Digital Digest

A personal take on recent Internet and Technology developments
from – and/or potentially impacting on - Qatar and the Middle East

Issue 1: June 2012

Context

This digest aims to share some of the key digital developments from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in recent months.

It also highlights some global communications developments which may impact on Qatar and the wider MENA region at a later date.

Stories of particular interest in this first issue include the extraordinary growth of Facebook's Arabic interface (slides 5-6) and the recent launch of an Arabic homepage for Twitter (slide 7).

Outside of our region, the smartphone revolution (slides 15-17) offers us some insights into the types of services we may shortly see in the MENA region, and there are potentially important changes afoot on how the Internet is governed too (slide 22).

Contents

1. Recent developments in the MENA region

News from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia and Arabic language initiatives

Images: http://bit.ly/LCN5yC and http://bit.ly/LTzNud

1.1   Facebook continues to grow in the region

- **Facebook now has 45 million users in the region, with Arabic overtaking English as the most popular language on Facebook in the Middle East.**

- Facebook's Arabic interface has outstripped the site's overall growth in the region by nearly double, reaching 160% year-on-year growth by May 2011

- This is compared with overall subscriber growth of 87%.

- **As a result, there are now more Facebook Arabic users in the MENA today than there were *total* Facebook users in the region two years ago.**

FACEBOOK ARABIC HAS GROWN UP FAST

Legend:
- French
- English
- Arabic

Chart data points:
- 2010: French 25%, English 50%, Arabic 23%
- 2012: French 23%, English 36%, Arabic 39%

Y-axis: 0 to 45,000,000
X-axis: 2010, 2011, 2012

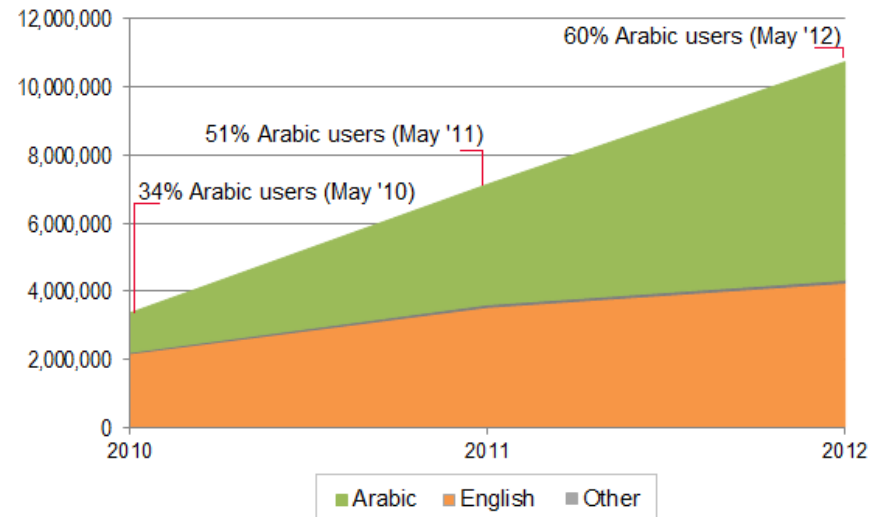Spot On Public Relations, May 2012

Source: http://bit.ly/KFMA3U
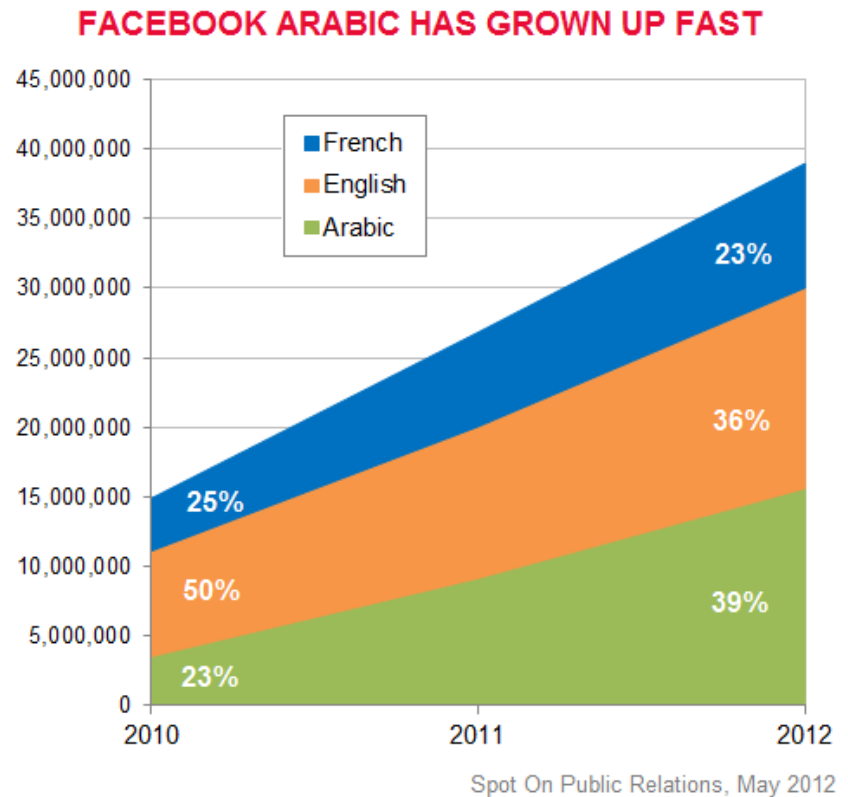
But usage, especially in Arabic, varies substantially

Arabic usage varies widely by country.

➤ Arabic dominates FB usage in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

➤ Whilst 60% of Iraq's 1.6 million Facebook subscribers now use the Arabic interface, 74% in Libya, 75% in Palestine and 82% in Yemen.

➤ French is the majority FB language in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

➤ In Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Oman and the UAE, English is the most popular language used.

EGYPT NOW HAS 6.4M FACEBOOK ARABIC USERS

60% Arabic users (May '12)

51% Arabic users (May '11)

34% Arabic users (May '10)

■ Arabic ■ English ■ Other

Spot On Public Relations, May 2012

Even in countries where Arabic FB usage is secondary, growth remains substantial e.g. UAE saw a 47% growth in Facebook Arabic users last year.

Source: http://bit.ly/KFMA3U

Also in the last month Facebook opened its first office in the Middle East (in Dubai).

Image: http://bit.ly/KsS7Kn

1.2   Twitter also continues to expand in Arabic

- In March Twitter announced that its homepage is now available in Arabic.
- Their blog thanked the 13,000 volunteers who helped translate Twitter into four new languages. See: Twitter Now Available in Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew and Urdu

Map by Venture Beat to illustrate Twitter's new geographic reach

Sources:
http://bit.ly/Mwdbmi
http://bit.ly/NqkAVB
http://bit.ly/LdQpiJ

غرّد مع تويتر

twitter

شرح مبسط لاستخدام هذه الشبكة الاجتماعية الأشهر

652,333
Twitter users
in Arabia by Sep 2011

www.DiscoverDigitalArabia.com

Arabic is the
8Th
Most spoken
language on twitter

www.DiscoverDigitalArabia.com

1.3   And YouTube is also growing fast

- **Google recently launched a UAE version <u>YouTube.co.ae</u> of the site.**
- There are also country specific versions of the site for Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen.

- Google's Managing Director of Middle East North Africa, Ari Kesisoglu, has <u>commented</u> that:

> "…**[YouTube] users in MENA upload one hour of video per minute.**
>
> **There are 167 million video views a day in MENA**,
>
> **putting the region in the number two spot in the world,**
>
> **behind the US and ahead of Brazil."**
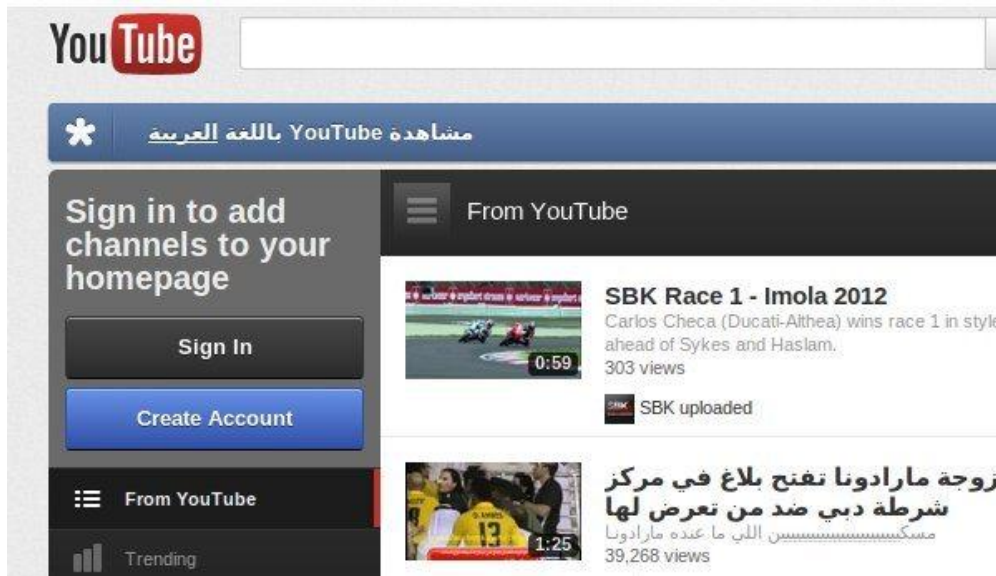
"A primary objective for us is to encourage local content from regional users, which we believe will be fuelled by this latest development."

Image: http://bit.ly/Mww4kV

1.4   7 new Arabic language initiatives launch in UAE

- **The UAE has launched 7 initiatives to establish the UAE as a global centre of excellence for Arabic language.**

- This includes a language center based at Zayed University, to "revive Arabic as لغة العلـــــــوم والتكنولوجيـــــــا (the language of sciences and technology)".

Sources: http://www.newzglobe.com/article/20120423/arabic-language-protects-emirati-heritage-ruler
And: http://blogs.transparent.com/arabic/new-global-center-of-excellence-for-arabic-language/

Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum has also launched his own YouTube channel.

The feed for the channel can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/user/HSMohammedBinRashid/feed

1.5   Drive to grow Arabic content on Wikipedia

- **The Wikimedia Foundation launched the Arabic Wikipedia Editors Program, run in partnership with Taghreedat, to find and train Arabic Wikipedia editors.**

- At present there are c.630 Arabic Wikipedia editors (the English edition has 300,000).

- Wikipedia hosts c.178,000 articles in Arabic, with 76 new articles added each day.

- The Arabic language on Wikipedia ranks 27th among 280 languages being used on Wikipedia.

- With c.374 million speakers this contrasts with many less popular languages such as Norwegian, which is spoken by only 4.6 million people, but enjoys 300,000 articles on Wikipedia in the language.

Source: http://thenextweb.com/me/2012/03/29/arabic-may-be-one-of-the-fastest-growing-communities-on-wikipedia-but-egypt-and-saudi-arabia-provide-half-the-content/
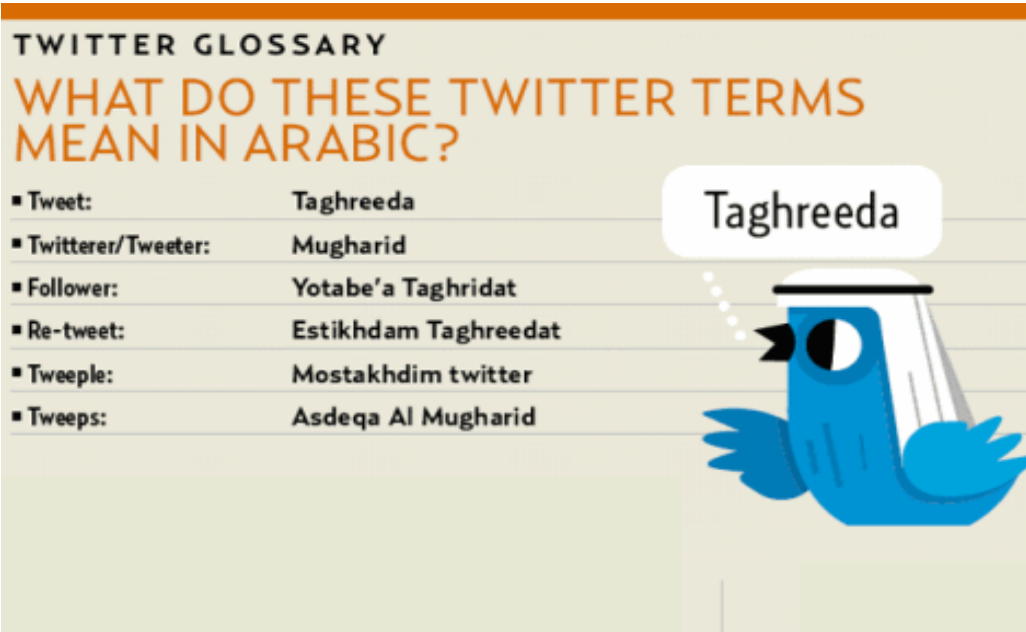
1.6   And to provide an Arabic context

Taghreedat, is also working to introduce the first Arabic Tech/Web 2.0 Dictionary.

- *The Next Web* reports that 2,500 volunteers from 28 countries are producing a dictionary of technological and social media-related terminology.

"The glossary will break a big barrier because many users resort to combining English terminology with the Arabic text, so we want to change that and introduce the first Arabic technology and social media glossary."

Co-founder of **Taghreedat** **Sami Mubarak** speaking to **Gulf News**

TWITTER GLOSSARY

WHAT DO THESE TWITTER TERMS MEAN IN ARABIC?

▪ Tweet:	Taghreeda	Taghreeda
▪ Twitterer/Tweeter:	Mugharid	
▪ Follower:	Yotabe'a Taghridat	
▪ Re-tweet:	Estikhdam Taghreedat	
▪ Tweeple:	Mostakhdim twitter	
▪ Tweeps:	Asdeqa Al Mugharid	

2. Internet & Society: External Research Update

ICT & Society research, Futures and data on usage of Facebook by Arabic Youth

Images: http://bit.ly/KXUeK6 and http://bit.ly/KL2OMQ

2.1   Internet & Society: ICT Research

- **Saudi Arabia has the highest proportion of mobile phone users in the world.**

A study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and development (UNCTAD) noted penetration levels of 188%. Vietnam and Oman came second and third in the study.

http://www.1888pressrelease.com/ksa-ranks-first-globally-in-mobile-phone-use-statistics-pr-390147.html

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- **Female participation in Facebook across the MENA remains low**, at 33.5%, as **compared with the global female percentage of Facebook users** (roughly 50%).

Source: Arab Social Media Report, Dubai School of Government:
http://www.dsg.ae/en/ASMR3/ASMRAnalysis3.aspx

- **Afghanistan opened its first female-only internet cafe** in central Kabul on International Women's Day. Reuters reported that "swarms of hijab-wearing young visitors poured into the small café".
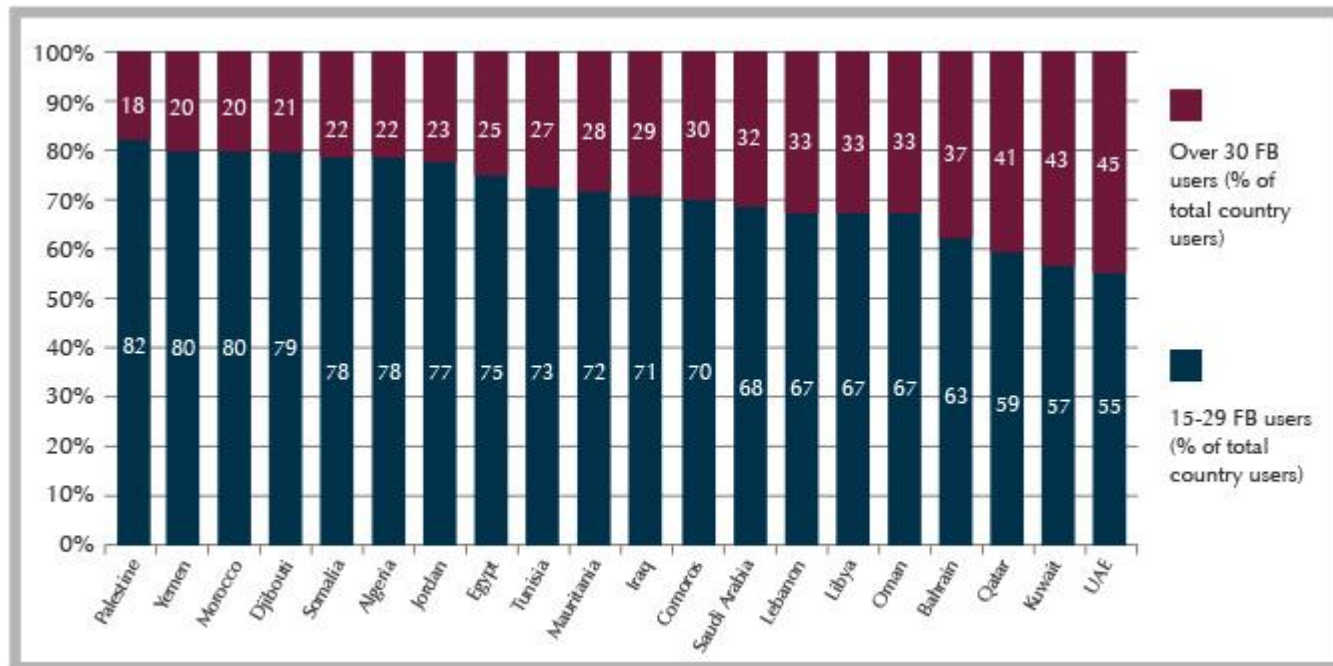
"We wanted women to not be afraid, to create a safe place for women to use the internet."

Aqlima Moradi, a 25-year-old medical student and member of

Afghan activist group YoungWomen4Change, which set up the cafe.

2.2   Internet & Society: Youth

- "**Youth (between the ages of 15 and 29) still make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region**, a number that has been holding steady since April 2011.

- Moreover, the UAE is still the most balanced in terms of adult and youthful Facebook users, while countries such as Palestine, Yemen and Morocco persist in having a predominantly youthful Facebook user population."

Demographic Breakdown of Facebook Users in the Arab Region (Oct 2011)*

Chart: Demographic Breakdown of Facebook Users in the Arab Region (Oct 2011)

Over 30 FB users (% of total country users):
Palestine 18, Yemen 20, Morocco 20, Djibouti 21, Somalia 22, Algeria 22, Jordan 23, Egypt 25, Tunisia 27, Mauritania 28, Iraq 29, Comoros 30, Saudi Arabia 32, Lebanon 33, Libya 33, Oman 33, Bahrain 37, Qatar 41, Kuwait 43, UAE 45

15-29 FB users (% of total country users):
Palestine 82, Yemen 80, Morocco 80, Djibouti 79, Somalia 78, Algeria 78, Jordan 77, Egypt 75, Tunisia 73, Mauritania 72, Iraq 71, Comoros 70, Saudi Arabia 68, Lebanon 67, Libya 67, Oman 67, Bahrain 63, Qatar 59, Kuwait 57, UAE 55
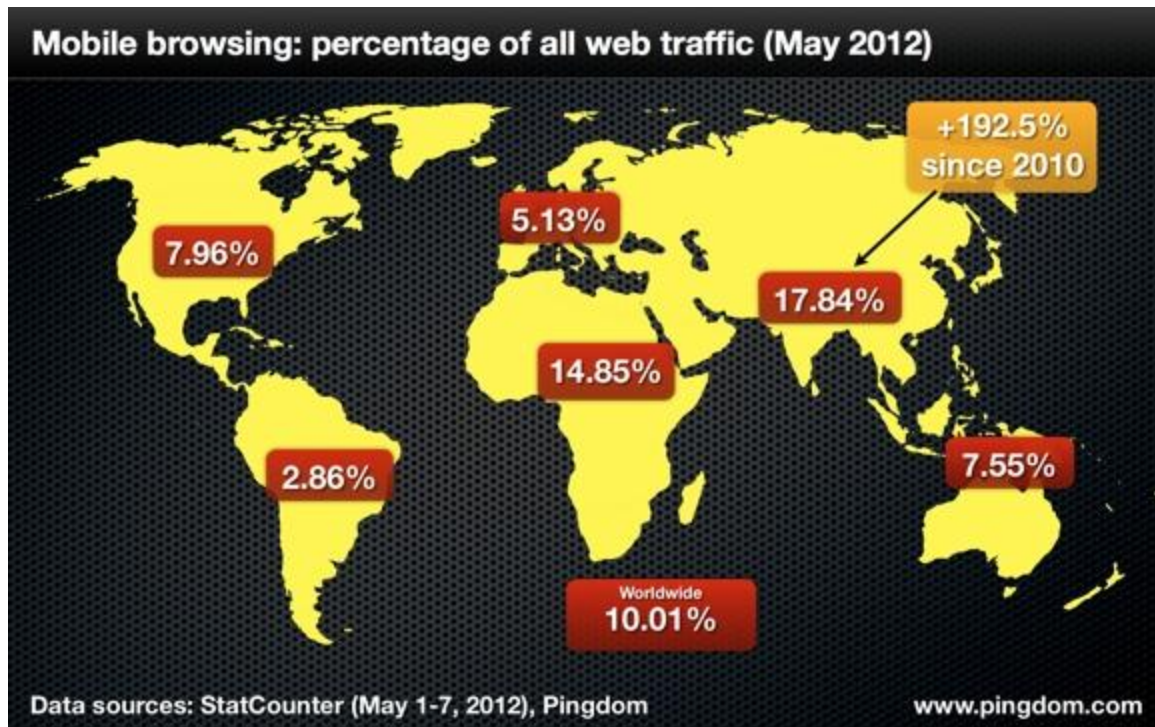
* Excluding Syria and Sudan. Due to US imposed technology sanctions on both countries, no data on demographic breakdown of Facebook users could be obtained.

2.3   Internet & Society: ICT Futures

Emerging Technologies - Mobile Internet Usage is Doubling Year on Year

- Global internet usage through mobile devices -- excluding tablets -- has almost doubled to 8.5% in January 2012 from 4.3% last year according to Cellular News.

- Worldwide, mobile Internet now accounts for 10.01% of total Internet usage, having increased from just 3.81% in 2010.

Mobile browsing: percentage of all web traffic (May 2012)

+192.5% since 2010

7.96%

5.13%

17.84%

14.85%

2.86%

7.55%

Worldwide 10.01%

Data sources: StatCounter (May 1-7, 2012), Pingdom   www.pingdom.com

Global use of mobile devices to access internet (excludes tablets)

Jan 2009: 0.7%
Jan 2010: 1.6%
Jan 2011: 4.3%
Jan 2012: 8.5%

Image: http://bit.ly/Kn240B

Map Source:
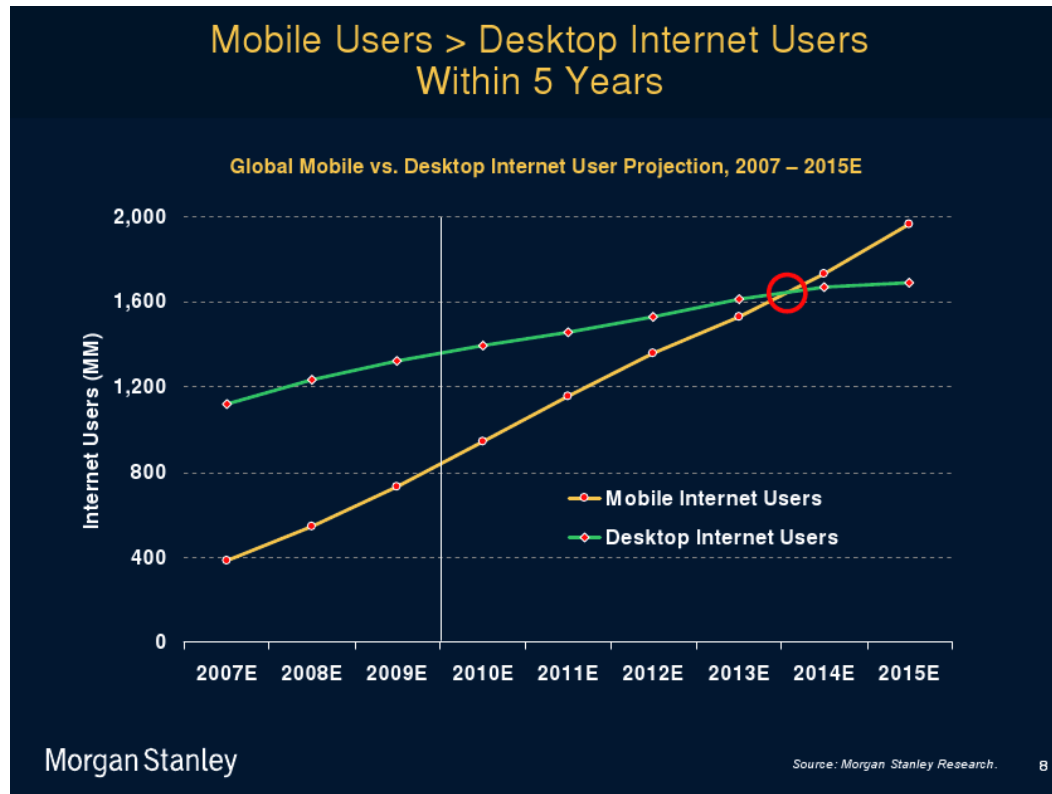http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/05/08/mobile-web-traffic-asia-tripled/

Mobile Internet Will Soon Overtake Fixed Internet across the globe.

- Mary Meeker of Morgan Stanley added her voice to those predicting this trend.

- Her team expects mobile data traffic to increase by almost 4,000% by 2014, for a cumulative annual growth rate of more than 100%.

Types of services likely to be popular include:

- location-based services,
- time-based offers and
- mobile coupons

Source:
http://gigaom.com/2010/04/12/mary-meeker-mobile-internet-will-soon-overtake-fixed-internet/

Image:
http://gigaom.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/mobile-chart2.png

Trend will open up new markets for ecommerce

Mobile Internet offers the potential for new ecommerce markets, with users are more willing to pay for content on mobile devices than they are on desktops.

Reasons for this include:

* Easy-to-Use/Secure Payment Systems — embedded systems like carrier billing and iTunes allow real-time payment

* Small Price Tags -— most content and subscriptions carry sub-$5 price tags

* Walled Gardens Reduce Piracy -— content exists in proprietary environments, difficult to get pirated content onto mobile devices

* Established Store Fronts -— carrier decks and iTunes store allow easy discovery and purchase

• Personalization -— more important on mobiles than desktops

Source: http://gigaom.com/2010/04/12/mary-meeker-mobile-internet-will-soon-overtake-fixed-internet/

However, current mobile Internet behavior and markets in the MENA may mean it takes a little longer for these to develop than in other markets such as the USA or Europe.

Top reasons for using mobile Internet by gender (MENA)

MALE

Mobile browsing (top 5 activities)
Email (71%)
Visit social networking sites (33%)
Sports news & information (32%)
News & weather information (30%)
Information on hobbies (25%)

Mobile apps (top 5 activities)
Email (64%)
Visit social networking sites (27%)
Sports news & information (24%)
News & weather information (24%)
Information on hobbies (22%)

FEMALE

Mobile browsing (top 5 activities)
Email (73%)
Visit social networking sites (40%)
Information on hobbies (25%)
Photo & video sharing (25%)
News & weather information (24%)

Mobile apps (top 5 activities)
Email (67%)
Visit social networking sites (34%)
Information on hobbies (22%)
Photo & video sharing (21%)
Play online games (19%)

SPOT ON
PUBLIC RELATIONS

effective measure

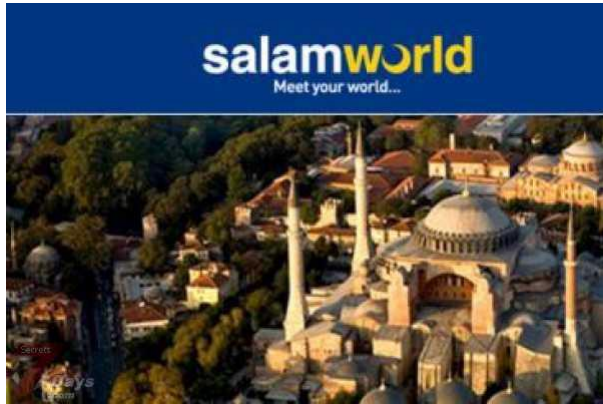Source: 2011 study by Effective Measure and SpotOn PR quoted at: http://bit.ly/mSqG0M

2.4   Internet & Society: Internet Governance

- Google is bidding to run an array of new top-level domains, including ".google", ".youtube" and ".docs", as part of a major expansion of the web's addressing system.

  See: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/9304758/Google-to-create-.lol-web-addresses.html#

- **World IPv6 Launch on June 6th**.

  More at: http://www.internetsociety.org/deploy360/ipv6/basics/

- Applications to The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) running new generic top-level domains closed at the end of last month.

- The new system will allow Internet names such as .Apple or .IMF or .Paris.

- ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, requires the new names. ICANN has taken in more than $352 million in application fees, with over 2,000 applications in ICANN's system.

- **Proposed new Internet neighborhoods will be unveiled on June 13.**

http://news.yahoo.com/proposed-internet-neighborhoods-unveiled-june-13-035930955--
http://www.ejc.net/media_news/website_address_revolution_back_in_motion/

ICANN
Internet Corporation for
Assigned Names and Numbers

3. Coming Up

Launch of Salamworld

Gamification research

Who will manage the web?

Images: http://bit.ly/LMGU7u, http://bit.ly/KmZ8kB and http://bit.ly/Kv2ai4

3.1 Societal Impact

Salamworld – 'halal' social network to launch during Ramadan

- Based upon Islamic ideals, and ', it 'hopes to bridge cultural, traditional and sectarian barriers and bring Muslims together in one online community'.

- They will ensure halal content through filters, moderators and user-based moderation.

- The site will be available in eight languages including English, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, and Russian. Plans to attract 5-15 million users by the end of 2012.

- Target audience includes: Young generation of Muslims and non-Muslims, International network of contemporary Muslim Scholars, Muslim communities in Islamic and non-Islamic regions and Non-Muslims seeking information on Islam.

> *"The content that is being used on other social networks is not very secure and full of haram...*
>
> *We don't want our young people to absorb all these ideas that are not familiar to them."*
> One of Salamworld's owners, Abdulvahed Niyazo, via Hürriyet Daily News

- Omar Chatriwala, an online journalist in Qatar, described the site as:

> *"…people trying to uphold the traditional values or the values of the religion who are saying*
>
> *'we don't want our youth exposed to this, and this is a better alternative…*
>
> *Its not necessarily the young people saying 'we don't want to be exposed to it.'"*

## 3.2   Emerging Technologies

US report on 'Gamification' and the Internet – says it is becoming more mainstream

- A new Pew Internet/Elon University survey of more than 1,000 Internet experts, researchers, observers and users suggested the use of game mechanics, feedback loops and rewards to spur interaction and boost engagement, loyalty, fun and/or learning will gain ground between now and 2020.

gamification:

The use of game mechanics & rewards for non-game applications in order to increase engagement and loyalty.

foldit BETA

21:59:50 GMT

Solve Puzzles for Science

BLOG »

Click to learn how you contribute to science by playing Foldit.

- In 2011, researchers at the University of Washington created a game *Foldit*, to crowd-sourced the discovery of a key protein that may help cure HIV.

- The game had 46,000 participants whose gameplay took 10 days to solve a problem scientists had been working on for 15 years.

Images: http://bit.ly/N2bLSZ and http://bit.ly/LhAtsE
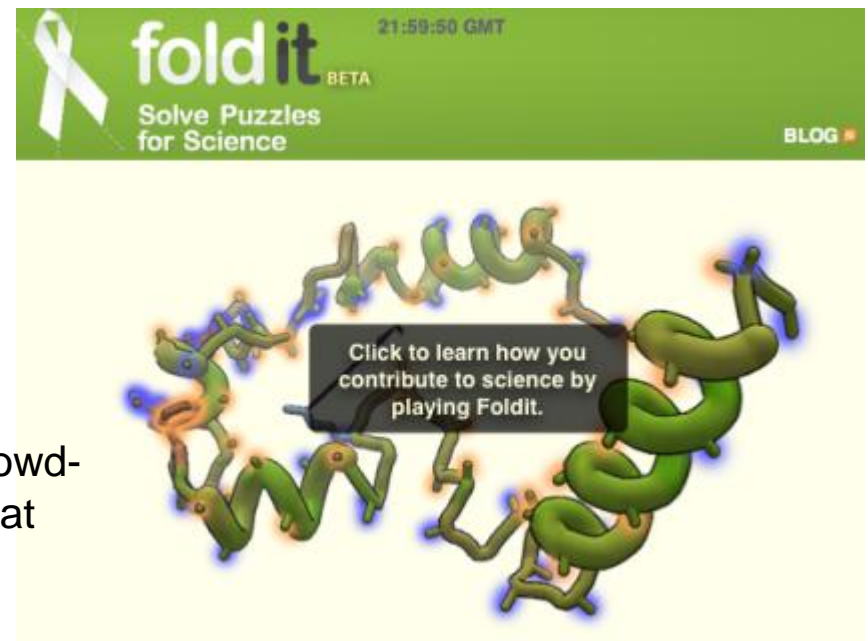
3.3 Will the UN control the Internet?

- **There are discussions about making major changes to the current system of Internet governance and moving control to Government-only entities.**

- **December's World Conference on International Telecommunications in Dubai, may see some countries pushing for the United Nations to take control of Internet governance.**

- Last year Vladimir Putin argued for: "establishing international control over the Internet using the monitoring and supervisory capabilities of the International Telecommunication Union."

- Whilst Brazil, India and South Africa called for creation of "new global body."

- The current system is a multi-stakeholder process including civil society as well as government actors.

- The US-based public policy organization Center for Democracy and Technology describes the current model as "bottom-up, decentralized, consensus-driven approach in which governments, industry, engineers, and civil society" contribute to policy outcomes.

"We are at a crossroads for the Internet's future. One path holds great promise, while the other path is fraught with peril…

The peril lies with changes that would ultimately sweep up Internet services into decades-old ITU paradigms.

If successful, these efforts would merely imprison the future in the regulatory dungeon of the past.

Even more counterproductive would be the creation of a new international body to oversee Internet governance."

FCC Commissioner Robert McDowell, at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

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