



INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY OF  
APPLIED SCIENCES

**Tesla growth strategy: Middle East market penetration (PESTEL. Porter's five forces,  
Value Chain analysis, and SWOT analysis)**

Bachelor in: International Management

Type of assignment: 1.1 Tesla Motors

Course of study: Principles Of Management (DLBBAPM01\_E)

Date: 06 December 2024

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## **Abbreviations**

- UAE: United Arab Emirates
- PESTEL: political, economic, sociological, technological, environmental, legal
- SWOT: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- RTA: Roads and Transport Authority
- DTC: Dubai Taxi Corporation
- DEWA: Dubai Electricity and Water Authority
- US: United States
- EVs: Electric Vehicles
- SGI: Saudi Green Initiative
- PIF: Saudi's Public Investment Fund
- FSD: Full self-drive

## **1.1 Introduction:**

The passionate, ambitious, and environmental-centric target of Tesla is to “Accelerate the world’s transition to sustainable energy” (Tesla, 2023, p. 2). Surpassing beyond electrical engineering, Tesla is encompassing beyond innovative transportation and energy, Tesla's approach aims to disrupt traditional automotive and energy industries by integrating electric vehicles with renewable energy systems and transforming the American automobile culture (Eisler, 2016, p. 35). Constantly expanding its market, Tesla established their first Middle East showroom in 2017 in the United Arab Emirates’ Dubai (Shane McGinley & Alexander Cornwell, 2017, para. 1), then following the sales launch in 2023, Tesla opened its first showroom in Qatar in 2024 (Zachary Visconti, 2024, para. 1) gulf states are known to have the highest sales of luxury cars per capita (Shane McGinley & Alexander Cornwell, 2017, para. 2) and Qatar has the fourth-highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the world (Zachary Visconti, 2024, para. 4) which makes this region rather lucrative and motivating for the automotive industry to flourish in, but challenges are posited expanding into unknown territory, especially of the Middle Eastern nature which has its own idiosyncratic environment. External analysis is necessary to figure out how to penetrate a new market; as Tesla has entered the UAE and with plans to expand into Saudi Arabia (as of 2024), there comes the time to challenge the course of growth of penetrating into the Middle East. This case study aims to formulate a strategic plan to penetrate into the Middle Eastern market following an external political, economic, sociological, technological, environmental, and legal analysis (PESTEL) and a five forces analysis, as well as an internal Value Chain and Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis.

## **2.1 PESTEL Analysis: Political, economic, sociological**

**Political:** Governmental support is crucial for innovative businesses like Tesla, since its penetration in 2017, the UAE has taken several measures to facilitate the brand’s growth - The Roads and Transport Authority of the UAE (RTA) signed a deal with Tesla to purchase 200 hybrid vehicles which will be added to the limousine fleet of the Dubai Taxi Corporation (DTC) (World Government Summit, 2017, para. 1). By 2021, Tesla has flourished hand in hand with the UAE’s vision to be the smartest city in mobility (World Government Summit, 2017, para. 8) with Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) inaugurating Tesla’s battery systems into the world’s largest solar farm located in Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park. Between 2017 and 2023, the UAE’s EV market has grown at an estimated annual rate of 30%, fueled by governmental support. This growth aligns with the UAE’s 2050 zero carbon emissions goal. Specifically, Dubai has made strides with over 7,000 EVs on its roads by 2023, targeting nearly 13,000 by 2025, while Abu Dhabi has incorporated over 2,000 EVs into its green mobility initiatives (International Trade Administration, 2023). This government intervention is what made Tesla stand out in the UAE

market, with both the brand and the government achieving their goals of a more sustainable future. Like its strategy in the United States (US), a similar application happened in the UAE, with governmental support purchasing the initial fleet and initiating laws to sell a certain amount of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in a certain time frame (Shiyong, 2021, p. 2).

Economic: The opening of showrooms and entering a new market undoubtedly stimulated economic impact in UAE by creating jobs for UAE residents alike, while it has limited its expansion to sales, showrooms, and service centers rather than manufacturing, this makes its impact relatively small but nevertheless vitalizing. Elon Musk the chairman of Tesla's target to sell 20 million vehicles by the end of the decade has inspired many countries to court the brand into opening a gigafactory in their country (Maryam, 2023, para. 2). Although Middle Eastern economies are heavily oil-dependent, Tesla can capitalize on the region's push for economic diversification and renewable energy adoption, through both the UAE's 2050 vision and Saudi Arabia's visions for 2030, both striving for cleaner energy and a more sustainable future, this alignment in brands and government will create a healthier business growth environment for Tesla in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia's 2030's green initiative project (SGI) stated that its targets include of the following: improving quality of life, fighting climate change, protecting the environment, and reaching zero carbon emissions by 2060 (SGI, 2021). The UAE's Green Agenda of 2030 stated the following goals: sustainable use of resources, clean energy and climate action, and social development of quality of life (UAE Green Agenda - 2023, n.d.) These ambitions create innovative ideas to combat these targets from both the government (as stated above para. 1) and the brands entering their market. Any company penetrating a new market doubtlessly creates competition for the existing market, Tesla entering new territory such as Saudi Arabia will create competition for existing brands such as the Saudi-owned EVs Lucid. The biggest challenge posited by Lucid to Tesla in Saudi Arabia is that Lucid Motors is Saudi-owned by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), with a factory in King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC) designed to produce luxury EVs for up to 155,000 vehicles per year and the PIF owns 62% of its shares (Saudi Gazette, 2021, para. 3). This foothold puts Lucid at a competitive advantage to Tesla, however, it is not possible to forget Tesla's immense impact globally.

Sociological: There is a growing cultural shift in the Middle East towards sustainability and luxury, allowing Tesla to position itself as both a premium and eco-conscious brand, awareness and interest in environmental sustainability are on the rise, especially among the youth and in urban areas. Tesla's reputation as a green energy pioneer aligns well within these values, which could boost its brand appeal rapid urbanization in the Middle East can drive demand for EVs as cities aim to reduce congestion and pollution. Tesla's energy products, like solar roofs, are also well-positioned to address regional sustainability goals, with a predominantly young and tech-savvy population, Tesla benefits from an audience that values innovation and modernity,

aligning with the company's brand identity. When it comes to wealth concentration, Tesla's high-end vehicles are well-suited to affluent markets like Dubai and Riyadh, where there's a high concentration of wealthy individuals who are early adopters of new technologies. Saudi Arabia alone has made their share of almost 52% of the vehicles sold in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and 35% in the MENA region in 2020 (ITA, 2021, para. 1)

## **2.2 PESTEL Analysis: Technological, environmental, legal**

**Technological:** A significant hurdle for EV adoption in the region is the lack of charging infrastructure. However, governments are increasingly investing in EV charging networks, which could enable Tesla's success and broader EV adoption. DEWA has created an EV green charging initiative which promotes the adoption of EV chargers across the UAE region, with a whole website dedicated to locating, requesting, and updating EV charging stations (DEWA, n.d.) since 2015 around 400 vehicle charging stations have been strategically placed to facilitate and encourage EVs adoption. Tesla's constant innovation with green initiatives such as battery systems and solar powers aligns with the Middle East's visions for the future, which resulted in collaborations with the government such as the solar panels adoption in the biggest solar park worldwide and the integration of EVs in the DTC fleet.

**Environmental:** The Middle East is experiencing a climate-conscious shift in the right direction, with countries setting ambitious carbon reduction targets (Saudi's 2060 and UAE's 2050 zero emissions visions) that support Tesla's environmentally friendly goals, Tesla must consider the extreme heat, dust, and sandy conditions of the Middle Eastern desert environment, which may require specific adaptations to vehicle cooling systems and battery life, Tesla's energy solutions, including solar panels and Powerwalls, align well with both Saudi Arabia's and UAE's sustainability goals, especially as they seek to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia are increasing investments in solar power, especially in areas with year-round sunlight. Tesla's solar energy products could complement this trend, potentially creating cross-industry opportunities. As reinstated by multiple news outlets, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been targeting to wean the economy off oil and create jobs, in order to do so the kingdom has invested at least \$10 billion in U.S.-based Lucid Motors and set up Ceer, Saudi Arabia's own brand, and built an EV metals plant (Pesha, 2024)

**Legal:** Regulatory frameworks for EVs vary across the region. Countries like the UAE offer incentives, but the legal environment is still developing in some Middle Eastern markets. Tesla's operations will be influenced by import regulations, tax incentives, and potential carbon reduction policies in the future, Tesla may encounter legal requirements related to local manufacturing or partnerships, as countries may favor companies that contribute directly to the local economy especially heavily invested by Saudi Arabia's PIF such as Lucid Motors. Tesla's sales model may

face legal challenges in certain Middle Eastern countries with traditional dealership regulations. Compliance with these laws is critical to market entry and success. Tesla must navigate local labor laws, especially as it looks to establish partnerships or potential assembly facilities, balancing cost-efficiency with fair labor practices.

### **3.1 Porter's 5 forces analysis: Industry rivalry, threats of new entrants**

Industry rivalry: Tesla faces increasing competition from established automakers like BMW, Audi, and emerging players like Lucid Motors in the EV market. The Saudi Arabian automotive market is experiencing rapid growth, driven by economic diversification efforts under the 2030 Vision which emphasizes sustainability and reducing oil dependence. As of recent data, Toyota leads the automotive market with a substantial share followed by brands like Hyundai, Ford, and Nissan (ITA, 2021, para. 2). EV market share remains small but is expanding quickly as Saudi Arabia introduces initiatives to support clean energy, such as subsidies and infrastructure development for EVs. By 2028, the Saudi EV market, which includes electric, hybrid, and natural gas vehicles, is forecasted to grow significantly, propelled by incentives for green vehicle adoption and government partnerships with global automakers. Another rivalry in the same exact industry especially in Saudi Arabia would be Lucid Motors and BYD. BYD's market entry is made through a partnership with Al-Futtaim Electric Mobility, which focuses on BYD's range of EVs, the company has established distribution networks that facilitate the availability of its EV models across major cities like Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. "BYD's 2023 performance paints a promising picture for the future of sustainable mobility." (EV Reports, 2021, para. 1) As China's BYD is globally reclaimed as one of the top 10 car makers (EV Reports, 2021, para. 1), this puts Tesla in the Middle East with serious competition, as well as Lucid being part of Saudi's PIF.

Threats of new entrants: Entering the EV market requires substantial investment in technology, production facilities, and research. Tesla's established presence and innovations make it challenging for new entrants to match its standards without significant financial resources, for example, Ford attempted to make an EV for a lower cost but sacrificed battery performance and speed of their model Mustang Mach-E GT eSUV. Tesla's brand reputation and advanced technology (e.g., Autopilot, battery efficiency) create high entry barriers for newcomers. The only point that would set another company apart from Tesla would be substantial governmental intervention - which is the case for PIF-owned new-coming Lucid Motors.

### **3.2 Porter's 5 forces analysis: buyer power, supplier power, threats of substitutes**

Supplier power: Tesla reduces supplier dependency by manufacturing many key components such as batteries in-house in Nevada, their United States' first gigafactory, as well as their models S and X at their Fremont factory; this strategy limits suppliers' influence over the company. To further reduce manufacturing costs, Tesla will remove the millimeter-wave radar from its newer version of

the Model 3 and Y and help “Tesla quickly achieve the commercialization process.” (Xiao Yang, 2022, p. 776). Tesla’s integration into raw material sourcing, battery production, and software development lessens reliance on external suppliers, which stabilizes its production costs and maintains quality control. Despite having to reduce costs and cutting out external suppliers, the bargaining power of suppliers is moderate, as business with Tesla will bring in more clients due to their brand recognition and reputation (John Dudovskiy, 2021)

Buyer power: Offering an affordable high-volume, low-price fleet was part of Elon Musk’s 2008 Master Plan buy using cash profits from their Roadster to produce affordable EVs (Andrea Wang, 2017). By offering a diversified range of fleets from the premium to the affordable, Tesla is leveraging a wider mainstream mass-production audience as well as the tech-savvy, environmentally friendly population. Since the luxury EV market has few direct competitors, especially in the Middle East region, customers have few options to choose from, reducing their bargaining power to moderate.

Threats of substitutes: A direct competitor and a potential substitute threat of of Tesla’s EV fleet would be hybrid and biofuel cars. However, the environmental appeal of EVs and Tesla’s commitment to renewable energy solutions mitigate this risk, especially as global EV adoption increases. Tesla has become a top-selling luxury car manufacturer with a market capitalization surpassing some established automotive companies such as Fiat Chrysler and half of Ford and General Motors (Stringham et al., 2015, p. 85).

#### **4.1 Value Chain Analysis: Primary Activities**

Inbound logistics: Tesla’s establishment of a Gigafactory in Shanghai has enabled increased production capacity and cost efficiency through an “indigenized supply chain”. However, the company faces challenges such as global shortages, raw material cost fluctuations, and potential utility grid overload (Zheng, 2024; Naor et al., 2021). To address these issues and expand market share, Tesla is focusing on battery technology improvements, supplier responsibility evaluations, and extending its vertical integration to the mining industry (Zheng, 2024; Chen & Wang, 2022; Naor et al., 2021).

Operations: Another point that makes Tesla special is their automation of manufacturing activities specifically in their gigafactories; This vertical integration allows Tesla to control costs and quality at each stage as they are responsible for their own marketing and manufacturing (Mangram, 2012, p. 10) Tesla also makes their own technological advancements such as autopilot and Full Self Drive (FSD) in house, which aligns with their own innovative and cost-cutting goals.

Outbound logistics: Tesla's direct-to-consumer sales model eliminates the need for third-party dealerships, giving the company full control over the customer experience, pricing, and delivery.

While they do in some countries like the UAE allow for third-party partnering delivery, everything is still priced, placed, promoted, and produced in-house.

Marketing and sales: After firing Tesla's entire marketing team in April 2024, Tesla relies heavily on the public persona of their CEO Elon Musk (Jeff Beer, para. 1 & 5, 2024) This particular organic and holistic approach to marketing enables market research to be easier to facilitate and adapt to global levels by having a closer relationship to their customer base.

Service: Tesla provides remote diagnostics and over-the-air software updates, allowing vehicles to improve over time with new features and performance enhancements. Service centers offer maintenance for their annual or every 40,000km check-up and repairs, while mobile service units enable on-site service for customer convenience, and with their expansive network of superchargers which add value to the product itself, they are as self-reliant and client-centric as ever.

#### **4.2 Value Chain Analysis: Support Activities**

Firm infrastructure: Tesla's extensive brand reputation that is built on a foundation of innovation and sustainability, supports its market position as a premium EV maker. Efficient management practices and a streamlined corporate structure enable Tesla to make swift decisions and adapt to industry changes quickly (Musonera, E., & Cagle, C.J., 2019, p. 120).

Human resource management: Tesla has a diversified workforce all from different backgrounds and different skills, Training and development are prioritized based on self-study paces, especially in cutting-edge fields like autonomous driving and battery research (Tesla, 2021, p. 21).

Technology developments: Tesla's biggest priority is their research and development department, with incredible technological breakthroughs such as the FSD and battery production as well as governmental fleets (Mangram, 2012, p.10)

Procurement: Strategic partnerships such as Panasonic reduce costs and secure essential resources for battery production (Mangram, 2012, p. 10) In-house manufacturing of things like batteries and electric motors helps Tesla avoid relying on external suppliers, reducing costs and supply chain risks.

#### **5.1 SWOT analysis: Strengths, weaknesses**

Strengths: As established so far in this paper, it goes without saying that Tesla is a leader in the EV field, from their extensive consumer range of fleets that have both luxury and mass production, to their heavy focus on R&D to create innovative technological advancements. When it comes to the automotive industry, vehicle performance is undoubtedly one of the main factors that set a company apart from its competitors, and Tesla is no stranger to surpassing their EV competition

when it comes to vehicle performance such as acceleration, range, specs, and more (Mangram, 2012, p. 14). Another interesting factor of success is their unique business model which allowed them to be one of the first to establish their placement in the EV market with their brand name foundation and positive press reviews, and especially word-of-mouth strength (Mangram, 2012, p.14)

Weaknesses: While Tesla has positioned itself as a leader of the EV world, there is without a doubt place for competition globally, such as China's BYD and Saudi Arabia's Lucid Motors. Which makes governmental funding for local brands one of their main weaknesses as competition. Another weakness described by Mangram (2012, p. 14) is "range anxiety" which refers to the EV market infrastructure from charging stations and battery driving capabilities.

## **5.2 SWOT Analysis: Opportunities, threats**

Opportunities: The Middle East moving towards sustainability and renewable energy will create significant opportunities for Tesla, especially with government-backed initiatives like Saudi Arabia's Green Initiative and the UAE's 2050 Carbon Neutrality Vision, collaborating with governments on EV subsidies and infrastructure development can accelerate Tesla's market growth. While they may seem insignificant due to their small population and impact on the Middle East, entering smaller but growing markets such as Bahrain and Oman, could broaden Tesla's regional footprint.

Threats: Local competitors like Lucid Motors (supported by Saudi Arabia's PIF) and BYD (partnered with Al-Futtaim Electric Mobility) pose significant threats to Tesla's dominance, the solution would be ensuring a collaborative environment with the government. Another threat would be the region's economic dependence on oil might slow the transition to EVs, despite diversification efforts. Despite business-related issues such as economy and policies, the sheer harsh desert environment of the Middle East is enough to cause hurdles for Tesla, as they must adapt further when it comes to battery performance and vehicle durability.

## **6.1 Strategy introduction and years one and two**

Based on this assignment target, positioning penetration to the Middle East is the next innovative, sound, and strategic step and putting the Middle East as a unique and attractive market for Tesla. the Middle East is a rapidly growing environment, and Tesla has seen this attraction by establishing their first Middle East showroom in 2017 in the UAE's Dubai (Shane McGinley & Alexander Cornwell, 2017, para. 1), then opening its first showroom in Qatar in 2024 (Zachary Visconti, 2024, para. 1). As the gulf region is known to have the highest sales of luxury cars per capita (Shane McGinley & Alexander Cornwell, 2017, para. 2), the next logical step would be migrating into Saudi Arabia.

Year one: The target strategy for 2025 is to open the way for a market in Saudi Arabia, while doing so, elevating driver experiences in current regions by offering more personalized experiences, which Tesla is already beginning to do by offering self-serve test drives in the UAE for the first time across popular locations in the country (Tesla Website: Test drives). Another step would be producing superchargers all over the country for long-haul drives on popular routes such as Riyadh to Khobar, or Riyadh to Dubai to ensure traveler experience and begin the journey for existing

Tesla users. The next step would be analyzing the most popular locations for dealerships and car companies in the country's capital to open the first pop-up-only showroom, most likely inside an accessible high foot flow mall such as Riyadh Park which has a 32.1% catchment rate of the population (Estater team, 2024). Prior to opening the pop-up, it is imperative to begin hiring a Saudi team and send them to the nearest Middle East country for on-site training for a quarter to grasp hands-on experience and be ready to tackle a new market. Finally, it is proceeding with opening the first pop-up, as Tesla relies heavily on word-of-mouth, it can rely on advertising their referral program that offers credit to existing customers and discounts to purchasing customers. Year 2: After analysis of sales, market share, competition, and opportunities, despite success or not it is important to provide a service center for both existing and new customers, thus opening a service center and offering their 24/7 on-the-road support to Saudi customers must commence. If success is determined, the next logical, lucrative, and strategic solution would be to open a showroom in Jeddah, the next most popular destination for both tourists and nationals alike; proceed with either internal transfers or with the hiring process.

## **6.2 Years three, four, five**

As Tesla positions itself as the leader of EV manufacturing, continue with opening showrooms in the Middle East starting with Bahrain as it has an accessible port of Khalifa Bin Salman for car import then Oman to complete penetration while continuing to place superchargers along countries to connect borders (e.g. Khobar to Qatar, Qatar to Bahrain) and elevating customer experiences through campaigns on 0% interest deals with central banks and free supercharging to push newer models or facelifts for a limited time.

After penetrating successfully into the Middle East, the next and final step of this plan is to open a manufacturing gigafactory with the country offering the most attractive deal of manufacturing products, location, employees, and supplies, which as established in this case study might be either Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

## **7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have a great opportunity to achieve their long-term sustainability targets, green initiatives, and technological advancements by integrating Tesla into their governmental fleets, investments, and growth opportunities. As Tesla penetrates into this new market, legal hurdles may arise such as labor laws, dealership regulations, and EV infrastructure. Economic diversification goals further support Tesla's presence, fostering a market conducive to both economic growth and environmental stewardship. The socio-cultural shift towards innovation and environmental consciousness among the Middle East's urban, tech-savvy population enhances Tesla's brand appeal, while strategic collaborations, such as those with DEWA, underscore the synergy between Tesla's offerings and regional sustainability goals. Overcoming

these hurdles means Tesla can benefit from one of the wealthiest urban countries per capita. By controlling and owning their supply chain, they reduce the bargaining power of suppliers to moderate and in both cases, a supplier would actually benefit from Tesla's brand reputation and clients. This vertical integration not only stabilizes production costs but also ensures consistent quality control, providing Tesla with a competitive advantage even with bargaining buyer power as they offer a diverse option of fleets for all. Tesla faces significant industry rivalry in Saudi Arabia's rapidly evolving automotive market, where Vision 2030 drives sustainability and clean energy growth. Established players like BMW and Audi and newer entrants such as Lucid Motors and BYD intensify the competitive landscape. Tesla's established presence and technological innovation give it a competitive edge, but Saudi Arabia's PIF support for brands like Lucid increases the threat level. In terms of new entrants, Tesla's brand reputation, advanced technology, and high entry barriers pose significant challenges, though substantial governmental backing such as Lucid's may pose a threat to new competitors such as Tesla in the region.

Furthermore, Tesla's emphasis on environmental innovation and commitment to renewable energy solutions reduces the threat posed by hybrid and biofuel vehicles as substitutes, particularly as global EV adoption grows. Tesla's focus on cost control, quality, and environmental appeal has established it as a market leader with a solid competitive positioning in the EV.



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