MIDDLE EAST PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION

MEPA'S OBJECTIVES:

- To encourage the widest possible spread of publications throughout Middle East and beyond.
- To promote and protect by all lawful means the publishing industry in Middle East
- To protect members by dealing collectively with problems.
- To cooperate for mutual benefits with other organizations concerned in the creation, production and distribution of publications.
- To promote the development of public interest in publications in association with other publishing organizations with similar objectives.
- To serve as a medium for exchange of ideas with respect to publication, sales copyright and other matters of interest.

IN THIS ISSUE:

AL-MAJALLA TO BE BACK ON NEWSSTANDS ON APRIL 1

March 2012

Al-Majalla will reappear in hard copy (print) form from April 1, but with a new style, design and more coverage that will, hopefully, attract the attention of its devoted readers, who have been following and reading its contents since the magazine's launch in 1980 in London, UK.

The magazine also plans to capture the attention of a new generation who are eager to acquire accurate information and read balanced analysis, interviews and opinions of known writers in the Arab world or the world at large.

Commenting on the move, Prince Faisal bin Salman, chairman of Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG), said the digital version of the magazine on the Internet should be appreciated which came in three languages: Arabic, English and Persian.

He said the decision to bring out a print version of the magazine comes in the framework of a number of developmental projects being undertaken by the SRMG.

On his part, Chief Executive Officer of SRMG Dr. Azzam Al-Dakhil said the issuance of a print form does not mean replacement of the digital version, but, rather, they complement each other. He said the decision to transfer the magazine into digital form in 2009 was aimed at following an example initiated by media industry to go into digital form at that time.

He said the issuance of a print version was based on success gained by the digital experience.

Meanwhile, Al-Majalla Editor in Chief Adil Al-Turaifi said the success in relaunching the magazine in its print form could not have happened without the keen support and care shown by Prince Faisal bin Salman.

It is to be recalled that Majalla magazine has recently launched its new Persian language website, the first of its kind within the publications of the Saudi Research and Publishing Company (SRPC).

SOURCE: ARAB NEWS

Middle East Publishing Conference Examines Region's Transformation

March 2012

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) presented its 7th annual Middle East conference with a look at media transformation in the region and issued a call for proposals for innovative projects to support the independent press.

For the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere to succeed in building democracy and press freedom, media in the region need training on business, editorial and ethical practices, legal and institutional reform, investment and other immediate support.

 As part of the process, WAN-IFRA and the Cairo-based Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI) on Thursday launched a call for proposals for its Arab Newspaper Development Programme, which will provide workshops, training and consulting for 10 selected media outlets in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. The goal is to identify new strategic development opportunities, revenue steams and build sustainable independent media businesses…

 "There is a tendency, within the international community, to turn attention elsewhere once repressive regimes are removed. A lot of people assume the job is done and development can now proceed accordingly," said Larry Kilman, Deputy CEO of WAN-IFRA. "But this simply is not true – there is a danger that the old ways will reassert themselves without a great deal of continuing attention and support."

The presentation focused on the findings of several international missions to Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt conducted by coalitions of international and regional media development organisations. It also looked at the historical record in places as diverse as Korea, Brazil and Taiwan to show how independent media can grow and thrive when political liberalization takes place.

 WAN-IFRA's Middle East Conference brought together nearly 300 regional and international media experts to present case studies and examine successful strategies for media companies. The conference is built around five big themes that are essential for media companies in the modern age: social media; leadership and human resource management; innovations in newsrooms; advertising revenue generation; and the power of print.

 The conference was opened by Princess Rym Ali of Jordan.

 Summaries of conference presentations and other details can be found at **http://www.wan-ifra.org/mec2012** or on Twitter using #mec12.

Source: WAN—IFRA

FOUR MISTAKES PUBLISHERS MAKE WHEN BRINGING CONTENT

(Feb 2012)

There's no doubt that the second half of 2011 was a difficult period for newspaper and magazine publishers. An Audit Bureau of Circulations report revealed that **single-copy sales of consumer magazines dropped by nearly 10 percent in a year**, while **the five magazines with the highest newsstand sales all reported sharp declines** as well. Most importantly, the fall in sales has hit revenues, making it more important than ever for publishing businesses to rapidly modernize their trade.

As readers move toward tablets and mobile phones, there's no question that these new reading devices will dictate the success and failure of the media industry. Successful publishers will be able to reincarnate their digital content onto these gadgets. So why are so many publishers stumbling in their mobile strategy? From over committing to a multitude of mobile platforms, to underwhelming app experiences, we're seeing a lot of mistakes that should not be repeated:

1. Trying and failing to reinvent the wheel.

Many big and small publishers have top-notch tech teams and significant resources, but often fall into the trap of believing that only the teams inside their own building can create the best platforms and experiences. Not true.

Partnerships are the prime way big and small media companies can succeed in building their audiences in the new media world. Small startups are creating amazing technology that can help publishers grow their distribution plans. By tapping into these talented, focused teams, the publishing world can quickly distribute content in a compelling and engaging way using tomorrow's trends, not yesterday's opportunities.

Don't reinvent the wheel, because by the time you do, a new wheel will already be in motion.

2. Getting left out of the mix.

If you think about it, listening to music on the radio or going clubbing exposes you to great new tunes you may not have discovered. Thanks to DJs, and discovery services, we all find new music we love and want to share. This curation and sharing experience has now come to the world of digital publishing. Modern social news aggregators are essentially content DJs that deliver awesome content to consumers through a fun and easy experience, whether that be via flicking, tapping or flipping a device screen. Publishers that are getting this right are experiencing booms in their digital readership solely due to the fact that new discovery tools and networks like Facebook and Twitter turn on new readers to great recommended content.

News needs distribution. In the old days, publishers put their newspapers under the door of every hotel room, at the front door of many homes or at the street corner. Today success is determined by how well publishers join and participate in social media and the news revolution. Discovery services like news readers can help.

Sadly, some publishers have avoided these discovery tools. They've wanted their content to only live in their controlled spaces, or have channels that include only their sourced and created content. But consumers are demanding more. Through news readers, they are browsing and uncovering new content and sources they never knew existed by taking advantage of search technologies that create serendipity for discovery, sharing and recommendations.

News reader users are building streams of curated topics across genres and receiving a plethora of content from editors across publications. Take the Super Bowl, for example. In days gone by, you had to hunt and peck your way through each editorial version of ESPN, CNNSI or Yahoo Sports. Now, you can DJ your own news mix to see what sports editors and the social crowd are saying about every aspect of the Super Bowl, making the user experience engaging, time saving, and far and away supreme to traditional news searches. When users like what they see, they share stories with their friends, families and followers—proving themselves a key ingredient for successful distribution. In the end, news readers and other discovery services drive more people back to media destinations where the cash register rings.

3. Ignoring brand potential.

Big branded publishers have an amazing treasure trove of content at their fingertips from many different brands or labels. They create enormous amounts of content every day. In fact, some of the largest media companies have several amazing newspapers or magazines in their stable, but many have not ventured into mixing and mashing content from their various publications into a new and exciting branded experience.

In this fast changing digital landscape, the time is ripe to test the waters for launching new aggregated services. The cost is not great and the upside can be very rewarding. It puts a spin on traditional distribution, and focusing on one deep vertical with existing brands lets publishers try new distribution strategies without cannibalizing their existing audiences and revenue.

Take **Glo from MSN**, for example. In collaboration with Hachette Filipacci Media and BermanBraun, they built a top lifestyle destination for women with a brilliant mix of aggregated media from across their stables of content. Using existing content from their print worlds, they created a new avenue for digital audiences to consume their great content, while taking advantage of an opportunity to build a new business at a relatively low cost.

4. Searching in the wrong places.

Distribution and discovery of publisher content used to take place primarily in traditional search engines like Google, Yahoo!, and Bing with traditional investments in search engine optimization (SEO) techniques that led users seeking one particular query to discover content from another related outlet. Content tagged a certain way shows higher up in the algorithmic search results, prompting users to click on it and publishers to receive the benefit of picking up greater share of audiences when SEO is done right. It's a type of free advertising publishers and media owners have used in their distribution plans. However, news readers like Taptu, Flipboard, Pulse and Zite are demonstrating the modern form of SEO, where users discover and share stories that have the perfect context and relevance to each user.

While reading a stream of content, people are exposed to related stories or served up other similar stories from a variety of publishers, leading users to share, tweet or follow links back to large media and publishers. So, for example, if a user searches 'NFL mock draft 2012,' they will instantly find a variety of new sources that have become experts on the topic like **Walter Football**. Walter who? Yes, Walter Football. Welcome to the new world of mobile search.

In speaking with more than 100 digital publishers across the world, the consistent thing we hear is, "We know mobile is critical, but going mobile is easier said than done." Hopefully the publishing industry can learn from what I see every day and take simple, cost-effective steps towards winning in mobile without letting history repeat itself

SOURCE: TECHCRUNCH

UAE Journalists Association & Emirates Motor Sports Federation
Road Driving Competition

Emirates Motor Sports Federation in collaboration with UAE Journalists Association have announced the launch of a competition on driving skills for women in media & journalism; which will take place on 07/04/2012 in the side arena of Dubai Festival City. In association with Al Nabooda Audi Centre, this competition aims at contributing in supporting road values, enforcing excellence in driving by respecting speed limit, improving driving skills, and enhancing a culture of driving with caution; to emphasize the concept of traffic culture awareness in order to avoid accidents and traffic violations.

DATE: 7/4/2012

PARTICIPANTS: Women Journalist & Media Executives

VENUE: DUBAI FESTIVAL CITY (Side Arena) - DUBAI—UAE

Arab Media Forum 2012

"Arab Media: Exposure and Transition"

Created under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, and ruler of Dubai, the Dubai Press Club is a well-established forum for journalists and media professionals to debate discuss and deliberate upon issues that are relevant to daily life.

Dubai Press Club has endeavored to play a vital role in the growth of the regional media industry through the launch of unique initiatives such as the Arab Media Forum and the Arab Journalism Award.

Providing members with incomparable services, resources and access to an elite global network, Dubai Press Club has proven to be one of the most active press clubs in the world. The club is dynamically involved in hosting and organizing workshops and seminars that focus on issues impacting the regional and international socio-political scenario.

High profile speakers and senior delegates are periodically invited by Dubai Press Club to interact with the local and regional media, as well as visiting media professionals.

DATE: May 8-9, 2012
VENUE: Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dubai—UAE

The *Arab Social Media Report*
The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment

The *Arab Social Media Report* series aims to inform a better understanding of the impact of social media on development and growth in the Arab region by exploring the following questions:

- What are the penetration trends of social networking services in the Arab region?
- What is the growth rate, and what is the demographic and gender breakdown?
- What factors affect the adoption of these platforms in different Arab countries (e.g., income, youth population, digital access, Internet freedom, etc.)?
- What is the impact of these phenomena on citizen engagement and social inclusion?
- What is the impact of the new social dynamics influenced by social media on innovation and entrepreneurship in Arab societies?

Ultimately, we hope that the report findings shed light on the role social media is playing in the societal transformations taking place in the Arab world.

The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment

Overview

The societal and political transformations sweeping the Arab region have empowered large segments of the region's population. Many stereotypes have been shattered, with Arab youth, "netizens" and women becoming the main drivers for regional change. Arab women in particular have become more engaged in political and civic actions, playing a critical leading role in the rapid and historic changes that have swept the region. Meanwhile, the debate about the role of social media in these transformations has reached policy making circles at the regional and global levels.

Throughout 2011, social media usage continued to grow significantly across the Arab world, coupled with major shifts in usage trends. From merely being used as a tool for social networking and entertainment, social media now infiltrates almost every aspect of the daily lives of millions of Arabs, affecting the way they interact socially, do business, interact with government, or engage in civil society movements. By the end of 2011, Arab users' utilization of social media had evolved to encompass civic engagement, political participation, entrepreneurial efforts, and social change. With a critical mass of Arab users in many countries, governments have also begun to recognize social media's potential to develop more transparent, participatory and inclusive governance models. But while creative and socially-beneficial uses of social media abound, they are accompanied by new-found concerns surrounding issues of security, privacy, freedom of expression, and the disruptive uses of social media on foreign policy making and diplomacy.

The Arab region has recently experienced exponential growth in the use of social media. Previous issues of the *Arab Social Media Report* have explored this growth, which has been fueled in part by the use of networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter in the movements of the so-called "Arab spring." The third edition of the report builds on these timely themes, which specifically explored the exponential growth of social media use in the Arab world, and the role of social networking tools in the civil movements in the Arab region. Given the heightened participation of Arab women in these movements over the past months, despite their diminished use of social media as compared to the world average, this issue of the report will address three main questions:

1. Explaining the "Virtual" Gender Gap: What are the factors contributing to the low level of social media use among Arab women, as compared to men's usage and to the global female average?
2. Trends in Social Media Usage: Do Arab women perceive social media as useful to their needs? What are the usage trends?
3. Social Media as a Tool for Women's Empowerment: Can social media potentially increase women's civic participation in the Arab world and contribute to their political and economic empowerment?

Produced by the Dubai School of Government's Governance and Innovation Program, the *Arab Social Media Report* series continues to analyze usage trends of online social networking tools across the Arab region. Based on data collected in the second and third quarters of 2011, this edition of the report analyzes data on Twitter and Facebook users in all 22 Arab countries, in addition to Iran, Israel and Turkey. In another first-of-its-kind regional survey, this special edition of the report explores the role of social media in Arab women's empowerment. The survey was conducted as a collaborative effort between the Governance and Innovation Program and the Gender and Public Policy Program at the Dubai School of Government.

The *Arab Social Media Report* series is part of a larger research initiative focusing on social engagement through ICT for better policy in Arab states, which explores the use of social networking services in governance, social inclusion and economic development. The initiative also studies the potential of social networking applications for increasing collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation, both between and among government entities, citizens and the private sector.

1. Introduction

The growth and popularity of social media throughout 2011 has not shown signs of slowing down, either on a global level or within the Arab region. Globally, Facebook still dominates, with over 800 million users worldwide, of which 50% log in daily, while 350 million users access Facebook through mobile devices2. Twitter, on the other hand, reached over 100 million "active users" in September 20113, with an estimated 200 million "tweets" generated each day. Half of these active users log in every day, although not all of them tweet. About 40% of active users log in just to get news and information.

Among several topics related to the popular movements in the Arab region, the top ten globally trending Twitter topics in 2011 included the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the killing of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Globally, the most recent gender breakdown of social media usage (if we take Facebook, as an example) reflects that of real world demographics, with the number of male and female Facebook users roughly equal.5 This trend, however, does not hold in the Arab region, where only a third of Facebook users are women.6 This ratio has not changed since the last edition of the *Arab Social Media Report* was published in May 2011, despite the fact that Arab women have been active on social media sites across the region throughout the "Arab spring." According to our findings, social media is increasingly viewed as an important tool for women's empowerment in the Arab region. Social media allowed women to take on a new form of leadership focusing on utilizing connections and networks. Moreover, Arab women were not merely cyber activists, but were documented as active participants on the ground, taking part in, organizing, and even leading protests, a fact recognized with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to an Arab woman—Yemeni Tawakkul Karman—for the first time ever. Pictures abound of women in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Yemen taking to the streets and demanding change. Whether this activism will lead to broader inclusion of women in civic and political engagement down the line, or will merely see women being relegated to the sidelines, as has happened in previous Arab revolutions in the 20th century, remains to be seen.

It is this connection between women's use of social media (though meager by global standards) and their political and civic empowerment that this edition of the report will explore.

Among many creative social media civil society initiatives, two prominent examples in the second half of 2011 of women utilizing social media to create change within their communities and countries are Saudi Arabia's "Women2Drive" campaign and Egypt's HarassMap initiative.

2. The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment and Civic Engagement
♦ **Regional Survey Findings**

The societal and political transformations taking place across the region played an instrumental role in challenging stereotypes about Arab women as oppressed and subservient. In particular, the leading role that women have played in orchestrating and participating in social movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen has cemented their position as equal partners to men in transforming the political landscapes in their countries. The most obvious acknowledgement of this leadership role was the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to an Arab woman, Tawakkul Karman, a leading female Yemeni political activist. Whether Arab women's civic and political engagement will be enhanced in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" remains to be seen.

Although social media has been a powerful tool throughout these popular movements, whether for mobilization or disseminating information15, Arab women's use of social media is low compared to men in the region, as well as in comparison with the global female social media usage average (for example women make up about half of Facebook users globally, while Arab women only make up a third of users in the region).

"Most respondents thought that Arab women are less likely to use social media because of the societal and cultural constraints imposed on women."

The role of social media in women's empowerment in the Arab world has been highlighted repeatedly during 2011, but hardly any research has been conducted on the subject. As a first step in studying Arab women's use of social media and its potential for women's empowerment and civic engagement, the Governance and Innovation Program (GIP), in collaboration with the Gender and Public Policy Program (GPPP) at the Dubai School of Government conducted a research project aiming to address the following questions:

1. Explaining the "Virtual" Gender Gap: What are the factors contributing to the low level of social media use among Arab women, as compared to men's and to the global female average?

2. Trends in Social Media Usage: Do Arab women perceive social media as useful to their needs? What are the usage trends?

3. Social Media as a Tool for Women's Empowerment: Can social media potentially increase women's civic participation in the Arab world and contribute to their political and economic empowerment?

The online survey ran from mid August to mid October 2011, targeting16 men and women of all ages from all 22 Arab countries. We received 469 full responses, and 62% of these were from women. At the national level, we highlight three Arab countries—Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE17—to illustrate similarities and variations between country responses.

The typical respondent was aged between 15 and 40 years old, holding at least a bachelor's degree (with 40% holding master's degrees). The findings were analyzed at both a national and regional level, with an emphasis on gender variations in responses. Overall, no major gender differences in responses to our questions were found between participants at the regional level, and even when breaking the responses according to nationality, we only found slight variations between male and female responses.

In its first part, the survey explored and highlighted the gender gap in social media usage in the Arab world. Given the sizable difference in percentage of male and female users in the region (the latter constituting only a third of Facebook users)19, respondents were asked to identify the main barriers that they perceived were holding back Arab women from fully utilizing social media. The largest of these barriers was identified as the societal and cultural constraints placed on women in the Arab world.

To further benchmark women's use of social media against men's in the Arab world, the second section of the survey explored Arab men's and women's social media usage trends; these proved to be very similar, with networking, access to information and jobs, as well as activism ranking as top purposes for the use of social media among both men and women.

Follow-up questions about how social media was used for activism provided a more in-depth exploration of how men and women used social media as a tool for political engagement.

Lastly, the survey delved into male and female respondents' perceptions of how social media impacts Arab women, and its potential as a tool for women's empowerment. Most felt that social media could, in fact, enhance women's participation in the legal, political, economic, social and civic arenas, although there was some ambivalence as to whether the empowering effects of social media are limited in the absence of actual changes in gender equality legislation and rights on the ground.

The main findings are elaborated below:

## 2.1 Explaining the "Virtual" Gender Gap

At the regional level, most respondents thought that Arab women are less likely to use social media because of the societal and cultural constraints imposed on women (see Figure 1). Other reasons for the virtual gender gap in social media use that were listed by both male and female respondents included privacy and security issues, ICT literacy, access, confidence in social media, education, and the availability of "relevant content" for women.

Figure 1: "Research shows that women in the Arab world use social media less than men when compared to the global average. Why do you think this is?" (Regional gender breakdown)
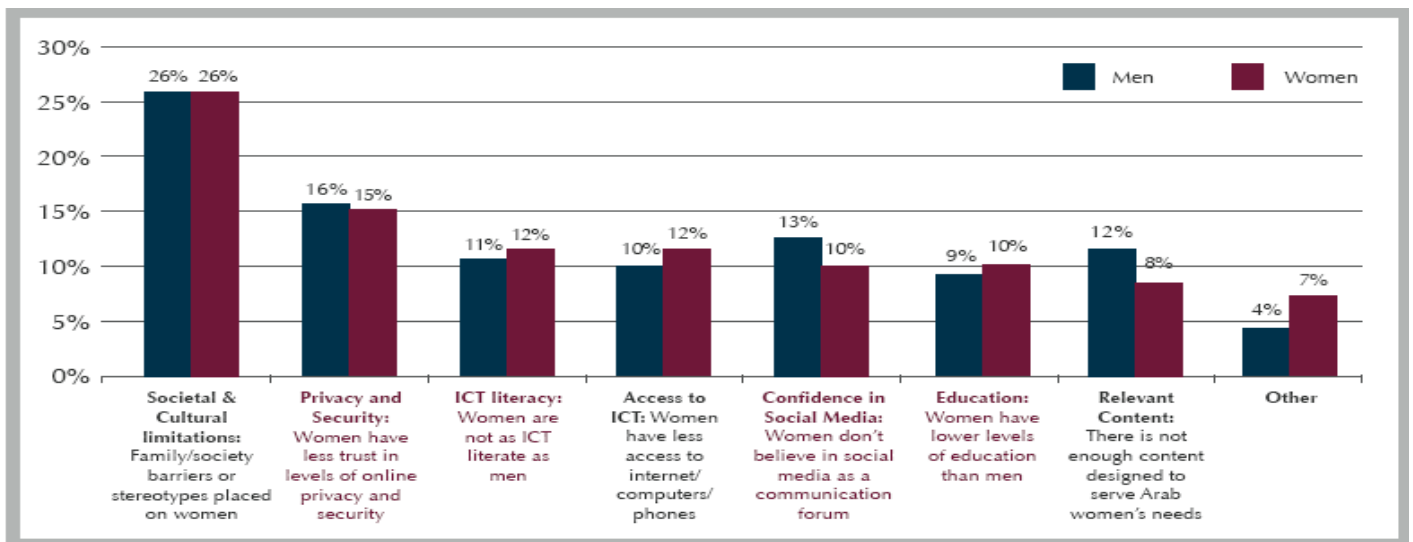
On a national level, responses varied slightly. While "societal and cultural limitations" were ranked as the top barrier across all three countries, Saudi Arabia had a slightly higher than average percentage, in comparison with regional levels (The country level differences between Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE were not tested statistically due to relatively small sample sizes. As such, these results are not meant to posit concrete conclusions about gender differences at the national level but, rather, indications of possible trends.) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: "Research shows that women in the Arab world use social media less than men when compared to the global average. Why do you think this is?" (National breakdown)
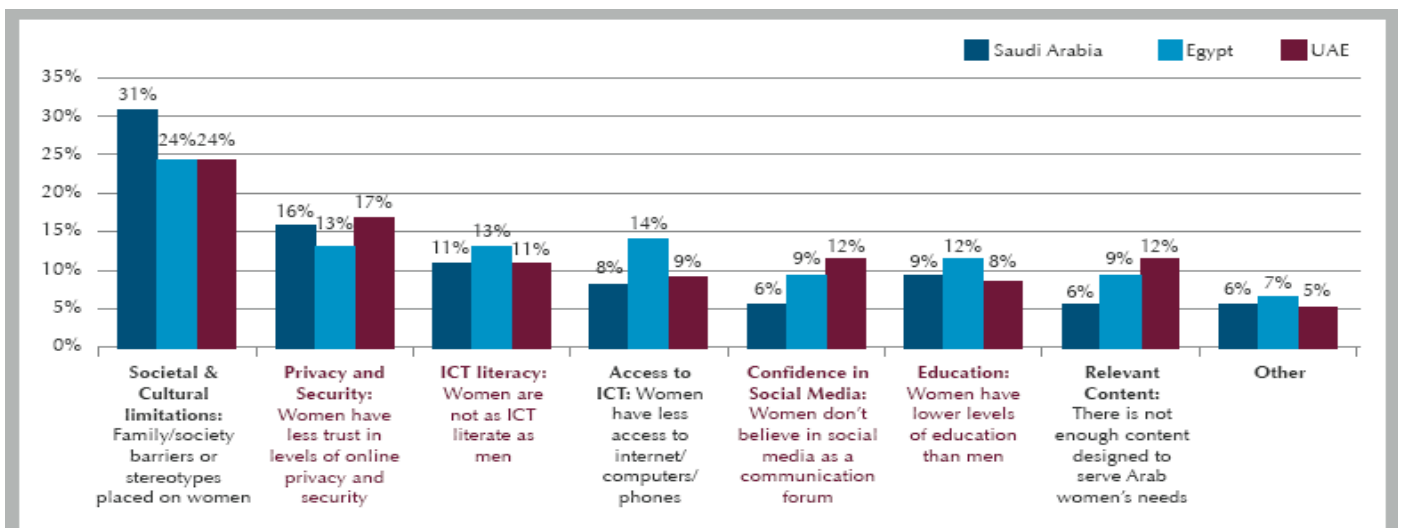
2.2 Trends in Social Media Usage by Men and Women in the Arab World

2.2.1 Social Media Use

After almost a year of popular movements in the Arab countries, at a regional level most men and women in the Arab world primarily use social media to access information and connect with people, according to the survey respondents. A lower percentage of men and women also use social media to contribute to civic and political activities, for professional purposes, and for job hunting (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: "What do you use social media for?" (Regional gender breakdown)
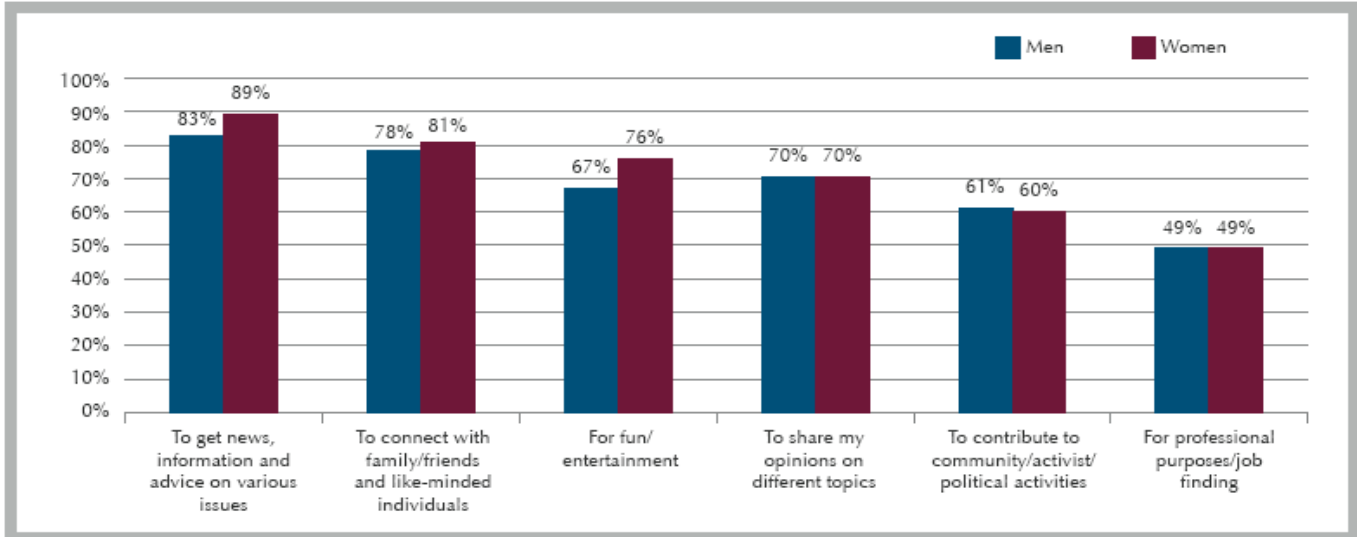
On a national level, responses were fairly similar across the three highlighted countries. With regards to political factors, some minor regional variations existed, such as in both the "use of social media to share opinions" and to "participate in civic and political activities." In these instances, Saudi Arabia showed a slightly higher than average response when compared to the regional level, while the UAE showed a slightly lower than average response (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: "What do you use social media for?" (National breakdown)
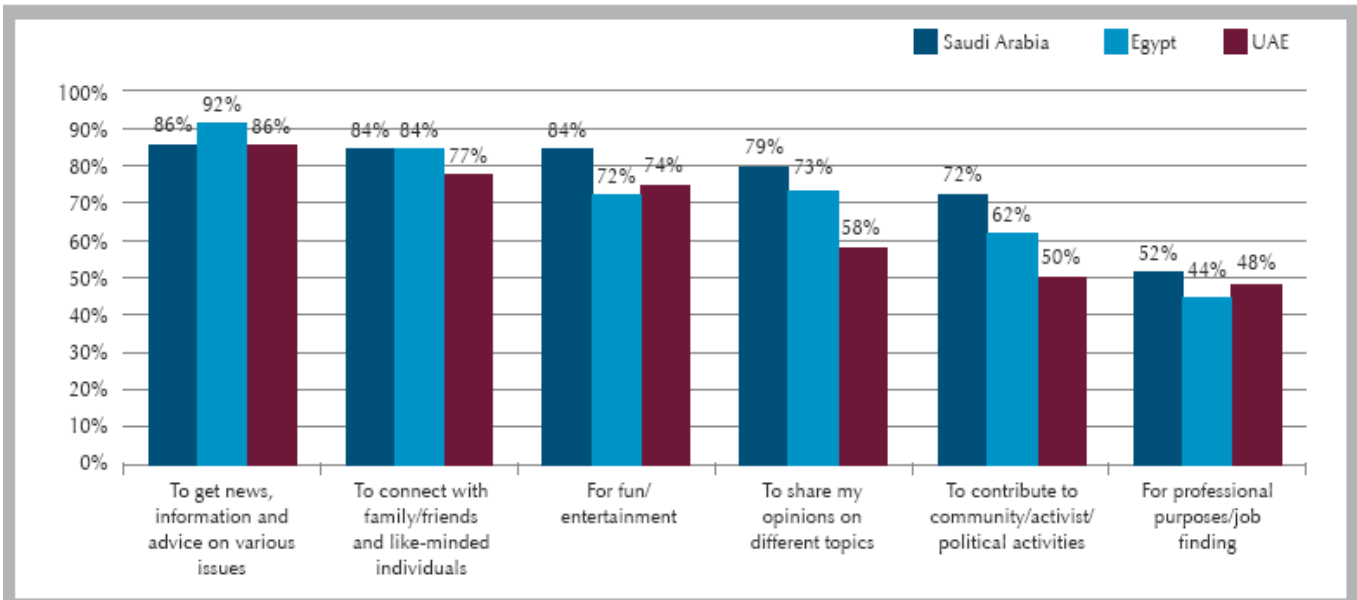
2.2.2 Concerns about Using Social Media

As observed by this survey as well as by earlier research published in previous editions of the *Arab Social Media Report*, with so many respondents using social media to raise awareness, share ideas and information, and engage in civic and political activities—whether for political reasons or otherwise—issues related to freedom of expression are natural concerns.

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE ...

SOURCE: Arab Social Media Report By Dubai School of Government

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Middle East Publishers Association MEPA is a FZ. LLC organization with the motto of building a society of publishers that will think and act for the benefits of the publishing industry.

The aim of MEPA is to serve, promote and protect the interest of press and electronic publishers, whilst raising the future standards of the publishing industry in the Middle East.

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