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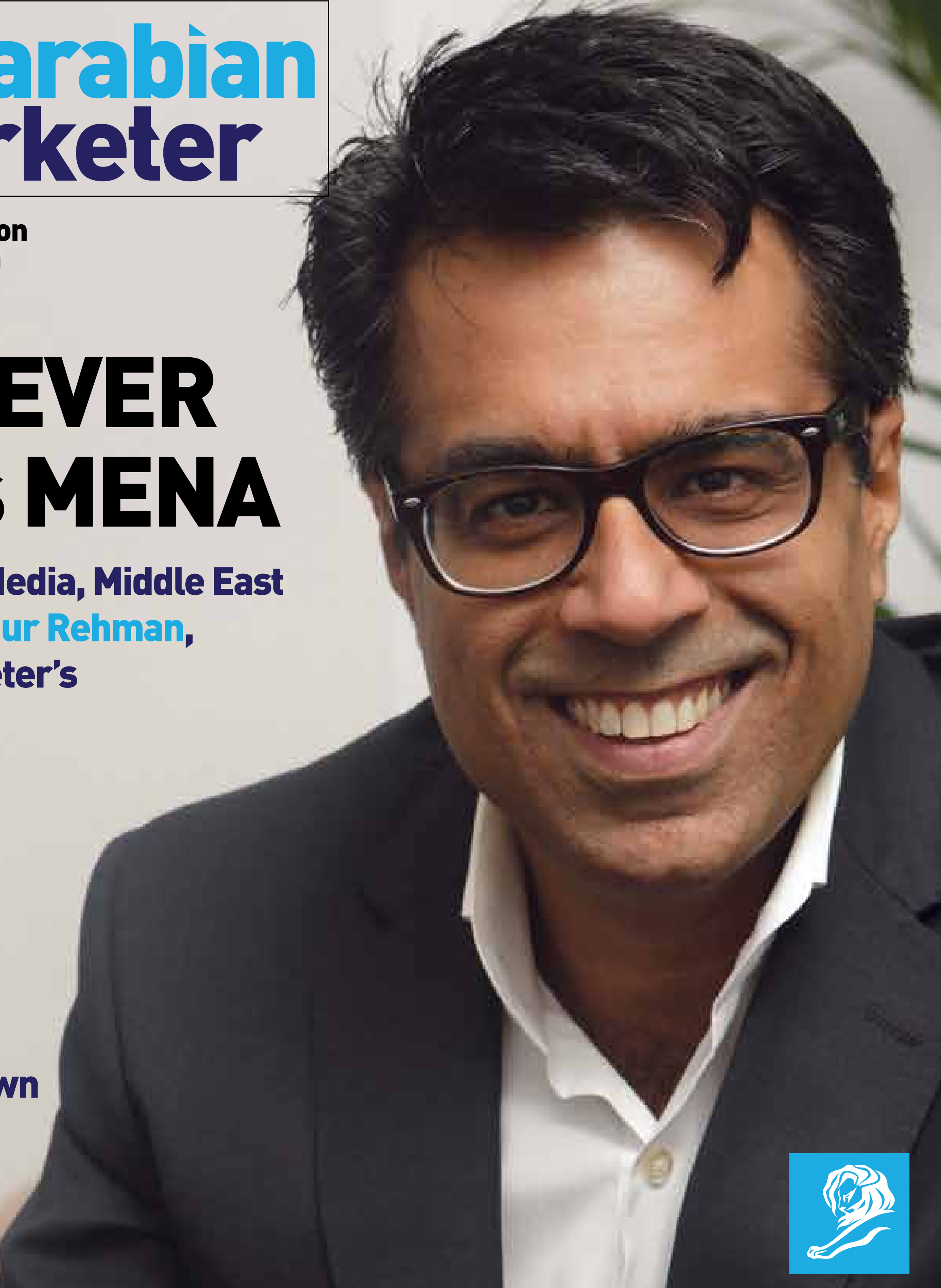

Digital LEVER Disrupts MENA

Unilever's Director Media, Middle East & North Africa, Asad ur Rehman, speaks on the marketer's rewired digital focus

INSIDE:

PERSPECTIVES:

Edmond Moutran
Memac Ogilvy

Vatche Keverian
J. Walter Thompson

Susan Kingston-Brown
Starcom MediaVest Group

Intisar Al-Sabah
Al-Nowair

& more...

A Toast to Arabian Creativity

ZEBA MAHMUD
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When we decided to come up with a special Arabian Marketer edition for Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, to say that ‘we were thrilled’ does not even begin to cover it. Two reasons for this – it is the first time we are going to be at AdLand’s Oscar-equivalent celebration, and second, since there are only those many publications representing this region, it is a great opportunity for us to showcase leaders who are shaping a tough industry, in a tougher market.

One of the words that Mr Asad ur Rehman of Unilever said in his interview, which also came up in other expert comments while working on this edition, was the ‘uncertainty’ factor in the region, and how that affects all aspects including marketing and communication. In the last six months, we have seen some fantastic work come from various MENA markets – inspiring in every sense of the word. We have also better understood the digital adoption of this region, the extreme natures of the markets here and the promise of growth for the next three years at least.

The pace in the region will calm down slightly as we enter the Holy Month of Ramadan but I agree with every comment that you will read in this issue that speaks of MENA markets shaping global trends.

With that background, when my colleague Sana Mahmud, who would be covering the event from Cannes this year, remarked while observing the 2015 Cannes Lions schedule that MENA, as a region, was not as well represented as some of the individual markets, it was a tad disappointing. At the time of going to press, we did not have a final number of attending delegates from MENA, or the kind of entries sent but the general sense was that MENA was not necessarily one of the high participating regions despite the work Lions Festivals has achieved with Dubai Lynx.

AM is new to the region, and I am more so. Some of the markets here have graver issues to address than the rest and some are so exciting that I look forward to seeing how the creative story will unfold itself. Irrespective of everything, it is a region of action that is finding a new voice – and I believe that the coming years of the Festival and such platforms will capture the transformation that we are witnessing here.

To those at the Festival, Happy Celebrating, and to those who are observing Ramadan (despite the Cannes sunset schedule) Happy Fasting!

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With a Captive Audience Comes Responsibility

EDMOND MOUTRAN
Chairman & CEO, Memac Ogilvy

As we draw closer to the month of Ramadan, we experience a dramatic change of pace in our lives. The calming influence of the holy month is felt across the region. Families come together at the setting of the sun and practice openness and giving with their loved ones. This month of sacrifice and reflection is highly valued throughout the Muslim community, and sentiments are shared among other communities that reside in tandem in the MENA's many cosmopolitan States.

The same can't be said for business. This time of year brings with it significant opportunities for brands to engage with audiences. Consumer behaviors change greatly; consumption levels increase, not only in regards to F&B, but also media, opening a door for brands.

But with a more captive audience comes responsibility. The key consideration for brands is to be sensitive to the nature of the holiday, and the routines of the consumers. These consumers are far more willing to let brands into their homes. They invite friends, family and colleagues into their lives, gift and share with them, and brands must be conscious not to exploit this tradition.

In this vein, we find interesting trends, particularly in the Gulf. For example, there's an expectation here for increasingly attractive promotions. Take the automotive sector; consumers are offered a car package, and that includes X, Y and Z for free. This has created a cycle between businesses and consumers. The consumers expect some kind of promotion, and in return are willing to buy more of the product.

Brands must communicate their values with the audience, as opposed to simple advertising. Offering a promotion much like you would in a supermarket isn't appropriate. Telling a story, and encouraging openness and sharing are much more effective measures.

This understanding is key. And some brands grow wealthy from it. There's a number of brands that benefit greatly from the holy month of Ramadan, in comparison to the other months of the year due to the way they associate themselves with the holiday. On the other hand, there's an argument that promoting your brand during Ramadan may have a negative effect on your business. Having an affinity to the sentiment of the occasion is vital. Therefore, brands that promote values that stray far from the core meaning and intentions of the holiday should think twice before using it as a platform.

Being in touch with the sentiment of Ramadan, as well as being aware of the business opportunities is the perfect balance.

Unlike the Christmas period, which is widely accepted as a consumption fest far detached from its traditions in many parts of the world today, consumers during Ramadan aren't silly. They're looking for brands to show commitment, and care towards society. Brands understand this. Multinational brands are keen to show they're creating something important as opposed to just exploiting the occasion.

Brands must communicate their values with the audience, as opposed to simple advertising. Offering a promotion much like you would in a supermarket isn't appropriate. Telling a story, and encouraging openness and sharing are much more effective measures.

In conclusion, there's three key points that must be remembered when approaching market during the holy month. Firstly, show an appreciation of what Ramadan means to the individual, not just an understanding of what it is. Secondly, show enough respect as to not exploit the business opportunities. Finally, create something sustainable. A story that can be built upon is far more meaningful than something that ends with Ramadan itself.

Keep it Relevant, Keep it Simple

SHEIKHA INTISAR AL SABAH
Founder & CEO, Al-Nowair

I have been blessed to have worked, and still continue to work, with many NGOs and CSR (corporate social responsibilities) projects. All have added immense value to the lives of many, including mine. The initiatives that I have had the honor to be a part of have been very diverse in nature. While some contributed to working for the benefit of sick children, some were for the welfare of abandoned animals and some were about refugees to the environment, amongst others.

In all, the heart and intention towards achieving a larger good was strongly present, but what was missing, in almost all instances, was a clear and accurate form of communication. I believe that the right communication is an essential component in solving these challenges.

When I first thought of beginning a publication like Al-Nowair, the first thing I had to pay attention to was relaying the information in a different manner that was appropriate to the targeted group – the youth. It was important to excite this group to learn more, engage more and eventually create a momentum for the change that we hoped for.

One of the obvious steps in that direction was using amazing visuals alongside different forms of media including animation content, short clips and needless to say, social media. While it is difficult to create a success formula, I would say this was our best indentified route to convey the messages across. In essence, we work like an advertising agency that advertises for 'positivity'.

Having initiated a Masters Degree a few months ago in communication, I can now see that giving information from top down is no longer applicable anywhere, as it was in the past. And if recipients do not engage in the message, the CSR programme has lost its interest and eventually this set of audience.

My takeaway, communication should always aim to listen, understand and eventually engage.

If I had one sentence to sum up my experience in the CSR/NGO community and in my communications study I would say - keep it relevant, keep it simple and please, please make sure it is aesthetically beautiful in message and visuals. Only then are we interested enough to give it a second glance.

Catch the Arab Consumers Before They Change

VATCHE KEVERIAN
CEO, J. Walter Thompson MENA

In the third annual consumer-centric report, J. Walter Thompson Intelligence MENA highlights the changes that will have direct impact on the consumption model in the Arab world in 2015. A significant takeout from the trend report is that 'betterment' is the key driver. As Mennah Ibrahim (Head of Brand Intelligence, at J. Walter Thompson Middle East & North Africa) says in the report, 'MENA consumers are redefining all their priorities, perspectives and affiliations, expecting brands to step up with more responsibility than ever before'.

Whilst it is probably hard to believe that the people in the region are ready to tone down their penchant for indulgent purchases and become more attuned to ethical and conscious consumption, this is becoming increasingly the case. This does not mean that they will be spending less. It means their purchases will gravitate towards what is more personally and morally rewarding. From this perspective, Arab consumers not only want more of what's good for them, they also want less of what's toxic or harmful. They are opting for more natural or 'free-from' alternatives and generally vying for 'what's better for them' as opposed to 'what's more gratifying'. If your brand wants to fit in, you will definitely need to carve out a spot for yourself in this new marketplace for 'clean consumption'.

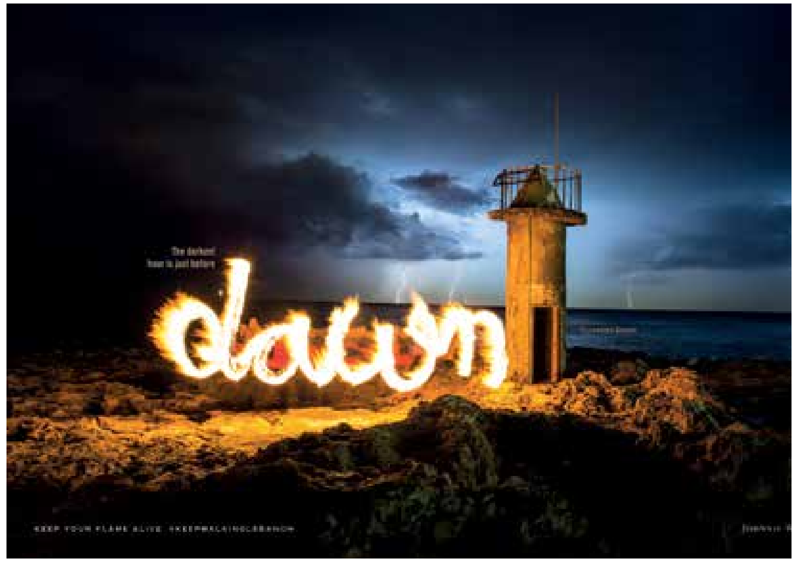
Consumers are looking inwards for things to take pride in from their origins. Those who once looked fondly upon or embraced global culture are now 'buying local' and rekindling a long-lost love for their mother tongue. This has already begun to manifest itself in the music and arts scene. People are experimenting with a mash-up of synergistic cultural elements, ushering in new social norms and Arabic lexicon. It is an exciting time for content makers because consumers expect brands to speak to them in Arabic – not the bland Arabic that has been typical of the web, but in a language that resembles them and celebrates their diversities and their unique individualities. It is the era of the inside joke and the culturally-relevant anecdotes. Take Abla Fahita for example. This chatty Egyptian puppet, initially created as an advertising character flaunting the persona of a tongue-in-cheek widowed housewife has become an established brand in the region.

The Middle East has always been considered a predominantly young demographic. Although this is still the reality today (42 per cent of the population under 35 yrs), the region is on the cusp of a significant transition. Older generations, boomers whom we call 'Generation B-Old' are breaking all the stereotypes we have long associated with them, and are establishing themselves as a cohort of 'ageless consumers' who seek new experiences. Since they are the ones who have the means as well as the dreams, brands stand to gain if they tap into their expectations. Around 73 per cent of the boomers agree that, today's world caters mostly to the younger generation. Read, '73 per cent unsatisfied consumers'. Clearly there is a need that can be addressed by pioneering brands.

The Arab consumer is anything but average. Tech-savvy and innovative, they share aspirations and needs with the world, but retain a strong affinity for cultural heritage that they customize on the go. The Arab consumers' wealth is no longer tied to financial display. They are caring, and expect others – including brands – to care too.

THE RISE OF MENA'S CREATIVE VOICE

As the Arabian consumer reclaims pride in local culture and nuances, **Zeba Mahmud** puts a lens on what is defining MENA's creative fabric



As communication goes beyond technology 'newness', Arabian consumers' aspirations are coming forth. The highlight of MENA's creative journey is the evolution towards embracing local culture and finding its own unique voice from being highly influenced by the Western ways. The advertising industry is playing a crucial role in shaping up that voice. There is a visible shift in consumers expecting more from brands that they engage with, while expecting global standards. A society that was otherwise considered conservative is slowing opening up, challenging the old order, adopting new ways without losing traditional values.

Many reasons have contributed to the growth of digital in the region including a significant push from the government in key markets. "With the government's investments in a 'smart city' in the Middle East, we expect to see significant growth in digital. Brands are realizing the potential of digital advertising and integrating this with an all round bought, earned and owned approach. Brands and advertisers are increasing their ecommerce presence. More international brands are keen to launch their ecommerce services in the region," points out Anouk Bondroit, General Manager, Vizeum, MENA, reflecting on the changing consumer.

While technology empowers the consumers in unprecedented ways, brands are looking to play a more meaningful role in their lives. Creativity is at the core of this proposition. The more important aspect is getting the right talent, and according to Dimitri Papadimitriou, Head of LiquidThread MENA, this is coming in the rise of an 'advertising editor'. "It is creative writing at the end of the day, and the need is for skillsets that are used to writing snackable content. We need people who know how to write for social, because that's where all these conversations are taking place. Especially today, when the attention span is dropping from 30 seconds to seven seconds," Mr Papadimitriou observed.

Beyond Selling

Putting their best foot forward, some of the biggest corporates are crafting strategies to better connect with the MENA consumer. If there was one underlying thread across most advertising messages seen in the year, it was the attempt from brands to own higher ground in a consumer's life. What stands out is not just a reflection of behavioral change of the MENA consumer but more importantly, making a connection that was not just based on selling a product or service. Brands that fulfilled the consumer's need to be inspired gained.

An example was seen in Leo Burnett's Johnnie Walker 'Keep the Flame Alive' campaign that aimed to motivate Lebanese citizens to keep their inner flame alive. While the sector faces some strict advertising regulations in the region, the campaign saw some of the best consumer resonation in the year, attracting both consumer and media attention. Lebanon also saw influencing political decisions in its advertising. Conceptualized and executed by Leo Burnett again, the 'Vote for Us, Vote for You' campaign from KAFA tried to convince MPs to pass a law against domestic violence in return for votes.

The task is not easy especially given the region's nuances. With markets that are known to be conservative, struggling with political instability in some cases and living through very extreme economic conditions in most others, MENA is not short of its challenges. The advent of technology has brought new ideas putting power back in the hands of the consumers to express themselves and think freely.

Another campaign that attracted local and global attention was Memac Ogilvy's AutoComplete Truth that addressed the issue of gender inequality. The campaign, that was launched through Press and Outdoor revealing for the first time the shocking mindset and similar problems that women face, invited people to join a global discussion on gender equality through the campaign hashtag #WomenShould.

J. Walter Thompson Riyadh had the region talking when it executed 'The Biggest Art Gallery Around The World' for Al Arabia. It was not just the idea but playing it in a market like Saudi Arabia, in the scale and manner that it was done that worked in favor of the campaign. The campaign saw Saudis waking up to the country's first ever public art show, by several unknown artists splashed across the streets opening up the Kingdom to a new creative state. Breaking conventional shackles, MENA is gearing up to dazzle.

DIGITAL LEVER DISRUPTS MENA

Unilever is reaching deep into its marketing arsenal for addressing MENA's uncertain & complex but high growth market, **Asad ur Rehman, Director Media, Middle East & North Africa, Unilever** speaks to **Arabian Marketer's Group Editor, Sana Mahmud**, on the company's plans ahead...

Uncertainty is the only constant in the changing global economy, and by extension, in the marketing advertising and media business across regions. The challenge is even more pronounced in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) markets. The political fabric, inherent strengths and challenges, the estimated growth rate and high adoption of digital give MENA its own traits of the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world. For Unilever, MENA has always been a market of significance and the year ahead will be no different, albeit with an even sharper digital focus.

Gearing up for a New MENA

"MENA is one of the most exciting regions even though it does not attract the amount of attention it should. Not only in terms of growth for businesses but also the consumer landscape here, especially from the perspective of adoption of digital media, is dynamic," observes Asad ur Rehman, Director Media, Middle East & North Africa, Unilever. He cited data points such as Saudi Arabia being YouTube's largest per capita consumption market and UAE's highest smartphone penetration globally as indicators that advertisers have to find new and meaningful ways of connecting with consumers.

"The change in consumer habits demands novel expertise, ability to sustain in new ecosystems and forming external alliances," Mr Rehman reflects, adding, "At a time when some of biggest emerging markets such as China, Brazil and Russia are braving either slowdown or crisis, MENA presents a growth opportunity. Applying a straight GDP growth will not give the whole impression of this opportunity because the region plays home to the highest and the lowest per capita incomes in the world."

Our First & Truest Obligation is to the Consumer: Asad ur Rehman

As the creative fraternity gears up for the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, **Asad ur Rehman**, Director Media, Unilever MENA speaks to **Sana Mahmud** on awards & recognition...

Q/A

How important are awards in the Unilever MENA scheme of things?
Recognition, including awards, is important for our brand. It creates a cycle of communication and innovation, which requires us to improve on previous year's accomplishments. However, our first and truest obligation is towards the consumer. The message has to be appealing, effective and engaging. Award is a happy coincidence.

What are your expectations from your agency partners in connecting with the new consumer?
We have some marvellous agencies that are doing fantastic work -- Lowe, a regional agency FP7, a creative independent We Want Traffic amongst others. I would like to see more digital specialists like Sapient Nitro, AKQA or RGA coming in the market. We haven't seen agencies that bring technology at the heart of brand communication. I hope we do see such players because otherwise we will just be applying traditional media principles to new realities of digital, not making the most of the opportunities that technology has to offer.

How do you expect Unilever MENA to perform this year on the awards front?
We expect a good year overall but specifically Cannes Lions is tough and global work has an advantage there. We had a good run at the Effie Awards last year and at the Festival of Media MENA. We are pushing forward in quality of innovation in communication and the number of awards we have won in the market has increased in the last couple of years -- so hopefully, onwards and upwards.

While Mr Rehman is optimistic on the region overall, he is quick to add that MENA sees its own VUCA world traits, at times as severe as the cases experienced in Syria and Yemen where business activities have been ceased overnight or have been affected due to political reasons.

The extreme conditions in MENA markets demand a new approach to communication and marketing that resonates with the new Arabian and African consumer.

Tech Transforming MENA's Media Landscape

While digital has seen continued growth in MENA, technology is impacting traditional media as well. "On the one hand, TV content is becoming on demand and applications such as SHAHID are growing in size and stature. On the other hand, digital pure play platforms such as Instagram and SnapChat are growing speedily," Mr Rehman points out.

Unilever estimates a 15 per cent growth in digital in the year ahead but Mr Rehman cautions that the industry needs to come together quickly to shape up this growth. He says, "The likes of Facebook and YouTube are creating premium digital inventory. Tech-impacted traditional channels like SHAHID or MBC content and international partnerships such as Choueiri Group and AOL will fuel the growth in digital but agencies have to gear up for these changes."

In many ways, the growth in digital has leveled the playing field, putting power back in the hands of content. New skill-sets are demanded to stay in pace with the consumer. Some of these are addressed by technology in terms of deploying content across channels, measurement and cross-platform reach. However, a lean and agile system is required, according to Mr Rehman, for actual content creation, which on occasions may even be in real time. He states, "In the past couple of years, we have benefitted from partnering with technology start-ups. Middle East is perhaps not known for a 'silicon valley' of its own, but there are respectable start-ups that are doing good work."

In addition to honing its focus on new ways of connecting with consumers, Unilever has become savvier in managing its digital media investments. Mr Rehman explains, "We realigned our partnerships with our global partner PHD, and on the back of that created quick wins, venturing into the likes of programmatic buying. We also set up platforms that can harness and harmonize big data accumulated from various sources."

Unilever's MENA Play

Unilever has 35 active brands in MENA – all of which contribute to the company's turnover. "We give each of them the due focus. From a brand perspective, in 2015, we are committed to doing new things in the market. Last year we relaunched our laundry detergent brand OMO. Laundry is a difficult category, as it requires long-term investment and commitment to build the brand. In terms of market share, it has been a successful relaunch and we have allocated resource and expertise needed to build the brand over the next five to 10 years," Mr Rehman informs.

Unilever's ambition in the personal care categories, such as haircare and deodorant, continues to be strong, where it aims to lead across categories in the different MENA markets. The company has also indentified categories that will add to its existing business opportunities in the region, ice cream being on the cards at present.

The company's 2015 game plan will see additional focus on markets such as Egypt, KSA and UAE, followed by Oman, Qatar and Bahrain, that the corporate major sees as promising markets. For Mr Rehman, MENA is set for a growth trajectory, and Unilever is poised to tap on this growth.

MENA Media Market Break Up

MENA total ad spend:
USD 3.5 billion

MENA's top three ad markets: **Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt**

Ad spends contribute to **0.3% of the GDP** (compared to 1% in developed markets & 0.6% in APAC)

Largest media: **TV (reaches across at least 12 MENA markets)**

Digital growth: **From 8% of spends in 2013 to 15% in 2015**

Unilever an active driver of digital spends, with above-industry average of digital ad budget

MARKETER VS CONSUMER

Is the Marketer Playing a Slow Catch-Up Game?

Consumers move seamlessly between all forms of media. Even though marketers struggle to balance ad money spent with consumer time spent, there are those who believe that marketing is catching up. **Zeba Mahmud** takes a closer look at the debate...

JAD CHABABI
Regional Business Director, J3 MENA, part of MCN

On Why 'Digital Marketing' and not Just 'Marketing'...

It is unarguable that to be a successful marketer, digital has to be at the core of what you do. This explains why the past few years have witnessed businesses transitioning talents into integrated roles, encouraging them to build brand stories across different platforms by thinking from a media neutral standpoint. However, the pace at which the digital ecosystem is growing has led to a proliferation of its disciplines and the emergence of new channels. That, fueled by the marriage of data and technology, has exponentially increased the amount of 'solutions' available for brands to grab. Finding the right formula within this complex environment requires a deep understanding of the technicalities of each channel. This is where the 'digital' marketer comes in. Working alongside the integrated marketer, this role remains pivotal in ensuring a smooth consumer journey online while maintaining synergy and optimizing efficiencies across the different elements.

On Ad Spend Versus Time Spent Imbalance...

The 'digital confidence gap', as we once called it, was believed to be due to the fact that advertisers were uncertain of how to effectively utilize some digital channels. Today, we attribute this gap to three factors:

a. The time consumers spend online and the ability for brands to effectively communicate are not a one-to-one ratio. Being connected doesn't necessarily mean being receptive to advertising; consumer might be spending time on emails, messaging apps or running last minute errands online. Additionally, advertising effectiveness varies by media – attention span on TV remains one of the highest – which affects the ratio and eliminates the possibility of looking at time spent vs. budget spent proportionally.

b. Region's readiness: While brands are more than ever eager to engage with their audiences online, a wide mix of assets needs to be developed to bring storytelling to life and engage in real-time. This requires a talent pool that is geared up to deliver digital solutions in short time; strong digital talent is a scarce resource that the region is currently challenged with.

c. Arabic digital content is growing, and the big bucks are still invested behind TV content. This in turn attracts the majority of the advertising dollars, making budgets hard to migrate outside the platform and into digital avenues.

On a Complex, Fragmented Digital Ecosystem...

Fragmentation is often used as a negative term to define the spread of advertising budgets across several platforms. But fragmentation can be a good thing. The emergence of new players creates healthy competition that upgrades the quality of offering – be it through more solutions or better quality content. Additionally, fragmentation should be viewed from a 'relevance' perspective. Consumers are moving away from the Mad Men era generic content that was consumed by everyone, towards searching for content that is more relevant to their interests and passion points. Answering this need means moving from a 'one size fits all' approach to creating platforms that cater to each of those interests. This plays to the advantage of the advertisers who are now offered more proximity with their consumers, and the opportunity to engage in conversations in an environment that portrays brands as being more relevant.

SALEH GHAZAL
Business Unit Director, OMD UAE

Digital is mainstream and industry professionals are well acquainted with its role in communication. Being a technical field, it requires special attention to plan and optimize. Technology advances have helped planners and marketers to do this better, as they have access to more data to understand and analyze. The key point is that digital and other media touch points must be considered as a whole rather than in silos so that they are working together to answer a marketer's objectives. The industry will have to find a balance between hybrid generalist marketers and digital specialists.

Advertising investments are less connected to pure media consumption and more to the role each medium plays in the purchase behavior of a product or its contribution to the overall objectives. Airlines, for example, invest heavily in digital because it is a medium that features heavily in their purchase funnel. People search, compare prices and buy online. This isn't necessarily the case for all industries and businesses, so each will have a particular set of media priorities as a result. That said, investments across the digital spectrum have increased significantly in the region and will ultimately reach the global standards. Media costs on TV and online are obviously different so the comparison of the two media is more valid on the basis of presence. Still, even with 10-20 per cent of total media investments on digital, we are already delivering significant results.

I believe that this 'complication' is the road to simplification, expanding before it finds its balance. By nature, anything unknown to the common human mind is complicated. After acquainting ourselves with those new fragments, I believe the industry will develop the most efficient way to thrive in this ecosystem. We have already witnessed this with programmatic buying and we will keep on finding new ways to make the ecosystem a better one.

Turning the Glocalization Philosophy on its Head

NADIM KHOURY
COO, Grey Group MENA

During the 1980s and into the early 2000s, global conglomerates were riding high on ambitious expansion outside their home markets, with favorable economic conditions and an internet boom that virtually connected their operations and consumers across the world. The result was a massive movement of globalization, followed by targeted localization efforts by global brands, and in response, aggressive 'glocalization' – marrying local offering with global relevance.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, multinational and local brands came under intense pressure; with the world economy almost coming to a halt and consumer purchasing power reaching its weakest level, global businesses struggled to curb costs and refocus their strategies on key growth markets. Meanwhile, smaller regional and local companies reconsidered the costs and risks they would incur to be 'glocal'.

While many tales have warned against it, glocalization has redefined itself to become a reality rather than a choice. Once a strategic byproduct of brands exporting their products and services to lucrative markets of interest, it has become a goal. The factors that have led to this paradigm shift are many, but the premise is one – in an age of connected consumers with shrinking attention spans, brands are competing across borders, vying for reach. Their products may be catering to specific markets, but their messaging must be amplified.

In the ambitious quest of glocalization, many brands have lost focus, time, money and local relevance. Inversely, many brands that stuck to their local roots have missed out on growth and scale. As always, the balance between becoming globally connected and locally focused lay somewhere in the middle.

This rings particularly true for MENA, a region comprising some of the most connected economies and some of the most underdeveloped countries. Treating MENA as one homogeneous block is already flawed but necessary as it serves multinationals in streamlining their operations.

It is also one of the factors impeding 'glocalization'. The size of many MENA markets might not justify investments into localizing marketing mixes and multinational brands resort to re-adaptation of their global messages. On the other side, local businesses that have built up prominent presence in MENA stand a solid chance of growing into global players, but need to consider their market limitations and long term objectives. By virtue of their business, large regional airlines have transformed themselves into global brands. Most regional and local businesses, however, have had to prioritize the strengths in remaining deep-rooted in their local markets above their need to reach outside.

The transformation brought about by data, technology and content has transformed this all-or-nothing take on glocalization. With the advent of social media and real time marketing technologies, consumers' constant connectivity and reduced attention span is at the service of brands. It has enabled them to localize their products and services while globalizing their message despite market size, budget and expansion limitations.

As it always has, a powerful idea or message can virtually cross borders and blur the lines between local and global relevance. Today's tools, technologies and connectivity can further amplify it at virtually no cost – turning the very philosophy of glocalization on its head.

Marrying Local Insights with Global Ambitions

SUSAN KINGSTON-BROWN
Client Managing Director, Starcom MediaVest Group MENA

How many times have you read about a big brand 'blunder', where you cringed and thought, 'could they not have just checked with someone in their local team?' Nike had to recall thousands of products when a decoration intended to resemble fire on the back of the shoe resembled the Arabic word for Allah. Mercedes-Benz entered the Chinese market under the brand name 'Bensi', which incidentally meant, 'rush to die'.

Beyond avoiding a listing in 'Ad Blunders of the Year', global brands have the opportunity to connect with consumers in a relevant way, rooted in culture. Creating a global platform allows brands to have consistency across the world. However, to connect with consumers, build brand loyalty and, most importantly, to sell products, brands must be relevant and brand experiences must add value to people's lives.

Coke Happiness is a great example; in Peru, the campaign was brought to life by creating a movement for smiling in people's national IDs. It was built on a simple insight that regardless of how happy the population is, smiling was not in their nature. In the UAE, a country built on success and wealth, the labor camps, where workers live away from their home countries, are often targeted for CSR initiatives. In this context, Happiness was brought to life by allowing an extra phone call home for free from a Coke booth. Both created locally relevant content that could be scaled to connect with consumers.

In the Middle East, consumers are embracing new technologies faster than in most other regions. Saudi Arabia is still the highest consumer of YouTube content per capita in the world and, overall, the region has some of the highest mobile penetration figures. However, evolving with the modern world is not coming at a cost of traditions and culture, and the consumers continue to embrace and celebrate their roots and traditions.

The biggest challenge for brands is to deliver the ambition, aspiration and standards of the global platform, but to root the activation with local insights and culture. The right balance is the winning formula.

Less exciting, but incredibly important are the logistics and planning of rolling out a global brand platform. Building the right team that understands a local market, and more so, the consumers, and timelines to do this will elevate the work and results. Achieving this in the right time will enable the right people to deliver the adaptation across markets, avoiding the Ad Blunder list of the year.

The world has evolved. The biggest opportunity brands have is to get the balance right between global and local lies with technology and the smart use of data in planning. In today's world, technology and data enable marketers to build personalized experiences for consumers – understanding behavior, situation and mindset is possible now through all manner of data sources that, when fused together, allow brands to speak to consumers as individuals.

The tapestry across the world of different cultures makes the world interesting, different and creates the best storytelling platform for brands. Getting it wrong is personal – and it creates a real risk of turning consumers away with a long path to win them back.

The Young and the Innovative

RAMZI HADDAD
Managing Director, Carat UAE & Lower Gulf

The MENA region is the proud parent of a big family. But it's a quite a diverse one with children at different stages of development and maturity. The odd thing is that sometimes the younger the kid, the less constraints it faces leading to more acceptance of the crazy things. Countries of North Africa, for example, are not as big media spenders as the Gulf States, yet they are able to produce communication that is unique, memorable and not to mention, award winning.

Maybe it's because they are, as yet, not viewed as big advertising markets giving them the chance to come up with creative, heart touching, humor-filled stories. Even on digital, these countries are inspiring by going beyond the norms and executing well thought through communication. These countries are taking inspiration from global trends, but applying them at a really local level and in the process, creating some truly unique and inspiring work.

I'm a fan of the Vodafone 'Fakka' campaign. Inspiration comes in the simplest forms and for some reason, doing such a campaign in Saudi Arabia doesn't get traction with clients because they always aim for over the top, larger than life ads that are all about flexing brand muscles in the face of competition.

In terms of global influence specifically, the rise of 'glocal' is no surprise to me. It comes with the rise of connected devices. As content moves from screen to screen, the local ownership of that content goes global. The better the content, the better the scale and reach it has within the digital world it lives in. Consumers from all around the world connect to Emirates and Jumeirah to book flights and hotel stays to destinations worldwide. Are these two brands Dubai brands only? Not anymore. Connectivity and smart devices helped those brands go global, while firmly holding on to their roots.

What do I see in my crystal ball for the MENA market? I see idea quality coming from North Africa and idea size coming from the GCC. Hopefully these bigger ideas will lead to more innovation that would help drive up entertainment value so that brands are able to engage with their consumers at a higher level.

Digital is firmly ingrained in the market and I'm excited to see more brands realizing the potential available to them and dedicating bigger spends to online. At the same time, not all sales woes are solved with the click of a button, so I'm waiting anxiously for TV 2.0 to kick in. I saw some magical new innovations in Tokyo being showcased as the future of TV (let's say 'Smart' is the key denominator) and I expect advertisers and brands to start pushing for a more connected and immersive user experience on Pan Arab stations.

One of the most beautiful things about the MENA market is that there is such a diverse range of cultures, languages, people and stories to tell. And that is why there is always a need for individualism and creativity in this market. There is not, and never will be, a 'one size fits all' for MENA.

MENA is Best Suited to take the Lead in Global Advertising

VICTOR KNAAP
CEO, MediaMonks

Creativity in the Middle East and African markets is booming. In the past few years we've seen many talented creatives and successful agencies flock to the region and the market is bursting with creative and digital opportunities. As a digital production company working with agencies we are very interested in the MENA region since we work with creative ideas (that are getting much better) to make those work on digital platforms (that grow exponentially). Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and SnapChat are more popular here than anywhere else, and the region has one of the largest density of internet connected mobile phones in the world.

Besides that, MENA is one of the best suited regions to take the lead in global advertising in my perspective. Just as brands and agencies in any other market nowadays, the MENA region is looking to play at a global stage while still being relevant to local markets, and thus local cultures. The question of how to achieve that is the key question in advertising at the moment, and not only in our Dubai office, which opened in the spring of this year, but also globally in our Amsterdam, London, New York, Singapore and LA offices. One of the strengths of the MENA agencies is that they already house so many different cultures and producing concepts that have the potential to be executed in many different cultural formats.

MediaMonks' expertise is to execute the creative ideas on the different digital platform in multiple regions. As John Hegarty said a long time ago 'advertising is 80 per cent idea and it is also 80 per cent execution'. When creating a campaign which has to be culturally relevant, execution is therefore just as important as the idea itself and I dare to add that it's even getting more complex and important in the digital age. The main challenge for us as a production company is how to execute this successfully, efficiently, in a timely fashion in the best possible quality we can provide, and how can we use our globally gained skills and apply them in the MENA region to help in its digital and creative development?

When tackling the challenge of producing global campaigns that are culturally relevant there is a mantra that we always keep in mind. We strongly believe that the strength of digital experience lies in the unrivalled interactivity that it can offer in emotionally driven and evocative stories. Digital experiences can offer a level of interaction, participation and personalization in their storytelling over-and-above any other available medium, in every culture. And while we don't come up with the Big Idea, we do work on the Beautiful Execution, mixing digital disciplines across platforms in an increasingly complex world and tailoring them to every market and their specific needs. It's software development on creative ideas with marketing deadlines, in an industry that's always looking to innovate.

A lot of successful work will come out of MENA and we look forward to contributing to that.

Finding Oz

TAHAAB RAIS
Head of Insights & Strategic Planning, FP7/MENA, part of McCann Worldgroup

In the book, Finding Oz, Evan Schwartz tells the story about how prior to becoming an impresario of children's adventure tales that began with The Wizard of Oz, L. Frank Baum - the J. K. Rowling of his age - failed. He failed at a series of careers and nearly lost his soul before setting out on a journey of discovery that would lead to the Land of Oz.

His journey, riddled with troughs, sounds a lot like the history of MENA region when it comes to the work we used to do and the international recognition that it got for its creativity and effectiveness. A series of failed attempts punctured our first steps on the international stage. And as we tried to be more global/universal in our ideas to be recognized on that international stage, we nearly lost our soul too as we started to lose what makes our cultures, their intricacies and their anxieties special.

In the book, we see that the Land of Oz resides in one's imagination (or dreams, as in the movie version). Oz was an idea, and a fantastic one at that. It was an abstract kingdom that rose above the biosphere of the ordinary. Much like the MENA region is rising today, through the power of its ideas and is not intending to hit the troughs again.

We've all heard that when a mind is stretched by a new idea, it will never return to its original position. We're looking at creating ideas that make the people in our region question things that are previously unanswered, ideas that move people and change perspectives. Ideas that dissolve boundaries between the east and the west, between generations and between genders, that remind us of what is possible, and that encourage us to think differently, to probe at the adjacent possible.

> We've all heard that when a mind is stretched by a new idea, it will never return to its original position. We're looking at creating ideas that make the people in our region question things

In other words, today, we are like Dorothy from Kansas who is finding Oz, craving a cyclone of ideas that will raise our minds and those of the people in our region out of their cognitive Kansas, transforming us from within and transporting us to our own Oz - a re-imagined land where everything is possible and awesome.

As people in MENA and as an industry, we have become broadcasters and programmers of our cultures, of our lives and of what makes us so unique. We don't just passively take in. We produce and publish. And so it is up to us to get the kind of ideas from our region out in the world that will spread and collectively upgrade our region and our people. It is our responsibility as co-authors of this new web of ideas to tell great stories, to enliven our imagination, to stretch our brains beyond the cognitive Kansas.

In Finding Oz, as you complete the book, the story of Baum ultimately reveals how failure and heartbreak can sometimes lead to redemption and bliss, and how one individual can ignite the imagination of the entire world.

Imagine how one region can ignite the imagination of the entire world.

Here's to the new MENA.

Resuscitating Ad Agencies with the Shift Between Screens

RASHA RTEIL
Head of Innovation- UM MENA

Media tattlers and the know-it-all Madmen talk about 'fluid consumer expectations', but have they rolled up their sleeves and begun walking the talk yet? Why are media agencies solely accused for not taking this model into action? Rewinding a few years back to the haunting hype about RTBs and programmatic, up until the top media agencies where gauged on having plugged their trade desks, unfortunately any innovative progression stopped there.

First of all, let's get our understanding straight on fluid consumer expectations – a customer's need is never set, and it changes based on the context they are in, their location and movement variations. But the creative ad wits in the region are not flexible in adjusting to those data variables. Essentially, in this data age, ads cannot be one creative fits all.

Ad agencies do not want to swallow the truth because it destroys their illusions. Media with data centric intelligence hold the baton. Content from format to message is no longer creative-centric with data abundance ranging from physical sensors, search data, and accessibility of public contextual data. Ad agencies are not exploiting the full power of insights, failing to see that media data analytics know more about the target consumer context.

What's standing in the way of data and creativity working together to revive old media from its stagnant 30 seconds TV ad? Ad and media agencies in UAE are just beginning to think about taking advantage of the data we possess and contemplating for strategic thinking to pave way to new content and targeting innovation. Will we see an emergence of capabilities that are creative as well as analytically driven?

We know Xaxis creates Xaxis Places allowing brands to buy DOOH inventory in coordination with digital media programs (Europe and US). TubeMogul launched the same last year. Fueled by WireOrbit's technology, Cadreon took it even further launching PTV (programmatic TV), allowing brands to buy TV ads in a marketing infusing manner. Let's take a step back and ponder on how it took us a few years to inevitably inherit RTBs. We think of applauding the adoption of the same formats and technology to our markets, when we dismiss the simplest functions of leveraging on mass environmental, and behavioral data usage for old media.

In broad-spectrum, the idea behind big data and message tailoring is that ad agencies have to think more than the message, they 'want' to broadcast, and crack what to say at that specific 'moment' when the user is at a metro station waiting for his ride. Expecting a blast of 45 degrees heat at DMC station, what will your sports or refreshment brand say before he steps out outside the station? Not only does the content have to respond to data, it has to listen to behavioral data.

The liability is on us all, the media and ad minds, and consequently when we (data brainers) find data areas to innovatively leverage, we can then let the creative brand minds get involved. This will be where personalization of content on traditional media becomes fluid, or to put it in today's glorified buzzword 'programmatic'.

Do not confuse media data brilliance as a replacement for the creative message. With technological curation serving us, our 'reason to exist' analogy does not limit the role of the brand agency; it intensifies it, fueling a requirement for more remarkable creative work than ever before.

A Beautiful Uncertainty

SAADI ALKOUATLI
Creative Director, Leo Burnett MENA

We, an uncertain generation, live in uncertain times, with uncertain media. Everything is changing. Timeless rules don't apply anymore. Time to embrace the new. Creatives rejoice!

A creative voice takes on unique character when it rises from the deep and intricate well of culture and is communicated to the people of that culture. We've always seen a plethora of locally cultured creativity coming out of Egypt and Lebanon. But now the game is changing in the Middle East. The rise of individual and collective creative voices on social media and YouTube has created a fertile landscape for creative expressions of so many different types. The key for advertisers is how to join this movement harmoniously and become part of the conversation, using traditional and untraditional skills in new ways. Many international and local brands are embracing new media and backing it with increasing investments.

The other day at our agency, we met Kharabeesh, a media house based out of Jordan that started as a bunch of passionate animators doing short YouTube animations and now has become a media hub with millions of subscribers and viewers. Kharabeesh's content is locally inspired and directed towards this market.

The media channels coming out of Saudi Arabia — Uturn and Telfaz11, for example — feature astoundingly creative and engaging content. Saudi youth is creating a voice for the new generation that bravely pushes the limits of creativity within the accepted social values.

Kuwait has also been producing some talent on the musical side of creativity. Sons of Yusuf are blurring the

> We need to realise that content is being commodified—it's crucial to put all efforts on making that content a premium experience for viewers

lines between hip-hop and Arabian culture. Yak's and his younger brother Abdul' Rahman are on a mission to challenge the status quo and build an art and hip-hop culture in the Middle East. Their last album was done with the help of Grammy award-winning artist Erykah Badu and Jay Electronica.

With the growth of this raw local talent in the Middle East, there is much potential for advertisers and marketers to tap content creators. But we need to realise that content is being commodified—it's crucial to put all efforts on making that content a premium experience for viewers/users to see or interact with. People will only care when the content is great. In the old days, you could get away with bombarding people with poor communications and use paid media to expose your message. Not anymore. Our local audiences have the power to zap brands in five seconds.

And the audience has started to shift in the Middle East, and the whole world, from the Millennial Generation to Generation Z, or Generation Katniss, as some magazines have called them in reference to the rebellion character from the Hunger Games. This tech-proficient generation is looking to change the world because they know they can. With today's portals and plethora of locally relevant creative sources, we are the most equipped of all time to make culturally-relevant meaningful experiences to satisfy a diversity of tastes.

Brands as Enablers in the Virtual Reality Age

DIEDERIK VEELO
Founder, Ambassadors Lab & Cube

People have become immune to advertising efforts. Brands today tell compelling stories and connect with consumers by using all sorts of content, from the written word, to video, audio and music. As an industry, we often discuss brands and the way they connect with consumers through the language of human relationships. In this context, one could say that brands need to inspire that first genuine excitement of 'having a fling', rather than the comfort of long-term love. This is because consumers today are fickle – they want to be surprised and amused. New technologies can create unprecedented experiences. It's this that keeps brand passion alive.

As consumers, we have an unstoppable urge to constantly be entertained – devouring fun, thrilling and engaging content wherever we are. We rely on technology to help us feel plugged in and create relationships. Reading stories, watching videos and viewing photos can often give us a sense of being part of an event, an experience or even a community that is bigger than ourselves.

Brands have realized they can make exhilarating bonds with consumers by creating dynamic experiences and engaging them at an emotional level. Virtual reality (VR), for instance, is greatly enhancing consumer experiences by directly tapping into the immediate

response system of the user. If VR is done correctly, the user is taken on a journey with unparalleled emotional responses. Whether that response is to a virtual rollercoaster ride, daredevil bungee jump or intimate emotional stimulus, the user will feel far more part of that experience than with any other medium.

VR can help consumers travel through time, to faraway locations, or even to fantasy landscapes. It allows us to witness things that perhaps don't even exist yet, whether that is choosing the model and colour of a new car before taking it for a spin, or walking through a new home without having to physically be there.

The potential for brands to tap into VR to connect with people is almost limitless. We are still in the first phases of a new era that is as yet undefined. Importantly, bravery is paramount here: technology is pushing the brand to grow, whilst at the same time the brand is pushing technology to evolve.

What can consumers expect from VR? Whatever brands want to imagine – from entertainment uses to sharing a serious message about child slavery (something I have been working on at The Ambassadors for international human rights charity Terre des Hommes). With an Oculus Rift and a pair of headphones, Terre des Hommes invites the viewer to experience a day in the life of Amani – a young Kenyan girl whose daily struggles include child labor, physical violence and sexual abuse.

The more brands and agencies pursue innovative ideas, the more they are forced to realize it involves taking a leap of faith. Doing something no one has done before literally means no one has done it before. In today's technology-driven world there is no time to seek perfection. In this constant environment of quick-fire change, consumers will get their thrills. Delivering the unexpected, being surprising and leading by one step ahead is the role that the world's most innovative brands thrive on.

Inside Egypt's App Economy

In one of the hottest advertising spends market in the Middle East and North Africa region, what are the trends emerging from the mobile growth...

Egypt in the Top African Country for Mobile Growth in 2014

UAE	71.4%
EGYPT	68.7%
S AFRICA	66.8%
SAUDI A	66.5%
NIGERIA	49.6%

Mobile Subscribers are on the Rise

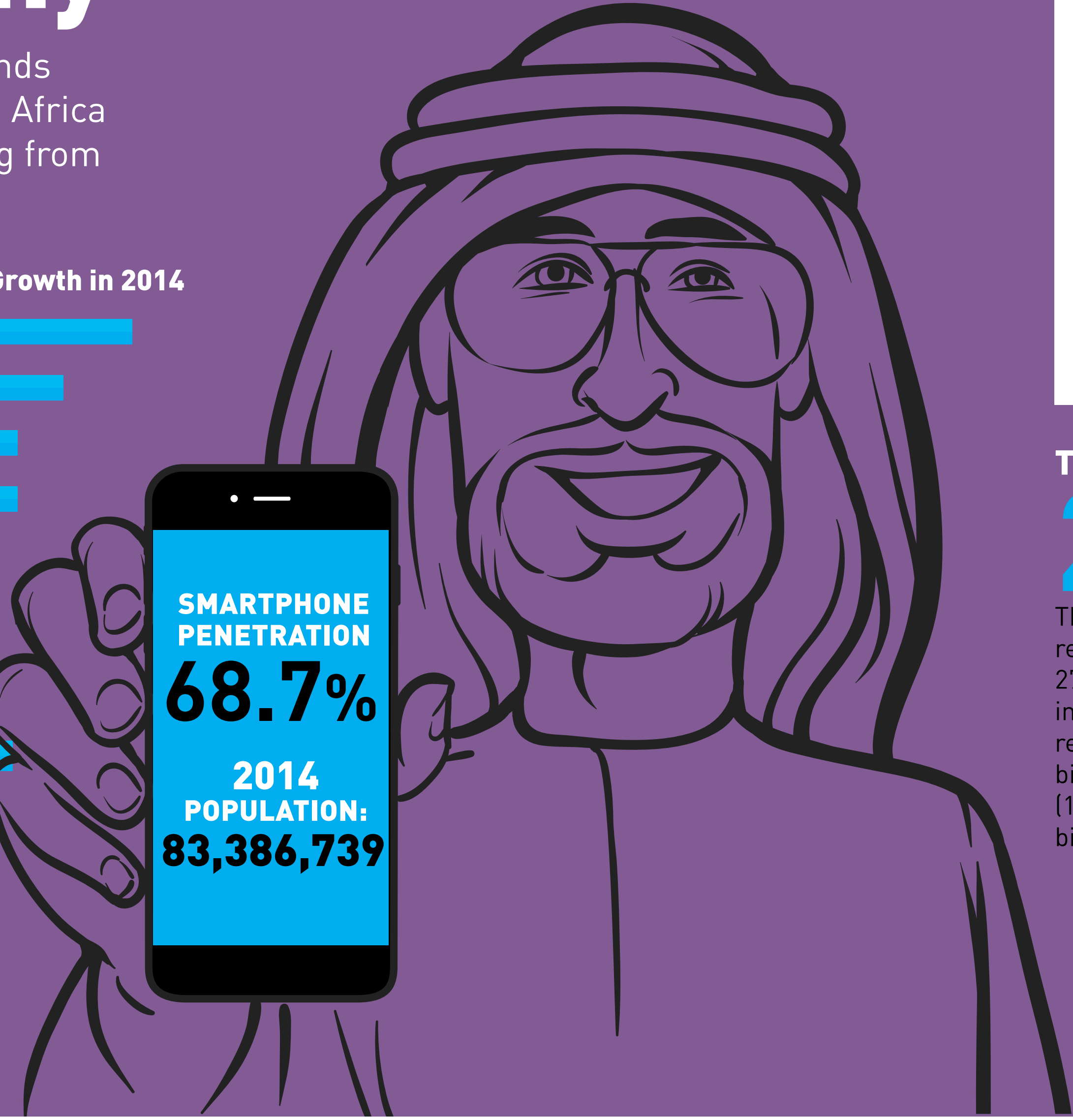
2009	55 MILLION
2014	97.4 MILLION

That is almost **1.12** subscriptions per person on average

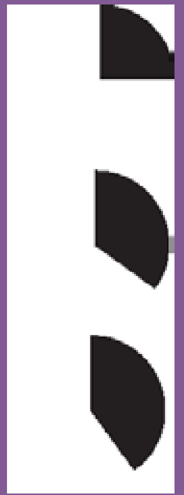
Avg Cost of Smartphones

iPhone 5c – **3775 EGP**
iPhone in Brazil – **7015 EGP**

M'rola XT 910 Razr – **2222 EGP**
Android in Brazil – **1376 EGP**



Telecom Market Shares



ETISALAT 25%
MOBINIL 35%
VODAFONE 40%

Telecom Revenue

27.9 Billion EGP

The combined telecoms revenue of Egypt amounts to 27.9 billion EGP, when taking into consideration reported revenues of Mobinil (10.2 billion EGP), Vodafone Egypt (14 billion) & Etisalat Egypt (3.7 billion EGP)

Most Popular Smartphone Brands 2014

SAMSUNG	45%
HUAWEI	10%
APPLE	8%

Most Popular Messaging Apps 2014

Viber

Most Popular Social Networks 2014

facebook
Instagram
Twitter

Top Apps by Egyptian Developers 2014

Easy Taxi
Bey2 0LLAK
Yallakora

"Egypt is determined to embrace the significant socio-economic opportunities offered by mobile. Broadband connectivity has become a key competitive differentiator in the global economy and our citizens will welcome the many benefits of greater access to mobile services in their personal and professional lives."
His Excellency Eng. Atef Helmy, Minister of Communications and Information Technology

Compiled by App Makr

The 'Publisher' way to Create Communities

NICK MCELWEE
Sales & Marketing Director,
Yas Marina Circuit

At Yas Marina Circuit we have done things differently - we built our Formula One Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix as though it were a brand, not an event. We looked to build a community around it and provide not just a differentiated proposition but an experience that was digital, immersive and unique. Beyond F1, we looked to make the Circuit relevant 365 days a year through retail, corporate, motorsport and less obvious for Circuits up to this point, through health and fitness activities.

As a consequence, our Formula One Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix hashtag #AbuDhabiGP in 2014 trended no.1 globally on Twitter for race day. This was the first Grand Prix ever to do so and our title sponsor benefited from the one billion impressions generated on race day, 1.9 billion across the weekend. Being part of the global conversation is something traditional brand building doesn't deliver, economically at least and something airlines rarely enjoy for the right reasons.

Through our health and fitness activities we will deliver circa 250,000 visits to the Circuit for health and fitness activities in 2015 across our weekly and annual events. Through these events our title sponsor Daman, the UAE's National Health insurer, gets a heavily trafficked real and virtual platform with high levels of local relevance and engagement, and gets to join the conversation rather than just listen in.

The trend in the MENA market, where there is very high interest in sporting events, is towards more technology driven experiences

Fans in MENA, just as everywhere are demanding more immersive experiences. And the key to offering value to the brands that support our events such as Etihad Airways and Daman Healthcare, is the way in which we build our own Yas Marina Circuit brand and the brand around the events we own and promote. We don't look to offer a place to showcase a message or logo but an opportunity to connect with people in a meaningful way.

The trend in the MENA market, where there is very high interest in sporting events, is towards more technology driven experiences. In 2014 we invested considerably in our YasHUB App to support the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, enhance the weekend experience as well as the build-up to the weekend across the F1 championship. As a result we had 41,000 downloads, reaching #1 in UAE's Apple App Store and Google Play. We are looking to blur the line between the physical and the virtual.

Globally, sporting events on TV only represent 1 per cent of total programming, yet circa 12 per cent of the overall TV audience, and 50 per cent of all TV related Twitter activity. We understand that the size of the sports event social following is extremely valuable. At Yas Marina Circuit, we understand the dominance of sports events on digital and social platforms, and we see ourselves not as an advertiser but as a publisher of content, using relevant, informative and interesting content to build and sustain communities.

Our PARTNERSHIPS IGNITE *opportunity*

SMG
STARCOM MEDIAVEST GROUP