

## Unraveling the Complexities of Competitive Aggressiveness: A Qualitative Exploration in the Oil and Gas Industry

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**Abstract :** This study delves into the complexities of competitive aggressiveness in the oil and gas industry, focusing on the characteristics of the identified competitive actions. The current quantitative research on competitive aggressiveness lacks agreement on the connection between antecedents and outcomes, prompting a qualitative investigation. To address this gap, the research utilizes qualitative interviews with CEOs from Oman's oil and gas service industry to explore the dynamics of competitive aggressiveness. Using Noklenain's typology, the study categorizes and analyzes identified actions, shedding light on the spectrum of competitive behaviors within the industry. Notably, actions predominantly fall under the "Bring about" and "Preserve" elements, with a notable absence in the "Forebear" and "Destroy" categories, possibly linked to the study's focus on service-oriented businesses. The study also explores the detectability of actions, revealing that "Bring about" actions are detectable, while those in "Preserve" and "Suppress" are not. This challenges conventional definitions of competitive aggressiveness, suggesting that not all actions are readily detectable despite being considered competitive. The presence of non-detectable actions introduces complexity to measurement methods reliant on visible empirical data. Moreover, the study contends that companies can adopt an aggressive competitive approach without directly challenging rivals. This challenges traditional views and emphasizes the innovative and entrepreneurial aspects of actions not explicitly aimed at competitors. By not revealing strategic intentions, such actions put rivals at a disadvantage, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of competitive aggressiveness. In summary, the lack of consensus in existing literature regarding the relationship between antecedents and outcomes in competitive aggressiveness is addressed. The study reveals a spectrum of detectable and undetectable actions, posing challenges in measurement and emphasizing the need for alternative methods to assess undetectable actions in competitive behavior. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of competitive aggressiveness, acknowledging the diverse actions shaping a company's strategic positioning in dynamic business environments.

**Keywords :** competitive aggressiveness, qualitative exploration, noklenain's typology, oil and gas industry

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