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The impact of PEST factors and marketing strategies on libraries in Libya and Egypt: theoretical study

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الملخص:

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى إظهار المجالات التي يمكن فيها بالفعل إجراء تحليل **PEST** والتسويق على المكتبات. للقيام بذلك، سيكون هناك أولاً مناقشة مفهوم ومعنى **PEST** , وايضا التسويق. ثم نستعرض وصف لأحد النماذج المستخدمة في التسويق: تحليل **PEST**. وأخيرًا، سيتم تطبيق هذا النموذج والعوامل المصاحبة له وتأثيرها على المكتبات في شمال إفريقيا، مع التركيز على دولتي ليبيا ومصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل بيست (**PEST**) ,التسويق ,المكتبات, شمال افريقيا , مصر , ليبيا

ABSTRACT: This article aims to show the areas where PEST analysis and Marketing on libraries can be done already. To do this, there will first be a discussion of what PEST and marketing means. This will be followed by a description of one of the models used for marketing: the PEST analysis. Finally, this model will be applied to the factors which affect libraries in North Africa, focusing on the countries of Libya and Egypt.
Keywords: PEST analysis, marketing , libraries, North Africa, Egypt, Libya

Introduction:

Communities can benefit enormously by using their libraries and 'the role of marketing is to support the library in its efforts to meet its goals by way of strategies which focus on the consumer' (Schmidt, 2006: 1). However, marketing libraries in North Africa is a new concept. Furthermore, because of problems, such as financial constraints and restrictions on the type of materials available, the library information sector (LIS) does not seem to have much to market.

Nevertheless, this article will show areas where marketing can be done already. In order to do this, there will first be a discussion of what marketing means. This will be followed by a description of one of the models used for marketing: the PEST analysis. Finally, this model will be applied to the factors which affect North Africa, focussing on the countries of Libya and Egypt.

Objectives:

The basic purpose of this study is to determine the impact of PEST factors and marketing strategies on libraries in Egypt and Libya. After that, description the models used for marketing: the PEST analysis. Finally, apply this model to the factors which affect libraries in North Africa.

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Methodology

In order to achieve objectives of the study, the desk research method was conducted, which relies on published literature review such as books,e- journal and different articles, periodicals, academic publications and other materials available online or in libraries.

1. Definition of marketing

According to Baker (1996, cited in Baker 1998: 38), marketing is '[the] delivery of a standard of living'. In order to do this, it is necessary to find out what the market for that standard of living actually is. For example, the organisation which wants to market its products or services must determine which part of society would most like or benefit from them. Furthermore, it may need to look at modifying its products or services in order to better fit the potential market's own needs and expectations. All of this is important, if the organisation is to both attract customers or users and keep them as such (Contreras & Ramos, 2016).

Additionally, according to Cronje, et al (2007:283) marketing is the process of making management decisions and tasks that are designed to effectively address opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment. This is accomplished by effectively developing and transferring a market offering that meets the needs of consumers in a manner that aligns with the objectives of the business, the consumer, and society.

Moreover, Lamb, et al (2007:7) say Marketing is the process of anticipating and fulfilling consumer requirements through mutually beneficial exchange processes, while doing so more profitably and effectively than competitors through the use of efficient managerial processes.

1i. Why Marketing of Library

According to (Chandratre, S & Chandratre, M, 2015, P. 164) the field of librarianship is undergoing fast change.. A number of internal and external factors are changing the function of libraries. The concept of information sector marketing has been discussed by librarians and information specialists. The following elements are in charge of pushing the library profession to adopt a marketing strategy for its services and operations.

1. The information explosion (rapid growth of reading material)
2. The technology revolution;
3. Escalating library costs/ budget cuts
4. Increase of user based services
5. Networking demands/ complexity in information requirements
6. Competition by database vendors
7. Reading habits among people are declining due to reasons such as the onslaught of television and Internet.

2. Definition of PEST

PEST is the acronym for a marketing model which looks at the political (P), economic (E), social (S) and technological (T) factors which may both directly and indirectly affect an organisation (Corrall, 1994).

According to Kenton, PEST (2025) analysis is a management tool that allows an organisation to assess critical external factors that may influence its operations or performance.

These are factors in the environment external to the organisation (Contreras & Ramos, 2016). They may not be easy to control and they may not be stable, but, as shown in Section 1, if they are not considered, there is less likelihood of the marketing being effective (Gutterman, 2023).

2i. Political factors

The political factors can be divided into two parts: international and national or local (Baker, 1998). In the former category, influences include the relationship between countries. In the latter, the organisation may be affected by such things as the stability of the government and its policies towards anything which may have a bearing on the organisation and its products or services. These policies may be in the area of public expenditure and education, for example (Baker, 1998; Corrall, 1994). Regarding the impact of Political factors on libraries see Table 1 : political factors and their influence on libraries (Cox, 2020: 5).

Table 1. Political factors influencing libraries

Political factor	Implications for libraries
Reduced role of state	Competition for resources
Widening participation policy	Supporting higher numbers
Accountability requirements	Proof of value, impact
Performance expectations	Changing relationships
Focus on research	Balancing of support
Resistance to neoliberalism	Promotion of library values

2ii. Economic factors

Government policies (see Section 2i) will determine to at least a certain extent how much the employees of an organisation will cost. They will also affect the availability of staff with the relevant skills to carry out the necessary tasks (Baker, 1998; Corrall, 1994). Both of these will in turn influence the products or services.

On the other hand, government policies will also have a bearing on the consumers or users that the organisation is trying to attract and keep. For example, taxes, level of inflation and interest rates as well as any pay levels set by the government will determine the amount of income which the people have available to spend on the organisation's products and services (Baker, 1998; Corrall, 1994). Regarding the impact of economic factors on libraries see Table 2 : economic factors and their influence on libraries (Cox, 2020: 6).

Table 2. Economic factors influencing libraries

Economic factor	Implications for libraries
Lower state funding	Reduced staffing, budgets
Cost control imperative	Focus on lower content costs
Intensified competition	Promoting competitive assets
Global market	Support for internationalization
High tuition fees	More demanding students
Employability	Enabling digital fluency

2iii. Social factors

The society where the organisation is based will have a major influence on the way in which it markets itself, because it must take into account the attitudes and beliefs of the people. These attitudes and beliefs concern all areas of life, including education (and therefore literacy), gender (who should do what) and religion (what is admissible) (Baker, 1998; Corrall, 1994). Regarding the impact of social factors on libraries see Table 3 : social factors and their influence on libraries (Cox, 2020: 8).

Table 3. Social factors influencing libraries

Social factor	**Implications for libraries**
Demographic trends	Changing user base
High educational participation	New user support challenges
Student well-being	Well-being initiatives
Global sustainability	Equity, open access focus
Equality, diversity, inclusion	Staffing, collections diversity
Public distrust of universities	Support for reproducible research

2iiii. Technology

An organisation needs to have the correct and, as far as possible, most advanced technology to make its products or carry out its services (Corrall, 1994). In addition, it needs staff who have the skills and knowledge to use the available technology (Baker, 1998). Regarding the impact of technological factors on libraries see Table 4: technological factors and their influence on libraries (Cox, 2020: 9) .

Table 4. Technological factors influencing libraries

Technological factor	Implications for libraries
Ease of access to information	Disintermediation
Mass ownership of devices	Engaging remote learners
Learning technologies	Opportunities to host
Research platforms	Open access expectations
Data-driven research	Data management roles
Artificial intelligence advances	Roles, skills, ethical concerns

Having said that ,the PEST analyses external political, economic, social and technological factors that can affect an organisation such as a library, helping it adapt to change, identify opportunities and mitigate threats. In the case of libraries in particular, this means analysing how government policies, funding, cultural shifts, demographics and new technologies such as artificial intelligence can affect their services, operations and community involvement.

3. PEST and the marketing in Egypt and Libya LIS

Having looked at the theory for the PEST model of marketing, it is now possible to see how it can be applied to marketing the (LIS) in North African Arabic countries.

3i. Political

As discussed in Section 2i, the impact of international relations on a country affects the way services (in this instance, LIS) can be marketed. However, there are a number of areas which affect the developing countries, such as those of North Africa, in particular.

In the first place, taking the case of Libya, its economy has been badly damaged by international sanctions, imposed at the beginning of the 1990s (Ali & Camp, 1999). Furthermore, this situation has been made worse because the economy depends so much on the revenue from oil, rather than income from internal markets (Agnaia, 1996). In the second place, taking the example of Egypt, this country has a different kind of problem: large debts to the International Monetary Fund, which have been made worse by the Gulf War (Chukwuna, 1995). Both of these issues mean that in these countries, there are less financial resources for services, such as LIS, which are considered to be less important (Agnaia, 1996; Blue, 1994). In fact, according to Mohammed (2025), the biggest hurdle for LIS is the lack of government funding and, as Blue (1994: 2) points out, ‘overwhelming demands on government resources [in developing countries] make books a low priority’, which means that there may not be a great deal to market.

On the other hand, on a national level, political ideology has an impact on the type of written material available in North Africa. In fact, authors are afraid to write certain types of material because of ‘political fears’, which means that they often ‘resign their intellectual duties and submit to the will and dictates of the ruling elite’ (Ali, 1998: 2). According to Mohammed (2025), this

leads to the available literature being repetitive rather than creative. In other words, in this area of the PEST model, it would appear that the LIS has difficulty marketing itself, because it does not provide the materials that people necessarily need.

However, authors may find it increasingly easy to write what they wish, because of the impact of the internet. This is because governments seem to be less concerned about what can be published in this medium than in other forms of publication (Main, 2001). From this, it would appear that the global situation can have a positive effect on what may be available in North African libraries and therefore increase the marketing potential.

Apart from the problems created outside the North African area (i.e. sanctions and international debts) and inside the countries by the political situation, there is also the problem of education. For example, in Libya, there is currently a large shortage of professional people. Fortunately, the government has now realised that education is extremely important for all areas of life and the number of people being educated at all levels has increased by several hundred percent (Agnaia, 1996). This therefore suggests that with increased education, there will be more people in a position to use the LIS and more people to work in this environment, which will make LIS marketing easier.

3ii. Economic

As mentioned in the previous section, public expenditure is determined both by the amount of money available and by what is seen to be a priority. For the LIS in North African countries, this therefore means that they are faced with several difficulties.

One difficulty is very basic: lack of materials. These countries do not have the financial resources to buy large amounts of material from overseas and yet they do not have the capacity to publish much themselves, both because of political restraints (see Section 3i) and lack of money for training people to do the publishing (Blue, 1994). However, there has been a move to make these countries less dependent on others through training programmes (see Section 3i), with Libya, for example, even sending people abroad to gain the necessary skills and knowledge (Agnaia, 1996). It would therefore appear that, even though there is a long way to go before libraries in North Africa are well-stocked and independent of other countries, there has been a move in this direction. In turn, this makes it more likely that their LIS will eventually have much more to market.

On the other hand, the countries under discussion do not have the opportunity to gain large amounts of revenue through taxes. To cite one example, in Libya less than a third of the population is in employment and of these people only a quarter are in the professional and managerial classes (Jamahiriya Statistics Book, 1999). To cite another example, in Egypt 34 percent of the population are under the poverty line and in no position to contribute to the national economy through taxation (Chukwuna, 1995). Because governments have other priorities with limited finances (see Section 3i), the conclusion is that yet again their LIS is not able to market much of a service.

3iii. Social

The LIS is very much influenced by social factors, as library users are members of society. However, reading is mostly associated with scholarly activity in Arabic culture (Mohammed, A. , 2025). Thus, since only 10 percent of young people in Libya, for example, go into higher education

(Jamahiriya Statistics Book, 1999), it would seem that the LIS in such countries has a limited audience.

Apart from Arabic attitudes towards reading, another point against the use of libraries is the high level of illiteracy in North Africa. In Libya, 18.7 percent of the total population is illiterate, with females being three times as likely as men to be unable to read and write in Arabic (Jamahiriya Statistics Book, 1999). Equally, in Egypt 34-38 percent of women are illiterate in comparison with 63 percent of men (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2019). Although the governments may be attempting to improve education (see Section 3ii), there are limits to the amount that can be done, however (Lind, 1986).

In the final analysis, the LIS market in North African Arabic countries is small and specialised. On the other hand, marketing could be used to show the benefits of libraries to those who have finished their studies as well as those who have not attended higher education but who can read.

3iii. Technology

In Section 3i, it was shown that the Internet is having an impact on the distribution of information. However, the effect is limited at the present time because in the whole of the Middle East only 0.7 percent of the population have access to it in their homes (Main, 2001). It is therefore clear that in the countries discussed in this essay, libraries are not yet in a position to push for materials which have so far been unavailable to them.

Furthermore, according to Mohammed (2025), technology in libraries in Libya is currently limited to the use of thirty-year-old databases for cataloguing, but they have no ability to scan books or track them, for example. On the other hand, now that sanctions have been lifted there is the hope that the money will become available and the policies will develop for up-to-date technology to be put into libraries. This in turn will make the LIS much easier to market as they will be both more attractive to the user and the libraries will have the technology to actually market themselves.

Conclusion

In the first part of the essay, there is a definition of marketing. In the second part, there is a definition of PEST, which stands for the political (P), economic (E), social (S) and technological (T) factors affecting the marketing of an organisation. Using this, in the third part, it has been possible to see how the environment in which the LIS of North African Arabic countries exists can be applied to marketing this sector.

Regarding the impact of political and economic factors on the LIS in North Africa, it is clear that both international and national policies have had a large influence. For example, lack of finances has made technology difficult to obtain. However, cultural attitudes are also a factor in how far and to whom the LIS can be marketed.

On the other hand, the lifting of sanctions in Libya and an acknowledgement of the need to train and educate mean that the LIS in this country, at least, could have a larger and more receptive population to which it could market its services.

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