported with its own vehicles.

Conclusion

This study examined the issue of outsourcing and its impact on Naftal Adrar's petroleum product distribution activities, specifically the use of specialized companies.

The field study conducted at Naftal Adrar's commercial agency revealed that the transport and distribution of petroleum products constitutes Naftal's most sensitive activity, given its economic, developmental, and social dimensions.

This study led to the following conclusions:

- The widespread use of outsourcing in the field of petroleum product distribution has enabled Naftal to fulfill its obligations to its customers.
- Sonatrach's motivation for outsourcing petroleum product distribution is primarily based on a strategic decision, the company's main objective being aligned with its overall petroleum product transportation policy. Despite the high costs incurred by Naftal due to its outsourcing policy, these costs remain reasonable compared to those it would incur if Naftal handled the distribution of petroleum products itself. The latter would be significantly higher due to the considerable distances involved, both between the Remchi refinery and the distribution center in Adrar, supplying petroleum products to neighboring regions.

Public subsidies granted to Naftal play a crucial role in enabling the continuation of outsourcing to specialized transport companies. The state bears substantial costs in this regard to guarantee the supply of petroleum products to its customers.

The study revealed that the main challenge facing Naftal is the transport and distribution of petroleum products. As a representative of Sonatrach, Naftal is responsible for this process, which has economic and social dimensions that impact the proper functioning of all sectors of the state.

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