Getting to Know Social Saudis

A Closer Look on the Behavior of Saudi Users on Social Networks
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Introduction

Social media is a constantly growing medium with incredible potential for businesses to connect to their customers. Saudi Arabia is one of the most active countries in the Middle East when it comes to this. Over 5 million active Facebook users and more than 3 million active Twitter users\(^1\), making it the country with the highest Twitter penetration worldwide\(^2\). Even niche platforms, such as Keek, Instagram and Path, are extremely popular in Saudi Arabia in comparison to other parts of the world.

It is no surprise why we decided to focus on Saudi Arabia in our report. Particularly, we were curious to learn about the behavior of these users, because prior to engaging with fans online, we need to know our audience. Over the years, we learned that this step alone is a driving force when it comes to the success and strength of social media campaigns.

Saudi Arabia’s economy is among the top 20 with highest GDP\(^3\) percentages in the world and the number one in the Middle East. This part of the world generates an abundance of business opportunities, and the Gulf region is a safe haven for investors. We always try to get the most accurate results especially when it comes to the Saudi market, since Social Media is very well-known by Saudis and they’re very receptive to it’s growth.

\(^1\) [www.arabnews.com/news/452204](http://www.arabnews.com/news/452204)
\(^3\) [blog.theonlineproject.me/6-reasons-why-your-business-should-expand-to-saudi-arabia/](http://blog.theonlineproject.me/6-reasons-why-your-business-should-expand-to-saudi-arabia/)
The Average Saudi Social User

In order for us to identify the typical Saudi user on social media, we first need to study the general behavior of people on social. After that, we begin mapping out similarities in behavior and common characteristics they share. Once we develop a group of ‘personas’, we are able to study each individually, for example, we are able to make more accurate conclusions on what platforms they enjoy using, what days do they log in, and what devices do they use to engage with their friends. This entire process is important so we better understand our audience and improve the way we engage with them in a more meaningful way.

A good way to begin this is by visualizing your target audience. You can do this by creating general ‘characters’ or personalities that you want to target. Then, begin collecting data on what reactions and behavior do they have to current events, to certain topics you post about, to what type of media you share, etc. This should give you a clearer picture of how they consume media on social.

To make things easier, we have created three general personas based on our findings of the average Saudi user on Facebook, Twitter and the video sharing platforms; YouTube and Keek.
Based on this, we have outlined the following characteristics based on common trends we observed when we began collecting and analyzing data from each social platform. For example, an interesting finding was that the number of male users surpassed the number of females, hence, we did not create a female persona.

Mohammad
- Age: 30 years old
- Most active day is Wednesday
- Mostly engages between 6-8 pm
- Uses Facebook through Android mobile
- Connected to the pages: STC, Extra stores

Ahmad
- Tweets mostly in Arabic
- Mostly tweets around midnight
- Uses Twitter through his iPhone
- Tweets about: #الإتحاد_اللبناني_مايففي.الحاجة_فيديوه.26_كفور

Abdullah
- Subscribed to: #ايش_الي
- Watches on Youtube: برنامج 3 يذكر
- Follows on Keek: LoujainHathloul, silver000
- Checks Youtube on a daily basis
Data

Facebook

- 7.8 million users in Saudi Arabia.
- 74% of the users are Male and 26% female.
- The largest age group on Facebook is 25-34 with 46% followed by 18-24 with 28%, 35-44 with 16% and the smallest age group on the platform is 45+.
- 51% of the Saudi users use Facebook in the Arabic interface and 72% of the comments on the pages are in Arabic.
- 5M users in Saudi are using Facebook through their mobile phones, 64% are using Android, 32% using iOS and the rest are using feature phones.
- 67% of the Saudi users do not share their marital status on their Facebook profile. And 46% of the remaining 33% set their status as single, 37% married, 12% in a relationship and 4% engaged.
• Saudi users mostly engage on Facebook between 6pm-8pm and the most active day is Wednesday.

• +6% of the users come to the pages to ask a question.

• 2% of the comments include emoticons and they use 😊 5 times more than 😏

• 10% of the Saudi users are connected to the pages: STC, extra stores and Jarir bookstores. 8% are connected to al mazr3a el sa3eda page and Mobily. 7% are connected to Souq.comKSA and Thaqefnafsak page. 6% are connected to Mohammed Al Araife page, Daa’ basmatak show and Panda stores.

Twitter

• On average the Saudi user follow 560 users and has 533 followers.

• 44% of the users don’t have a bio written about themselves in their profiles and 8% are using Twitter default egg photo as their profile picture.

TWEETS INCLUDE

- 26% Links
- 6% Photos
- 3% Video
- 65% Text only
• On average the Saudi user tweets 3 times a day.

• 14% of the users tweets are engagements with other twitter users and 66% of their tweet count are retweets and only 20% are actual tweets.

• 89% of the users tweet in Arabic.

• Saudi twitter users mostly tweets around mid night and the most active day of the week is Friday.

• 28% of the Saudi users in 2013 engaged with hashtags:
  - دعاء_لربي،  كنز_المسلم،  غرد_ بصورة،  قيادة_10أكتوبر،  رتويت_الأجر،  الإتحاد،  اليوم_الوطني،  الراتب_مايكفي_ الحاجة،

• 26% of the tweets include links, 6% includes photos, 3% includes video and 65% are text only.

• 9% of the users use emoticons and they use 😊 2 times more than 😊

• 70% of the Saudi users use twitter through their mobile, iOS users are almost double Android users with 32% of the total mobile users and 18% for Android.

**Video Platforms**

• The Average number of subscriber per YouTube channels is 264K. The average number of subscriber per Keek channel is 125K and an average of 400K followers.
• On YouTube the average video views per channel for the top channels is 33.5M views while on Keek it’s 20.4M views.

• The average number of video uploaded on the YouTube channels is 401, on Keek the average video uploaded is 110 per channel.

• The top 5 channels on YouTube are: ايش اللي EyshElly, صاحي Sa7i, التمساح La Yekthar Show, برنامج لا يكثر ،على الطاير 3al6ayer Show which all fall under the comedy category.

• On Keek the top 5 channels are: silver000, badr_alzidan, sultan_altwam, LoujainHathloul, mohammedalmousa39, and they post about different social matters.

• Average views per video on YouTube is 83.5K, on Keek it’s 185.4K per video.

• The frequency of posting on Keek is a video every 6 days and on YouTube a video every 25 days.
Conclusion

Based on the data we collected, we identified common behavior trends that can be associated with that of the typical Saudi Arabian social media user:

• Facebook is the largest social platform on Saudi Arabia but the Saudi user is more active on Twitter.

• Saudis prefer to engage in Arabic on all the platforms.

• Mobile usage in Saudi Arabia is generally very high, what’s interesting is that Facebook users are mostly Android phone users while Twitter users are more likely using iOS enabled devices.

• Saudi users connect with brands on Facebook more than on Twitter.

• Comedy is the most popular category of watched videos on YouTube, while on Twitter the categories with the highest number of followers is religion.

• Saudis engage with short videos more than longer ones. We reached this conclusion when we looked at the ratio of number of views per video to the number of videos uploaded, Keek surpassed Youtube by 2 times.
Recommendations

• Identify the behavior of your target audience.

• Visualize your audience as real people with very specific characteristics so you can understand their behavior and tailor the right campaign for them.

• Schedule periods to test content pieces (according to type) and then observe the change in engagement rates, make sure that you isolate all other variables that might impact your engagement.

• Listen to the conversations that your audience engage in (particularly with advocates, competitors and other consumers of your brand).

• Select which platforms you want to engage on depending on the behavior of your audience – also learn about the specific user behaviors of each platform.

• Identify and engage with influencers that are relevant to your company or industry.
Methodology

Data for each channel was retrieved in the following ways;

**Facebook**

1. Using the advertising dashboard - we collected data on the demographics of users in Saudi Arabia, including age, gender and relationship status.

2. Using our in-house developed tool - we tracked comments, likes, shares on Facebook Fan pages in terms of engagement per user (data was generalized due to privacy settings). Pages selected were the most popular pages by local fans in Saudi Arabia according to Socialbakers.

**Twitter**

1. Using our in-house developed tool – we collected data from tweets, profiles and users biography. The analysis included quantitative and qualitative research ranging from most common Tweeting time and content of the tweets. The sample size was 2 M tweets from 0.5 M users.

**Video platforms**

1. Data collected manually from YouTube and Keek for the top 30 channels on each platform.

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4 www.socialbakers.com
About TOP

As the Middle East’s leading digital agency, The Online Project develops and executes digital strategies for Fortune 500 companies and high profile organizations operating in the region.
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