

The Evolution of Marketing in Algeria

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Received: 02/04/2023

Accepted: 29/05/2023

Published: 20/07/2023

Abstract:

The evolution of marketing in Algeria has been a topic of interest among researchers and marketers for several years. Algeria is an emerging economy that is experiencing significant changes in its political, economic, and social structures. As a result, the country's marketing environment is evolving at a rapid pace, and firms need to adapt to these changes to remain competitive. This article provides a comprehensive review of the evolution of marketing in Algeria, highlighting the key changes in the country's marketing environment, the challenges facing Algerian marketers, and the strategies used by firms to address these challenges. The article concludes with recommendations for future research in this area.

Keywords: Marketing, Algeria, Evolution, Challenges, Strategies

1.Introduction:

Marketing is a critical function for firms operating in today's global economy. Marketing involves creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The marketing environment, however, is constantly evolving, these changes to remain competitive. Algeria is an emerging economy that has experienced significant changes in its political, economic, and social structures in recent years. The country's economy is largely dependent on its oil and gas reserves, which account for more than 95% of its exports and 60% of its government revenue (OPEC, 2021). However, the government has implemented economic reforms aimed at diversifying the economy and reducing its reliance on oil and gas exports. These reforms have created new opportunities for firms operating in Algeria, but they have also created new challenges for marketers.

Marketing has undergone significant changes in recent years, particularly with the rise of digital technologies and the increasing use of social media as a marketing tool. As such, marketers operating in Algeria must stay up-to-date with these changes to remain competitive in the global marketplace (Kotler, & Keller, 2016, pp. 4,22), Moreover, the Algerian consumer has also changed, becoming more educated, tech-savvy, and demanding, creating a need for businesses to adapt their marketing strategies to meet these evolving customer needs and preferences (Hadjikhelifa, 2019, p. 124).

To keep pace with these changes, Algerian businesses have been investing heavily in their marketing efforts, both online and offline. In particular, social media platforms have become increasingly popular for marketing purposes, as they offer a cost-effective way to reach a wider audience and engage with customers in real-time (Hadjikhelifa, 2019, p. 125). However, there are still challenges that businesses face when it comes to marketing in Algeria, such as a lack of infrastructure, limited access to funding, and a lack of skilled marketing professionals (Bougherara & Benamara, 2020, p. 70).

Despite these challenges, the marketing landscape in Algeria is rapidly evolving, and there are many opportunities for businesses to grow and expand. By staying up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies and adapting their strategies to meet the changing needs of Algerian consumers, businesses can succeed in this emerging market.

The main question of this study is: what are the different stages in the evolution of marketing in Algeria?

For that purpose, we chose to articulate the study around those secondary questions:

- How can we describe the evolution of marketing in Algeria from a historical view?
- What economic context allowed the emergence of marketing in Algeria?
- What is the current state of marketing practices, challenges, limitations in Algeria?

To answer those questions, we have divided the study model to the following points First we discussed The Evolution of Marketing in Algeria where we talked about the different phases of this evolution alongside with the economic environment of each phase, in the second part we discussed Challenges Facing Algerian Marketers, and we have examined many limitations that phases the new marketing practices and in the third part we have analysed the different Strategies Used by Firms in Algeria.

2.The Evolution of Marketing in Algeria:

We will present in this section two era of marketing evolution in Algeria with pertinent analysis for each, as follow;

2.1 The Historical Context:

Marketing in Algeria has a relatively short history compared to more developed economies. The country gained its independence from France in 1962 and embarked on a process of nation-building, which included the development of a national economy. At the time of independence, the Algerian economy was largely agricultural, with little industrialization or modernization. The government's development strategy was focused on the nationalization of key industries, including oil and gas, and the promotion of import substitution policies to develop local industries (Stora, 2014, p. 202).

Marketing during this period was largely focused on the promotion of locally produced goods and services, with little attention paid to consumer preferences or market research. The government played a dominant role in the economy, and firms were largely state-owned or controlled. This created a challenging environment for marketers, who were limited in their ability to respond to market demands and consumer preferences.

The situation began to change in the late 1980s when Algeria adopted a new economic policy that aimed to promote private sector development and attract foreign investment. This policy shift led to the privatization of many state-owned enterprises and the opening of the economy to foreign competition (Lamine, 2012, p. 127).

As a result of these changes, marketing in Algeria began to evolve, with firms starting to pay more attention to consumer preferences and market research. However, the process has been slow, and the industry is still in the early stages of development compared to more mature economies (Dib, 2016, pp. 133-135).

One of the key challenges facing marketers in Algeria is the lack of reliable data and market research. This makes it difficult for firms to understand consumer behavior and preferences, as well as to identify market opportunities (Dib, 2016, p. 136) The government has taken some steps to address this issue, such as establishing a national statistical office and encouraging the development of market research firms (Lamine, 2012, p. 130), However, much more needs to be done to improve the availability and quality of data.

Despite these challenges, there are signs of progress in the Algerian marketing industry. The growth of digital marketing and social media has opened up new channels for firms to reach consumers, and there has been a rise in entrepreneurship and start-ups in recent years (Dib, 2016, p. 131)

The evolution of marketing in Algeria has been influenced by the country's historical context and economic policies. In the early years after independence, the Algerian economy was largely agricultural, and the government focused on nationalization and import substitution policies to develop local industries. This approach did not place much emphasis on market

research or consumer preferences, resulting in limited opportunities for marketers (Stora, 2014, p. 203) .

In the late 1980s, Algeria adopted a new economic policy to promote private sector development and attract foreign investment. This policy shift led to the privatization of many state-owned enterprises and opened up the economy to foreign competition, creating new opportunities for marketers (Lamine, 2012, p. 131). However, the marketing industry in Algeria still faces several challenges, including a lack of reliable data and market research (Dib, 2016, p. 132).

According to a study by the International Journal of Business and Management, Algeria's marketing industry is still in the early stages of development compared to more mature economies. The study found that marketing practices in Algeria are often limited to basic advertising, with little emphasis on market research, branding, or customer relationship management (Bouhaddou, Abid, & Elharfi, 2017, p. 176). This situation creates a significant barrier for firms looking to enter the Algerian market, as they may not have a clear understanding of the market's dynamics.

To address this issue, the Algerian government has taken steps to improve the availability and quality of data. For example, the National Office of Statistics (ONS) was established in 1963 to provide reliable data on the country's economy, and the government has encouraged the development of market research firms (Lamine, 2012, p. 132). However, much more needs to be done to ensure that marketers have access to accurate and timely data.

Despite these challenges, the growth of digital marketing and social media has opened up new channels for firms to reach consumers in Algeria. According to a report by Hootsuite, Algeria has one of the highest social media penetration rates in Africa, with over 17 million social media users (Hootsuite, 2022). This presents a significant opportunity for firms to engage with customers and build brand awareness through social media marketing.

Additionally, there has been a rise in entrepreneurship and start-ups in Algeria in recent years, with a growing number of young people starting their own businesses. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), Algeria's entrepreneurial activity rate increased from 7.3% in 2019 to 10.8% in 2020, indicating a growing interest in entrepreneurship ((GEM), 2021). This trend presents an opportunity for marketers to target a new generation of consumers who are open to innovative products and services.

To summarize that, the evolution of marketing in Algeria has been influenced by the country's historical context and economic policies. While the industry is still in the early stages of development, the growth of digital marketing and social media, along with a rise in entrepreneurship and start-ups, presents significant opportunities for firms to engage with customers and build brand awareness in Algeria. However, more needs to be done to improve the availability and quality of data, which remains a significant challenge for marketers operating in the country.

2.2 The Current Context:

The economic reforms implemented by the Algerian government in the 1990s and 2000s aimed at liberalizing the economy and promoting private sector development have led to significant changes in the country's marketing environment. These reforms have led to an increase in foreign investment, the entry of multinational firms, and the emergence of a private sector (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 216). As a result, the marketing environment in Algeria has become more competitive, with firms competing for market share and consumer loyalty.

However, the Algerian market remains challenging for marketers. The country has a relatively low GDP per capita, and consumers have limited purchasing power. In addition, the government continues to play a significant role in the economy, with state-owned enterprises dominating key industries, such as energy and telecommunications. The country's political instability and security concerns also create challenges for firms operating in Algeria.

2.2.1 Economic Context: The Algerian economy heavily relies on hydrocarbon exports, which account for more than 90% of the country's export earnings and about 35% of its GDP (World Bank, 2021). The country's economic growth has been sluggish in recent years due to the drop in oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a negative impact on global trade and investment. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Algeria's real GDP contracted by 4.5% in 2020, and the country is expected to face significant economic challenges in the coming years (IMF, 2021).

Furthermore, Algeria's business environment is characterized by significant bureaucratic and administrative hurdles, which can hinder the establishment and growth of firms. The country ranks low in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, ranking 169th out of 190 countries in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, the legal system is weak and can be subject to political interference, leading to an uncertain legal environment for firms operating in the country (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 217).

2.2.2 Marketing Context: Despite the challenges facing marketers in Algeria, the industry has shown signs of progress in recent years. The growth of digital marketing and social media has opened up new opportunities for firms to reach consumers in Algeria. According to a study by Hootsuite and We Are Social, as of January 2021, 23.5 million Algerians were active internet users, representing a penetration rate of 53% of the population (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2021). This presents a significant opportunity for firms to target consumers through digital channels.

Moreover, the rise of entrepreneurship and start-ups in Algeria has contributed to the growth of the marketing industry. The government has introduced measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and promote entrepreneurship, such as the creation of a national agency for SME development (ANSEJ) and the launch of the National Program for the Promotion of Start-ups (PNE). According to a report by the African Development Bank,

the number of start-ups in Algeria has increased significantly in recent years, with the country ranking third in Africa in terms of the number of start-ups (African Development Bank, s.d.). However, the marketing industry in Algeria still faces significant challenges. The lack of reliable data and market research is a major obstacle for firms seeking to understand consumer behavior and preferences. Additionally, the country's political instability and security concerns can make it difficult for firms to operate and invest in Algeria (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 218).

Overall, while the Algerian marketing industry has evolved over the past few decades, it still faces significant challenges related to the country's economic and political context. However, the growth of digital channels and entrepreneurship presents opportunities for firms seeking to enter the Algerian market.

3. Challenges Facing Algerian Marketers:

Algerian marketers face several challenges in the country's evolving marketing environment. These challenges include:

- **Limited Market Research:** Despite the increasing importance of market research in today's competitive environment, the practice is still relatively underdeveloped in Algeria. Most firms do not have access to reliable market data, making it difficult to identify consumer preferences and market trends (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 219).
- **Limited Infrastructure:** Algeria's infrastructure remains underdeveloped, with limited access to modern distribution channels and transportation systems. This makes it difficult for firms to reach customers in remote areas of the country (Stora, 2014, p. 203).
- **Bureaucracy and Corruption:** Algeria's bureaucratic and legal systems can be complex and slow, making it difficult for firms to obtain necessary licenses and permits. Corruption is also a concern in the country, with many firms facing demands for bribes and other forms of illegal payments (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 219).
- **Cultural Factors:** Algerian culture is unique, with strong religious and traditional values. Firms must be aware of these values when developing marketing campaigns and strategies (Stora, 2014, p. 203).

Overall, while the Algerian marketing environment has evolved significantly over the past few decades, it remains a challenging and complex market for firms. Algerian marketers must navigate these challenges while developing strategies to reach and engage with consumers in a competitive and evolving marketplace.

3.1 Limited Market Size:

The Algerian market is relatively small, with a population of around 44 million people (World Bank, 2021). In addition, the country's GDP per capita is relatively low, limiting consumers' purchasing power. This creates challenges for firms looking to achieve economies of scale or justify investments in marketing activities.

The limited market size in Algeria poses a challenge for marketers, as it restricts the potential for growth and scale. According to the World Bank (2021), Algeria has a population of around 44 million people, which is relatively small compared to other countries in the region. This limited market size means that firms may struggle to achieve economies of scale, which is an essential factor for success in many industries.

Moreover, the country's GDP per capita is relatively low, which further limits consumers' purchasing power. This can result in a lower demand for certain products or services, which can make it difficult for firms to justify investments in marketing activities. In addition, Algerian consumers tend to be price-sensitive, which can lead to a price war between firms and affect profit margins.

These factors together create a challenging environment for marketers in Algeria, as they must navigate the limited market size and consumer purchasing power to develop effective marketing strategies that can drive growth and profitability for their firms.

3.2 Limited Infrastructure:

The country's infrastructure remains underdeveloped, particularly outside of major cities. This limits the ability of firms to distribute products and services effectively and reach consumers in remote areas.

The lack of adequate infrastructure in Algeria presents a major challenge for marketers. Poor transportation and logistics infrastructure can make it difficult and costly to distribute products across the country, particularly in remote or rural areas (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 220). This can limit the availability of products in certain regions and impact the ability of firms to reach a wider customer base.

Furthermore, limited telecommunications infrastructure can make it challenging to communicate with customers and conduct business operations. This can include difficulties in accessing reliable internet or phone services, which can impact firms' ability to engage with customers through digital channels (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 220).

The low internet penetration rate in Algeria also creates challenges for marketers looking to leverage digital channels to reach consumers. With just over 20% of the population using the internet in 2021 (World Bank, 2021), firms may need to rely on more traditional marketing channels to reach customers, such as television or radio advertising.

Overall, the limited infrastructure in Algeria can create significant challenges for marketers looking to reach a wider audience and distribute their products effectively.

3.3 Bureaucracy and Corruption:

The Algerian government's bureaucracy and corruption create challenges for firms operating in the country. Obtaining licenses, permits, and approvals can be time-consuming and costly,

and corruption can add to these costs. Fortunately, with the hirak, and the new government aspirations, the new objective is to limit bureaucracy and eradicate corruption to allow firms to operate in all transparency and facility.

3.4 Limited Marketing Expertise:

The lack of marketing expertise and training among Algerian firms and professionals creates challenges for firms looking to develop effective marketing strategies. The limited marketing expertise among Algerian firms and professionals is a significant challenge facing the country's marketing industry (Bouarfa & Osman, 2020, p. 221)). While the number of universities and educational institutions offering marketing programs, has increased in recent years, there is still a lack of qualified professionals in the field. Many firms rely on foreign marketing consultants or agencies to develop and implement marketing strategies, which can be costly and may not be tailored to the local market.

In addition, the lack of marketing research and market intelligence data makes it difficult for firms to make informed decisions about their marketing activities. This can lead to a trial-and-error approach to marketing, which may not be effective or efficient. The development of marketing research capabilities and the training of marketing professionals are necessary to improve the marketing industry's effectiveness and efficiency in Algeria.

According to a report by the International Trade Administration (ITA), many Algerian companies lack marketing expertise and struggle with developing effective marketing strategies due to the lack of specialized training and education programs (ITA, 2020). The report further notes that Algerian firms often rely on traditional marketing methods, such as print advertising and product displays in stores, instead of adopting more modern marketing techniques, such as digital marketing and social media advertising.

This lack of marketing expertise may also be attributed to a shortage of qualified professionals in the field. According to the ITA report, there is a shortage of trained marketing professionals in Algeria, and many companies struggle to find qualified candidates to fill marketing roles. This shortage of talent may hinder the ability of Algerian firms to develop and execute effective marketing campaigns.

4. Strategies Used by Firms in Algeria:

Firms operating in Algeria have adopted several strategies to address the challenges of the country's marketing environment. These strategies include:

4.1 Localization:

Firms have recognized the importance of understanding the local market and consumer preferences and have invested in market research to develop products and services that meet local needs. This has involved adapting products and services to local tastes, languages, and cultural norms. Digital marketing is an effective way for firms to reach consumers in Algeria, particularly younger consumers who are more likely to be connected to the internet and social media. According to a report by Hootsuite (2021), Algeria has over 20 million internet users, with a penetration rate of just over 50%. This presents an opportunity for businesses to reach

a large audience through digital marketing channels such as social media, email marketing, and search engine optimization (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2021).

4.2 Digital Marketing:

Firms have increasingly turned to digital marketing to reach consumers in Algeria, particularly younger consumers who are more likely to be connected to the internet and social media. This has involved using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote products and services and engage with customers. Digital marketing is an effective way for firms to reach consumers in Algeria, particularly younger consumers who are more likely to be connected to the internet and social media. According to a report by Hootsuite (2021), Algeria has over 20 million internet users, with a penetration rate of just over 50%. This presents an opportunity for businesses to reach a large audience through digital marketing channels such as social media, email marketing, and search engine optimization (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2021).

4.3 Partnership and Collaboration:

Firms have sought to overcome the challenges of limited infrastructure and bureaucracy by forming partnerships and collaborations with other firms, suppliers, and distributors. This has enabled firms to access new markets, expand their distribution networks, and reduce costs. Partnership and collaboration are crucial strategies that firms operating in Algeria have adopted to overcome the challenges of limited infrastructure and bureaucracy. According to a study by Aliouche and Schlenrich (2010), partnerships and collaborations with local firms, suppliers, and distributors can help foreign firms to navigate the complexities of the Algerian market. It enables firms to access new markets, expand their distribution networks, and reduce costs (Aliouche & Schlenrich, 2010, p. 190).

4.4 Corporate Social Responsibility:

Firms have recognized the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Algeria, particularly in light of the country's history of social and economic inequality. Firms have invested in CSR initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of local communities and promoting sustainable development. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming increasingly important in Algeria, particularly in light of the country's history of social and economic inequality. According to a report by the International Labour Organization (2021), CSR initiatives can have a positive impact on businesses in Algeria by improving the welfare of local communities, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing the reputation of the firm. Algerian firms have recognized the importance of CSR and have invested in initiatives aimed at improving education, healthcare, and social welfare in the country (International Labour Organization, 2021).

5. Discussion

5.1 Implications of the Results

The results of this study have several implications for marketers operating in Algeria. First, firms need to be aware of the challenges of the country's marketing environment and develop

strategies that address these challenges. This may involve adapting products and services to local tastes and preferences, investing in digital marketing, forming partnerships and collaborations, and investing in CSR initiatives.

Second, firms need to develop a deep understanding of the local market and consumer preferences. This requires investment in market research and the recruitment and training of local marketing professionals.

Third, firms need to be aware of the importance of building strong relationships with stakeholders, including government officials, suppliers, distributors, and local communities. This can help firms navigate the challenges of bureaucracy and corruption and build trust and goodwill with local stakeholders.

To elaborate more on those point we can explain each point as follow:

The results of this study have several implications for marketers operating in Algeria. First, firms need to be aware of the challenges of the country's marketing environment and develop strategies that address these challenges. This may involve adapting products and services to local tastes and preferences, investing in digital marketing, forming partnerships and collaborations, and investing in CSR initiatives (Corporate Social Responsibility).

Second, firms need to develop a deep understanding of the local market and consumer preferences. This requires investment in market research and the recruitment and training of local marketing professionals.

Third, firms need to be aware of the importance of building strong relationships with stakeholders, including government officials, suppliers, distributors, and local communities. This can help firms navigate the challenges of bureaucracy and corruption and build trust and goodwill with local stakeholders. Additionally, investing in CSR initiatives can help firms build a positive image and reputation among local stakeholders. This can enhance customer loyalty and brand equity, which are critical for long-term success in the Algerian market.

Secondly, firms need to develop a deep understanding of the local market and consumer preferences. Algeria is a diverse country with different regions, cultures, and languages. Therefore, it is important for firms to invest in market research and develop localized marketing strategies that address the unique needs and preferences of each region.

To accomplish this, firms may need to recruit and train local marketing professionals who understand the local market and can help firms develop effective marketing campaigns that resonate with local consumers. Additionally, firms may need to adapt their products and services to meet the needs of local consumers, such as offering halal products, providing products in local languages, and customizing product features to match local preferences.

Finally, building strong relationships with stakeholders, including government officials, suppliers, distributors, and local communities is critical for success in the Algerian market.

Algeria has a highly regulated business environment with a complex bureaucracy and corruption challenges. Therefore, firms need to build trust and goodwill with local stakeholders to navigate these challenges effectively.

By building strong relationships with local stakeholders, firms can access critical resources, such as distribution channels, financing, and information about local regulations and business practices. Additionally, building strong relationships with local communities can help firms build a positive image and reputation, which can enhance customer loyalty and brand equity.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the study relies on secondary data sources, which may not provide a complete picture of the marketing environment in Algeria. Second, the study does not examine the experiences of individual firms operating in Algeria, which may vary depending on industry, size, and other factors. Finally, the study does not examine the perspectives of consumers in Algeria, which would provide valuable insights into their preferences and behaviors.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research in this area could address some of the limitations of this study by collecting primary data from firms and consumers operating in Algeria. This could involve surveys, interviews, or focus groups to gather insights into their experiences, challenges, and strategies for success. Future research could also examine the impact of cultural, social, and political factors on the marketing environment in Algeria, including the impact of language, religion, and regional differences.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study has examined the evolution of marketing in Algeria, highlighting the key changes in the country's marketing environment, the challenges facing Algerian marketers, and the strategies used by firms to address these challenges. The study has found that the Algerian marketing environment is characterized by a range of challenges, including limited infrastructure, bureaucracy and corruption, and limited marketing expertise. However, firms operating in Algeria have adopted several strategies to address these challenges, including localization, digital marketing, partnership and collaboration, and CSR initiatives.

6.2 Recommendations for Marketers in Algeria

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for marketers operating in Algeria. First, firms should invest in market research to develop a deep understanding of the local market and consumer preferences. Second, firms should consider adapting products and services to local tastes and preferences, including language, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Third, firms should consider investing in digital marketing to reach consumers in remote areas and engage with younger consumers. Finally, firms should prioritize building strong relationships with stakeholders, including suppliers, customers, and

government officials, to navigate the bureaucracy and corruption that exists in the Algerian business environment.

6.3 Implications for Future Research

This study has provided an overview of the evolution of marketing in Algeria, but further research is needed to deepen our understanding of this topic. Future research could investigate the impact of specific marketing strategies on firm performance in Algeria. Additionally, research could explore the role of cultural and religious factors in shaping consumer behavior in Algeria, as well as the potential of e-commerce in the Algerian market.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the challenges facing marketers operating in Algeria and the strategies used by firms to overcome these challenges. The Algerian marketing environment is characterized by limited infrastructure, bureaucracy and corruption, and limited marketing expertise, but firms have adopted localization, digital marketing, partnership and collaboration, and CSR initiatives to address these challenges. Marketers operating in Algeria can benefit from investing in market research, adapting products and services to local tastes and preferences, investing in digital marketing, and building strong relationships with stakeholders. Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the Algerian market and the potential of marketing in this context.

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