NEW MEDIA ACADEMY

BY **NEW MEDIA ACADEMY**
AUTHOR: **DAMIAN RADCLIFFE**

THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MID-YEAR UPDATE: JANUARY TO JUNE 2022

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SUMMARY: MOST POPULAR ACCOUNTS BY MARKET

For the first time, this report brings together in a single chart the most popular accounts originating in MENA on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

Each of these platforms is explored in more detail in this report, but below we outline the account with the largest number of followers, likes and subscribers, across MENA as well as the region's four biggest markets: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Featuring news and music channels, content creators, religious figures, politicians and sports stars, this chart shows the breadth of activity seen on different social media channels and the different ways in which users utilize them. Egyptian footballer Mohamed Salah is the only person to be featured twice. The Liverpool player, and captain of the Egyptian national team, has the most popular Instagram and Twitter account stemming from Egypt.

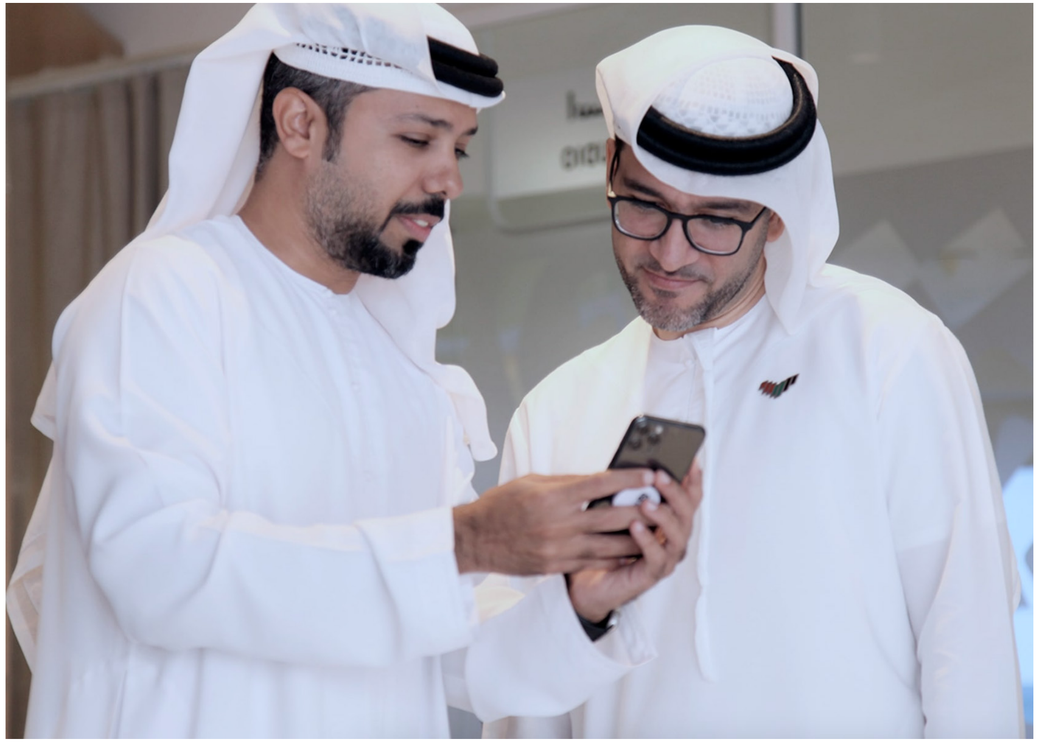


*Image **via** New Media Academy.*

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TOP ACCOUNT BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ACCOUNT BASED

	MENA	EGYPT	SAUDI ARABIA	TURKEY	UAE
FACEBOOK	**Supercar Blondie** Celebrity/Automobiles **48.2M**	**Mustafa Hosny** Preacher **35M**	**Mohamed Al-arifi** Scholar **22.9M**	**Galatasaray SK** Football Club **12.1M**	**Supercar Blondie** Celebrity/Automobiles **48.2M**
INSTAGRAM	**Gal Gadot** Actress **83.4M**	**Mohamed Salah** Footballer **51.7M**	**Ahmad AlShugairi** TV Presenter and Activist **15.2M**	**Nusret Gökçe** Celebrity Chef & Restraunter **46.8M**	**Ahlam Alshamsi** Singer **14M**
YOUTUBE	**AboFlah** Kuwait **25.9M**	**Mohamed Ramadan** Actor and Singer **14M**	**Mohammed Moshaya Al-Ghamd** YouTuber/Content Creator **21.9M**	**netd müzik** Digital Music Channel **22.6M**	**Narins Beauty** YouTuber/Content Creator **13.3M**
TWITTER	**Al Arabiya Breaking** News Channel **21.8M**	**Mohamed Salah** Footballer **16.9M**	**Aid al-Qarni** Preacher **20.5M**	**Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** Politician **19.1M**	**Al Arabiya Breaking** News **21.8M**

*Table: MENA's Top Accounts by Country of Origin/Account Based, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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SUMMARY: MOST FOLLOWED AND LIKED ACCOUNTS



Looking in more detail at each of the four platforms covered in this report, below we have outlined - in one handy chart - the top five accounts originating in MENA on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

Using likes, followers and subscribers, further demonstrates the diversity of each social media platform, with none of the twenty-five accounts here appearing more than once.

Although content creators, brands and public figures are active on multiple social channels, they each tend to have a platform that their users are more likely to gravitate towards. This usage is typically shaped by the characteristics and functionality of each social network, and reinforces the notion that - when it comes to your digital strategy and footprint - there is no cookie-cutter model. One size does not fit all.

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MENA'S MOST FOLLOWERS/SUBSCRIBERS

RANK	FACEBOOK	INSTAGRAM	YOUTUBE	TWITTER
#1	Supercar Blondie UAE **48.2M**	Gal Gadot Israel **83.4M**	AboFlah Kuwait **25.9M**	Al Arabiya UAE **21.8M**
#2	Mustafa Hosny Egypt **35M**	Jacqueline Fernandez Bahrain **57.5M**	netd müzik Turkey **22.6M**	Aid al-Qarni Saudi Arabia **20.5M**
#3	Amr Khaled Egypt **31.2M**	Mohamed Salah Egypt **51.7M**	Mohammed Moshaya Al-Ghamd Saudi Arabia **21.9M**	Mohamad Alarefe Saudi Arabia **19.5M**
#4	Nancy Ajram Lebanon **30.5M**	Huda Kattan Iraq **50.7M**	TRT Originals Urdu Turkey **18.5M**	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Turkey **19.1M**
#5	Jerusalem Prayer Team Israel **30.4M**	Nusret Gökçe (Salt Bae) Turkey **46.8M**	Al-Remas Iraq **16.8M**	Al Jazeera Arabic Qatar **19M**

*Table: MENA's MENA's Most Followers/Subscribers, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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MOST FANS

As in 2021, the most followed Facebook account in the region remains **Supercar Blondie**. With more than 48 million followers on Facebook alone, fans watch 500 million minutes of content **focused** on "the coolest cars, tech and gadgets in the world," on the platform each month.

Since launching the site in 2017, Australian-born **Alex Hirschi** has emerged in the past five years to become arguably the world's biggest female car and **automotive influencer**.

"Our mission is to entertain, as well as encourage a generation of women to lead in traditionally male-dominated industries," their website **notes**. "We always want to inspire a reaction of "How cool is that!"."



*Image: Supercar Blondie **via** Facebook.*

TOP FIVE MOST LIKED FACEBOOK PAGES

	NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY	FOLLOWERS	GROWTH SINCE END OF 2021	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1	Supercar Blondie @SupercarBlondie UAE	48.2M	+3.9M	– NO CHANGE
#2	Mustafa Hosny @MustafaHosny Egypt	35M	NO CHANGE	– NO CHANGE
#3	Amr Khaled @AmrKhaled Egypt	31.2M	+0.1M	– NO CHANGE
#4	Nancy Ajram @NancyAjram Lebanon	30.5M	NO CHANGE	▲ UP FROM #5
#5	Jerusalem Prayer Team @JerusalemPrayerTeam Israel	30.4M	-0.3M	▼ DOWN FROM #4

*Table: MENA's Top Five Liked Followed Facebooks Pages, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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Interestingly, the top five Facebook accounts - in terms of page likes - in the region are the same at the end of June 2022 as they were at the end of 2021.

The top three accounts remain Supercar Blondie and the official pages for the Islamic preacher **Mustafa Hosny** (35 million followers) and the televangelist **Amr Khaled** (31.2 million). Meanwhile, the Lebanese singer **Nancy Ajram** moves up one place (to fourth, with 30.5m fans), swapping places with the **Jerusalem Prayer Team** (30.4m fans), which slips to fifth place.

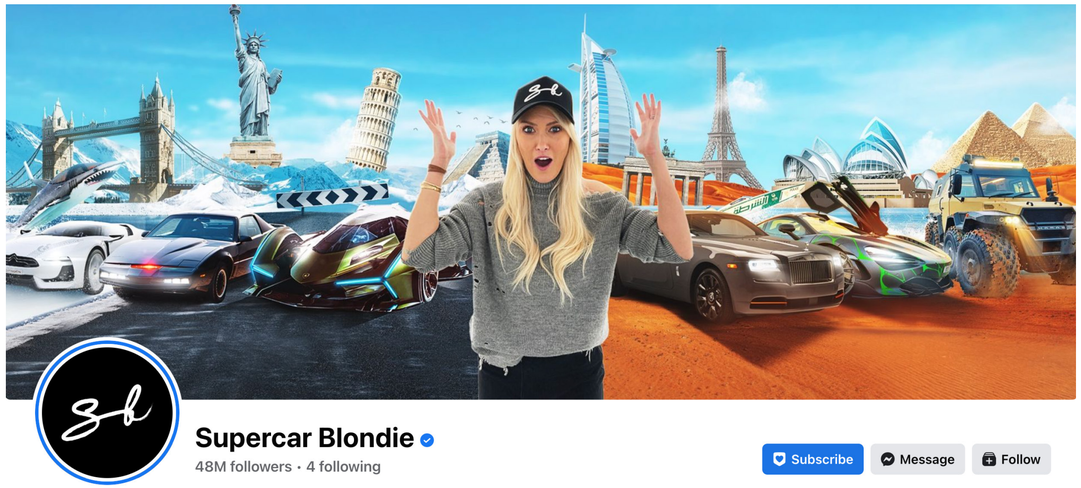


*Image: Screenshot showing **Supercar Blondie's** Facebook page.*

MOST INTERACTIONS

In contrast to the most liked Facebook pages in MENA, the first six months of 2022 saw a lot of change in terms of accounts with the most engagement. Three of the top five accounts on this list in 2021 (**Mustafa Hosny**, Egyptian newspaper **Youm7** and **Supercar Blondie**) were replaced by new entrants.

Leading the way is the page for **Magicano** which shares extensive content related to the Egyptian based football team Al Ahly Sporting Club. It's primary Facebook account has just under four million followers. In the first half of 2022 Magicano enjoyed more interactions (172.6 million) on Facebook than it did in the whole of 2021, where the page didn't even feature in Egypt's top five, nevermind the regional charts.



*Image: Magicano, August 2022, **via** Facebook.*

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TOP PERFORMING PAGES ON FACEBOOK

NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY			INTERACTIONS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1		Magicano @MagicanoMedia Palestine	172.6M	NEW ENTRY
#2		Screen Mix @ScreenMixx Egypt	151.1M	– NO CHANGE
#3		Rudaw @RudawEnglish Iraq	117.7M	▲ UP FROM #4
#4		Al Jazeera Egypt @AJA.Egypt Egypt	79.8M	NEW ENTRY
#5		AlSharqiya @sharqiyatv Iraq	74.5M	NEW ENTRY

*Table: MENA's Top Performing Facebooks Pages, Data **via** Emplifi.*

Also breaking through in the first two quarters of 2022 were **Al Jazeera Egypt** (79.8 million interactions) and **Al Sharqiya** (74.5 million), an Iraqi TV news channel.



*Image: AJA Egypt **via** Facebook.*

The dominance of pages based in Egypt and Iraq (with the Kurdistan based news site, **Rudaw**, sitting at number three) reflects the popularity of Facebook in those markets. As of **April 2022**, more than **45.6 million Egyptians use Facebook**, akin to 61.8% of the population aged 13+. In Iraq, 19.25 million use Facebook, **just over two-thirds** (68.2%) of those aged thirteen and above. Globally, Facebook had **2.93 billion monthly active users** at the end of Q2 2022.

Since the end of 2021, **Mustafa Hosny** (No. 1), **Youm7** (No. 3) and **Supercar Blondie** (No. 5) all dropped from the top five.

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MOST FANS

Israeli actress and model **Gal Gadot** remains MENA's most followed Instagram account. By the end of 2021, the Wonder Woman star had nearly 71 million followers. That's since grown to more than 83 million in the first six months of 2022.

Gadot has 25.8 million followers than the second most followed account originating in the region, which belongs to the Bahraini-Sri Lankan actress **Jacqueline Fernandez** (57.5 million followers)

There are no new entrants in this list, although the make-up artist and blogger **Huda Kattan** (50.7 million) is now ranked fourth having been overtaken by **Mohamed Salah** 51.7 million followers). The Liverpool star and captain of Egypt's national team added nearly five million new followers in H1 2022.

Nusret Gökçe, aka Salt Bae, the Turkish chef and restaurateur wraps up our top five with 46.8 million followers.

TOP FIVE MOST FOLLOWED INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS

	NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY	FOLLOWERS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1	Gal Gadot @gal_gadot Israel	83.4M	— NO CHANGE
#2	Jacqueline Fernandez @jacquelinef143 Bahrain	62.6M	— NO CHANGE
#3	Mohamed Salah @mosalah Egypt	51.7M	▲ UP FROM #4
#4	Huda Kattan @hudabeauty Iraq	50.7M	▼ DOWN FROM #3
#5	Nusret Gökçe (Salt Bae) @nusr_et Turkey	46.8M	— NO CHANGE

*Table: MENA's Top Five Most Followed Instagram Accounts, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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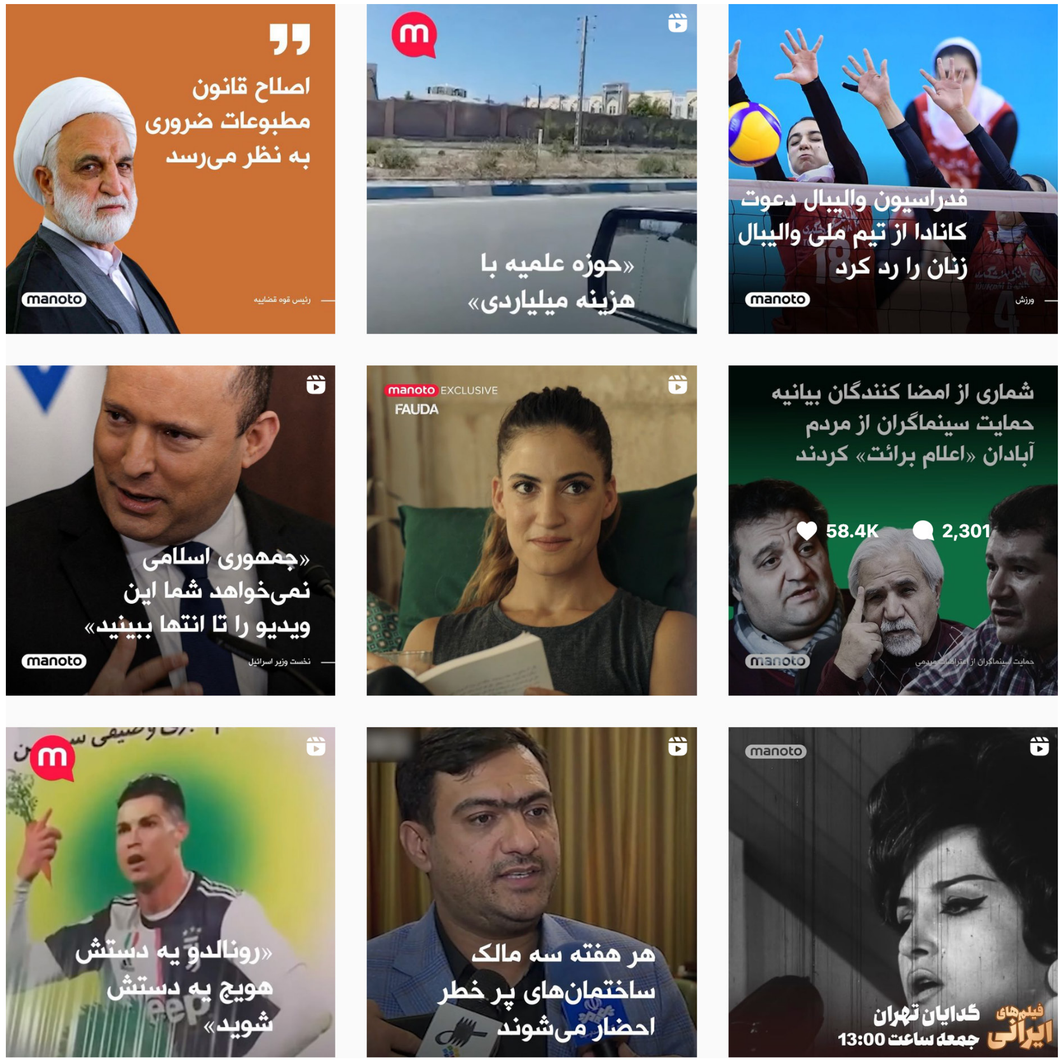


*Image: Screenshot of **Manoto TV's** Instagram, May 2022.*

MOST INTERACTIONS

As we saw in our 2021 end-of -year report, the profiles with the most interactions on Instagram are distinctive from our list of the most followed accounts. This lack of overlap highlights how there is not necessarily a relationship between the number of followers a user and the engagement an account has.

One again, **Manoto TV's** Instagram page - with 805.4 million interactions in H1 - has enjoyed considerably more engagement than the next account on our list. That's partly due to the popularity of Instagram in Iran, as well as the volume of posts they make on the platform. The Iranian sports news website **Vazesh 3** also had a strong six months, rising to fourth place (194.1 million interactions).

Turkish football team **Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü** remains in second place (238.3 million interactions) with another Turkish team, **Galatasaray**, hot on their heels (232 million interactions).

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TOP PERFORMING ACCOUNTS ON INSTAGRAM

	NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY	INTERACTIONS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1	**Manoto** @manotoofficial Iran	805.4M	– NO CHANGE
#2	**Fenerbahçe** @fenerbahce Turkey	238.3M	– NO CHANGE
#3	**Galatasaray** @galatasaray Turkey	232M	NEW ENTRY
#4	**Varzesh3** @varzesh3 Iran	194.1M	▲ UP FROM #5
#5	**Ennahar TV** @ennahar.tv Algeria	162.2M	NEW ENTRY

*Table: MENA's Top Performing Instagram Accounts, Data **via** Emplifi.*

Algerian **Ennahar TV** makes its first appearance on this list, coming in at number five. Although they have fewer than six million followers, they enjoyed 162.6 million interactions on Instagram in the first half of the year.



*Image: Screenshot of **Ennahar TV's** Instagram, May 2022.*

Since the end of 2021, **Çağrı Taner** (232 million interactions) and **Beşiktaş JK** (194.1million interactions) both dropped from the top five.

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MOST FANS

Of the social networks covered in this report YouTube has seen the most change since the end of 2021. Four of the top five most followed accounts in the region during H1 2022 are new entries, with only Mohammed Moshaya Al-Ghamd (aka **mmoshaya**) remaining on the list (where he drops from number one to number three).

The changing of the YouTube guard is led by **AboFlah**, with 25.9 million followers. The Somali YouTuber (real name Hassan Suleiman), attracted considerable attention earlier in the year when he raised $11 million for the campaign supporting displaced people in the region. His **record breaking fundraising efforts** included the "Longest live-stream (video)", which ran for 268 hours 14 mins 20 seconds and "Most viewers for a charity donation live stream on YouTube."

TOP FIVE MOST FOLLOWED YOUTUBE CHANNELS

	NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY		FOLLOWERS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1		AboFlah **AboFlah** Kuwait	25.9M	**NEW ENTRY**
#2		netd müzik **netd müzik** Turkey	22.6M	**NEW ENTRY**
#3		Mohammed Moshaya **mmoshaya** Saudi Arabia	21.9M	▼ **DOWN FROM #1** FOLLOWERS INCREASED FROM 21.2M
#4		TRT Originals Urdu **TRT Originals Urdu** Turkey	18.5M	**NEW ENTRY**
#5		Al-Remas **الريماس - Al-Remas** Iraq	16.8M	**NEW ENTRY**

*Table: MENA's Top Five Most Followed YouTube Channels, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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*Image: AboFlah, **via** European Gaming, January 2022.*

Other popular YouTube accounts which surged in popularity this year included the channel for **netd müzik** part of the wider video on demand provision provided by the Turkey-based **Netd.com** (22.6 million followers), **TRT Originals Urdu** (18.5 million followers)which features dubbed episodes of the Turkish historical drama **Payitaht Sultan Abdulhamid** ("The Last Emperor") and the Iraq based Arabic-language music channel **Al-Remas** (16.8 million followers).

Since the end of 2021, **Enes Batur** (15.5 million followers), **Anasala** (13.4 million followers), **Saad Lamjarred** (13.3 million followers) and **MBC** (11.2 million followers) all dropped from the top five.

MOST VIDEO VIEWS

Turkey also dominated our list of the YouTube channels with the most views in H1 2022. Among MENA originated services, **netd müzik** (822.2 million views), **Trendyol** (737 million views) and **Kuruluş Osman** (468.8 million views) are ranked first, third and fourth respectively. None of these channels featured in our end of 2021 round-up.

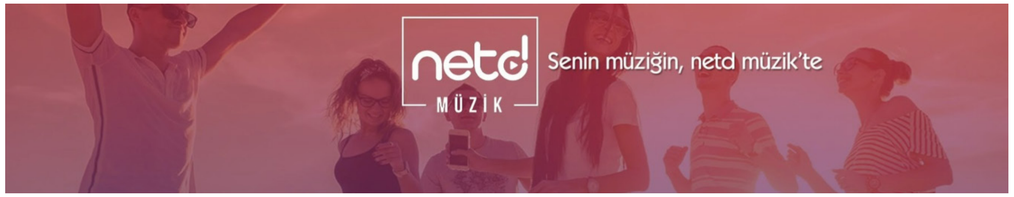


*Image **via** YouTube.*

That said, as our 2021 report discussed, we've already seen the growing popularity of music on YouTube, manifest here by **netd müzik** taking the top spot for engagement. **Kuruluş Osman** is another Turkish historical drama, a genre which enjoys huge global reach. The Guardian **explained** back in 2019 how "thanks to international sales and global viewership, Turkey is second only to the US in worldwide TV distribution – finding huge audiences in Russia, China, Korea and Latin America."

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TOP PERFORMING CHANNELS ON YOUTUBE

NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY			INTERACTIONS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1		netd müzik netd müzik Turkey	822.2M VIEWS	NEW ENTRY
#2		Nas Daily Nas Daily Israel	766M VIEWS	▼ DOWN FROM #1
#3		Trendyol Trendyol Turkey	737M VIEWS	NEW ENTRY
#4		Kuruluş Osman Kuruluş Osman Turkey	468.8M VIEWS	NEW ENTRY
#5		Supercar Blondie Supercar Blondie UAE	459M VIEWS	NEW ENTRY

*Table: MENA's Top Performing YouTube Channels, Data **via** Emplifi.*

Nas Daily, who enjoyed nearly 2 billion views on YouTube last year, remains popular dropping one place to the number two spot, with 766 million views in the first half of 2022.

Perhaps the most striking entry in this list is for the Turkish e-commerce platform **Trendyol**. Serving markets throughout Europe, the channel (737 million views in H1) features commercials, make-up and outfit suggestions, as well as other content featuring people from Turkey's fashion scene. Its popularity is just one indication of the increasingly important role social media plays in e-commerce.

Since the end of 2021, **Mmoshaya** (723.5m views), **Anasala I** (702.2m views), **Atv** (618.7m views) and **ON** (528.3m views) all dropped from the top five.

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MOST FANS

The **breaking news account** for Al Arabiya, the Dubai based Arabic TV news channel, continues to be MENA's most followed account on Twitter with nearly 22 million followers.



*Image **via** Twitter.*

Another news channel account, **Al Jazeera Arabic** is ranked fifth, down one spot from the end of 2021 even though it's follower count has grown by 1.5 million in that time.

In second and third place are the Saudi based preacher **Dr. Aid al-Qarni** and the Muslim scholar **Mohamad al-Arefe**. Both have around 20 million followers on Twitter and are also active on multiple other social media platforms.

TOP FIVE MOST FOLLOWED TWITTER ACCOUNTS

	NAME, RANKING AND COUNTRY	FOLLOWERS	CHANGE IN POSITION SINCE END OF 2021
#1	Al Arabiya **@AlArabiya_Brk** UAE	21.8M	— **NO CHANGE** FOLLOWERS INCREASED FROM 21.1M
#2	Aid al-Qarni **@Dr_alqarnee** Saudi Arabia	20.5 M	**NEW ENTRY**
#3	Mohamad Alarefe **@MohamadAlarefe** Saudi Arabia	19.5M	▼ **DOWN FROM #2** FOLLOWERS DECREASED BY 0.1M
#4	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan **@RTErdogan** Turkey	19.1M	▼ **DOWN FROM #3** FOLLOWERS INCREASED FROM 18.3M
#5	Al Jazeera Arabic **@AJArabic** Qatar	19M	▼ **DOWN FROM #4** FOLLOWERS INCREASED FROM 17.5M

*Table: MENA's Top Five Most Followed Twitter Accounts, Data **via** Emplifi.*

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*Image: Screenshot showing **Recep Erdoğan's** Twitter profile.*

Recep Erdoğan, the President of Turkey, comes in at number four - down one spot from 2021 - despite growing his followers by a further 1.2 million. With 19.1 million followers, President Erdoğan's Twitter base is some way ahead of his nearest compatriot, **Cem Yılmaz** (15.7 million followers) the Turkish actor, stand-up comedian, musician, filmmaker, screenwriter, and cartoonist.

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METHODOLOGY

This new report explores the most followed, and interacted with, social media accounts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It builds on data presented for the first time in the New Media Academy's 2021 report on social media developments in the Middle East.

As with that study, we worked in partnership with **Emplifi** to identify and share the biggest – and most engaged – social media pages and profiles in the MENA region in the first half (H1) of 2022 (January - June).

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Emplifi monitors more than +15 million social media accounts, making it the largest social media dataset of its kind. Harnessing this data, Emplifi works with more than 7,800 clients across 100 countries around the world, helping marketers and brands gain valuable and actionable knowledge about their industry.

These principles shape this interim report. Featuring previously unpublished data, this white paper provides a unique snapshot of insights into the most followed accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, across MENA.

We also dive into the pages and profiles on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube which enjoyed the most engagement during the first half of the year, and some of the reasons for these trends.

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ABOUT NEW MEDIA ACADEMY

NEW MEDIA ACADEMY

New Media Academy (Arabic, English) was launched in 2020 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to train Emirati and Arab youth to lead the rapidly growing field of digital media.

To improve their career prospects and enable them to lead as digital citizens in the new economy, the institution provides a range of interactive online programs that are delivered by top digital practitioners and academics from around the world.

Additionally, the academy collaborates with an elite group of influencers in the Arab world and helps institutions and businesses to create digital strategies and creative digital content.

New Media Academy's goals are in line with the four basic requirements in the UAE and the region: talent development, capacity building, preparation for the future and open learning. This reflects the key role the institution plays to ensure a promising future for the country and the region.

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Damian Radcliffe is the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism, a Professor of Practice, an affiliate of the Department for Middle East and North Africa Studies (MENA) and the **Agora Journalism Center**, and a Research Associate of the Center for Science Communication Research (SCR) at the University of Oregon.

He is also a three-time Knight News Innovation **Fellow** of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, an **Honorary Research Fellow** at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies (JOMEC), and a life fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

An experienced Digital Analyst, Journalist and Researcher, Damian writes about digital trends, social media, technology, the business of media, and the craft of journalism. He tweets **@damianradcliffe**.



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Terra Johnston is a digital storyteller and mixed-media artist based in the Seattle, Washington area.

Working with a wide variety of clients she utilizes both her marketing and design background in areas such as brand development, social media content creation, web, and graphic design, media relations, and copywriting.

She also does custom portrait and cartographic commissions and is currently designing the art for a children's book.

REFERENCES

All of the sources used for the creation of this report are hyperlinked throughout.

DISCLOSURE

Damian Radcliffe is owner/director of Kenja Consulting, LLC (UK) and Kenja Media Consulting (US). The work Professor Radcliffe does for the University of Oregon and for Kenja Consulting are related or overlap in that Professor Radcliffe undertakes research journalism, training, public speaking and consulting in areas which are, or may appear, related to Professor Radcliffe's University of Oregon (UO) duties. Thus, this study could affect Damian Radcliffe's personal financial status.

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Professor Radcliffe's outside work activity was reviewed and approved by the University of Oregon in accordance with its conflict of interest and commitment.

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