

HOW THE  
MIDDLE  
EAST USED  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
IN 2020

BY DAMIAN RADCLIFFE & HADIL ABUHMAID



# THE PURPOSE: NEW MEDIA ACADEMY



The year 2020 was undoubtedly the year where shift happened. Industries far and wide accelerated towards digitization in a bid to go from crisis to opportunity. A developed digital economy can spur on economic growth in the region as a whole by offering an alternative yet seamless experience with advanced infrastructure, substantial access and mature level interaction.

Content is crucial, both regionally and globally. Social Media is a fundamental force for forging connectivity and lifting the lid on what is happening on the ground through powerful story-telling. The Arab world has historically been misconstrued and misplaced in our own narrative as well as the world's - now is the time to refract our content through a renewed and purposeful prism.

The New Media Academy is an organization that works within the space of development, with a focus on harnessing opportunities in the digital space. We are committed to developing a new generation of change-makers who naturally excel in the digital space with programs and skills bolstered by a world-class digital education system, delivered by top digital practitioners.

We have a civic duty to effect change to the entire region, beyond our home turf. The Arab world deserves to be seen and heard in a creative and authentic light based on the realities and aspirations of its key thinkers and culture shapers. Across our three pillars of support: Education, Talent and Content, our change-makers are shaping the narrative and driving action leadership in the ever-evolving digital world.

This report is the bedrock of the Social Media industry. With these real-time findings, you will be able to develop strategies to tell the next best story.

***Rashid Al Awadhi***  
***Chief Executive Officer at New Media Academy***

# INTRODUCTION

This year's study is produced in partnership with the New Media Academy. The New Media Academy was inaugurated in June 2020, by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, and ruler of Dubai, to work within the space of development, with a focus on harnessing opportunities in the digital space. We are committed to developing a new generation of change-makers who naturally excel in the digital space with programs and skills bolstered by a world-class digital education system, delivered by top digital practitioners.

Using a broad range of industry, academic and media sources, we dive into the trends - and biggest stories - which shaped MENA's relationship with social media during the past year. Not surprisingly, this study is heavily influenced by the impact of COVID-19. The novel coronavirus impacted on everyone's lives around the world, including the Middle East. One by-product of the pandemic could be seen in our changing media habits. Social media usage - across all platforms - increased during the early stages of the outbreak.

More widely, given the importance of social media in our media diets, platforms, industry and governments alike sought to use these networks to promote public health messages, as well as counter misinformation related to the COVID crisis.

Alongside these developments, we have also seen continued investment in content on social media platforms - especially during Ramadan - and growing partnerships between traditional media players and social media channels and influencers. These developments reflect the popularity of high quality digital content consumed on social media, and a desire to reach audiences on these platforms, or bring existing social audiences onto other networks.

We expect that this synergy will only rise, not least because many media habits developed during the pandemic may well continue post-COVID. As a result, social networks will become an increasingly important source for talent spotting, as well as a key avenue for content and information consumption.

This trend, as we outline at the end of this report, matters for brands, creators and influencers, as well as governments and other public entities. Social media is already an important part of digital media habits and digital marketing strategies. In 2021, that importance looks set to continue and grow even further.

***Damian Radcliffe and Hadil Abuhmaid***  
***March 2021***

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Damian Radcliffe** is the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism, a Professor of Practice, an affiliate of the Department for Middle East and North Africa Studies (MENA), and a Research Associate of the Center for Science Communication Research (SCR) at the University of Oregon. Alongside holding the Chambers Chair at the School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC), he is also a [Fellow](#) of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, an [Honorary Research Fellow](#) at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies, and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

An experienced Digital Analyst, Consultant, Journalist and Researcher, Damian writes about digital trends, social media, technology, the business of media, and the evolution of journalism. He tweets [@damianradcliffe](#).

Damian has worked in editorial, research, policy, and teaching positions for the past two decades in the UK, Middle East, and USA. This includes roles in all media sectors (commercial, public, government, regulatory, academic, and nonprofit/civil society) and all platforms (print, digital, TV and radio). In these roles, and through his company Kenja Media Consulting, he undertakes a wide range of teaching, consultancy, research and journalistic work, which includes writing a monthly column on technology in the Middle East for [ZDNet](#) (which he has done since December 2013).

He has produced an annual report charting social media developments across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 2012. Between 2012-2014 he worked for Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR) as an analyst and researcher. He joined the University of Oregon in 2015.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Hadil Abuhmaid** is a Media Studies PhD student and a Graduate Employee at the University of Oregon. Her primary area of research interest explores [national identity and culture](#) in Palestinian cinema.

Hadil earned a BS in Journalism and Political Science from Bir-Zeit University in Palestine and an MA in Nonprofit Management from the University of Oregon, with a focus on Arts Administration. She is the co-founder of Filmlab: Palestine, a nonprofit company based in Ramallah, that aims at developing the cinema industry in Palestine.

Her work in the field of cinema has created a base for her research interest in Palestinian self-representation. Through her research, Hadil aims at examining the formation and self-representation of the national identity in Palestinian feature films produced within the historical map of Palestine by researching their production and aesthetics. Her research interests include cinema studies, diasporic studies, representations, and national identity.

In addition to academic work, Hadil is a member of the Graduate School Advisory Board at the University of Oregon, a member of the Dean of Students' Advisory Board, and a board member of Creating Connections; a graduate student group that supports the traditionally marginalized population in the U.S. higher education.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## DESIGNERS AND OUTREACH



**Terra Johnston** is a content creator and digital marketing strategist based in Seattle, Washington. She specializes in brand development and management, and her areas of service include graphic design, social media, web design, media relations, and copywriting. She received her Bachelor's degree in public relations,



**Jackie Gutierrez** is a sports journalist and the writer and founder of [Women Kick Balls](#), which is an independent news source that exists to capture women's soccer in an authentic voice. She is also a freelance content creator who specializes in brand development through social media, graphics, website design, and photography.



**Kelly Kondo** is a Production Coordinator at Servco Pacific Inc. and former Marketing Designer for Yoga Ed., based in Honolulu, Hawaii. She graduated from the Advertising and Brand Responsibility Master's program at the University of Oregon, where she also received her Bachelor's degree in Advertising.



**Hanin Najjar** is an Arab-American multimedia journalist based in Portland, Oregon, USA. She is the Editor-in-Chief at [Parachute Media](#), a start-up media company run by and for Gen Z women of color.

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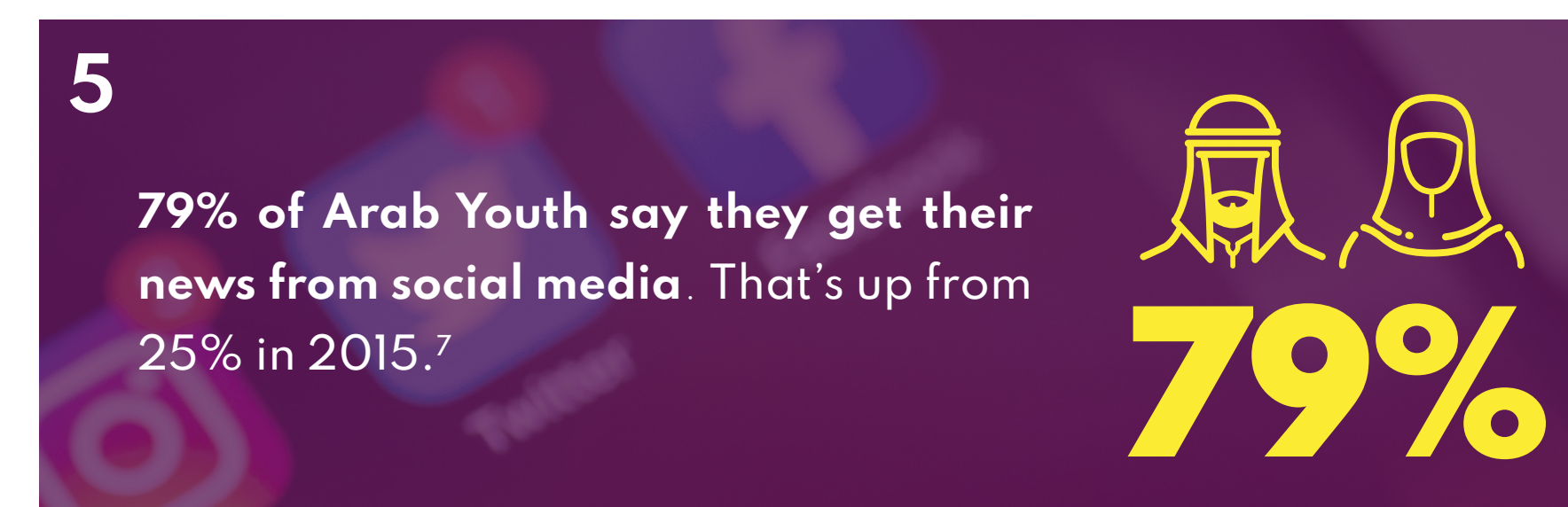
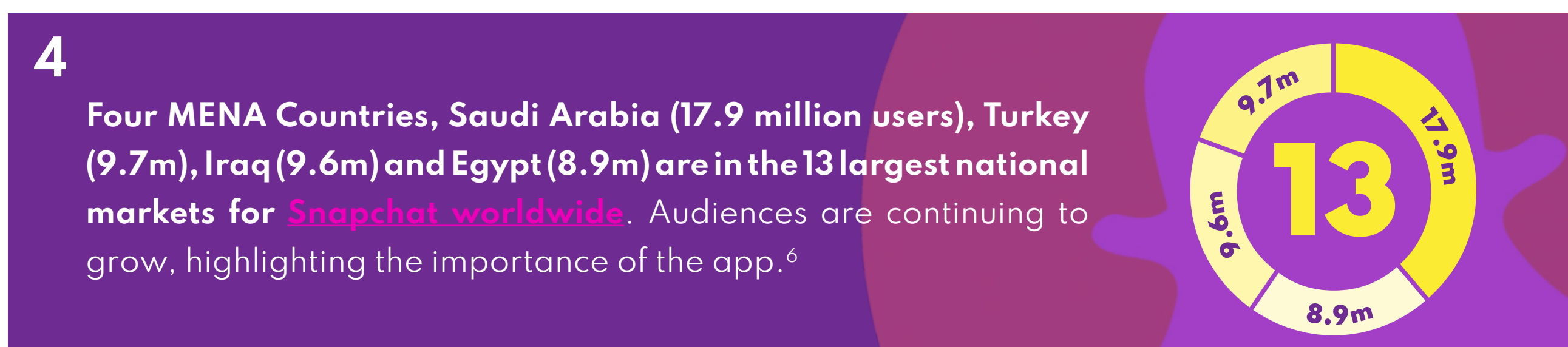
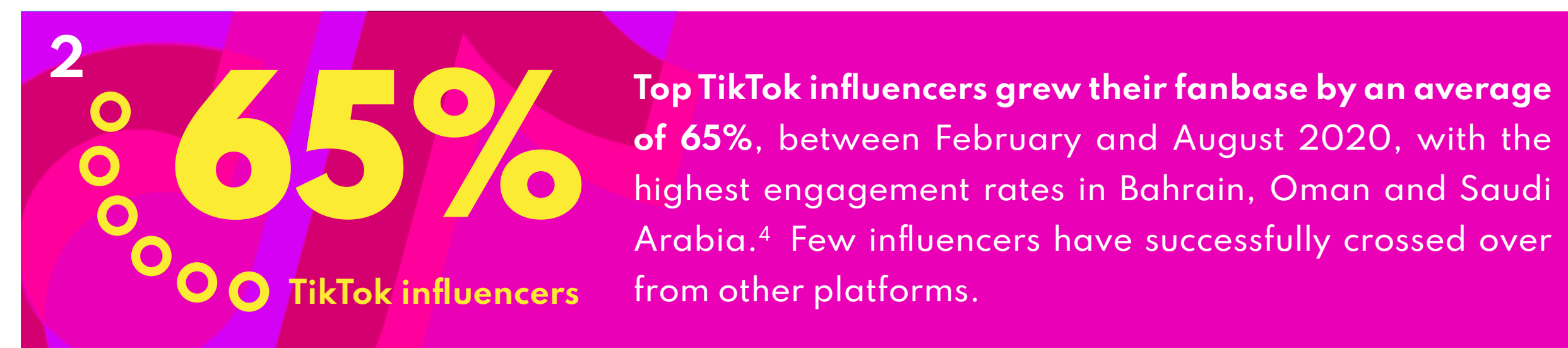
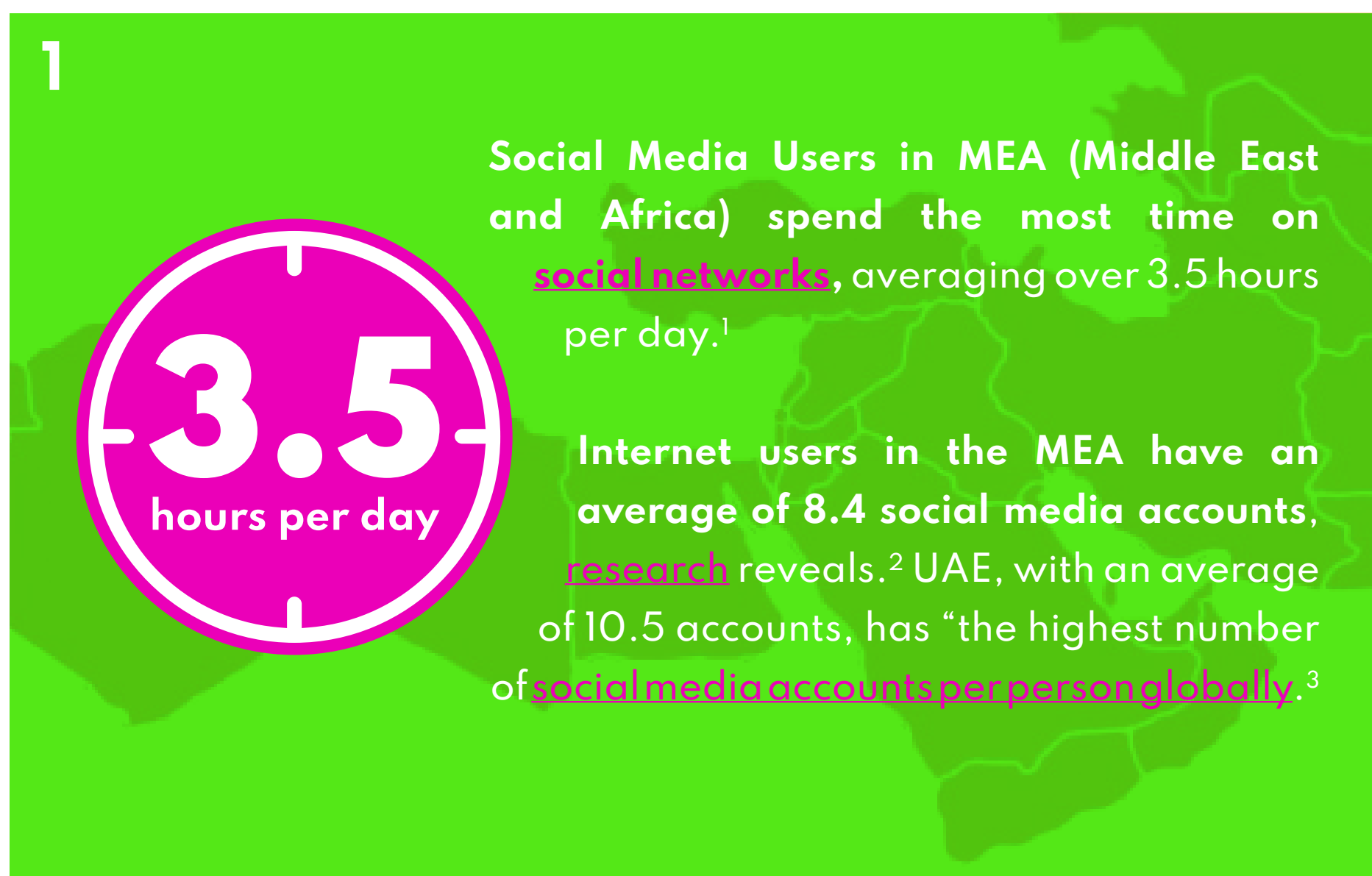


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

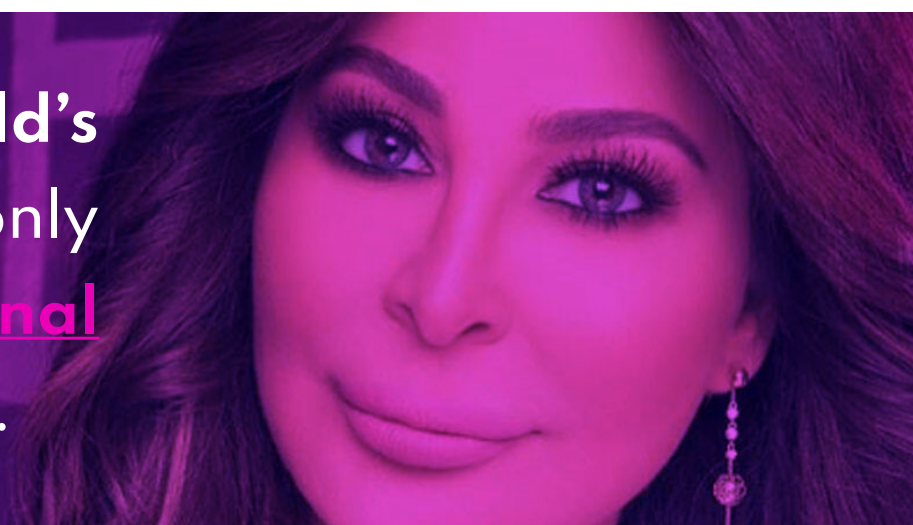
## KEY STATS FROM 2020



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## DIGITAL CONTENT, INFLUENCERS AND COLLABORATIONS

**6** Lebanese pop artist, **Elissa**, is the Arab world's most influential person on Twitter and the only Arab figure in the **50 most powerful international influencers**,<sup>8</sup> report published by **Brandwatch**.



**7** Facebook **rolled out 9** content partnerships,<sup>9</sup> while Snapchat launched **40** new shows, specifically for the Holy Month.



**8** Snapchatters in UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, **spent 77 minutes a day** on the app during the Holy Month.<sup>10</sup> Watch time on Snapchat Discover had increased by over **50%** year-over-year.



**9** Influencer budgets appear to have been impacted by the **COVID-19** pandemic, due to reduced marketing budgets, concerns about brands being linked with people sharing misinformation and relevance to COVID-era lifestyles.<sup>11</sup>

**10** Some content creators, like **Nas Daily**, continued to **grow** their businesses.<sup>12</sup> (Disclosure, this **includes** a training partnership with New Media Academy.)<sup>13</sup> Popular Saudi YouTubers, the **Moshaya Family**, partnered with Spacetoon, a pan-Arab free-to-air TV channel, to **turn** the family into a lifestyle franchise featuring toys, games and animation series.<sup>14</sup>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

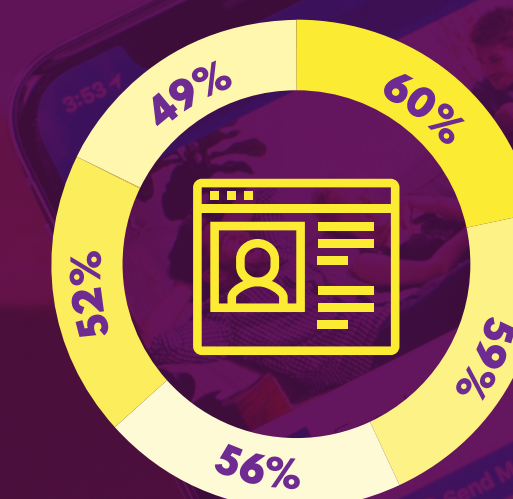
## BRANDS, BUSINESSES AND DIGITAL MARKETING

11



Businesses are increasingly using WhatsApp for business communication.<sup>15</sup> Travel agency [Almosafer](#),<sup>16</sup> telecom providers [Zain Bahrain](#)<sup>17</sup> and [Ooredoo](#),<sup>18</sup> as well as the leisure resort [Yas Island](#) in Abu Dhabi,<sup>19</sup> are using the platform for customer relations.

12



Social Media users in Morocco and Egypt (60%), Saudi Arabia (59%), Turkey (56%), Israel (52%) and UAE (49%) are more likely to use social to research brands than the global average.<sup>20</sup>

13

Platforms introduced a range of measures to promote public health information related to the pandemic, including special [filters](#) on Snapchat and [links](#) to the WHO on YouTube when users searched for COVID-19.<sup>21</sup>

14

Lockdowns encouraged some small businesses to digitize. A survey in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE,<sup>22</sup> reported a 25% increase in digital sales, as more small businesses used social to promote goods and services.<sup>23</sup>

# 25%

15

# TOP 10

Social networks and tech companies are some of the highest ranked brands in the region. Google, WhatsApp and YouTube were in the Top 10 for Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE in YouGov's 2020 [Best Brand Rankings](#).<sup>24</sup>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

## GOVERNMENTS AND SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

16

WhatsApp was used by multiple governments to address issues and concerns related to COVID-19. Abu Dhabi's health department launched an automated "Chatbot" allowing users to get answers to common questions about the virus.<sup>25</sup>



9



The [Saudi Ministry of Health](#) launched a coronavirus awareness campaign in collaboration with Snapchat and Trend, a digital content creator.<sup>26</sup>

17



[UNICEF](#) and government agencies [partnered](#) with influencers and platforms to deliver public health campaigns related to the pandemic.<sup>27</sup>

18

Platforms monitored and [shut down](#) social media accounts determined to be spreading pro-government messaging.<sup>28</sup> Thousands of accounts from MENA across the region were suspended in 2020.

20

Grassroots, bottom-up campaigns also had an impact. Black Lives Matter resonated across parts of the region, as social media users discussed what this [meant](#) for the Arab World.<sup>29</sup> In Lebanon, users [responded](#) on social media to the horrific explosion which killed several hundred people.<sup>30</sup> Hundreds of Lebanese [offered shelter](#) using #OurHomesAreOpen in [Arabic](#) and [English](#), to help those displaced by the tragic event.<sup>31</sup>

# IMPLICATIONS

12 KEY TAKEAWAYS AND PREDICTIONS

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## 12 KEY TAKEAWAYS AND PREDICTIONS

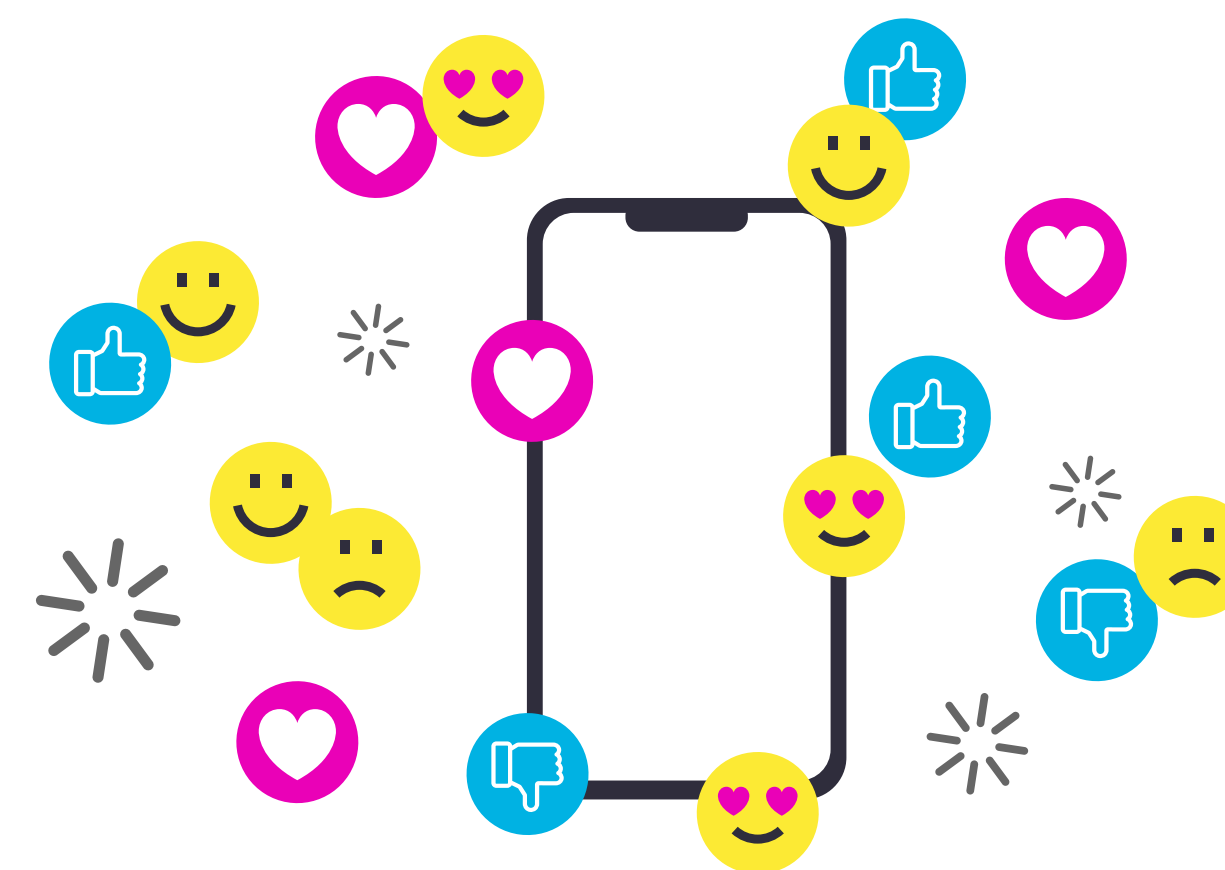
### FOR: CONTENT CREATORS, BRANDS AND DIGITAL MARKETERS

1. **Social networks have seen users spend more time on their channels as a result of COVID-19.** It remains to be seen if audiences will revert to pre-pandemic media habits once the crisis ends, but some new digital behaviors are likely to remain engrained (e.g. social commerce). Brands and businesses will need to respond to this shift.

2. **Social media users in MENA are among those most likely to use social networks to research brands;** a habit which may also influence purchasing decisions. As the ability to buy directly on social networks develops (aka social commerce) the pathway from research to purchase needs to become as **frictionless** as possible.<sup>32</sup>

3. **Social media's significance as a channel for content continues to grow during Ramadan.** Tapping into this demand, and these media habits, remains a priority for content creators, platforms and brands alike.

4. **Influencer marketing took a hit in 2020 due to COVID. It is unclear if this will bounce back to pre-pandemic levels,** or if these types of relationships will evolve. **TikTok's rapid growth,** and the emergence of a new generation of influencers, for example, **is a trend to watch.**



# IMPLICATIONS:

## 12 KEY TAKEAWAYS AND PREDICTIONS

### FOR: PLATFORMS

5. There remains a symbiotic relationship between the platforms, digital content creators and traditional media companies. **We continue to see “media stars” emerge on social networks**, as well as platforms and traditional media companies seeking to create content specifically for given social networks.

6. More than in previous years, **it can be challenging for researchers, agencies and others to find up to date public data on audience behaviors, which can make it challenging to make informed investment decisions**. We hope to see more data in the public domain, post-pandemic, to support businesses.



7. This matters, because **platform consumption varies considerably from country-to-country**, making it very difficult (and indeed inadvisable) to deploy a “one size fits all” regional strategy.

For example, as Hussein Freijeh, Regional Director of Snap Inc. MENA, has revealed “In Saudi Arabia, more people watch Snapchat Discover content every day than any of the Top 10 TV channels, both before and during Covid-19.”<sup>33</sup> This situation is not necessarily replicated in other markets.

8. **The use of Messaging Apps - like WhatsApp - for B2C (business to consumer) relationships is growing**. Convenience, high levels of platform take up and familiarity with these channels are all drivers for consumers increasingly using these networks for customer service related activities.

In response, businesses must continue to adapt to these preferences, as social media habits increasingly replace more traditional communication methods such as customer service telephone lines.

# IMPLICATIONS:

## 12 KEY TAKEAWAYS AND PREDICTIONS

### FOR: GOVERNMENT AND NGOS

9. **Governments have embraced social networks as a key vehicle for both informing and supporting, citizens and residents during the coronavirus crisis.**

We expect this trend to remain popular as the pandemic continues well into 2021, and that governments will also use these platforms - and the lessons learned from COVID - for other types of information and public awareness campaigns - in the future.


10. **Influencers have been involved in numerous COVID campaigns** - as voices advocating for behavioral change, or as amplifiers of key messages - again public information trends that we expect to see continuing beyond the end of the COVID crisis.

11. **Ensuring that government agencies understand the potential of social media, and that they have the skills to use these networks, will continue to be a key training need.**

12. **The decision to suspend former U.S. President Donald Trump** from Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, and **Twitter's decision to ban an account linked to Iran's supreme Leader may irreversibly change the relationship that platforms have with government leaders**, potentially making these types of suspensions more common place, and possibly changing the way in which political leaders use social platforms.





The background is a solid pink color. In the top-left corner, there is a large, irregular shape with a pink-to-white gradient and a fine, parallel-line texture. In the top-center, there is a solid yellow shape. In the bottom-right corner, there is another large, irregular shape with a pink-to-white gradient and a fine, parallel-line texture. A solid yellow shape is also present on the right side, partially overlapping the pink-to-white textured shape. The text 'MARKET CONTEXT' is centered horizontally in the middle of the page. A green checkmark is positioned to the right of the text.

# MARKET CONTEXT

# MARKET CONTEXT

**Social Networks are powerful platforms in the Middle East, as they are around the world, shaping - and influencing - a wide range of online and offline behaviours.** This includes news consumption, shopping preferences, as well as entertainment habits and relationships with friends and family.

As the United Nations [observed](#) back in 2019:

**Social media are likely to play an increasing role in advertising digital arabic content. For an increasing number of people in the region, this is a “first filter” through which they access content.**

**Videos are popular among arab youth and could be used as a conduit to push any kind of useful infotainment or edutainment content.**

**News [content] represent[s] an important segment of digital media as people in the region now predominantly use online sources to access information rather than more traditional media (print and radio, and to lesser extent television).**

*Arab Horizon 2030:  
Digital Technologies for Development*

**Statistics show how internet take-up has grown substantially in the past decade.**

As the Beirut-based Arab Development Portal, [notes](#): “The percentage of individuals (% of total population) using the internet in the Arab region has more than doubled in 2018 at 54.7% in 2018 up from 24% in 2010.”<sup>34</sup>

**Internet users in the Middle East have an average of 8.4 social media accounts,** research from GlobalWebIndex (GWI) reveals.<sup>35</sup> The figure is higher in UAE at an average of 10.5 accounts each, “the highest number of social media accounts per person globally,” Forbes observed.<sup>36</sup>

## MULTI-NETWORKING BY REGION

Average number of social media accounts\* held by internet users in each region

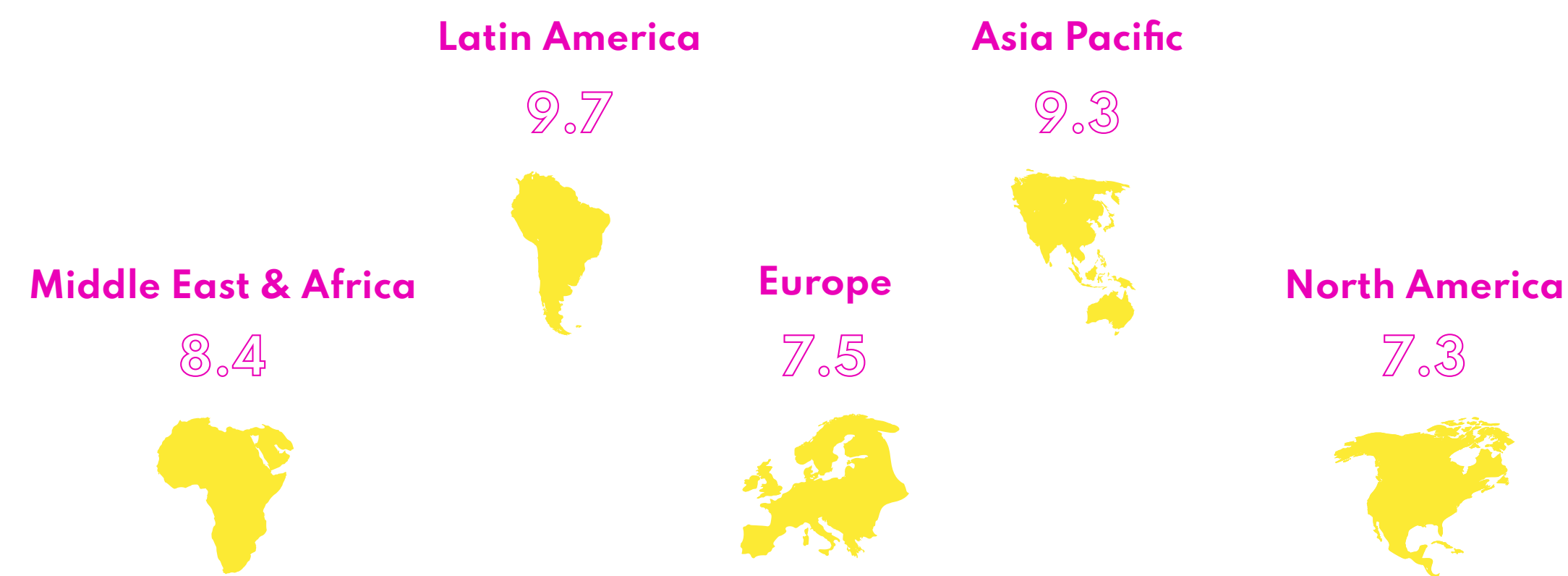


Chart: Daily time spent w/ social media pre-pandemic and in May-2020, [via](#) GWI

Mobile has - for some time - been an important part of the equation. Since 2014, mobile social media penetration in the region has more than doubled to 44%, GSMA - a trade body for the mobile industry - [reports](#).<sup>37</sup>

Mobile connection speeds in some parts of the Middle East are among the fastest in the world, helping to fuel MENA’s social media habit. Ookla’s November 2020 Global Index [placed](#) three GCC countries in the Top 10, UAE (1st), Qatar (3rd) and Saudi Arabia (8th) with Kuwait at 11th, “its highest mobile ranking to date ... most likely due to all major operators offering 5G in the country.”<sup>38</sup>

Data [published](#) earlier in the year also shows that Morocco and Turkey also have mobile internet speeds above the world average.<sup>39</sup>



# SPEEDTEST® GLOBAL INDEX

Ranking mobile and fixed broadband speeds from around the world on a monthly basis (November 2020).

## Mobile Global Average Download Speeds



Download Mbps  
**45.69**



Upload Mbps  
**12.60**

1. <b>United Arab Emirates</b>	<b>170.30 Mbps</b>	
2. South Korea	166.70 Mbps	
3. <b>Qatar</b>	<b>159.66 Mbps</b>	
4. China	148.12 Mbps	
5. Australia	113.16 Mbps	
6. Norway	100.98 Mbps	
7. Netherlands	99.67 Mbps	
8. <b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>99.34 Mbps</b>	
9. Canada	93.74 Mbps	
10. Switzerland	87.73 Mbps	

Table: November 2020 Data showing mean download speed, [via](#) Speedtest® by Ookla®

**Social Media Users in MEA (Middle East and Africa) spend the most time on social networks, averaging over 3.5 hours a day.** In May, more than half of users in those regions also told GlobalWebIndex that they were spending more time on social media as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Daily usage of social media has increased in several MENA countries,** notably Turkey (up 16 min, a day since 2017), UAE (up 21 min.) and Saudi Arabia (up 33 min.). In Egypt and Morocco use has dropped slightly in 2020, for reasons unknown, having previously held fairly steady between 2017-2019.

### DAILY TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Average hh:mm spent using social networks on a typical day (**January - March**).

### SPENDING LONGER ON SOCIAL MEDIA

% in each region who have spent longer on social media because of the outbreak (**May**).

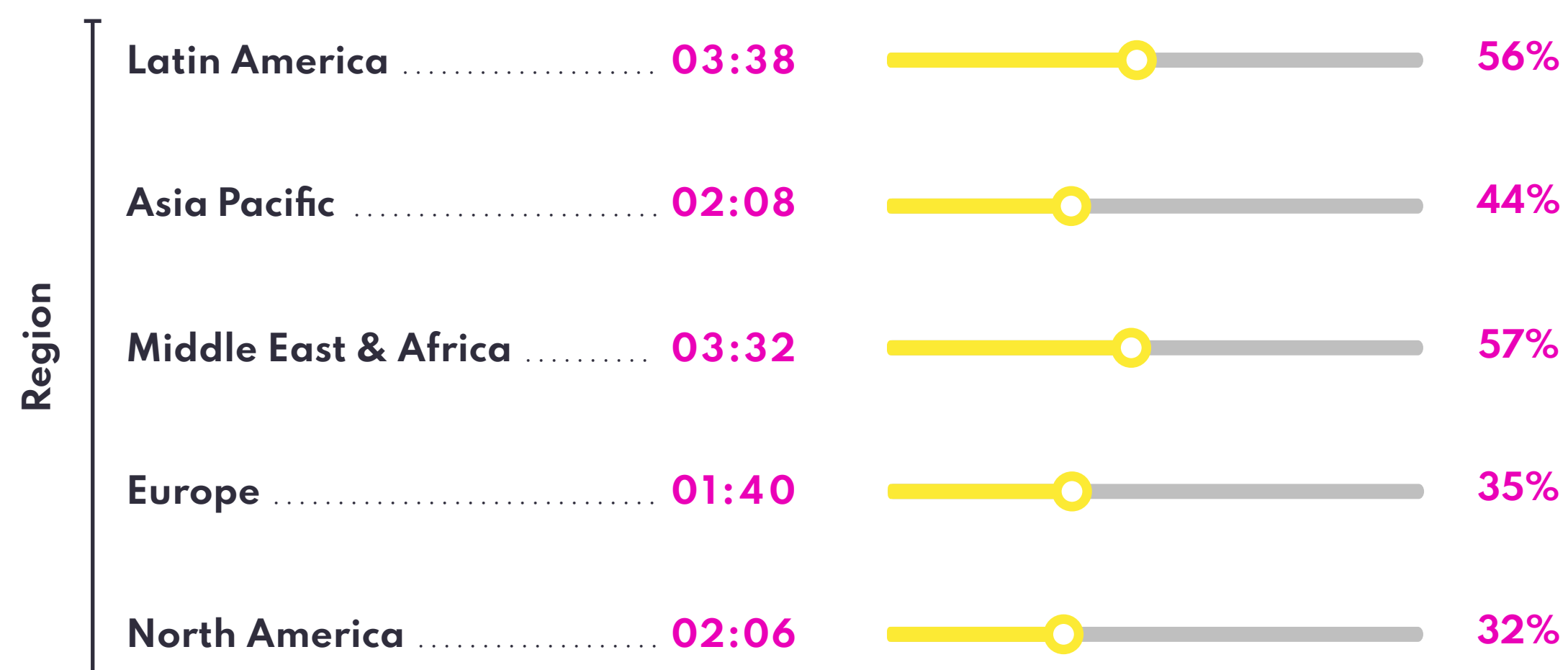


Chart: Daily time spent with social media pre-pandemic (January - March) and in May-2020, [via](#) GWI

	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Egypt</b>	3:06	3:05	3:02	2:38
<b>Israel</b>			1:59	2:10
<b>Morocco</b>	2:22	2:34	2:30	2:19
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	2:38	2:52	3:08	3:11
<b>Turkey</b>	2:49	2:52	2:56	3:05
<b>UAE</b>	2:56	3:00	3:03	3:17

Table: Average time (h:mm) spent using social networks on a typical day, [via](#) GlobalWebIndex<sup>40</sup>

**Social Media users in MENA are among those most likely to use social networks to research brands;** a habit which may also influence purchasing decisions.

Among [social media users](#), consumers in Morocco and Egypt (60%), Saudi Arabia (59%), Turkey (56%), Israel (52%) and UAE (49%) are all more likely to engage in this behaviour than the global average.<sup>41</sup>

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BRAND RESEARCH

Percentage of **internet users aged 16 to 64** who use social media when they're looking for information about brands (**October 2020**).

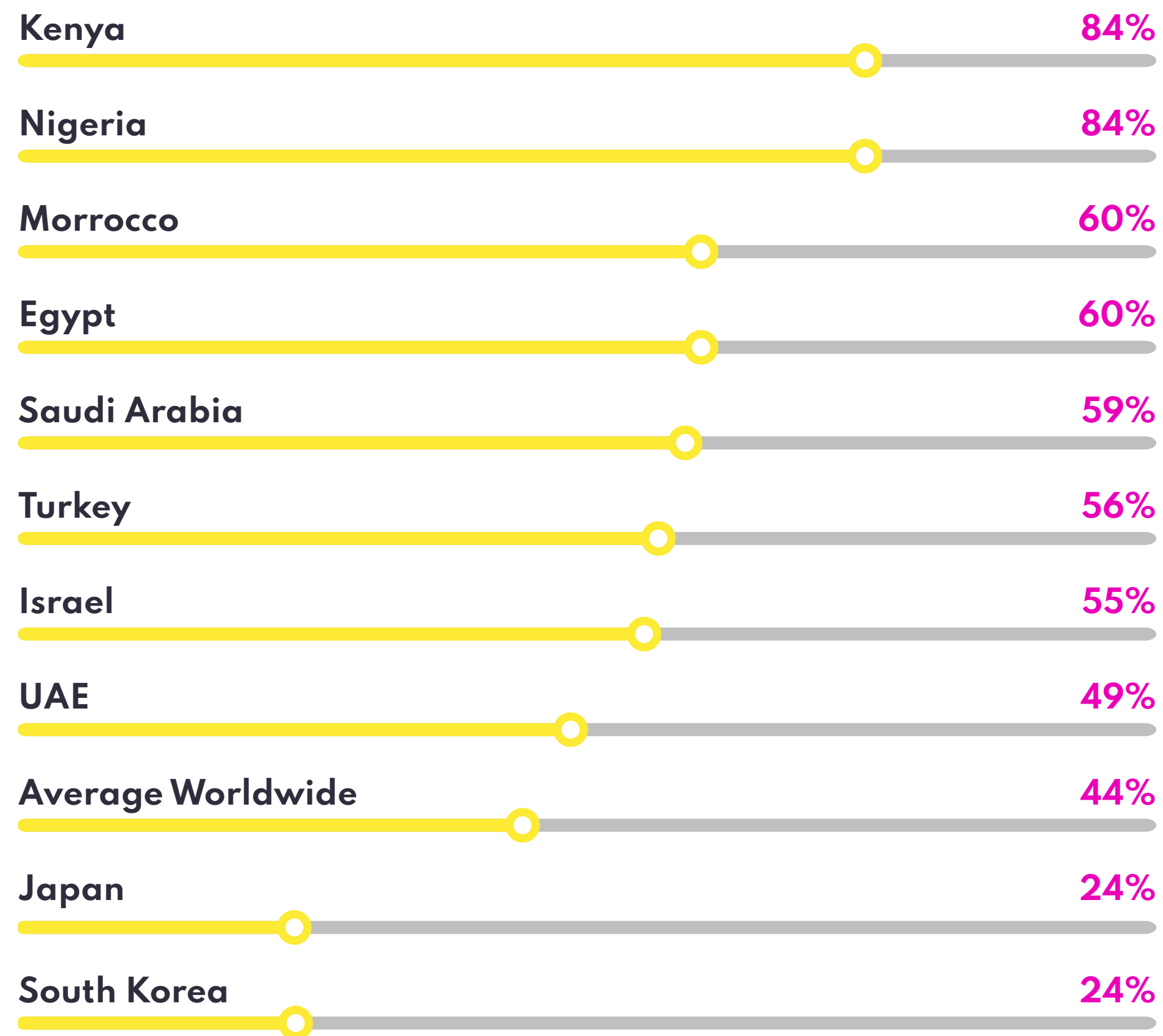


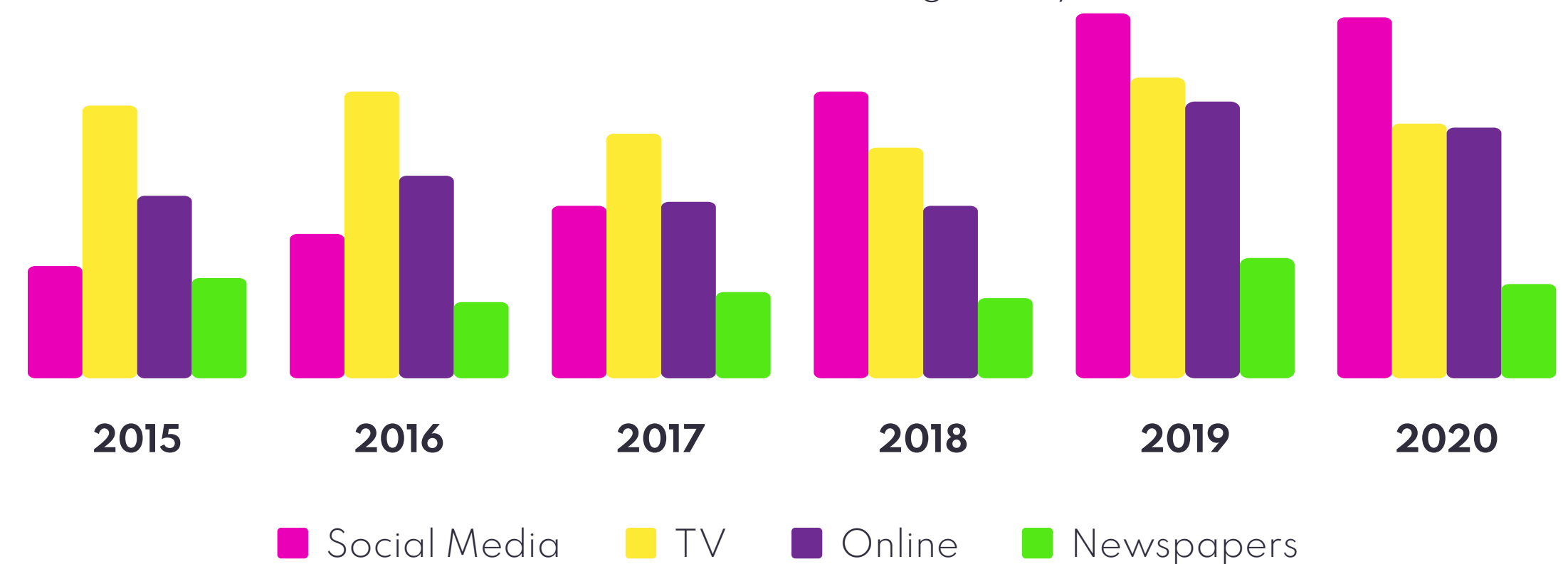
Chart: Use of Social Media for Brand Research [via](#) We Are Social and Hootsuite

“In 2015, just 25% of young Arabs cited social media as their main news source,” the latest Arab Social Media report **reminded** us, “this year, 79% say they get their news from social media.”<sup>42</sup>

As these findings show, social media increasingly influences numerous aspects of digital diets in the Middle East. COVID-19, faster mobile networks and growing smartphone take-up has only increased these behaviors, creating social media habits which are only likely to grow.

## WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

Social media has grown to become by far **the most common news source** among Arab youth.



Graph: News habits of Arab Youth, [via](#) Arab Youth Survey

In the coming chapters, we examine some of the biggest stories and market developments seen across individual platforms in the past year, as well as diving into cross-cutting news stories and issues.

# SOCIAL NETWORKS

# FACEBOOK



Facebook continues to be a powerful social media presence in the region, through both its core platform and other services: Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The main service also continues to see growth, particularly in North Africa emphasizing the on-going importance of the region to the company.

**Egypt is the 9th largest market for Facebook in the world, with 44 million users**, as of October 2020.<sup>43</sup> **Turkey is the only other MENA country in the Top 20**, ranked 13th - ahead of Columbia and behind the UK - with 37 million users.

**Libya (100%), UAE (93%) and Qatar (90%) are among the countries with the highest levels of reach for Facebook, relative to the population.** According to [data](#) from We Are Social and Hootsuite, Libya and the Philippines are the only countries in the world where Facebook penetration levels cover the entire population.

**Facebook is also continuing to grow in several North African markets.** Egypt is ranked fourth in the Top 10 countries and territories for the fastest growing number of Facebook users, followed by Morocco ranked at seventh, and Algeria ranked at ninth.

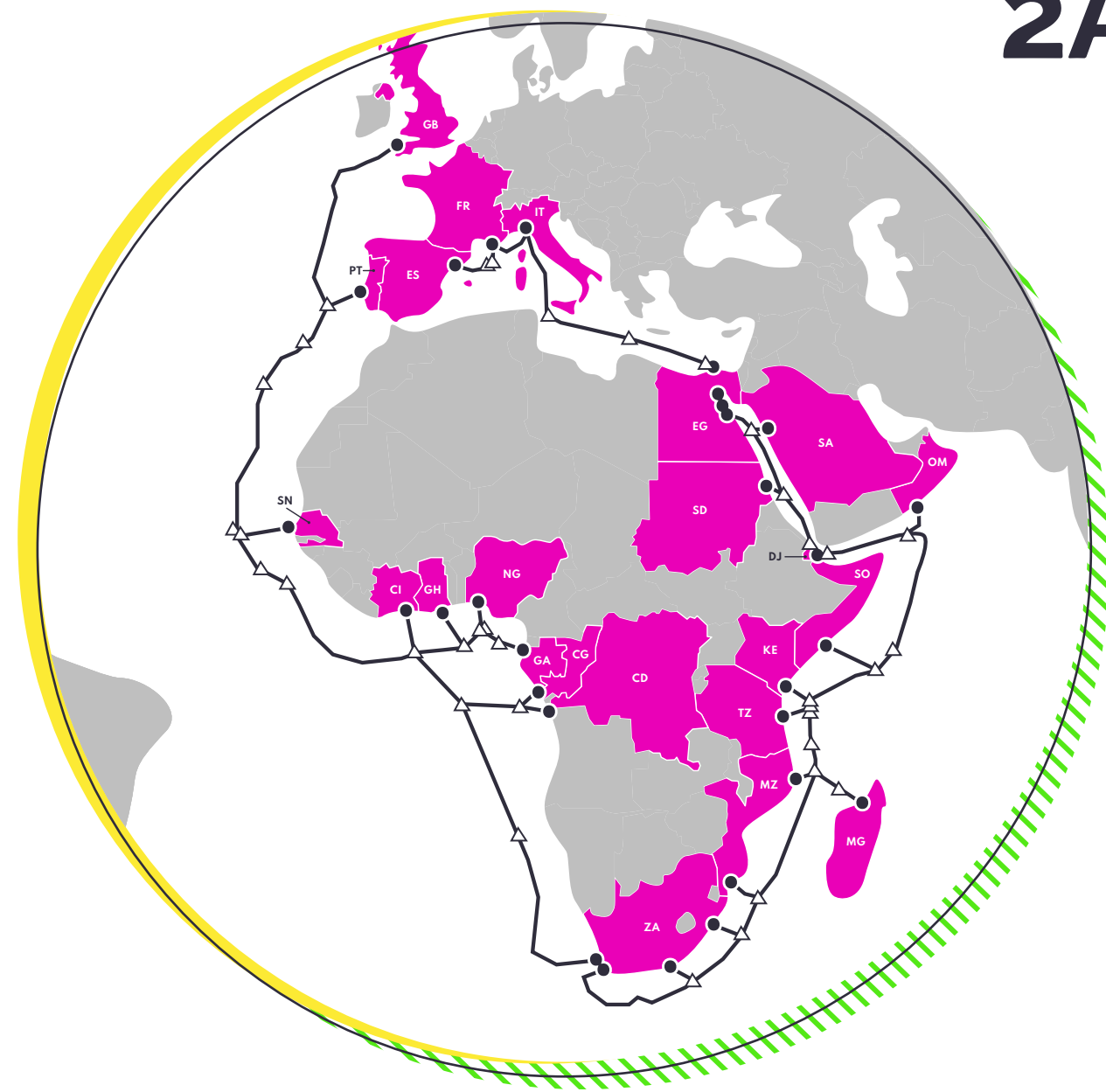
## COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES WITH THE GREATEST ABSOLUTE INCREASE

#	ABSOLUTE INCREASE	USERS INCREASE	% INCREASE
01	<b>India</b>	+20,000,000	+7%
02	<b>Philippines</b>	+5,000,000	+7%
03	<b>Mexico</b>	+3,000,000	+3%
04	<b>Egypt</b>	+2,000,000	+5%
05	<b>Cambodia</b>	+1,000,000	+10%
06	<b>Ukraine</b>	+1,000,000	+7%
07	<b>Morocco</b>	+1,000,000	+6%
08	<b>South Africa</b>	+1,000,000	+5%
09	<b>Algeria</b>	+1,000,000	+5%
10	<b>Peru</b>	+1,000,000	+4%

Table: Facebook Audience: Largest Increases Q3-Q4 2020,  
[via](#) We Are Social and Hootsuite

Facebook is partnering with a number of global telecom providers, including Saudi Arabia's stc, Telecom Egypt, to build one of the world's largest subsea cable networks.<sup>44</sup>

## 2AFRICA



Map: Highlighting the countries covered by the 2Africa Network, [via](#) Facebook.

The 2Africa network will boost internet capacity - and increasing demand for 4G, 5G and broadband - across 23 interconnected countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

An important market for Facebook's potential growth, "Africa is currently the least connected continent," the company notes, "with just over a quarter of its 1.3 billion people connected to the internet."<sup>45</sup> Globally, more 3.5 billion people remain unconnected to the internet.<sup>46</sup>

Facebook announced a new initiative, #LoveLocal, to support local small and medium businesses in the Middle East and North Africa. Through the campaign, Facebook will provide business owners with access to their [Middle East and North Africa SMB Training Hub](#), offering free courses exploring digital marketing, eCommerce and other online activities.

"According to the '[Global State of Small Business](#)' report [published by Facebook] in July 2020, 70% of businesses in the MENA region reported reduced sales, with around 40% reducing their workforce in response to the pandemic," [said Ramez Shehadi](#), Managing Director for Middle East & North Africa, Facebook.<sup>47</sup>

Separately, a survey to determine how the pandemic has affected small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE, was conducted by Facebook, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>48</sup>

Although overall sales were down, the survey reported a 25% increase in digital sales, as a result of SMBs accelerating their digitization and use of social media to promote their goods and services.<sup>49</sup>

#حِبِّ-الْحَالِيبِ  
#LOVE LOCAL

Image: Campaign's logo [via](#) Communicate



**MBC**, the Middle East Broadcasting Group, **announced an exclusive one-year content partnership with Facebook** across the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>50</sup> With this partnership, the digital department at MBC will share content in the MENA region across various Facebook pages and will include MBC's Ramadan line-up for 2021.

**Nestlé Middle East previously created a bot for Facebook Messenger during Ramadan** back in 2019. Available across the GCC, Nestlé partnered with Zenith MENA and the bot development agency Chatlab to create a bilingual bot communicating in English or Arabic.<sup>51</sup>

**Speaking about the impact of the campaign in early 2020**, Rainer Mueller, communication director for Nestlé MENA, **revealed**: "The bot was able to connect with over 7,000 users who opted in and spent over three minutes interacting with the content on the platform, which is almost three times the time spent on our own internet platforms."<sup>52</sup>

Users could ask simple questions across five categories: food ideas, general information about Ramadan, health and wellness, entertainment and gifting ideas.

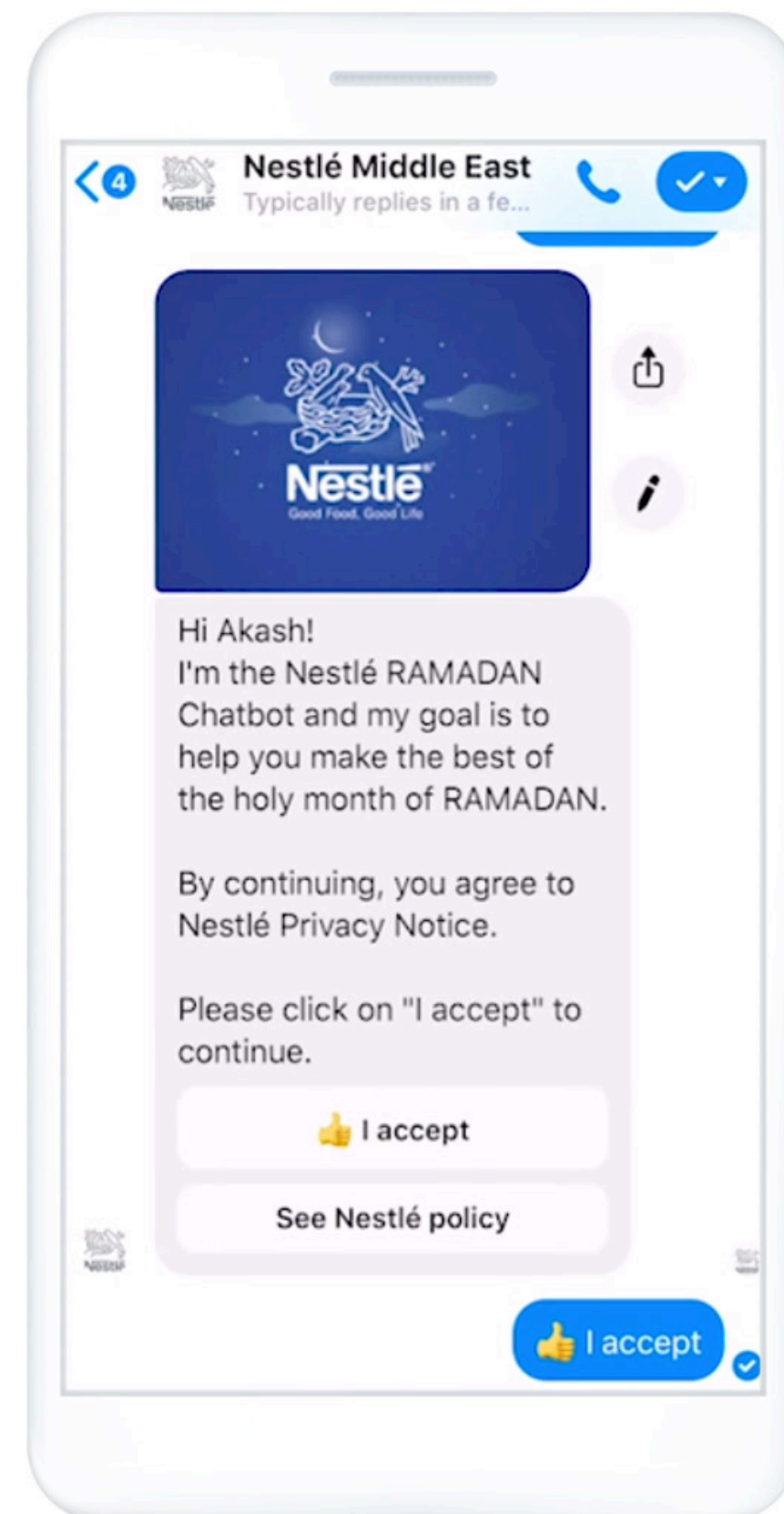


Image: ChatBot [via](#) Facebook

**Facebook rolled out a series of content partnerships during Ramadan, including a 10-part series with CNN International.** Collaborations **included** entertainment providers 7AWI, Shoof, Charisma Group and Roya TV, as well as influencers such as Khalid Al Ameri and Ahmad Al Shugairi.<sup>53</sup>



Image: Screenshot of the [homepage](#) for CNN and Facebook's Ramadan series "Together Apart"

# WHATSAPP



In February 2020, Facebook that the Whatsapp messaging service - which they acquired in 2014 - now had more than 2 billion users worldwide.<sup>54</sup>

Research in late-December 2019 by Northwestern University in Qatar found that three-quarters (75%) of nationals surveyed in seven nations across the region (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and UAE) used the service. Since 2017, their data has consistently found WhatsApp to have the highest reach of any social platform in the region.<sup>55</sup>

**71% of Middle East respondents** in a 500 person survey run by PwC **reported that their usage of WhatsApp and other messaging apps had increased since the outbreak of the pandemic.**<sup>56</sup> Similarly, 75% of the Middle East sample said their consumption of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok had increased as a result of social distancing, “substantially more than the average of 52% for all (8 other) territories.”

**Businesses are increasingly using WhatsApp for business communication.**<sup>57</sup>

Examples the telecom providers [Zain Bahrain](#)<sup>58</sup> and [Ooredoo](#),<sup>59</sup> as well as the leisure resort [Yas Island](#) in Abu Dhabi,<sup>60</sup> all of whom are using the platform for customer relations, and a more conversational experience.

**Almosafer, a Saudi based travel company, reported in February 2020 that it was seeing 2,200 WhatsApp conversations a day between customers and their agents.**

Users can harness WhatsApp to make enquiries and get post-booking support.<sup>61</sup>

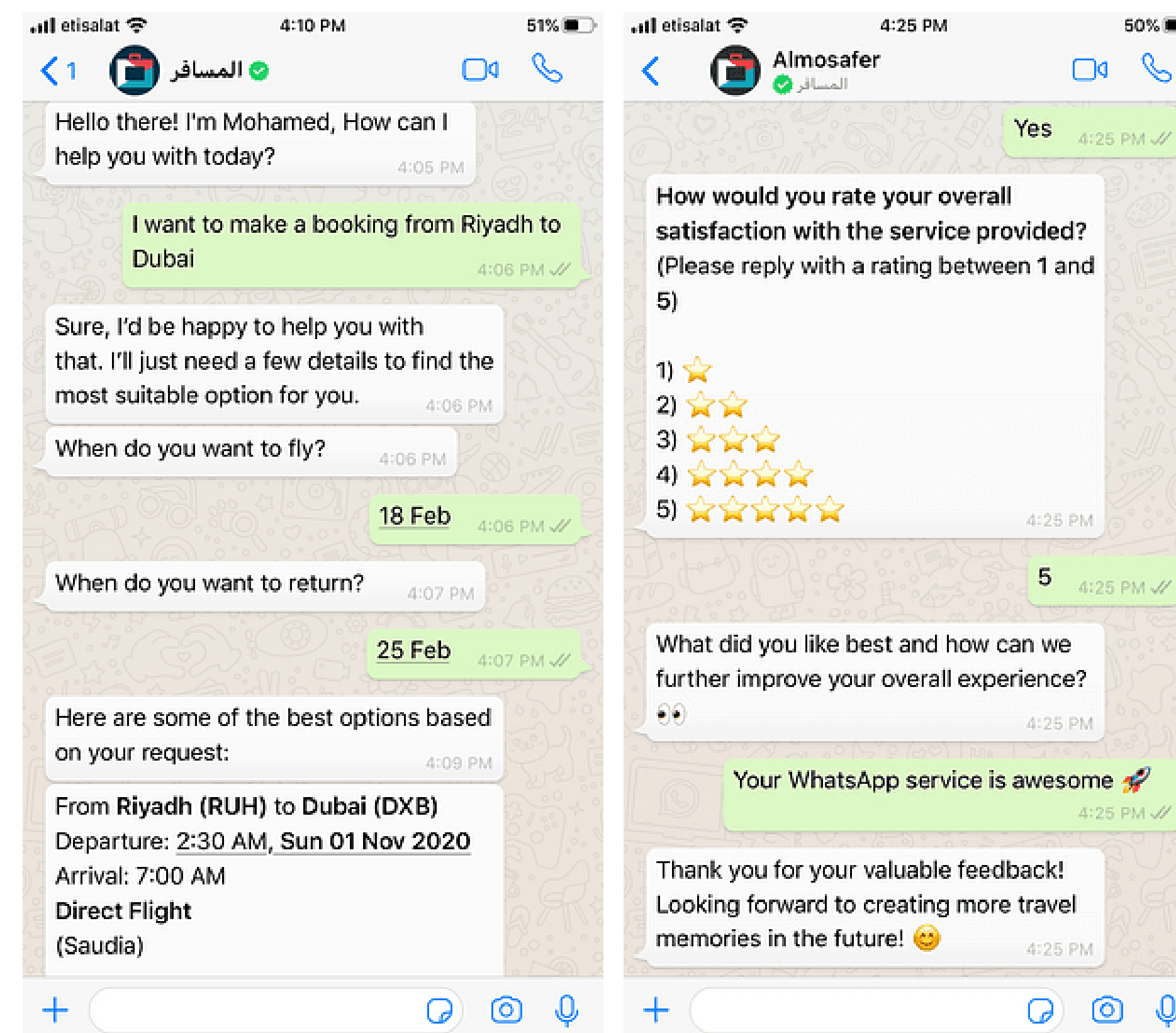


Image: Example of a WhatsApp conversation with an Almosafer customer

The chat app was used by multiple governments to address issues and concerns related to COVID-19. Abu Dhabi's health department [launched](#) an automated "Chatbot" allowing citizens to get answers to the most common questions about the virus.<sup>62</sup>

The **Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia** also [deployed](#) a WhatsApp service, through its contact center 937, enabling users to explore information related to information about the coronavirus, locations of primary health care centers, appointments, blood donation and other services.<sup>63</sup>



Image: Ad [promoting](#) the Saudi Ministry of Health's new WhatsApp Service<sup>64</sup>



**UAE Forsan** @UAE\_Forsan · Jun 14, 2020  
 The Department of Health Abu Dhabi (DoH) in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center, launches the COVID-19 Home Isolation Programme Smart service on its verified WhatsApp business channel  
[#أنت\\_مسؤول](#)  
[#YouAreResponsible](#)  
[@DoHSocial](#)

Image: Announcement of the Abu Dhabi Department of Health's new WhatsApp service, [via](#) Twitter<sup>65</sup>

WhatsApp was the highest ranked brand among a survey of Egyptian women conducted by YouGov. Nearly two-thirds (60.5%) of respondents had a positive impression of the service.<sup>66</sup> YouTube (4th) and Facebook (5th) were also in the Top 10. It also ranked highly in the other MENA countries covered in their survey.

## RANKING OF SOCIAL MEDIA APP BY COUNTRY

	WhatsApp	Facebook	YouTube
<b>Egypt<sup>67</sup></b>	No 1 (60.5%)	No 5 (47.6%)	No 4 (54.3%)
<b>KSA<sup>68</sup></b>	No 6 (48%)	Instagram No 10 (44.5%)	No 4 (48.6%)
<b>UAE<sup>69</sup></b>	No 3 (59.8%)		No 5 (54.2%)

Table: MENA countries featured in [YouGov's 2020 Global Women's Impression Rankings<sup>70</sup>](#)

Algeria once again [blocked access](#) to a number of social networks - including WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter - during a period where students were busy sitting exams.<sup>71</sup> The move, which has happened [consistently<sup>72</sup>](#) since<sup>73</sup> 2016 is designed to stop students from cheating, by discussing answers and sharing papers.

“Saudi Arabia is developing a secure alternative to the short messaging service WhatsApp,” Arab News [reports](#), noting that “the local messaging service will limit the Kingdom’s reliance on foreign companies and ensure that any confidential or sensitive data is safe on local servers.”<sup>74</sup> The initiative is being led by Saudi engineers and researchers at the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST).

Meanwhile, in response to COVID-19, **a judge in Lebanon interrogated a detainee via WhatsApp video call**. “The WhatsApp interrogation was done in accordance with the discretion of the Attorney General,” the Lebanese digital news site The961, [said](#).<sup>75</sup> This unusual move was designed to help reduce in-person contact due to the spread of the coronavirus.



Image: [Tweet](#) from Lebanon’s Internal Security Forces

Louvre Abu Dhabi, working with the agency TBWA, **announced the re-opening of the museum in the summer by mimicking a WhatsApp conversation** between different works of art.<sup>76</sup> The 51-second video, which is available with the characters chatting in [English](#), [Arabic](#) and [French](#), has been viewed more than 600,000 times on Facebook.

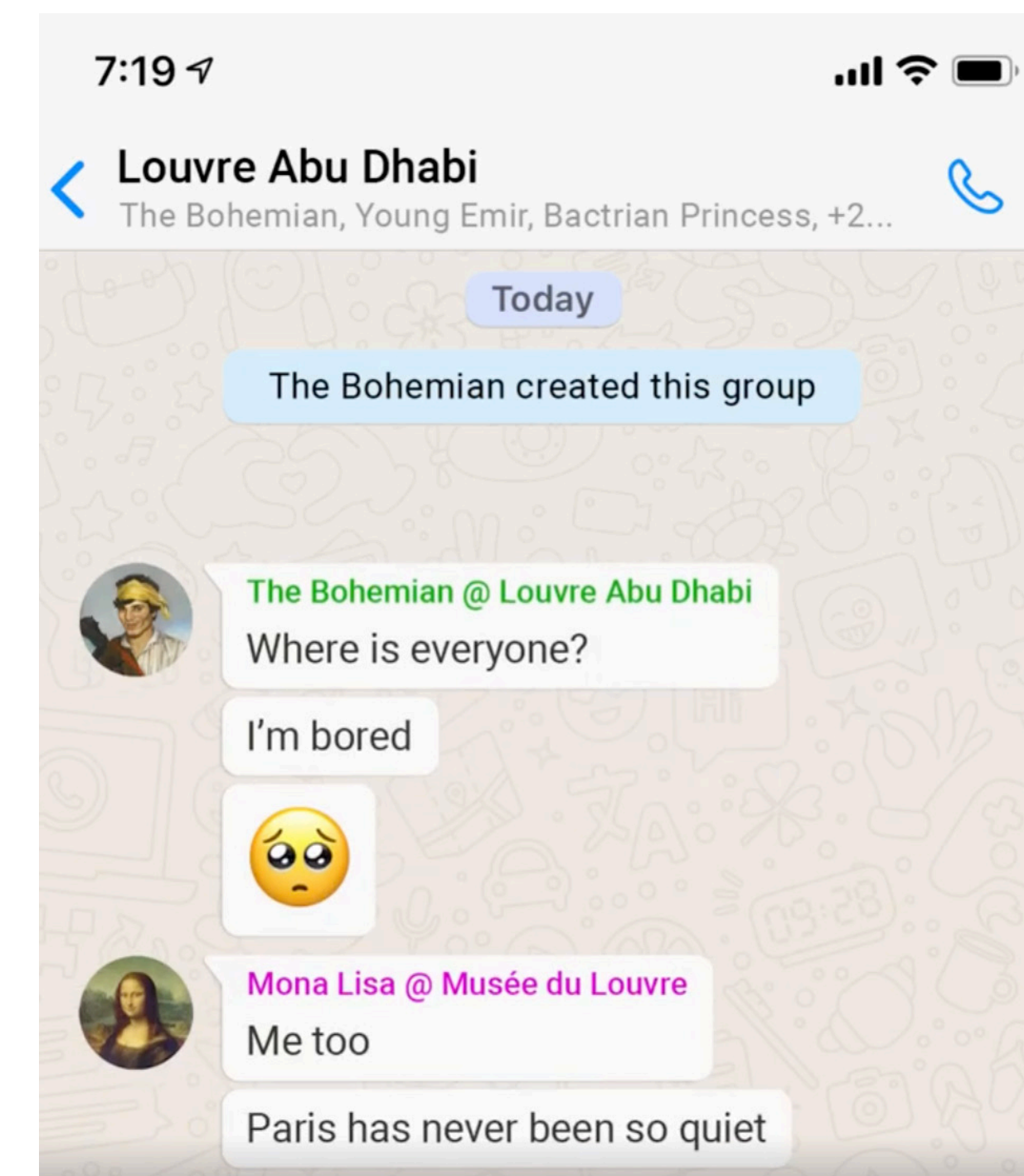
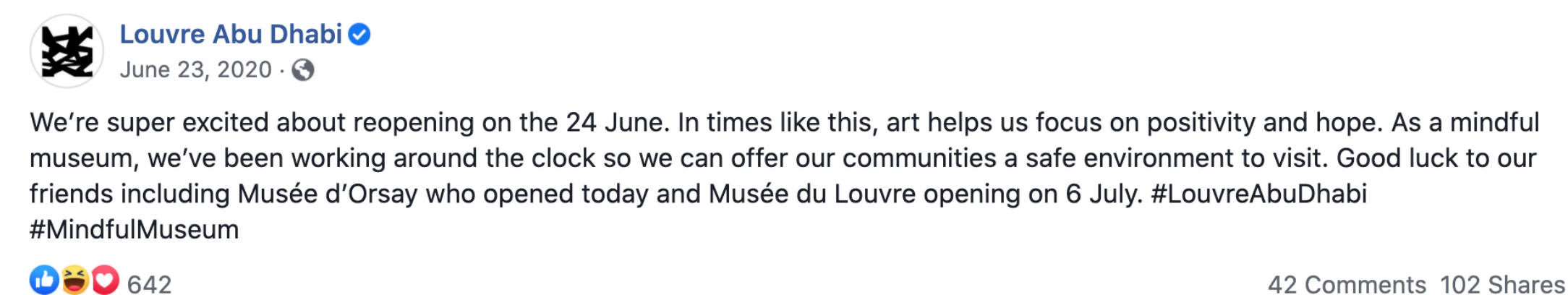


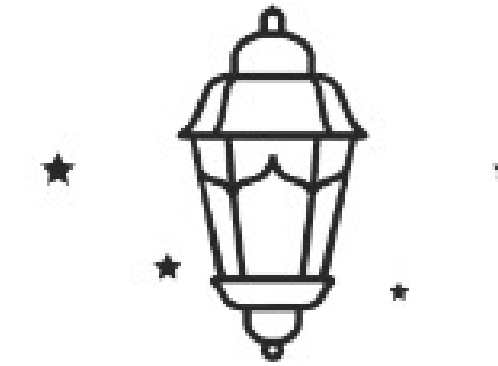
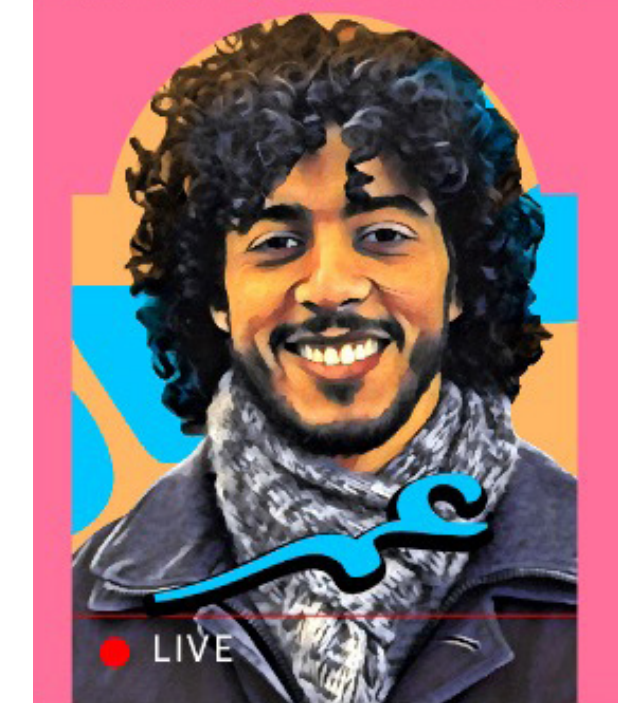
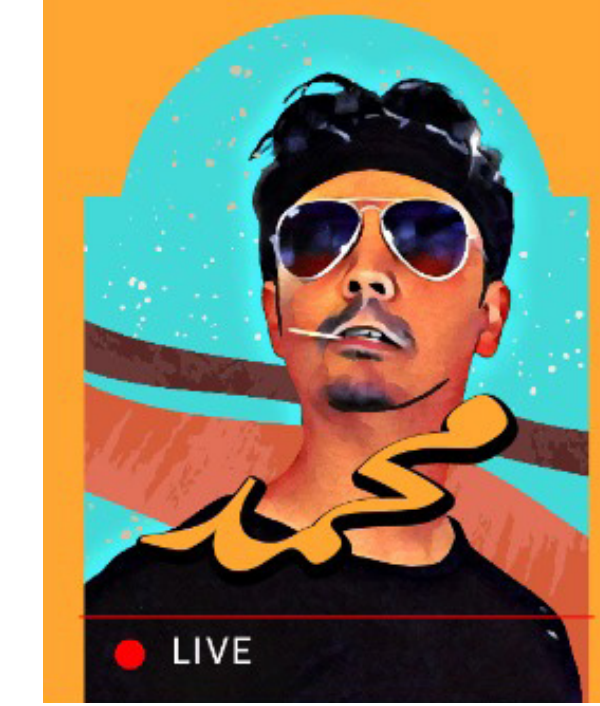
Image: Screenshot [via](#) Facebook

# YOUTUBE



YouTube *celebrated* its 15th birthday in 2020,<sup>77</sup>The first ever YouTube video was uploaded on April 23, 2005. In the past decade and a half, the platform has emerged as a social media behemoth. Over 2 Billion logged-in users now *visit YouTube* each month and over a billion hours of video watched daily.<sup>78</sup>

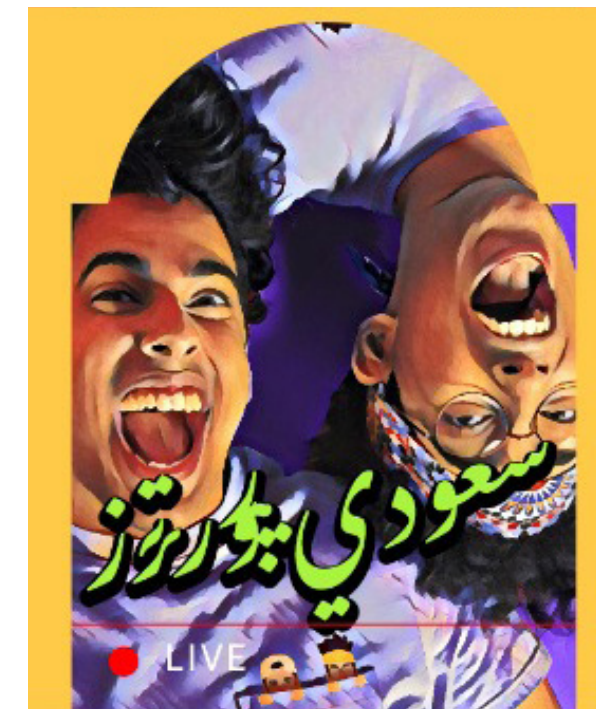
Six YouTube creators *grabbed* a Guinness World Records title this Ramadan, after 183,544 concurrent viewers joined them for a virtual Iftar, the “most viewers for an Iftar YouTube live stream.”<sup>79</sup> *Participating* in the initiative were Mohamed Moshaya, Noor Stars, The Saudi Reporters, Anasala Family, Asrar Aref, and Omar Hussein.<sup>80</sup>



## دخلنا التاريخ

مع بعض حققنا الرقم  
القياسي العالمي  
لأضخم بث مباشر لإفطار  
عبر يوتيوب

Images: [via](#) Campaign Middle East

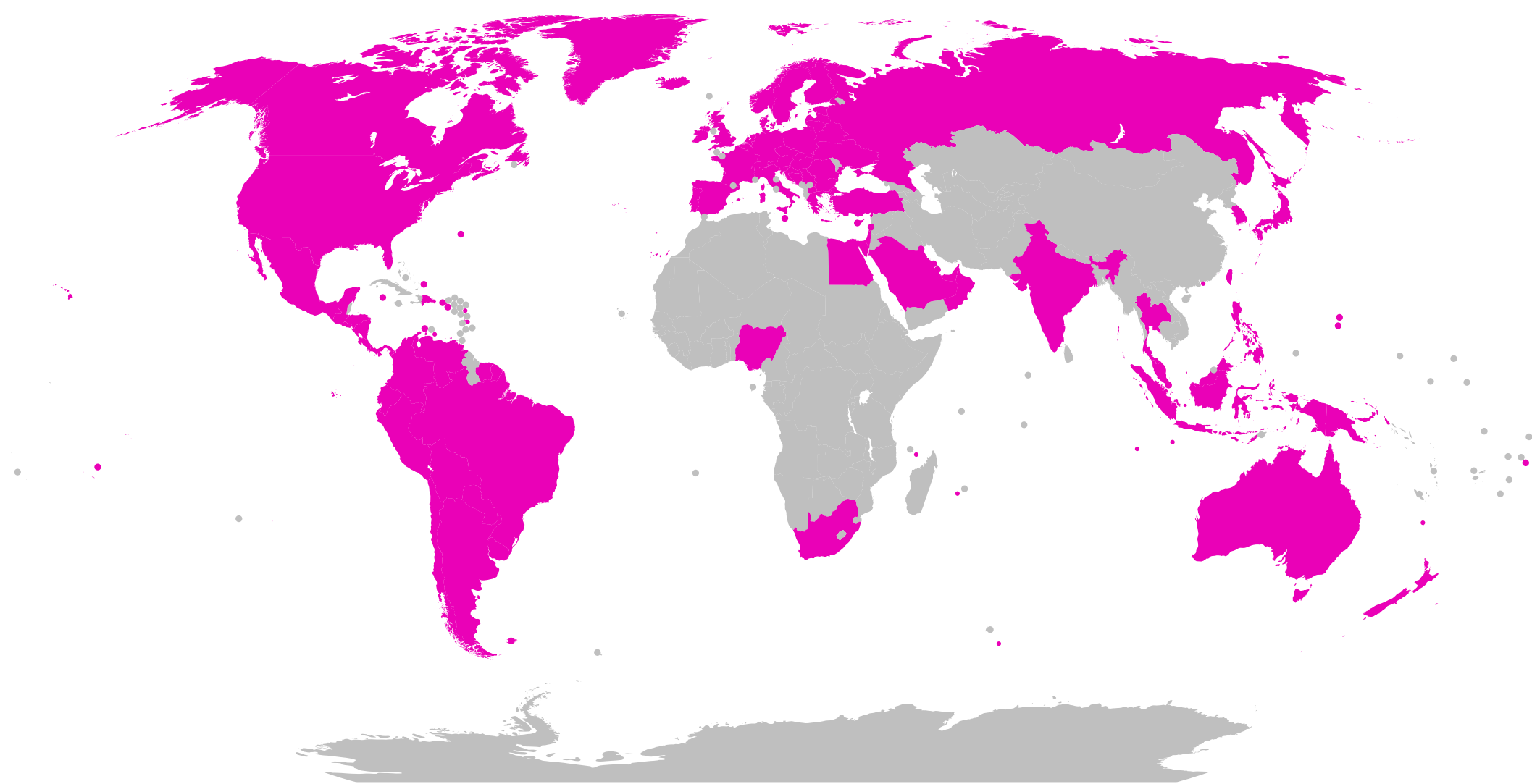


After launching **YouTube Premium and YouTube Music** across parts of the Middle East in 2019, the service finally **launched in Egypt, the region's largest market**.<sup>81</sup> All users in Egypt were **offered** a one free month trial on YouTube Premium, a product with ad-free viewing, offline access and a YouTube Music subscription. Thereafter, YouTube Music subscriptions start at 49.99 EGP (or 74.99 EGP for family plans) and YouTube Premium costing 59.99 EGP (or 89.99 EGP for family plans).<sup>82</sup>

Announcing the service, Liliana Abu Dalu Deira, Director of the Music Partnerships programme for YouTube in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, commented that **70% of Egypt's Internet users watch YouTube on a daily basis**.<sup>83</sup>

## YOUTUBE MUSIC MARKETS

Countries and territories in which **YouTube Music is available**.



Map: [via AndroidCentral](#)

**منتجان جديان من YouTube في مصر**

**YouTube Music**  
إبتداءً من 49.99 جنيه شهرياً  
أكبر موسوعة للموسيقى العربية  
بحث باستخدام التعلم الآلي  
آلاف القوائم الموسيقية

**YouTube Premium**  
إبتداءً من 59.99 جنيه شهرياً  
لا إعلانات  
تشغيل الفيديو في الخلفية  
إشترك في YouTube Music

Image: Promotional ad for YouTube Music and YouTube Premium

**YouTube terminated 16 channels linked to Iran in April** “as part of our ongoing investigation into coordinated influence operations.” The platform **determined** that state-sponsored content was being posted to the network about Saudi-American relations and the U.S. response to COVID-19.<sup>84</sup>

Earlier in the year, **Google deleted the YouTube account for Iran's Press TV UK channel**, Middle East Eye **reported**.<sup>85</sup>

“The normalization of ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates has produced its first musical collaboration: “Ahlan Bik,” or “Hello you” in Arabic,” [observed](#) The Times of Israel.<sup>86</sup>

Collaborating over Zoom, the song by Israeli singer Elkana Marziano and Emirati artist Walid Aljasim has clocked [more than 1.6 million YouTube views](#) since 30th September. The chorus — “I hear you friend far away, far away” — is repeated in Arabic, Hebrew and English,<sup>87</sup> while the video cuts from Dubai to Tel Aviv.



Image: Screenshot [via](#) The New Arab

YouTube, like other social media platforms, implemented a range of measures related to COVID-19. In MENA, this [included](#) a link to the WHO’s website at the top of the page when users searched for COVID-19.<sup>88</sup>

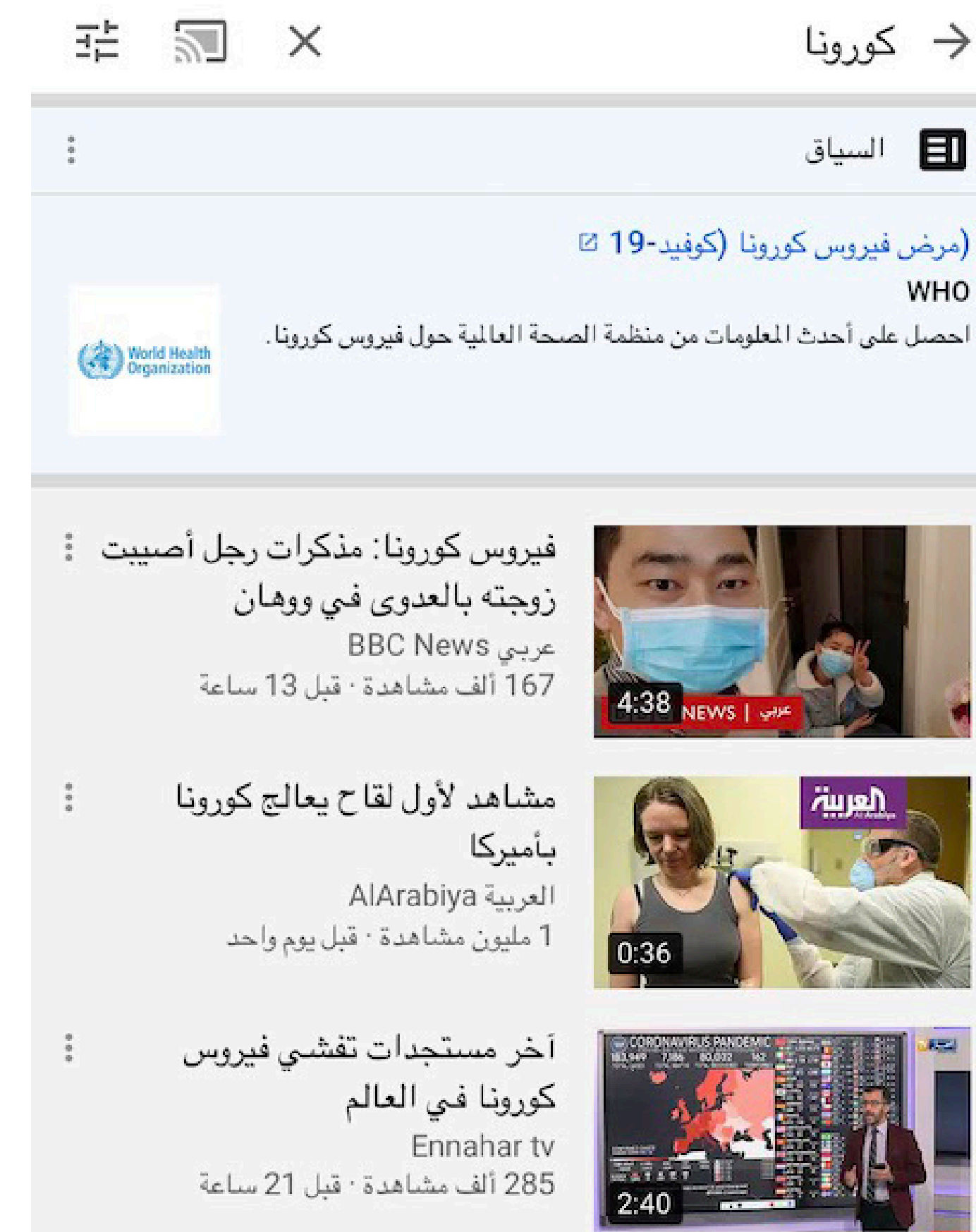


Image: via [Google Arabia Blog](#)



Image: [via](#) Animation Magazine.

The Moshaya Family, who run a [series of popular YouTube channels](#), have partnered with Spacoon, a pan-Arab free-to-air TV channel specialising in animation and children programmes.

“Through this agreement, Spacoon will turn MENA’s titan YouTube family channel into a true lifestyle franchise,” [explains](#) Animation Magazine, “including toys, animation series, video games and FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) specially designed to reach and entertain kids and families.”<sup>89</sup>

The Saudi-based family-friendly content creators, who chart their family trips and adventures on the platform, launched their primary channel a decade ago. By the end of 2020, their [main YouTube account](#) has nearly 19 million subscribers and has enjoyed just under 12 billion views.

New Media Academy launched a Youth YouTuber Program in the summer, in partnership with Nas Academy, part of the Nas Daily Group.<sup>90</sup> The two-week program covered scripting, storytelling, on camera presence and “beating the algorithm.” The travel vlogger Nas Daily [announced](#) in 2020 that he was opening an office in Dubai (his HQ is in Singapore).<sup>91</sup> He has more than 18.9 million [followers](#) on Facebook, and more than 2 million [YouTube subscribers](#).

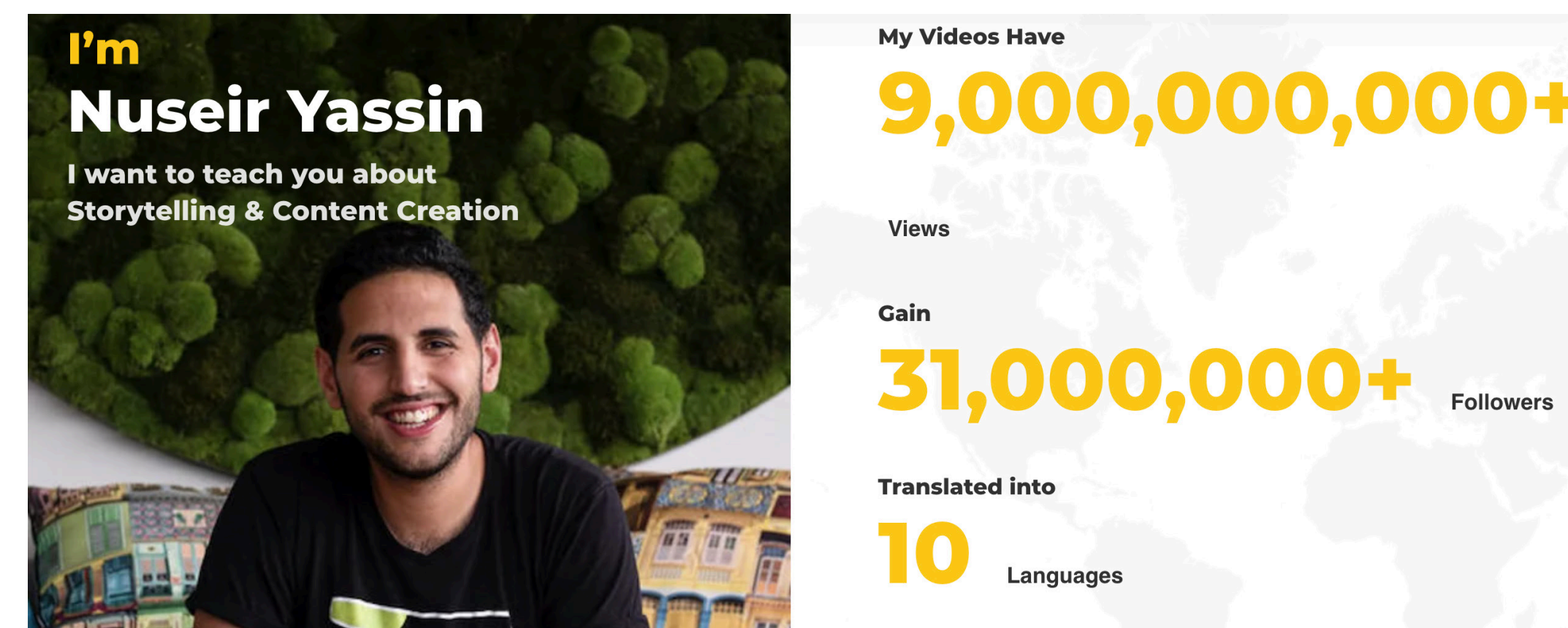


Image: Screenshot [via](#) Nas Academy



Billed as “the Arab World’s first influencer TV show,” AYA ([As You Are](#)), an Arabic fashion show series, run by an all-female team, premiered on YouTube in January. Recorded on location in 6k, episodes garner around 400,000 views, Digital Studio ME [reports](#).<sup>92</sup>


Each episode features a fashion-related task - such as a [professional make-up challenge](#) - judged by a guest influencer.<sup>93</sup> The #AYASquad, expanded from [four](#) to [eight](#) ([Haya Al Yassin](#), [Haya Atassi](#), [Noor](#), [Roua](#), [Assia](#), [Marwa](#), [Nadine](#) and [Sarah](#).) comes from across the region.<sup>94</sup>

“It’s not hard to see why the AYA Fashion Squad are set to be the stars of the tomorrow,” Grazia [says](#). “Each is extremely relatable in their own way - bold, confident and representing the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes of a generation at the beginning of their journeys as role models of the future.”<sup>95</sup>


THE ARAB WORLD’S FIRST

## INFLUENCER TV SHOW /


All the relatability of influencers in a brand-safe environment




#iamaya  
We collaborate with relevant brands to deliver organic content integrations



#iamaya  
Pioneering network that produces and delivers premium Arabic series for Arab Youth audiences



#iamaya  
Every week we drop a 15 minute episode on Youtube with daily integrations on Instagram and TikTok



#iamaya  
Each episode features a relatable challenge judged by a guest influencer

Image: Screenshot [via](#) IAmAYA

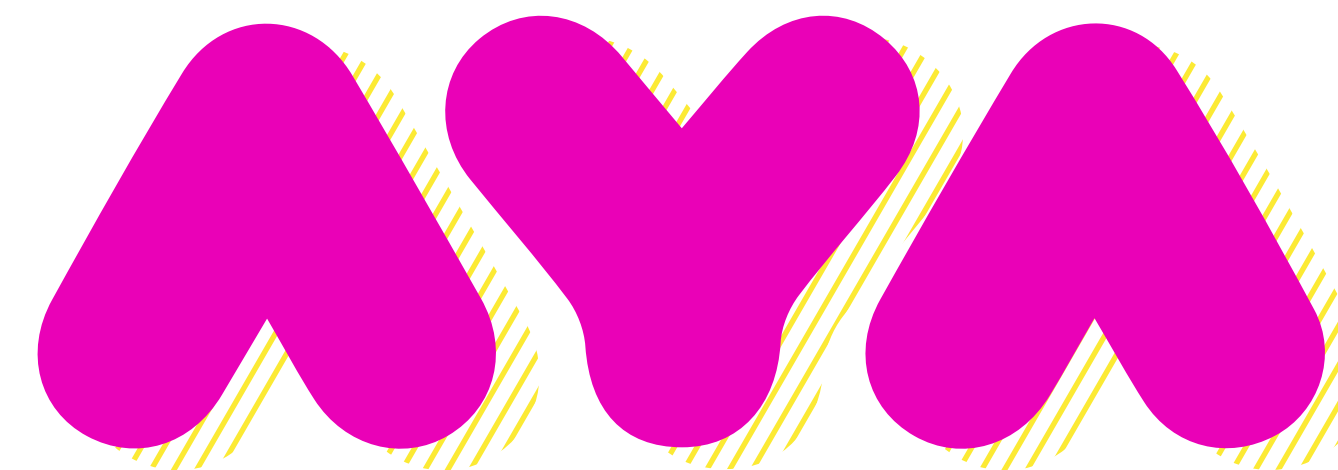
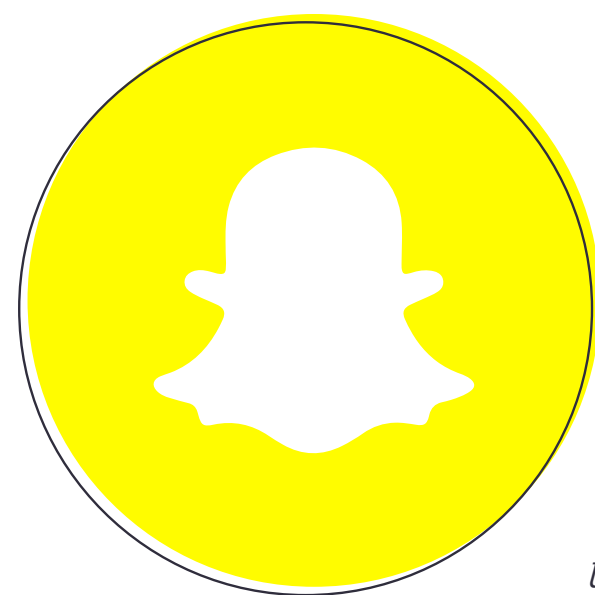


Image: AYA [via](#) Facebook

# SNAPCHAT



Globally, Snapchat now *reaches* 249 million users a day (up 18% on this time last year)<sup>96</sup> with the MENA region - and in particular Saudi Arabia - a key market for the company.

*"It goes without saying that Saudi Arabia is one of the most interesting markets that all eyes are on for the past five years; it's one of our biggest economies."*

*Abdullah Alhammadi, Snapchat's regional business lead for the Middle East and North Africa market, *told* Arab News in December 2020.<sup>97</sup>*

**Snapchat now reaches 67 million unique users in the region each month, up 38% year-on-year** (as of October 2020). The app reaches 60% of 13-24-year-olds in UAE and 90% of 13-34-year-olds in Saudi Arabia. Arabian Business *observed* that over 85% of MENA daily users interact with Lenses every day.<sup>98</sup>

**Four MENA countries - Saudi Arabia (17.9 million users), Turkey (9.7m), Iraq (9.6m) and Egypt (8.9m) are in the 13 largest national markets for the app worldwide.** Each of these countries continues to see considerable growth in terms of Snapchat users.

## SNAPCHAT REACH RANKINGS

Countries and territories with the **greatest potential Snapchat advertising reach**.

#	COUNTRY	REACH	QOQ	QOQ
01	<b>U.S.A.</b>	101,900,000	+0.5%	+500,000
02	<b>India</b>	49,800,000	+047%	+16,000,000
03	<b>France</b>	22,150,000	+7%	+1,500,000
04	<b>U.K.</b>	19,150,000	+8%	+1,500,000
05	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	17,900,000	+3%	+550,000
06	<b>Mexico</b>	15,700,000	+3%	+500,000
07	<b>Germany</b>	13,600,000	+8%	+1,050,000
08	<b>Brazil</b>	11,200,000	-9%	-1,150,000
09	<b>Philippines</b>	10,750,000	+19%	+1,750,000
10	<b>Turkey</b>	9,700,000	+8%	+750,000
11	<b>Iraq</b>	9,600,000	+10%	+900,000
12	<b>Canada</b>	9,400,000	0%	[UNCHANGED]
13	<b>Egypt</b>	8,900,000	+15%	+1,150,000
14	<b>Indonesia</b>	8,650,000	+35%	+2,250,000
15	<b>Pakistan</b>	8,200,000	+30%	+1,900,000

Table: Largest markets for Snapchat globally, *via* We Are Social and Hootsuite

Snapchat **launched**<sup>99</sup> 40 new shows specifically for the month of Ramadan. Snapchatters in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, **spent 77 minutes a day** on the app during Ramadan 2020. In Q3 2020, Snap revealed that the total **daily time spent watching shows on Snapchat Discover increased by more than 50% year-over-year.**<sup>100</sup>

**“In Saudi Arabia, more people watch Snapchat Discover content every day than any of the top ten TV channels, both before and during Covid-19”**<sup>101</sup>

**- Hussein Freijeh**  
Regional Director of Snap Inc. MENA

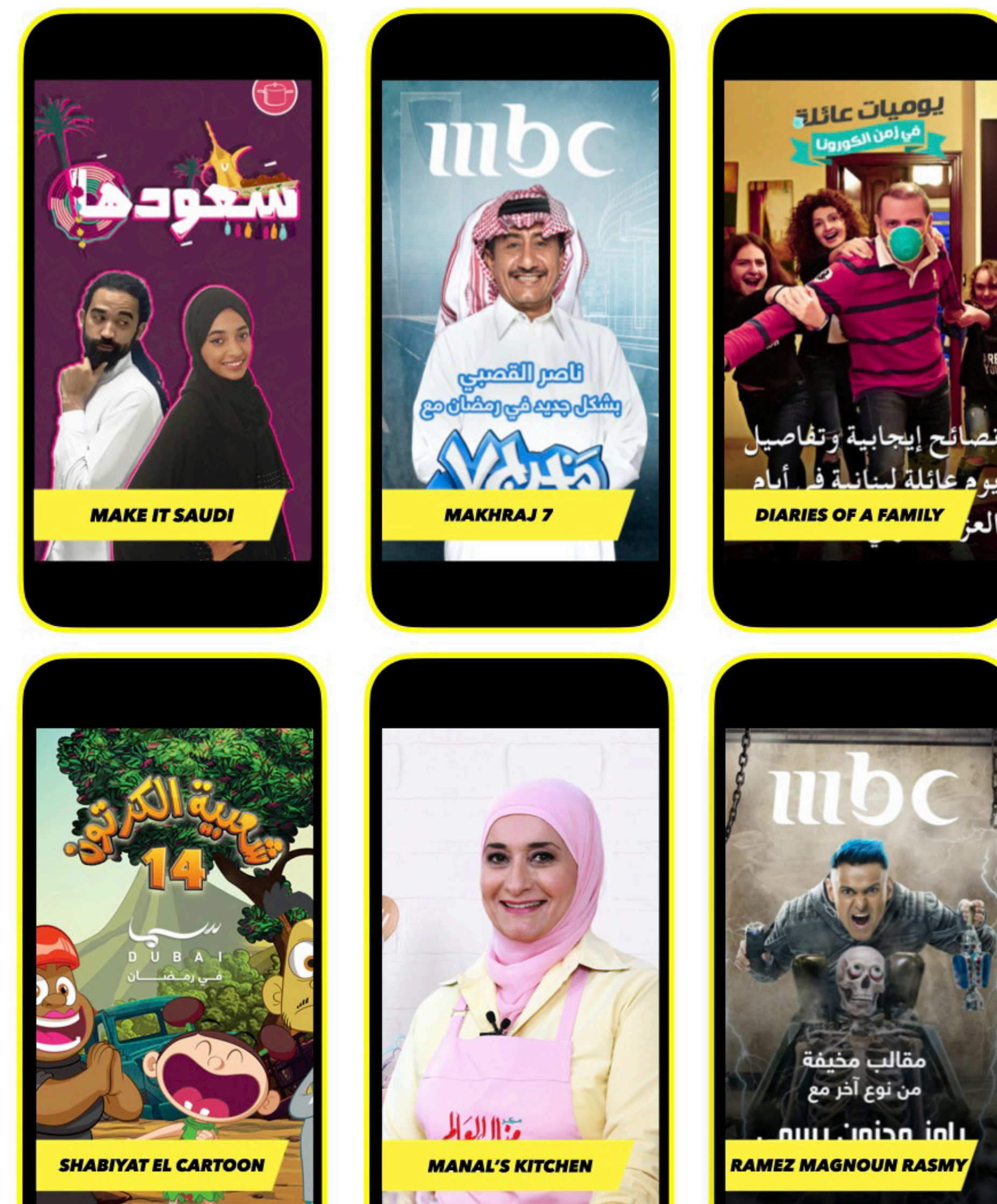


Image: Examples of Snapchat's exclusive Ramadan shows

Rotana, one of the apps Discover partners, **reaches** an average of nearly 10 million Snapchatters in the Middle East each month.<sup>102</sup>



One of the new propositions to emerge on Snapchat during the year was an **ASMR Arabic Snapchat series, Hamsa 3arabiya** (aka “Whispers of Arabia”) **launched by Cosmopolitan**. The series offers beauty tips using “auditory whispering, tapping, scratching and squelching to provide an overall sense of calm.”<sup>103</sup>



Images: Snapcode & screenshot of Cosmpolitan's Snapchat show, Hamsa 3arabiya

In time for Ramadan,<sup>104</sup> Snapchat **revealed**<sup>105</sup> a new AR experience **designed to encourage donations to the United Nations Foundation's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund**.

Available in select markets, such as UAE and Saudi Arabia, the lenses allowed Snapchatters to scan real-life objects like an AEDIO/SARIO note to show how a potential donation could support the WHO's immediate response efforts.

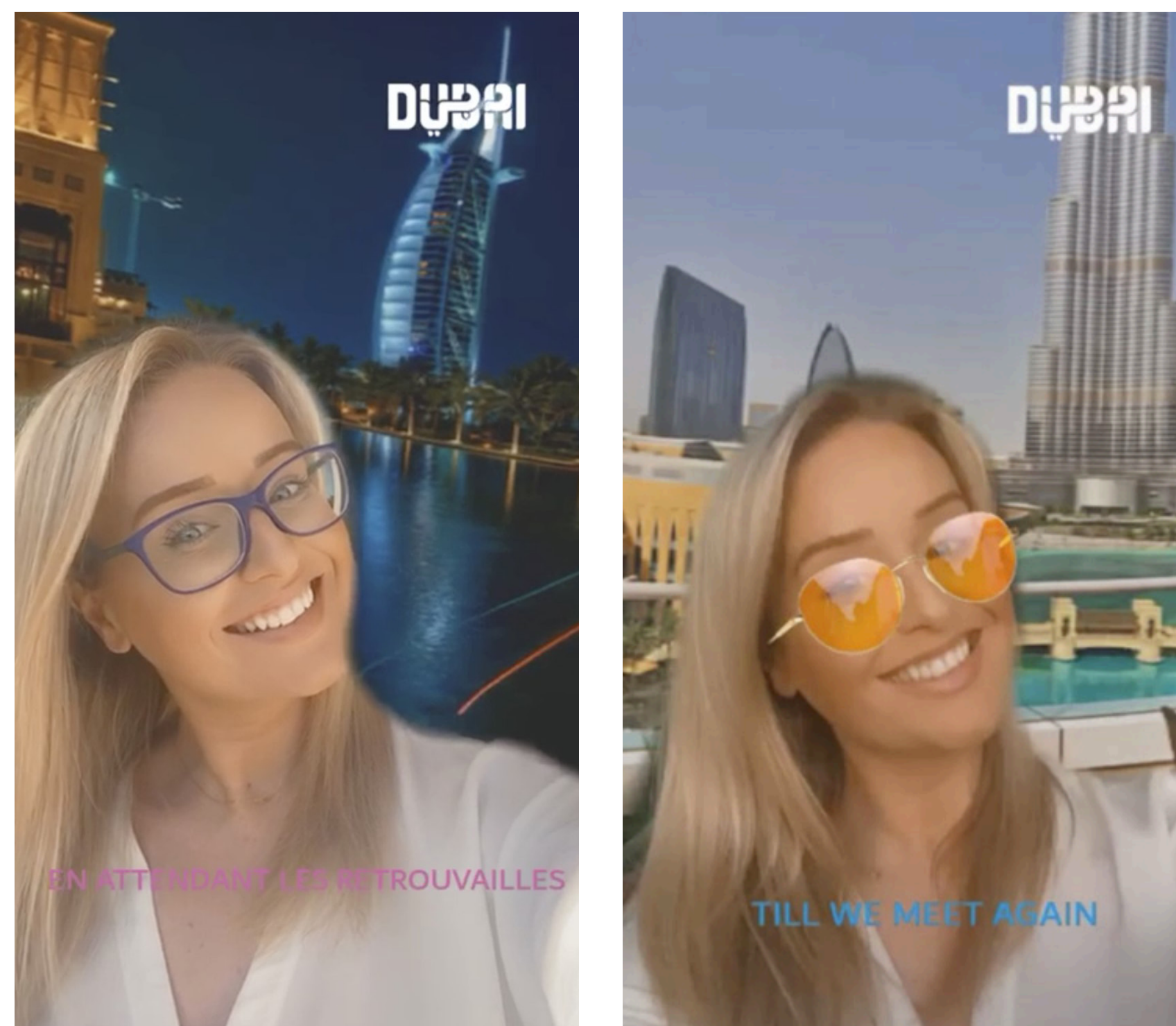
Discussing the launch, Snap's Hussein Freijeh, said: “This campaign also comes as we are getting ready to welcome the holy month of Ramadan and celebrate the spirit of giving. We believe that everyone can play a meaningful role in stopping the spread of COVID-19, and that it is our responsibility to support initiatives that can make that happen.”



Image: via Saudi Gazette

Dubai Tourism **partnered** with Snapchat in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, to allow Snapchatters to virtually visit some of the emirate's best known landmarks.

More than 9.2 million people in the UK and France used the lenses, as part of Dubai Tourism's "Till We Meet Again" **campaign**,<sup>106</sup> designed to remind people of Dubai's potential as a holiday destination once COVID restrictions were lifted.<sup>107</sup>



Images: Examples of Snapchat lenses used for the "Till We Meet Again" campaign, [via](#) Twitter



Image: Screenshots of the "Till We Meet Again" campaign ad, [via](#) YouTube

DUBAI

# INSTAGRAM



Instagram is now ten years old, celebrating its birthday on 6th October. In the past decade the service has grown from a fledgling start-up to one of the *biggest social networks* in the world,<sup>108</sup> with *over* 1 billion users a month.<sup>109</sup>

The service is continuing to *evolve*, offering new functions such as the new "Reels" feature and an increasing focus on online shopping.<sup>110</sup>

The Middle East is home to some of the **biggest markets** for Instagram in the world. **Three MENA nations - Turkey** 6th (at 44 million), **Saudi Arabia** 16th (15 million) and **Egypt** 20th (14 million) - are all in the Top 20 for largest audiences, by country.

Looking at a different metric, percentage of the population using Instagram, and even more MENA nations are present in the Top 20. **More than half of people online in Kuwait** (4th), **Turkey** (5th), **Bahrain** (9th), and **Israel** (17th) are using the visual social sharing app.<sup>111</sup>

## INSTAGRAM ELIGIBLE AUDIENCE REACH RATE RANKING

Countries and territories with the **highest levels of potential Instagram advertising reach** compared to population (aged 13+)

#	COUNTRY	%13+	REACH	QOQ
01	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	72%	10,000,000	+6%
02	<b>Brunei</b>	71%	250,000	+4%
03	<b>Iceland</b>	67%	190,000	+6%
04	<b>Kuwait</b>	66%	2,300,000	+5%
05	<b>Turkey</b>	66%	44,000,000	+5%
06	<b>Cayman Islands</b>	65%	36,000	+0%
07	<b>Guam</b>	63%	84,000	+4%
08	<b>Sweden</b>	63%	5,400,000	+2%
09	<b>Bahrain</b>	61%	880,000	+7%
10	<b>Chile</b>	60%	9,500,000	+3%
17	<b>Israel</b>	56%	3,700,000	+6%

Table: Largest markets for Instagram, based on % of online population, *via* We Are Social and Hootsuite

As Instagram expands its eCommerce potential, Social Networkers in Saudi Arabia and Egypt are among those most likely to say that adding a “buy button” on social networks would increase their likelihood of purchasing a product. Nonetheless, with fewer than one in five users in those countries open to this idea, this suggests that social commerce still has some way to go before it becomes mainstream.

## A “BUY” BUTTON ALONE ISN’T ENOUGH

Percent of each social platform’s visitors/users who say a “buy” button would most induce them to buy

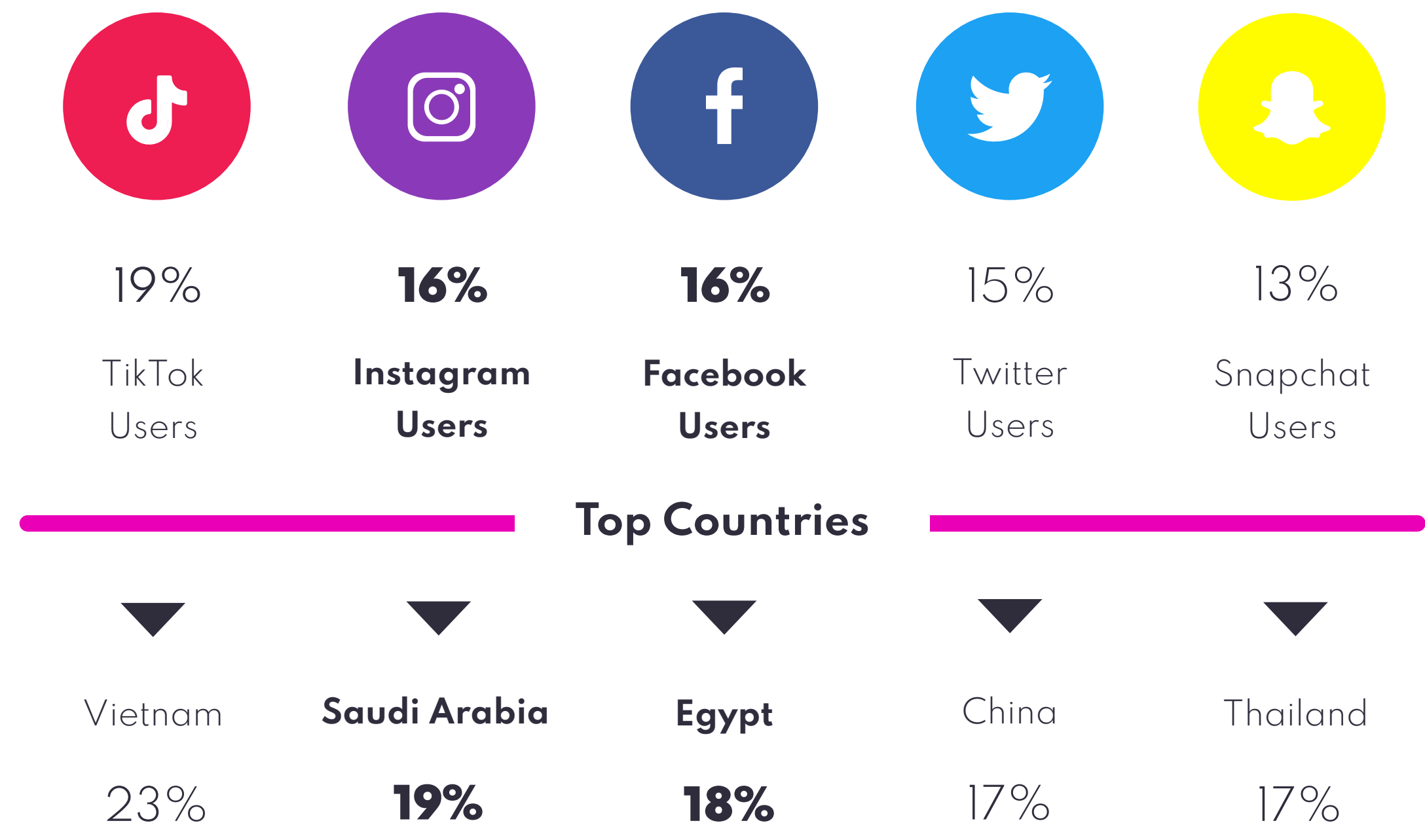


Chart: [via GlobalWebIndex](#)



**Iranian Instagram star Sahar Tabar has been jailed for 10 years**, the Guardian [reported](#), “charged with corruption of young people and disrespect for the Islamic Republic.”<sup>112</sup> Tabar had [previously](#) been arrested in 2019 on blasphemy charges,<sup>113</sup> before being [released](#) earlier in the year after contracting COVID-19.<sup>114</sup>

**Three men were arrested in Iran over the summer for allegedly selling babies on Instagram**, CNN [reported](#), citing the semi-official ISNA (Iranian Students’ News Agency) news agency.<sup>115</sup>

Instagram apologized to the supermodel of Palestinian origin, Bella Hadid, after she criticized the platform for deleting a post she shared that showed a picture of her father's passport with the birthplace listed as Palestine.<sup>116</sup>

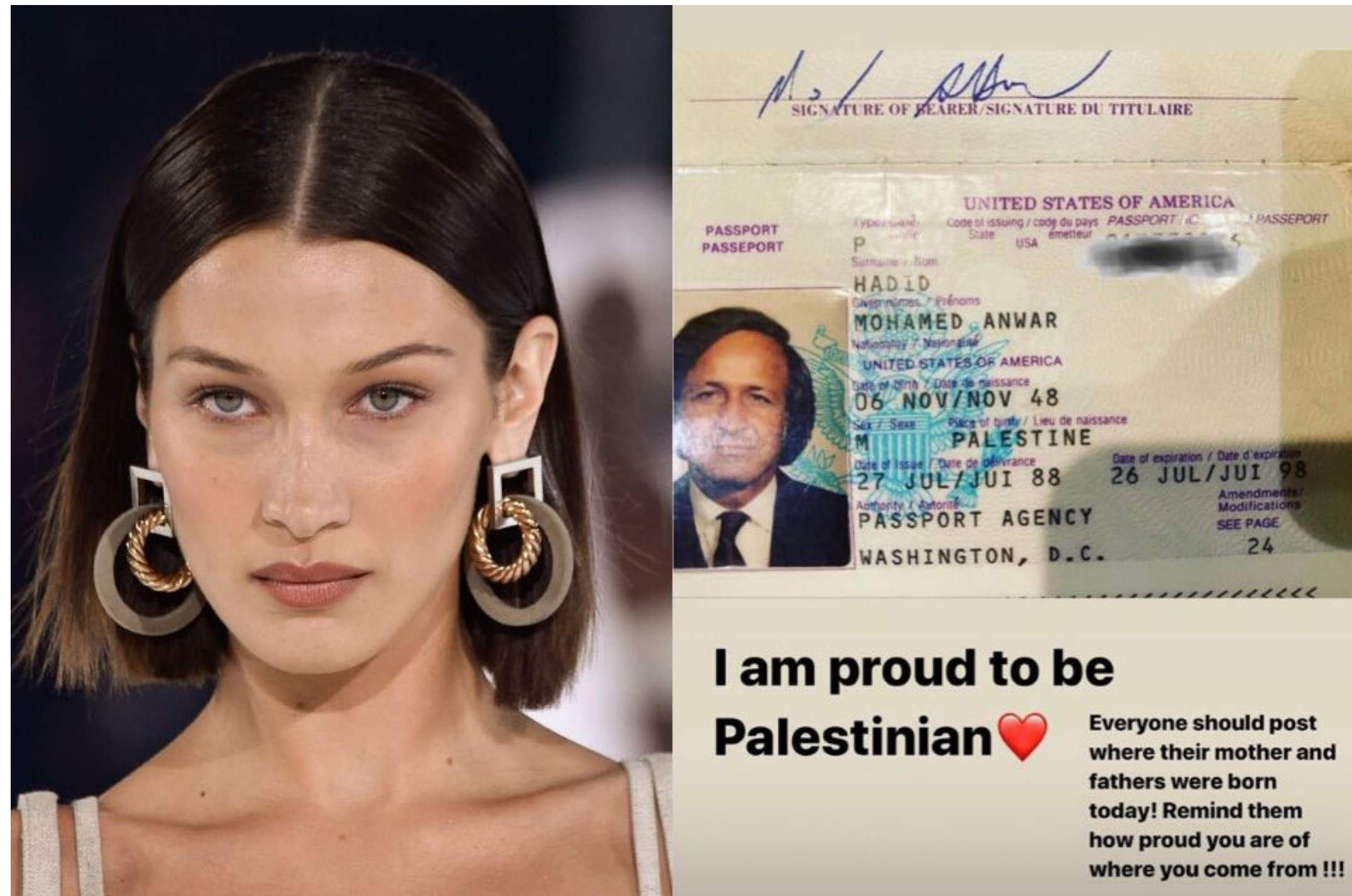


Image: Screenshot [via](#) Al-Jazeera/AFP of Hadid's post which was captioned: **"Are we not allowed to be Palestinian on Instagram? This, to me, is bullying."**

"To protect the privacy of our community, we don't allow people to post personal information, such as passport numbers, on Instagram. In this case, the passport number was blurred out, so this content shouldn't have been removed," an Instagram spokesperson said. "We've restored the content and apologised to Bella for the mistake."

Egyptian authorities ordered the arrest of a group of men accused of being involved in a gang rape in 2014, after the incident was **highlighted** on an Instagram account ([@assaultpolice](#)) designed to fight sexual violence.<sup>117</sup> The account has nearly a quarter of a million followers.



2,717 likes  
 assaultpolice صوتنا اعلى لما بنحكي مع بعض! اكتبني قصتك مع @assaultpolice التحرش، حتى لو معاكسه في الشارع، و إعملي أو إستعملي #مش\_هنسكت و احنا هنعطها هنا.. كلنا في ضهرك ❤️  
 #مش\_هنسكت  
 #endthesilence

2,573 likes  
 assaultpolice Our voices are louder when we speak together! Share your story with sexual harassment or assault on your story using these hashtags, and mention us @assaultpolice if you want us to repost your story. IT'S TIME TO SPEAK OUT!  
 #endthesilence  
 #مش\_هنسكت

Images: in [Arabic](#) and [English](#), on the Assault Police Egypt's account, encouraging Instagram users to share their stories of sexual assault and harassment



To celebrate the start of the new football (soccer) season in Saudi Arabia, Instagram **created** a new voice activated AR filter. Part of its #ThereInSpirit campaign, users press record and make noise to activate the filter and its effects.<sup>118</sup>

“The campaign achieved 3,400 filter impressions a day and 1,116 English or Arabic posts shared with the hashtag across Instagram and other social platforms,” Instagram **reported**. “In total, the **#thereinspirit campaign** achieved an estimated 72 million reach across the MENA region and widespread media coverage.”<sup>119</sup>

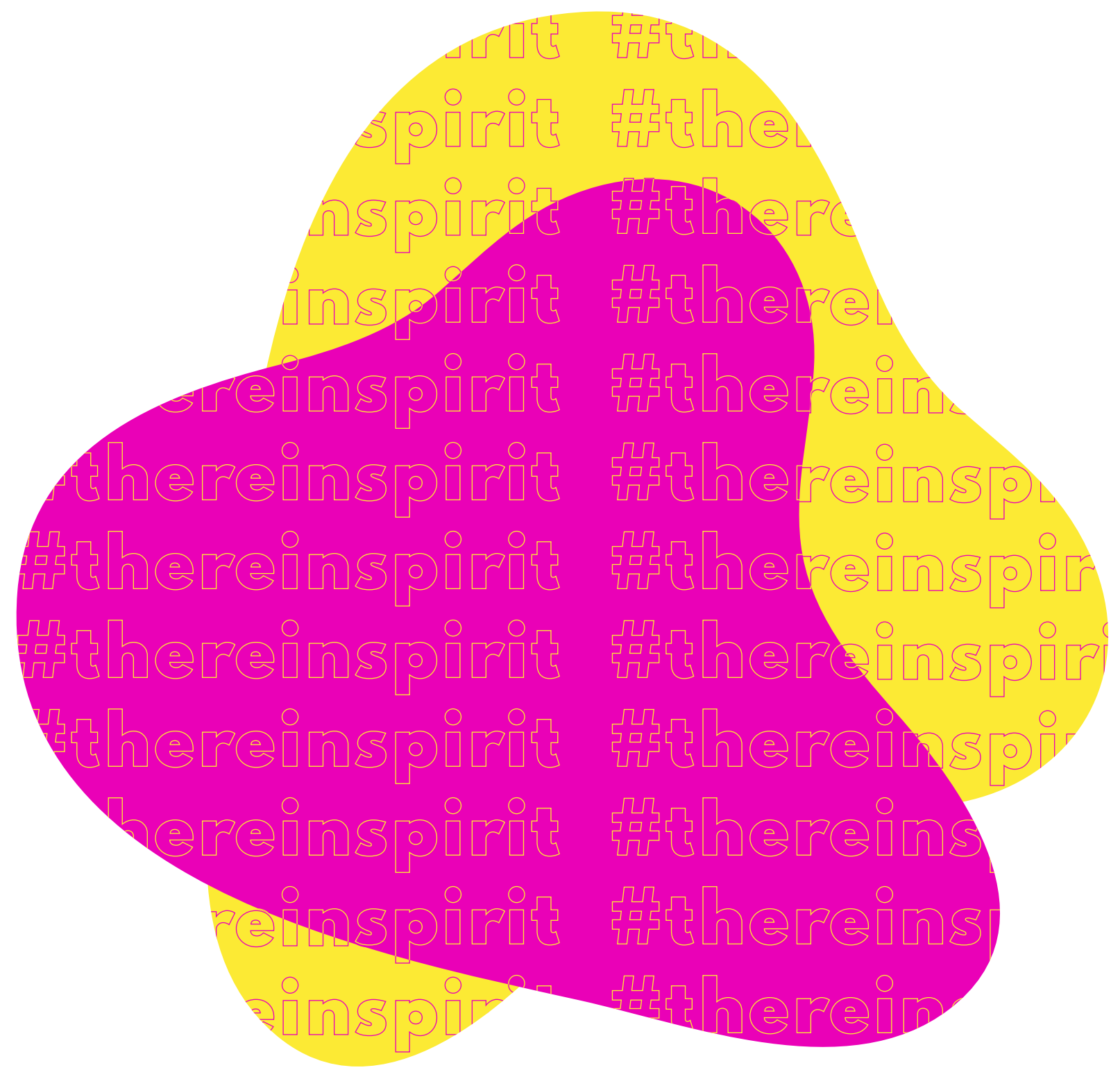


Image: [via Saudi Gazette](#)

The [@nescafeArabia](#) Instagram grid was **turned into a building**, with different balconies showcasing stories of how people are connecting during the time of COVID. Using the hashtag [#StayCloseFromFar](#) users were asked to submit their stories, with each story that was added to the virtual building accompanied by its own individual illustration.<sup>120</sup>



**NESCAFÉ**  
#StayCloseFromFar

Join Nescafé's Instagram balcony series and get your story illustrated!

We thought that COVID 19 cancelled catch-ups, coffee with friends and all sorts of check-ins. But it didn't.

People are connecting in all sorts of extraordinary new ways in this time and NESCAFÉ is telling those stories!

The stories inspired us to create balconies on our Instagram grid which come together and create a building – where each person shares their way of connecting.

**Here's how:**

1. Post a video on Instagram of how you're connecting a little differently
2. Tag @NescafeArabia and use #StayCloseFromFar
3. Watch our page for your story!

Each story is celebrated with its own illustration as it's added to our balconies series.

Are you connecting a little differently during this time? Do you want your story shared and illustrated?

Tap to see what Yamane does to #StayCloseFromFar

Tap to see what Cartos does to #StayCloseFromFar

Tap to see what Philip does to #StayCloseFromFar

Image: [via FAB News](#)

Image: [#StayCloseFromFar posts via Instagram](#)

# TIKTOK & TWITTER



“Can we really talk about 2020 without mentioning TikTok?” asked the research company GlobalWebIndex during summer 2020. The company pointed out how time spent on social media had risen during the start of the pandemic. “Nearly every social media platform has seen a boost in monthly engagement,” *they observed*.

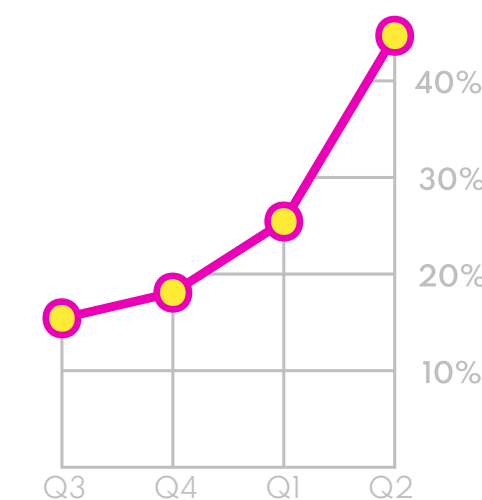
One reason for TikTok’s growth - which in MEA is behind other regions during this period - lies in the fact that “the social platform has certainly given people an outlet for creativity during lockdown, offering a platform for light-hearted content at a time it was needed most.”<sup>121</sup>

“TikTok is seeing phenomenal growth across the GCC, with the app consistently ranking among the top downloads in regional Apple App and Google Play Stores,” an [August 2020 report](#) from Anavizio Data Solutions revealed.<sup>122</sup>

## THE EXPLOSION OF TIKTOK

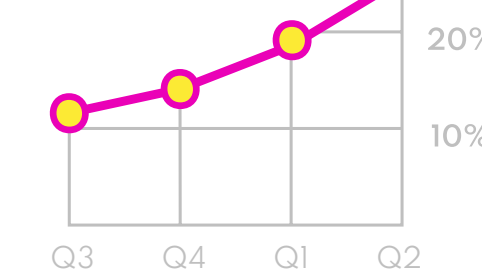
Percent outside China who say they visited TikTok in the last month.

**000% = change between Q3 (2019) & Q2 (2020)**



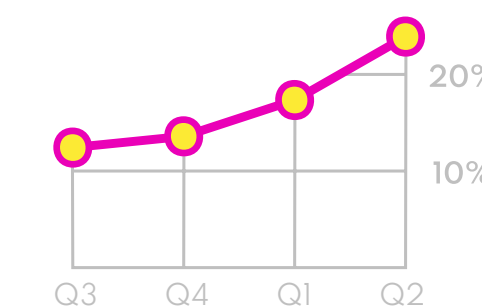
Latin America

**+185%**



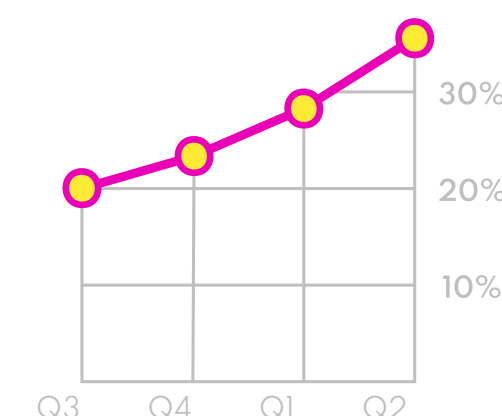
North America

**+123%**



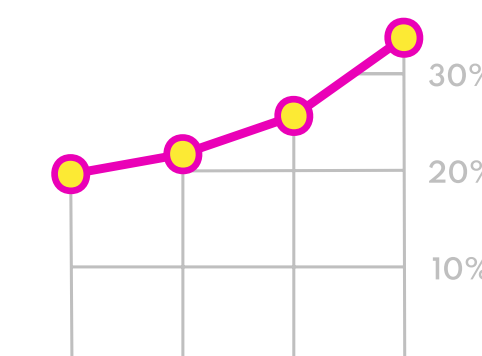
Europe

**+93%**



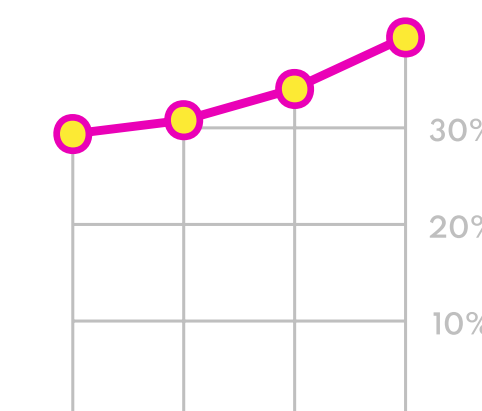
Middle East & Africa

**+72%**



Global (excl. China)

**+72%**



Asia Pacific (excl. China)

**+36%**

Graphs: [via GlobalWebIndex](#)

Between February and August 2020, top influencers grew their fanbase by average of 65%, with the highest engagement rates seen in Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

“New influencers have emerged organically on TikTok,” the authors note, rather than crossed over from more established social media channels such as Instagram. Huda Kattan “is one of the few celebrities or influencers to have successfully crossed over.”

## TOP 3 INFLUENCERS IN THE GCC



@jumana\_khan\_

8.4 M



@sarahmiladd

6.6 M



@xzayx89

5.2 M

Chart: The Top 3 TikTok influencers in the GCC, as of August 2020

TikTok users are more willing to click on an ad with a higher intent to purchase than other networks, [according](#) to a new study from TikTok for Business in partnership with the UAE research company, Feedback Market Research.<sup>123</sup>

The study found that 68% of users in Egypt, 66% in KSA and 65% in UAE say an ad on TikTok has persuaded them to proceed with a purchase. On other channels that drops to 48% in KSA and 51% in UAE and Egypt.

**Five Egyptian young women were sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of nearly \$20,000 for violating the country’s family values with their TikTok and Instagram posts**, the BBC [said](#).<sup>124</sup>

Their videos “show them dancing, singing and clowning about,” the New York Times [noted](#), observing that “the clips are tame by social media standards, and nothing that would raise the eyebrow of a broadcast censor in the West.”<sup>125</sup>

The sentences were overturned in early 2021, the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram [reported](#).<sup>126</sup>

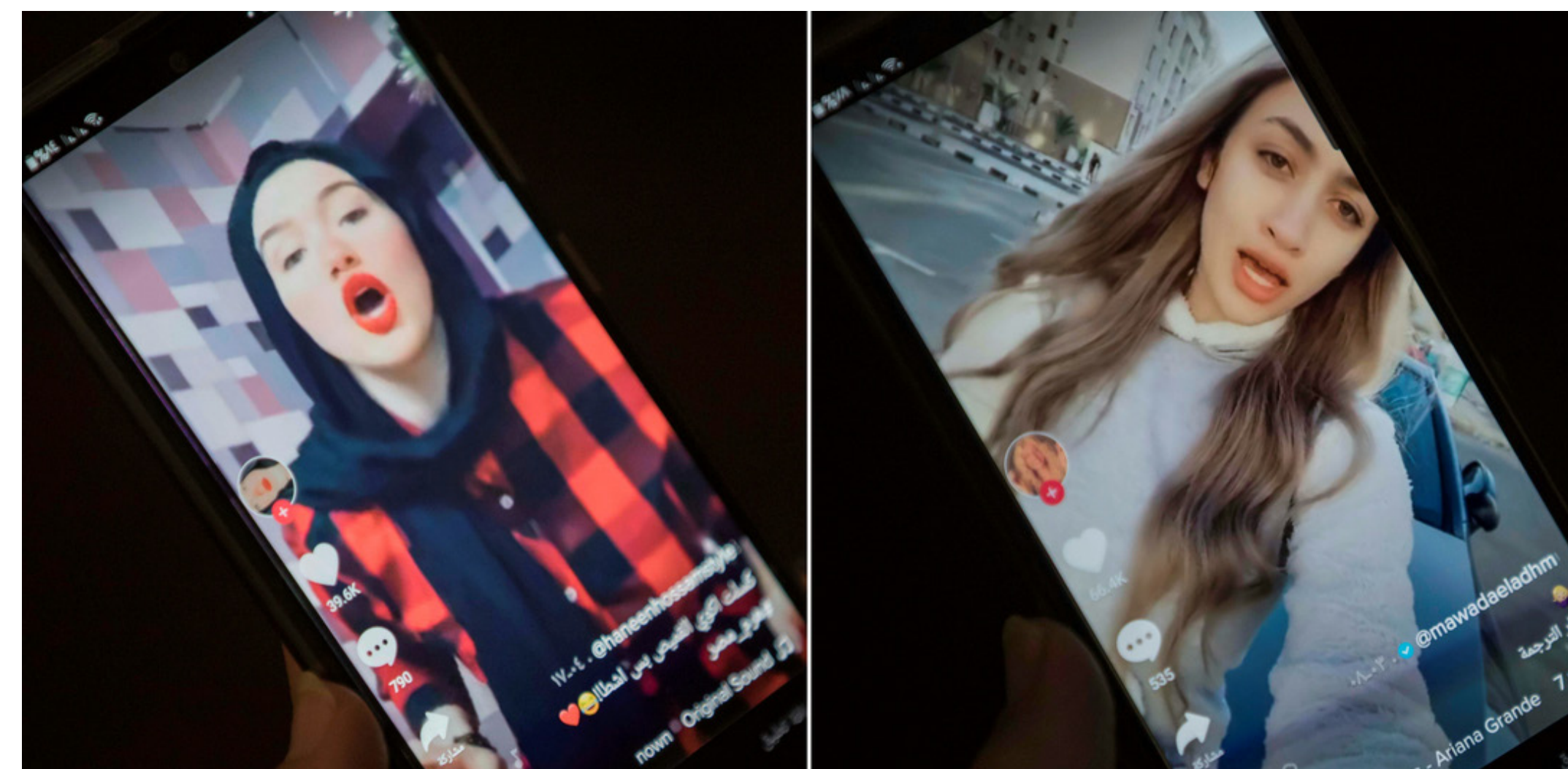
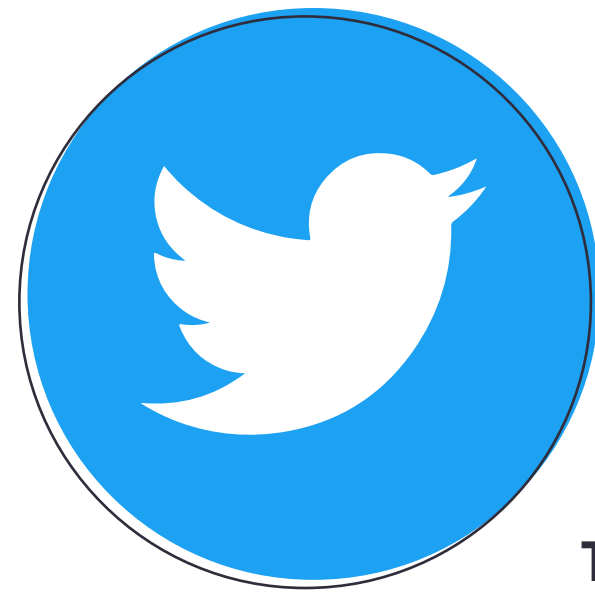


Image: Haneen Hossam (left) and Mowada al-Adham (right). Image [via](#) CNN.

# TIKTOK & TWITTER



*In recent years, Twitter has seen some decline in usage in the Middle East as audiences have [moved](#) to other newer social media platforms.<sup>127</sup> However, it continues to play an important role in some of the biggest markets in the region.*

**Turkey (6th), Saudi Arabia (8th) and Egypt (18th) are all in the Top 20 countries with the highest audiences for Twitter; and in each market, numbers continue to increase.**

The Lebanese pop artist, [Elissa](#), is the Arab world's most influential user on Twitter and the only Arab figure to make the list of [50 most powerful international influencers](#).<sup>128</sup>

In a [report](#) published by Brandwatch, [Elissa \(@elissakh\)](#) is ranked at number 45, just behind [@TheRock](#) (actor Dwayne Johnson at No 44) and ahead of former US First Lady [@MichelleObama](#) (No 50).<sup>129</sup> The pop star has just over 15 million followers on Twitter and nearly [17 million on Instagram](#).

## TWITTER REACH RANKINGS

Countries and territories with the **greatest potential Twitter advertising reach**.

#	COUNTRY	REACH	QOQ	QOQ
01	<b>U.S.A</b>	68,700,000	+10%	+6,150,000
02	<b>Japan</b>	51,900,000	+6%	+2,800,000
03	<b>India</b>	18,900,000	+11%	+1,900,000
04	<b>Brazil</b>	16,650,000	+6%	+950,000
05	<b>U.K.</b>	16,650,000	+9%	+1,400,000
06	<b>Turkey</b>	13,450,000	+6%	+750,000
07	<b>Indonesia</b>	13,200,000	+18%	+2,000,000
08	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	12,350,000	+3%	+350,000
09	<b>Mexico</b>	10,650,000	+2%	+250,000
10	<b>France</b>	7,900,000	+11%	+800,000
18	<b>Egypt</b>	3,700,000	+4%	+150,000

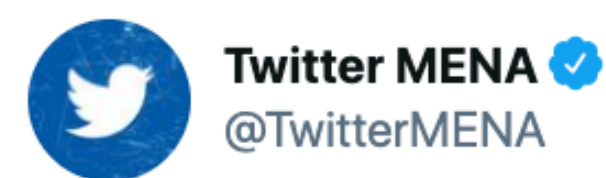
Table: Twitter reach rankings, [via](#) Hootsuite and We Are Social

Twitter suspended the account of the Iranian Petroleum Minister, Bijan Zanganeh in November. “The account was suspended for violation of the Twitter rules against impersonation,” Bloomberg [wrote](#), citing an email from a spokesperson for the social media company, which they commented did not provide “any more details.”<sup>130</sup>

The social network also removed 130 accounts linked to Iran which they **said** they were attempting to interfere with conversation around the first American presidential debate.<sup>131</sup>

In **April**, the micro-blogging site removed 5,350 accounts associated with Saudi Arabia and 2,541 Egyptian accounts it said were involved in pushing pro-government messaging.<sup>132</sup>

Twitter **launched** their “Topics” feature in Arabic, enabling users to follow specific subjects on the network.<sup>133</sup> The service, as of March 2020, was available in English, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Korean.



أصبح الآن بإمكانك متابعة المواضيع التي تهتمك تماماً كما تتابع أي حساب من خلال متصفح المواضيع الموضح في الصورة. المزيد من المعلومات على مدونتنا.

[blog.twitter.com/ar/topics/prod...](https://blog.twitter.com/ar/topics/prod...)

Translated from Arabic by Google

Now you can follow the topics that interest you just as you follow any account through the Topics Browser shown in the picture. More information on our

[blog.blog.twitter.com/ar/topics/prod...](https://blog.blog.twitter.com/ar/topics/prod...)



Images: Showing how the “Topics” feature works, [via](#) Twitter

# TRENDING HASHTAGS

# TRENDING HASHTAGS

Although news about COVID-19 dominated social media in 2020, there were many other events - globally and in the region - which attracted a lot of attention on social media.

Here are three examples of non-COVID related stories which trended in the Middle East last year, including stories originating from MENA and one that resonated within it.

## 1. THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS

The hashtag **#Palestine\_Charter** in Arabic circulated on social media criticising the recent signing of the Abraham Accords, undertaken by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. The online charter, which was signed more than 200,000 times, called for the liberation of occupied Palestine and denounced normalization with Israel.<sup>134</sup>

'[Normalization Is Betrayal](#)' and '[Gulf people against normalization](#)' in Arabic were other trending hashtags rejecting the Arabs' states normalization relations with Israel.<sup>135</sup>

Elsewhere, the Israel-Morocco normalization deal was also condemned by some Moroccans online using the hashtag [#MoroccansAgainstNormalization](#),<sup>136</sup> reflecting the decades-long animosity and lack of diplomatic ties between different Arab States and Israel.



@iyna\_alghamdi



#خليجيون\_ضد\_التطبيع علموا اولادكم أن الحب فلسطين ،  
والأمل فلسطين ، والحلم فلسطين ، أخبروهم بأنها عربية  
مسلمة من الضفة وحتى غزة الأبية عاصمتها القدس نوروهم  
.. فالجهل مخيف.



A Tweet using the hashtag *Gulf people against normalization*. Image: [via](#) Twitter

Citing research by Israel's Strategic Affairs Ministry, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz [reported](#) that "Ninety Percent of Arabic Social Media Chatter About Israel-Gulf Deals [is] Negative."<sup>137</sup>



## 2. BEIRUT EXPLOSION

On August 4th 2020, an horrific explosion in Beirut, the Lebanese capital, killed over 200 people and injured thousands. It was described as one of the biggest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded, Reuters [says](#).<sup>138</sup>

Footage of the blast and its impact went viral on social media. Meltwater, the media monitoring and social listening platform, [reported](#) in November that there had been more than 600 000 global social media mentions related to the 'Lebanon explosion.'<sup>139</sup>

As videos and images of the blast went viral on the internet, so did support from - and for - Lebanon.

Through social media, hundreds of Lebanese [offered shelter](#) - using the hashtag **#OurHomesAreOpen** in [Arabic](#) and [English](#) - to those who were displaced by the tragic event.<sup>140</sup>

The hashtags [#PrayForLebanon](#), [#PrayForBeirut](#), [#BeirutBlast](#) and [#Lebanon](#) were also trending. However, there were concerns that [misinformation](#)<sup>141</sup> around the [causes](#),<sup>142</sup> impact and [support](#) for the country could be seen across social media.<sup>143</sup>

Many local Lebanese expressed their anger through the hashtag [#HangThem](#) in Arabic, blaming the government's negligence and corruption for the explosion.<sup>144</sup>



Follow [@thawramap](#), they are building a map with all shelters from the posts on the following hashtags [#Lebanon](#) [#Beirut](#)

[#ourhomesareopen](#)

[#بيوتنا\\_مفتوحة](#)

[#بيوتنا\\_مفتوحة](#)

[#بيوتنا\\_مفتوحة](#)



Thawra Map - Google My Maps  
Instagram: [thawramap](#)  
[google.com](#)

A tweet that shows buildings with shelters. Image: [via](#) Twitter

### 3. BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

The growth of the Black Lives Matter Movement, following the killing of George Floyd in May, [spread](#) beyond the USA to encompass numerous countries,<sup>145</sup> [including](#) those in the Arab world.<sup>146</sup>



Image: George Floyd in Idlib, Syria by Aziz Asmar, [via](#) Mohamad Jamalo/Reuters and Atlantic Council

In Tunisia, activists launched an [Instagram account](#) to document racist and discriminatory acts against black people in the Arab world and to raise awareness.

[Others](#),<sup>147</sup> including the Saudi beauty vlogger [Abeer Sinder](#)<sup>148</sup> and the Palestinian actress and film director Maryam Abu Khaled also [shared](#) their experiences.<sup>149</sup>



The hashtags [#BlackLivesMatter](#) in Arabic and English and the hashtag [#BLM](#) were trending during June, resulting in media [coverage](#)<sup>150</sup> across the [region](#)<sup>151</sup> and [internationally](#).<sup>152</sup>



Images: Screenshot of Black Lives Matter Tunisia, [via](#) Instagram



**FAKE NEWS &  
MISINFORMATION**

# FAKE NEWS & MISINFORMATION

*False and misleading information continued to spread online in the Middle East last year, just as it did around the rest of the world. From fake accounts that were agenda driven, to misinformation about COVID-19, the world of social media was bombarded with misinformation.*

*Responses to this challenge varied. In some cases, social media platforms traced and deactivated online accounts. Elsewhere governments continued to take steps to the source of those news, by introducing new “fake news” laws and prosecuting those accused of being purveyors of false information.*

## BLOCKS BY PLATFORMS

**Twitter suspended 16 accounts after an investigation by The Daily Beast found that 46 different publications had “published Middle East hot takes from “experts” who are actually fake personas pushing propaganda.”**<sup>153</sup>

Those accounts were used by fake personas who acted as Middle East experts and wrote opinion pieces for several U.S. right-wing news outlets and some Middle-East websites like Al-Arabiya, Arab News, and The Jerusalem Post.<sup>154</sup>

“The personas in the network used a mixture of stolen or AI-generated avatars and fake biographies to make them seem more plausible,” The Daily Beast explained.

“It’s not just fake news we need to be wary of, but fake journalists,” said Marc Owen Jones, an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar.



**Marc Owen Jones** @marcowenjones · Jul 7, 2020

For my Middle East followers, some of the outlets to have published opeds by fake journalists include @AlArabiya\_Eng @arabnews and @JPostOpinion I don't expect the Arab News and Al Arabiyya ones be taken down...



Image *via* Twitter

**Twitter removed 130 accounts linked to Iran** claiming they were attempting to “disrupt the public conversation” during the first U.S. presidential debate.<sup>155</sup>



We identified these accounts quickly, removed them from Twitter, and shared full details with our peers, as standard. They had very low engagement and did not make an impact on the public conversation. Our capacity and speed continue to grow, and we'll remain vigilant.

Samples 

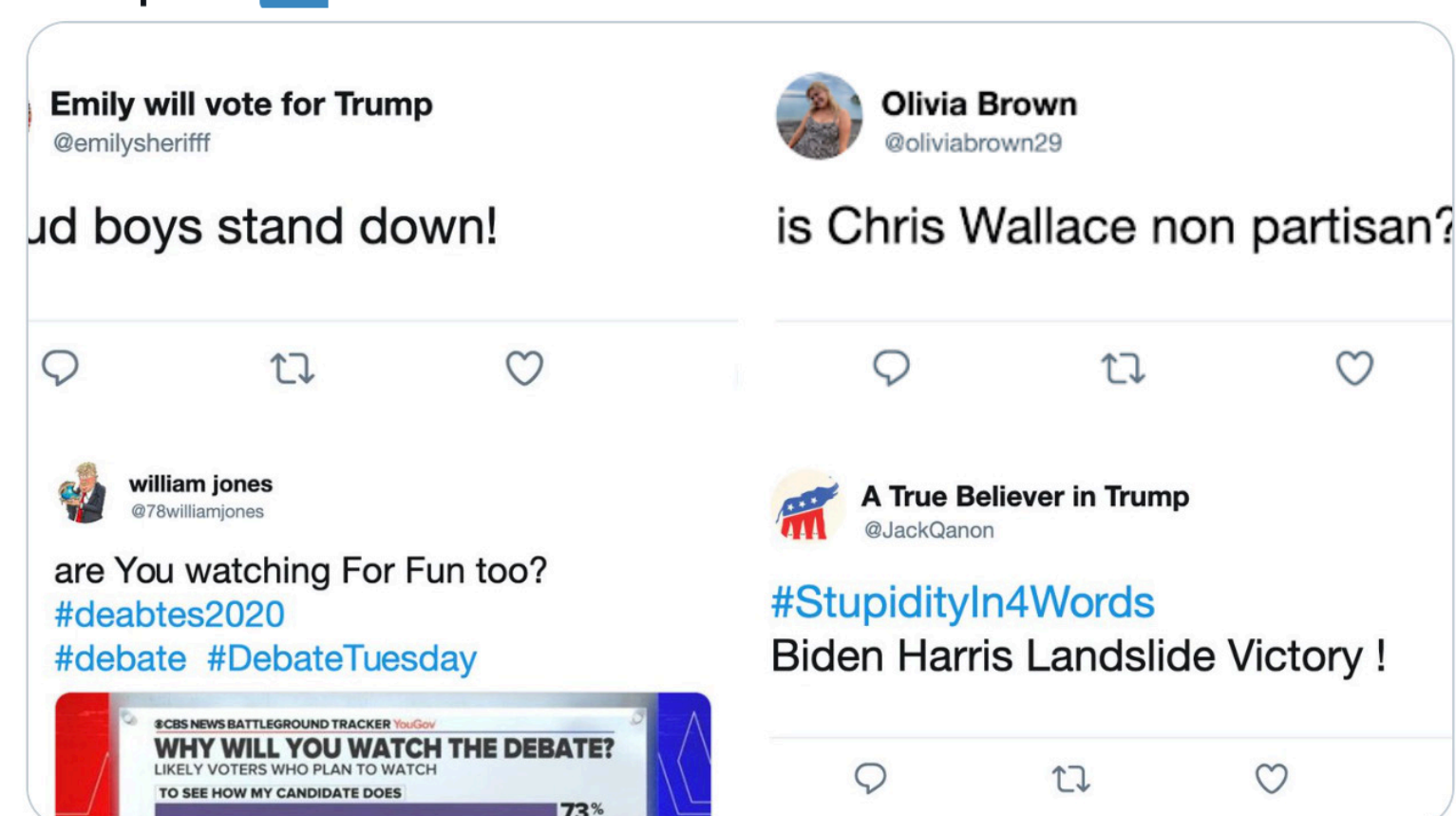


Image *via* Twitter

**Facebook removed two networks of fake accounts with over 6 million followers linked to two digital marketing companies in Egypt and India.** As **Reuters** explained in March, these networks “were pushing dueling narratives about countries in the Gulf on the Facebook and Instagram platforms.” the Middle East.<sup>156</sup>



Example of a *post* removed by Facebook, saying that “the spokesman for the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, Major General Ahmed Al-Mismari, confirmed Tuesday that his country is at war with Turkey, and that it is a real showdown exacerbated by the Turkish fool, Erdogan.”

Later in the year, **Facebook removed accounts** operated from Egypt, Morocco and Turkey **linked to the Muslim Brotherhood**, and which the social network said included some ‘terrorism-related content.’<sup>157</sup>

And in December, the company removed a series of accounts which were part of a **widespread Russian disinformation campaign, targeting a number of regions including the Middle East.**<sup>158</sup>

Focused primarily on Libya, Sudan and Syria, “these accounts posed as locals based in the countries they targeted,” the company **said.**<sup>159</sup> In response, the network removed 211 Facebook accounts, 126 Page, 16 Groups and 17 Instagram accounts for **coordinated inauthentic behavior.**

## GOVERNMENT-LED DEVELOPMENTS

The Algerian government **passed** a law criminalizing the broadcast of fake news deemed to harm state security and undermine national unity.<sup>160</sup> In April, they also passed a second bill that penalizes discrimination and hate speech. Critics **argued** the bill could be used as a tool for censorship and to intimidate journalists and social media users,<sup>161</sup> limiting freedom of speech.<sup>162</sup>

“More and more journalists have found themselves the targets of exceptionally violent social media hate campaigns because of comments that caused annoyance,” Reporters Without Borders **commented**.<sup>163</sup> AFP **reported** the further tightening of online laws in December.<sup>164</sup>

**During the summer, the Iraqi Defense Ministry ordered the suspension of all social media accounts that belong to security forces** in order to control direct news through official channels and block the spread of false information. Fadel Abu Raghef, an Iraqi analyst and security expert, **told** The Media Line that the social media pages of some officers had been hacked and used to spread fake news.<sup>165</sup>

**Turkey passed a law that regulates social media content by extending control over platforms like Facebook and Twitter in the country.**<sup>166</sup> Through this new law, social media platforms with over one million daily users have to open offices in Turkey or face stiff penalties.

These local offices must obey the orders of the Turkish government and are required to remove any content the government deems offensive within 48 hours. Numerous activists and rights groups considered this a threat to freedom of expression in the country.<sup>167</sup>



**RSF\_Afrique-du-Nord** @RSF\_NordAfrique · Apr 23, 2020

Comment museler un peu + la liberté de la presse en [#Algérie](#) ? En pleine épidémie de [#covid\\_19](#), une poignée de députés ont voté un projet de réforme du code pénal "criminalisant" la diffusion de « fake news » qui portent "atteinte à l'ordre public et à la sûreté de l'Etat" 1/2



**RSF\_Afrique-du-Nord** @RSF\_NordAfrique · Apr 23, 2020

[#Algérie](#) : 3 ans de prison, voire 5 en « période de confinement sanitaire », c'est la peine prévue pour quiconque diffusera ou propagera ces "fausses informations". @Rsf\_inter dénonce un projet de loi flou et liberticide, futur outil de censure et d'intimidation de la presse 2/2



Image: Tweets from Reporters Without Borders (RSF) for North Africa denouncing the law as a future tool for the “censorship and intimidation of the press.” [via](#) Twitter

## WEAPONIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

In Iraq, the Kata'ib Hezbollah group, which is listed as a terrorist organization by Japan and the U.S., is paying large sums of money to Facebook to boost fake accounts and pages, the UK newspaper *The Telegraph* reported.<sup>168</sup> According to those reports, there are around 400 individuals working on the group's propaganda team.<sup>169</sup>

Hezbollah has trained thousands of Iran-backed social media activists, helping create so-called “electronic armies” across the region, a further article in *The Telegraph* [said](#).<sup>170</sup>

Journalismfund.eu [summarized](#) the article, noting that “Hezbollah has been flying individuals into Lebanon for courses teaching participants how to digitally manipulate photographs, manage large numbers of fake social media accounts, make videos, avoid Facebook’s censorship, and effectively spread disinformation online.”<sup>171</sup>

United States prosecutors seized 92 domains that they claimed were used by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to spread political disinformation around the world.<sup>172</sup> “Prosecutors said the most recent takedown was the result of a joint investigation by the FBI and social media companies Google, Facebook and Twitter,” Reuters [reported](#).

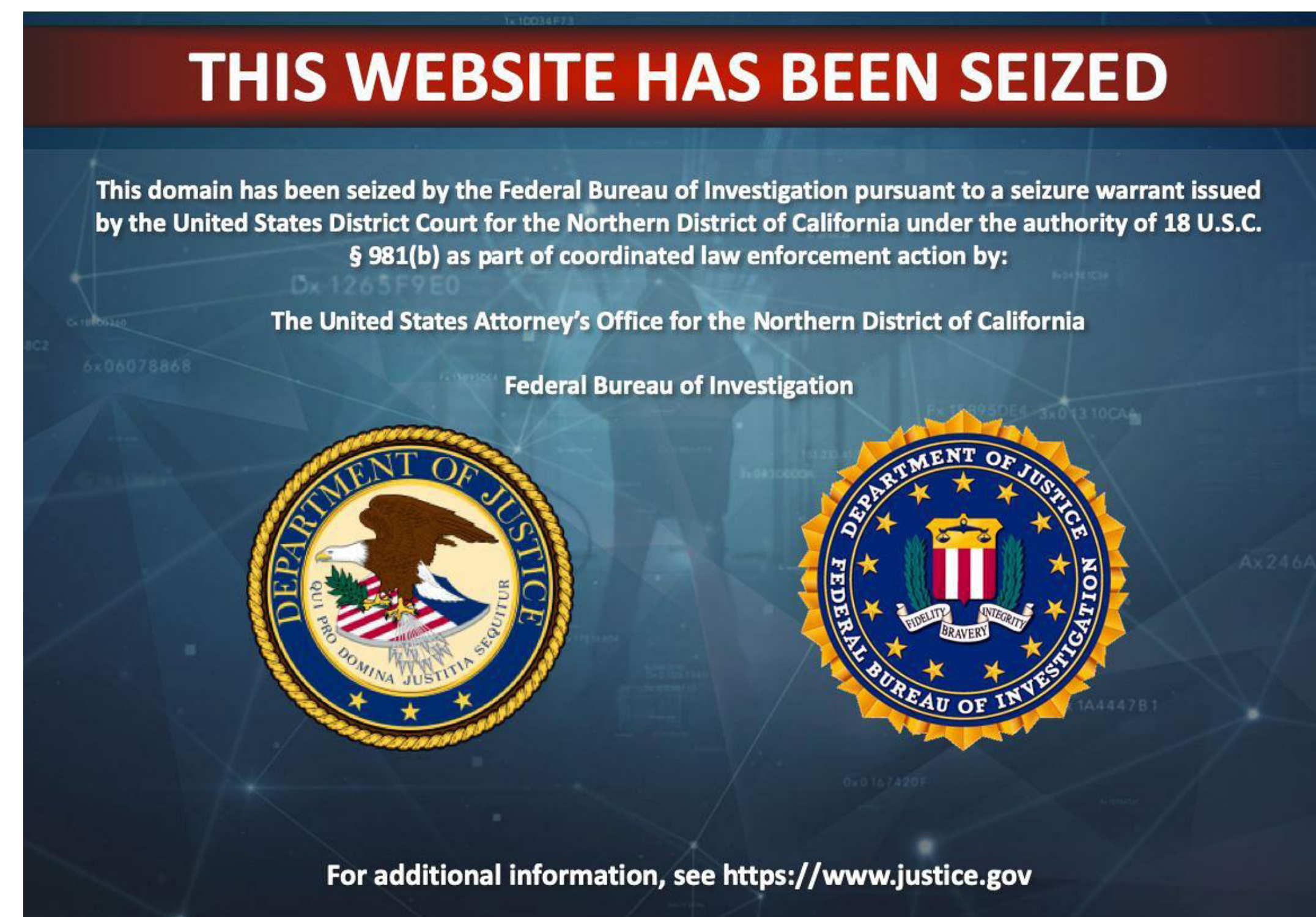


Image [via](#) The United States Department of Justice

## COVID-19

During the pandemic, many Arab speakers fell prey to false or inaccurate information related to COVID-19. One potential reason for this is predominance of virus related news and information in English, resulting in a lack of credible Arabic-language outlets that provided information on COVID-19, its symptoms, and many other related topics.

As part of their COVID-19 response, Facebook teamed up with the Jordanian-based firm Fatabayano, to provide Arabic language support for their third-party fact-checking network.<sup>173</sup> The network covers more than 40 languages, and features over 50 partners, around the world.

In November they launched the #ThinkBeforeYouShare campaign, a move which includes an interactive website, designed to educate people on how to detect false news.<sup>174</sup>



Image: Screenshot of the #ThinkBeforeYouShare website

DXwand, an Egyptian startup that provides conversational artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for over 200 businesses in the region, has also deployed this technology to help combat the spread of inaccurate information regarding COVID-19.<sup>175</sup>

Ask Nameesa allows users to ask a question through Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. After a few minutes, they receive a response - based on information from both local health authorities and the WHO - stored in their database, in Egyptian slang, Arabic or English.



Image: Tweet promoting the service, via Twitter



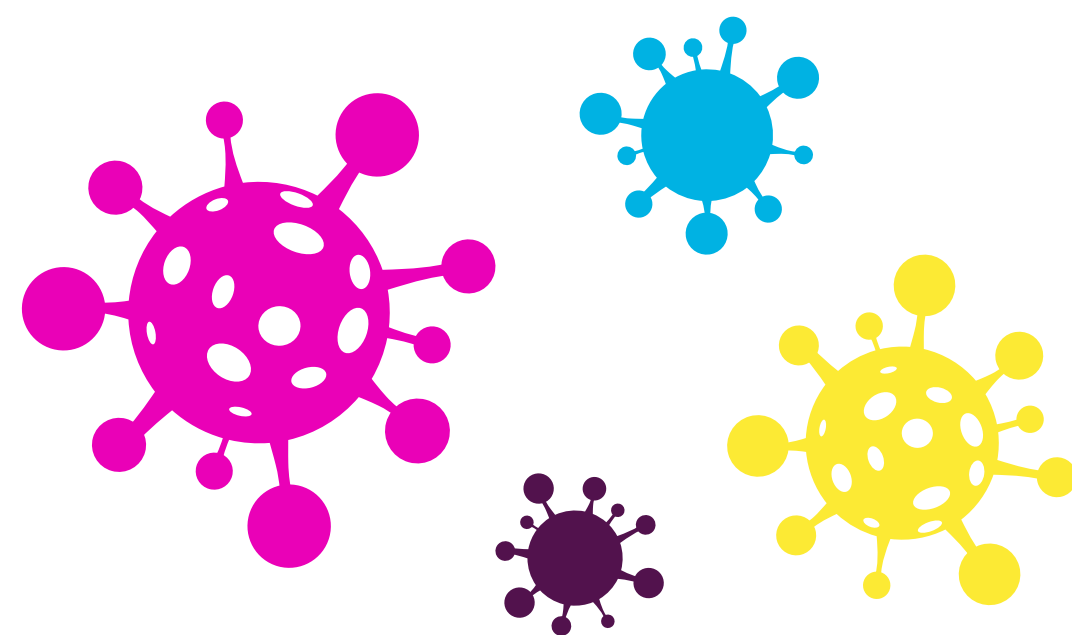


**COVID - 19**

# COVID - 19

*The spread of the novel coronavirus dominated the news the past year. But it also unleashed an “infodemic” as incorrect, misleading or unverified information also circulated widely.*

*Social media played a big role in the spread of misinformation about coronavirus. In MENA, as elsewhere, social networks proved to be fertile ground for misinformation and disinformation about the virus.*



**WhatsApp imposed a limit on shared messages to halt the spread of coronavirus misinformation.**<sup>176</sup> As a result, the app has seen 70% drop in the number of viral forwarded messages. The app is also working with trustworthy sources like the WHO to create credible information sources for its users.

**Due to the popularity of the app, multiple governments and other agencies embraced WhatsApp as a key platform for distributing public health messages.**

In Sudan, the UNDP, UNICEF and WHO set up COVID-19 WhatsApp alerts in Arabic and English. These alerts [offered](#) “advice on staying safe, frequently asked questions, tips for protecting yourself and others, the latest news and case numbers – and easy messages to “forward” and share.”<sup>177</sup>

In Jordan, engagement by UNICEF during the early stages of the pandemic regularly reached 8,000 primary users and a secondary audience of 3.5 million people. The platform also reached over 2,000 people at the Al Hol and Areesha camps in Syria.<sup>178</sup>

لديك أسئلة حول كوفيد-19؟  
نحن لدينا الإجابات



Image: [via UNICEF](#)

The **Saudi Ministry of Health** launched a coronavirus awareness campaign in collaboration with Snapchat and Trend, a leading digital content creator.<sup>179</sup> The campaign lasted around two months, and received over 15 million views on Snapchat from 12 million users. On Twitter, the campaign's videos enjoyed 4 million views and around 2,000 interactions.



Images of messages delivered through the campaign: [via](#) Campaign Middle East

In Jordan, the Ministry of Culture **enlisted** a number of Jordanian actors and influencers for an awareness campaign video, titled **Our Life is More Important**, in which they showcased tips to combat the coronavirus, and how children quarantined at home could use their spare time.<sup>180</sup>

The Ministry, like others around the region, also took advantage of the opportunity to share materials produced by organizations like the WHO and UNICEF, a move which the platforms encouraged through partnerships and the creation of sharable materials.

 **عُلا الفارس** @OlaAlfares · Dec 16, 2020  
يسعدني المشاركة في حملة **#حياتنا\_أهم** التي أطلقتها وزارة الثقافة الأردنية و اليونيسف للتوعية بمخاطر فيروس كورونا ...  
[@UNICEFJordan](#) [@UNICEFinArabic](#) [@UNICEF](#) [@jo\\_culture](#)



The Jordanian TV presenter and influencer Ola Al-Fares' tweeting about her participation in the campaign. Screenshot [via](#) Twitter

Citizen journalists in Syria collaborated with **Truepic**, a photo and video verification platform, in an effort to fight misinformation, disinformation, and fake news coming out of Syria, as well as exposing Western audiences to conditions of civilians living in conflict zones during the pandemic.<sup>181</sup>

This initiative through **The Soufan Center**, a non-partisan strategy center dedicated to increasing awareness of global security, gives citizen journalists the opportunity to report on the ground and capture images and videos using Truepic's software.

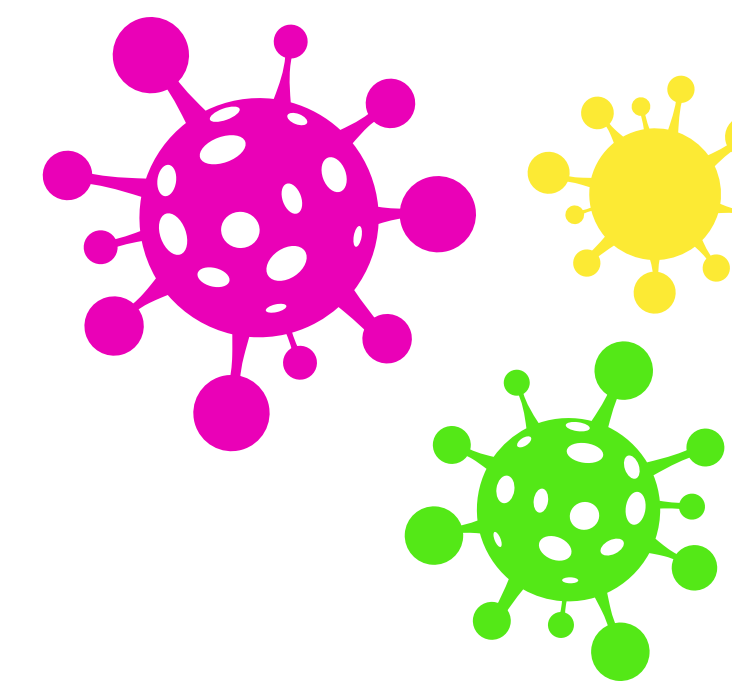


Image: Screenshot of debunking of [a video claiming](#) "The Australian prime minister is taking the vaccine and the needle cap is not removed" by Tech 4 Peace

Other civil society organizations have also been involved in COVID-19 related work. In Palestine, the Mada Center launched an online awareness campaign, guiding the public to credible information sources, while in Lebanon the Maharat Foundation's fact-o-meter tackled COVID rumours as did Tech 4 Peace in Iraq.



Image: Screenshot of the testing kit promoted by Alfahd on Snapchat



One of the biggest influencers in the Arab world, Fouz Alfahd, was arrested by the authorities for promoting unlicensed 15-minute coronavirus test on Snapchat. In the video, Fouz claimed that the test kit has a 95% accuracy rate, however, people should go and check if they are feeling any symptoms.<sup>182</sup>

evazubeck • Follow  
Socotra Island جزيرة سقطرى

Thank you to everyone who has been so concerned about my stay on the island. 🙏 #Respect\_Socotra, You have given me a new perspective and I apologize if I sent the wrong message before.

Things are different from what they were before. My 1st month here was a "honeymoon period", and the island felt very much sealed from COVID-19 due to restricted traffic.

But, times change. Currently, many cases are being reported in mainland Yemen, and with some boat traffic to the island, not all of it properly quarantined (as it seems), locals have concerns. People (not tourists) have continued to arrive on Socotra.



21,191 likes  
MAY 19, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Screenshot: [via Instagram](#)

Polish YouTuber, **Eva Zu Beck**, who has over 800k followers on the video network, was criticized on social media for self-isolating in the Yemeni island, Socotra.

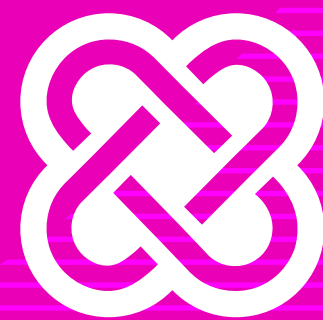
Critics used the hashtag [#Respect\\_Socotra](#) to argue that her presence on the island - and the tone of her social media posts - sounded like she was inviting people to visit the island, potentially endangering its residents.<sup>183</sup> In an [Instagram](#) post, to her half a million followers, Zu Beck said that her intention was never to encourage active travelling, but to share its beauty.<sup>184</sup>

Arabian Business **asked** "Has Covid-19 killed off influencers?" noting how you could be "one selfie away from disaster."<sup>185</sup> Lockdowns and reduced marketing budgets have all impacted the influencer industry, with brands wary of being associated with proponents of misinformation. There's also a wider existential question: "Are social media users remotely interested in what influencers have to offer in such times?" **wondered** StepFeed.<sup>186</sup>

To encourage people in MENA to wear masks, UNICEF also **launched** a campaign featuring children and influencers to encourage correct usage and disposal.<sup>187</sup> The NGO worked with multiple platforms, including TikTok, on the #MaskUp Campaign.<sup>188</sup>



Image: UNICEF's #MaskUp campaign [via UNICEF](#)



NEW MEDIA  
ACADEMY



THANK  
YOU!

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**2014** [\*\*Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2014\*\*](#)  
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Round-ups produced by **Damian Radcliffe** when he worked for Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology ([ictQATAR](#)):

**2013** [\*\*Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2013\*\*](#)  
by Damian Radcliffe ([English](#), [Arabic](#))

**2012** [\*\*Social Media in the MENA – 2012 Review\*\*](#)  
by Damian Radcliffe ([English](#), [Arabic](#))

## ENDNOTES

All of the sources used for the creation of this report are hyperlinked throughout. **You can find, and access, a full list of references featured in this document, [in this PDF.](#)**

## DISCLOSURE

Damian Radcliffe is owner/director of Kenja Consulting, LLC (UK) and Kenja Media Consulting (US). The work Professor Radcliffe does for the University of Oregon and for Kenja Consulting are related or overlap in that Professor Radcliffe undertakes research journalism, training, public speaking and consulting in areas which are, or may appear, related to Professor Radcliffe's University of Oregon (UO) duties. Thus, this study could affect Damian Radcliffe's personal financial status.

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Professor Radcliffe's outside work activity was reviewed and approved by the University of Oregon in accordance with its conflict of interest and commitment.