

A Statistical Understanding on the Demographics and Presence of Social Media in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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Abstract: The project titled A Statistical understanding on the demographics and presence of Social Media Market in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) clearly states that the objective of the article is to highlight the changes that have taken place in the social media platform and the dynamics that internet connectivity has brought to customer interaction. As United Arab Emirates (UAE) is considered as a launch pad for retailers for entry into the Middle East, a study on the customer sentiment and scale of internet usage is of utmost importance to the prospective social media marketers in Dubai. The article also gives an up to date insight into the customer demographics and number of users in the UAE and the potential benefits of targeting this segment. The research design used for the study is secondary research which analyzes the current market status and consumers. Also, the population of the country is compared with the number of Face book users and broken down demographically which will help businesses imparting on a journey to make a mark on social media and ensure that the customer is benefitted the most. Consequently, the outcomes, recommendations and suggestions are constructed which are considered to be the vital part of the assignment. The research design used for the study is conceptual theory provides the structure/content for the whole study based on literature and personal experience. Hence, the findings, suggestions and recommendations are constructed which are considered to be the important part of the project.

Key words: Social Media • Twitter • Face book • UAE Demographics

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them. Thus, the impact of consumer-to consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace (Mangold, 2009)[1]. Conventional marketing wisdom has long held that a dissatisfied customer tells ten people'. But that is out of date. In the new age of social media, he or she has the tools to tell 10 million consumers virtually overnight (Gillin, 2007)[2]. There have been many examples of angry customers writing blogs and tweeting about their negative experiences which in turn have hampered the brand reputation of various big brands.

Word of mouth (WOM) is the process of conveying information from person to person and plays a major role in customer buying decisions (Richins, 1983)[3]. In commercial situations, WOM involves consumers sharing

attitudes, opinions, or reactions about businesses, products, or services with other people. WOM marketing is influential, multifaceted and typically hard to influence (Dellarocas, 2003)[4]. Positive WOM is considered a powerful marketing medium for companies to influence consumers. WOM communication functions based on social networking and trust: people rely on families, friends and others in their social network. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the guiding principle organizations follow to communicate with target markets. Integrated marketing communications attempts to coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix-advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing and sales promotion-to produce a unified customer-focused message and, therefore achieve various organizational objectives. (Boone, 2007)[5]. The social media has combined both these concepts of WOM and IMC. Moreover, they have been interwoven into a powerful channel to interact with the customer.

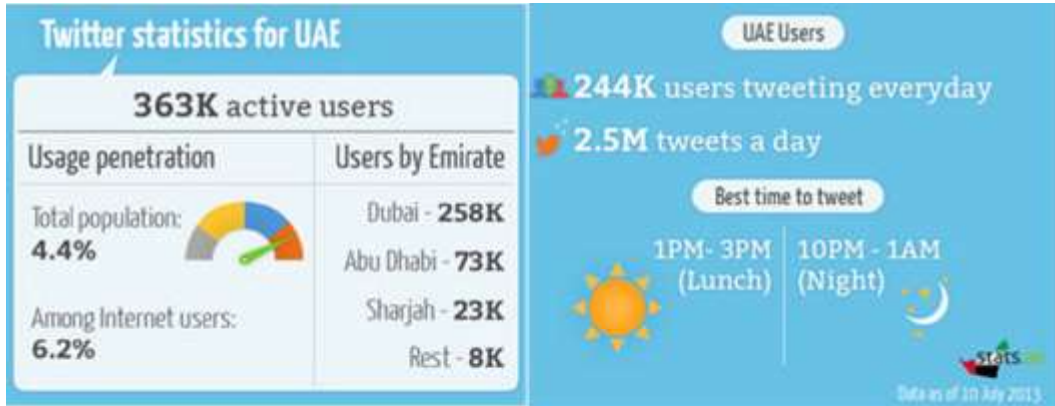


Fig. 1: Twitter Statistics for the UAE

Twitter in the UAE: Twitter is a micro blogging site which allows users to get updates from people or organizations and retweet the message to their followers. Micro blogging is a relatively new phenomenon defined as “a form of blogging that lets you write brief text updates (usually less than 200 characters) about your life on the go and send them to friends and interested observers via text messaging instant messaging (IM), email or the web (Wikipedia, 2014). Twitter not only gives the customers a medium to communicate with each other and amplify viewpoints but also it gives companies a very regular medium to converse and update customers on the brand.

Twitter has reached approximate 5% of the UAE’s population and around 7% when compared to the internet users market in the UAE. Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the two emirates with more developed economies, have the highest concentration of Twitter users in the UAE. Dubai is in the lead with an estimated 258,611 Twitter users, which constitutes about 71.12% of total users in UAE (Fish Eye Analytics, 2014)[6].

As of 10 July 2013, the estimated number of active Twitter users in the UAE stands at 363,624. The accounts are considered as “active” if the account has one tweet in the last month. Between 10 January 2013 and 10 July 2013, the number of Twitter users in the UAE increased from 305,056 to 363,624. This constitutes a 19.20% increase (58,568 new users) over the 6 month period, or a month-over-month growth of 2.97%. Umm al-Quwain has the least number of Twitter users in the UAE, standing at 189 which constitute less than 1% of total users. Among the UAE Twitter users, 52.05% tweeted in Arabic, 35.91% tweeted in English while the rest tweeted in other languages.

Facebook in the UAE: Businesses are using Facebook to find new customers, build online communities of fans and dig into gold mines of demographic information. “You need to be where your customers are and your prospective customers are,” said Clara Shih, author of The Facebook Era (Pearson Education, 2009)[7].

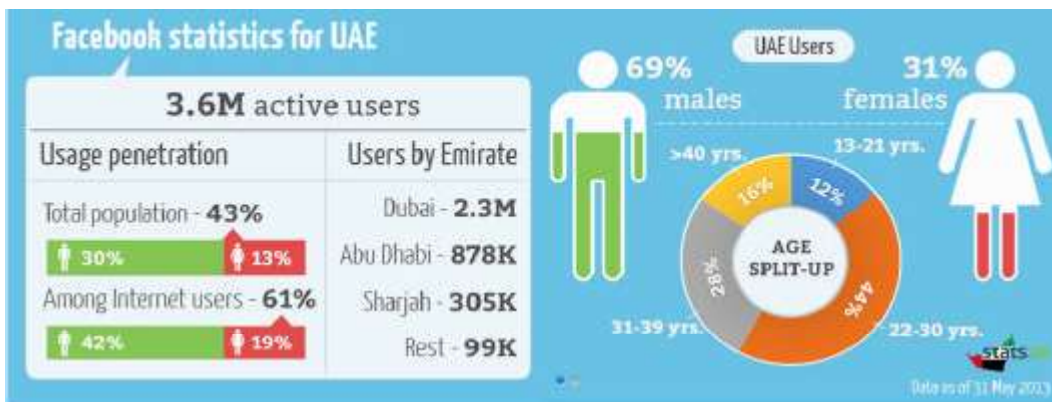


Fig. 2: Facebook Statistics for the UAE

Region	Users	Males	Females	Age 13-21	Age 22-30	Age 31-39	Age >40
Abu Dhabi	878,539	619,734	258,805	103,214	375,565	245,938	153,822
Ajman	52,320	33,538	18,782	11,972	21,726	11,972	6,651
Dubai	2,310,797	1,599,783	711,015	239,800	1,046,399	675,799	348,800
Fujairah	19,184	13,653	5,531	3,395	7,786	5,039	2,963
Ras al-Khaimah	26,160	17,722	8,438	5,056	11,211	6,155	3,737
Sharjah	305,200	204,513	100,687	54,500	126,440	76,300	47,960
Umm al-Quwain	1,504	1,142	362	309	664	332	199
Total active users	3,593,704	2,490,086	1,103,619	418,246	1,589,792	1,021,535	564,132
Total population penetration	43.49%	30.13%	13.35%	5.06%	19.24%	12.36%	6.83%
Internet population penetration	61.34%	42.50%	18.84%	7.14%	27.13%	17.43%	9.63%
Total UAE population*	8,264,070	6,161,820	2,102,250				
Total UAE internet users	5,859,118						

Fig. 3: Snapshot of Region wise users in the UAE

With more than 800 million users daily (Facebook, 2014), it is the place where majority of the customers are spending time online. Therefore, presence on Facebook increases the audience reach for most of the products and services.

The total number of Facebook users in the UAE stands at 3,593,704. 69% of Facebook users in the UAE are males while 31% are females. UAE has a Facebook penetration rate of approximately 43%, where male users make up 30% and female users make up 13%. The number of Internet users in the UAE who are using Facebook is estimated to be 61%, with male and female users making up 42% and 19% respectively. Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the two emirates with more developed economies, have the highest concentration of Facebook users in the UAE. Dubai is in the lead with around 2,310,797 Facebook users which constitutes about 64% of total users in UAE[8]. Abu Dhabi has the second highest number of Facebook users, standing at 878,539 users which constitute about 24% of total users in the UAE. Umm al-Quwain has the least number of Facebook users in the UAE, standing at 1,504 which constitute less than 1% of total users. The majority of Facebook users in the UAE are young adults between the ages of 22-30, standing at 1,589,792 which constitute about 44% of total users. Of this age group, approximately 71% are male users while 29% are female users. Interestingly, users between the ages of 13-21 only make up 12% of Facebook users in the UAE, standing at 418,246. The distribution of male and female users is fairly even, with male and female users making up 52% and 48% respectively. The number of Facebook users in the UAE went up from 3,397,760 on 1 Dec 2012 to 3,593,704 on 31 May 2013. This represents an increase of 5.8% over the 6 month period, or an average monthly increment of 0.9%.

Over the 6 month period, Facebook penetration rate rose by 2.4%, largely owing to the fast-growing Facebook users in Abu Dhabi-who grew by 48.5%. Male Facebook users in the UAE grew by 8.7% compared to the female users, who grew by a modest 1.8%. Facebook users aged between thirty one and thirty nine years grew the fastest among all the users using social media (FishEyeAnalytics,2014).

CONCLUSION

WOM communication functions based on social networking and trust: people rely on families, friends and others in their social network. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the guiding principle organizations follow to communicate with target markets. Integrated marketing communications attempts to coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix-advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing and sales promotion-to produce a unified customer-focused message and, therefore achieve various organizational objectives.

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