



**dotmedia**

Online Premium Network

NEWSLETTER

OVER 2,000  
**WEBSITES**

35 MILLION  
**AFFLUENT UV**

262 MILLION  
**PAGE VIEWS**

1 BILLION  
**IMPRESSIONS**

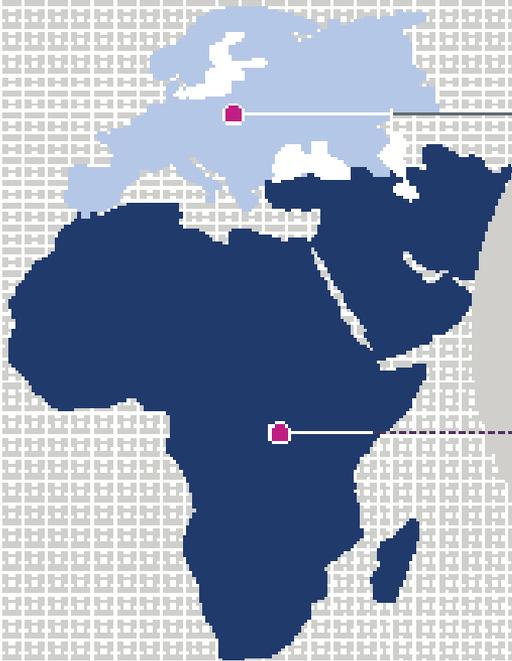
# RTB

What the new  
mind-boggling  
technology  
means for the  
whole industry

## RICH AND FAMOUS

Ad management and distribution platform DG MediaMind has released its 2012 global benchmarking report, *Viewability: A New Lens for Engagement*. The report includes a comprehensive analysis of complete 2012 engagement metrics from more than 600 billion display ad impressions from 47 countries worldwide, with a focus on viewability, a new metric shaking up the online advertising industry; viewability indicates the percentage of ads that were seen versus those served.

Benchmark tables included CTR, interaction rates and dwell, as well as video and expansion metrics. ■



**EXPANDABLE BANNERS BREAK OUT IN A STRONG YEAR FOR SPORTS CONTENT FOLLOWING THE LONDON OLYMPICS & EURO CUP**

0.51% CTR

10.5% DWELL RATE

18.1% - 58.3% AUTOUSER INITIATED VIDEO START RATE

36.1% EXPANSION RATE

**STRONG GROWTH IN MOBILE IN LINE WITH REST OF THE WORLD AND OUTSTANDING RESULTS FROM EARLY IN-STREAM VIDEO CAMPAIGNS**

CTR

0.73% MOBILE STANDARD BANNER

7.48% IN-STREAM VIDEO (VAST)

63% of rich media ads that were viewable showed a 54.5% boost in CTR vs total served ads

OVERALL RICH MEDIA DWELL RATE WAS OF 5.6%

The DG MEDIAMIND platform served in-stream impressions in more than 23 COUNTRIES throughout the year, UP BY 43.8% OVER 2011

63% of **RICH MEDIA ADS** that were viewable showed a **54.5%** boost in **CTR** vs total served ads

**CTR BY FORMAT IN THE MENA:**  
Standard banners: 0.11%  
Rich media: 0.21%  
In-stream video: 7.48%  
Mobile: 0.73%



**ENGAGEMENT, AS MEASURED BY CLICK-THROUGH RATE, INCREASED DRAMATICALLY WITH THE INCLUSION OF RICH MEDIA & INTERACTIVE VIDEO ELEMENTS**

**CTR**  
0.10% STANDARD BANNER  
0.14% RICH MEDIA  
0.16% EXPANDABLE BANNERS  
0.85% IN-STREAM VIDEO  
1.92% INTERACTIVE IN-STREAM VIDEO

**DWELL RATES COINCIDE WITH STRONG EXPANSION**

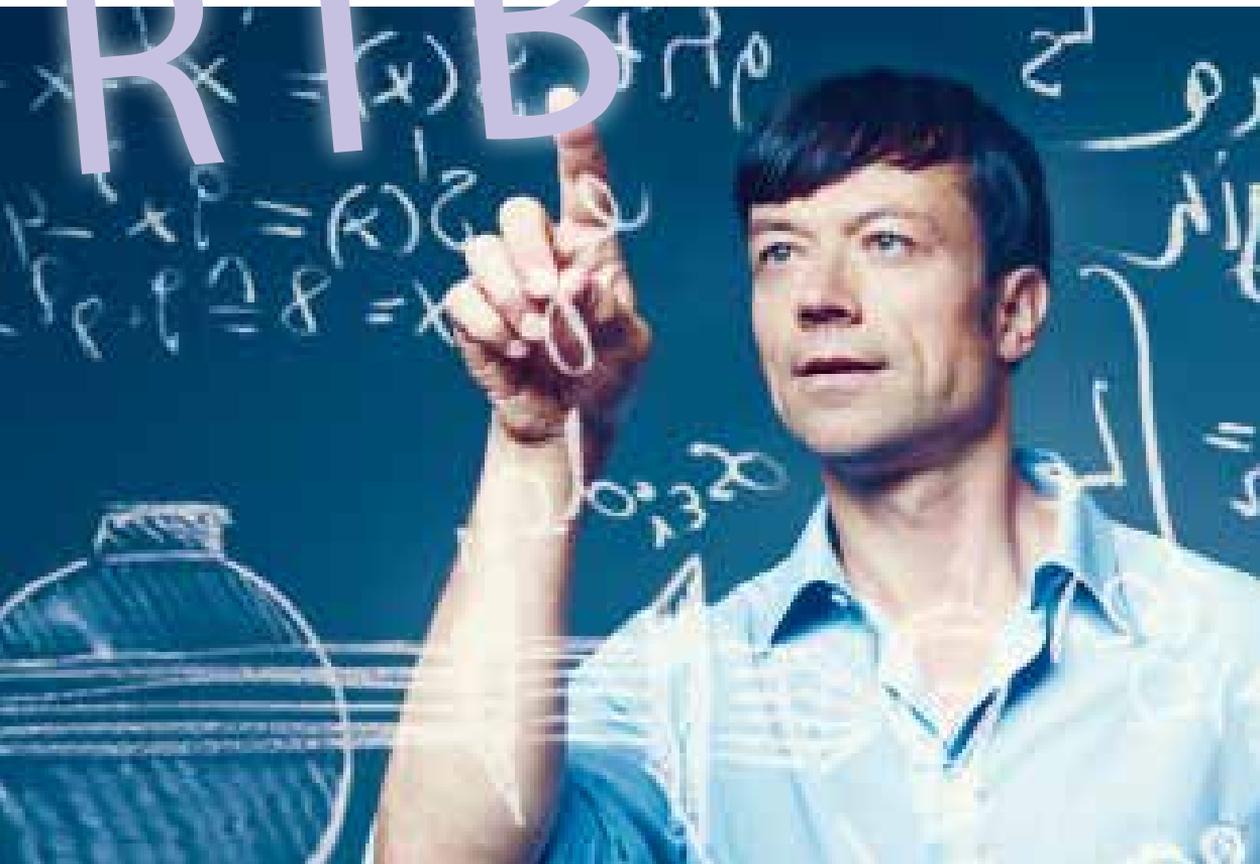
7.9% RICH MEDIA DWELL  
22.3% TOTAL EXPANSION RATE

Viewability markedly improved over total served impressions. It showed an increase of **54.5%**, proving that unseen ads were dragging down the overall effectiveness of campaigns

**FLOATING ADS and EXPANDABLE BANNERS** had the highest CTRs at **1.63%** and **0.25%**

Viewability markedly improved over total served impressions. It showed an increase of **54.5%**, proving that unseen ads were dragging down the overall effectiveness of campaigns

# RTB



## AUTOMATONS IN ADVERTISING



**Algorithms may already be an everyday reality in digital advertising, but are humans really being pushed out of the online equation?**

By **Precious de Leon**

When communication theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the line “The medium is the message”, do you think he could have ever imagined how profoundly digital media would affect communication? More than three decades after his passing, McLuhan’s most famous quote resonates well in today’s world, particularly in the media and marketing arena.

Content remains the strongest foundation for brand communications. Technology, however, is emerging at the heart of innovation in advertising. In fact, media agency MEC Global, in the 2013 edition of its annual *Review Preview*, puts “Content and Technology” as one of the key trends

for the next few years, firmly placing the two as the “new normal in brand communications.”

In its third year, the *Review Preview* is a collection of essays that discuss emerging trends. Last year, it highlighted “the era of content-ricity” and this year, it sees the use of technology as the driver of a brand’s content strategy, stating that “whether that is creating technology solutions that provide utility to consumers and then fuel content stories; or using the digital infrastructure to amplify a content idea, the lines between technology, product and communications are blurring like never before”.



**'CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY'**  
is one of the key trends for the year

These days, much of the focus in the digital media industry appears to be centered on real-time bidding (RTB).

It may be just starting to come into the spotlight, but the algorithmic media buying process has been in the digital advertising consciousness for a few years. It is mainly fueled by the need for more transparency, and perhaps more importantly, more efficiency of budget allocation. After all, the growing significance of science behind media strategies has really been about maximising the marketing buck. And RTB offers just that.

This programmatic buying model can be simplistically described as a stock market-esque, allowing the real-time auctioning (buying and selling) of individual ad units.

For publishers, it underlines the need for quality content to attract desirable readers. For media agencies, it signals the need to expand their capabilities and restructure their operations to include talent from professions such as IT and economics. For advertisers,

this means even better control and accountability, at least for campaigns online.

Indeed, RTB has created an alphabet soup of platforms that allow each party to optimise real-time operations: Demand-Side Platforms (DSP), Supply-Side Platforms (SSP) and Agency Trading Desks (ATD). Each of them is designed to make the process run simultaneously, communicating with each other in a matter of milliseconds.

A general RTB operation goes like this: When a user visits a website, exchange servers make an ad call to DSPs and ATDs with user information such as their browser cookies, search history and browsing behaviour. The ATD will communicate this information to SSPs and determine which advertiser gets to serve their ad on that window. User data is technically anonymous and contains information such as browsing history, IP address, location,

### TECHNOLOGISTS AND DATA

analysts become  
a new part of the  
media agency

internet speed, time of day, browser type, language, operating system and available ad

spaces on the site's window. Based on provided attributes, a bid is placed

on the ad slot and the highest bidder gets the placement.

All of this happens within a matter of milliseconds, and it's all possible because all communication happens through algorithms designed to sell or buy spaces within predetermined parameters.

Historically, RTB started out as a way to sell leftover inventory from publishers. Now, it seems to be fast replacing bulk buying of ad spaces online.

IT market intelligence firm IDC has projected "programmatic buying" to grow 53 percent annually between 2011 and 2016 in the US alone.

In the Middle East, adoption of the technology is climbing at a steady pace. "Technologies that emanate from the US tend to be followed here and the only reason it was not applied earlier was due to a lack of consumer data. Now, agencies in the UAE and the region have

recognised the power of RTB and have prepared for it by setting up trading desks and teams to manage demand," says Sean Hart, client service director at OgilvyOne.

"Previously, the only way that agencies could target their audiences was through conventional media planning, which never guaranteed the right audience and positive ROI. The shift from conventional media planning to RTB is because agencies can now better target their audience and control how much they are willing to pay per bid, as well as execute cross-platform campaigns," he adds, explaining that his agency is in the process of setting up RTB systems.

"Neo@Ogilvy, Ogilvy's performance marketing agency, has been monitoring the growth of RTB in the US for quite some time and since its recent introduction to the market, is now fully prepared to offer this technology to its clients," he says, confirming that clients from the finance and hospitality sectors have expressed interest in using RTB.

With every new model comes new challenges, however. What will complete commoditization of ad impressions mean for the implementation marketing strategies in other channels? How much automation is enough?



Varick Media Management (VMM), launched in 2008 in the US as the first data-driven trading desk for agencies and brands, recently published a white paper entitled *Man + Machine* that talks about the role of human capital in analysing audience insights and innovation in RTB. In it, VMM acknowledges the benefits of algorithmic models while strongly underlining the argument that human intervention is essential in making sure the programmatic process is as efficient as possible.

More specifically, the paper shows that campaigns running on an unchanged algorithms with minimal human control were less efficient and cost more to the advertiser because it could not immediately correct and modify its course as fast as a human can when it came to considering external factors. VMM calls these factors “noise” and it includes the weather (which may facilitate more online buying), current affairs, political and environmental factors plus holidays. These may widely affect a user’s acceptance of a brand message and likelihood of purchase.

Perhaps to the relief of some in the industry, we won’t be seeing ad servers and DSPs replace scores of advertising specialists. But a more diverse workforce in media and

advertising offices is inevitable.

“Technologists and data analysts are going to be a new part of the media agency,” says Dimitri Metaxas, regional executive director for digital at Omnicom Media Group MENA.

The long-term impact of RTB across the marketing, communications and advertising spectrum remains to be seen. Digital advertising is just slowly seeing a more substantial role in bigger, more integrated marketing campaigns and RTB would only help this movement.

In the region, Ogilvy’s Hart says a sizeable shift in ad spend to RTB is hinged on “whether agencies and clients can see a positive ROI by making each dollar count.” This movement will consequently change how online media is planned and bought in the region. And there may be no better example for a medium being the message in the digital age. If only McLuhan could see it now. ■

RTB is projected to grow  
by **53%** annually,  
between 2011  
and 2016 in the US

## THE MIDDLE EAST IN A STATE OF ONLINE PLAY



Our track record in the Middle East, across any given sector, points roughly in the same proverbial direction as the approaching iceberg: instead of learning from the iceberg hammering at our counterparts in the developed world, we have a habit of re-enacting catastrophes, a fiscal cycle or two later. Online advertising is no different.

It is easy to criticise the industry in the Middle East, but the time to pelt stones at it is long gone. Given that empires have been built on the foundation of the 15 percent commission, the greatest challenge for going beyond 'advertising-as-interruption' is inertia.

Breaking the cycle will take the might of Middle Eastern brands themselves, to demand real consumer engagement and not settle for a game of who can scream the loudest.

Today, brands need to connect with attitudes, not demographics. Traditional ad units such as online banners will continue to have a place in the digital mix, but only when informing of a genuine brand experience that awaits beyond them. Unless you're an online startup where customer delight is nestled a click away, in all likelihood a brand is touting content that is easier accessed elsewhere, maybe even at the point of sale. Jumping on the social media bandwagon isn't the magic pill either. Social media doesn't reinvent a brand. Many brands in the region only amplify their screaming by deploying banner-ad thinking to social media. Additionally, building a mobile app to replicate the offering of a website is another example of checking the right boxes but on the wrong sheet.

Every brand's promise is rooted in adding value to the consumer by selling their product, of course. But in the age of jaded online consumers bombarded with animated leaderboards, popups, page takeovers and skip video buttons, we need to start building delightful detours that add value first. The sale is the organic endgame, not the deliberate first stop.

Brands will go to any lengths to build mobile apps that digitally reproduce the fluffiness of a detergent, for example, in the hopes of convincing customers of its advanced formula. For the brand, this checks three boxes: latest technology, builds an experience, and creates awareness. Flip the equation for a second; from a consumer point-of-view, a key product attribute is highlighted, but nothing has benefited his/her life yet. Instead, the brand could have built an app (if mobile was a prerequisite) aimed at homemakers in the Middle East, to help keep track of groceries and home errands. Using the brand's deep behavioural insight of the target segment, it would have discovered a key pain-point for its consumers, and gone out on a limb to help alleviate this concern. Besides adding obvious benefit on a daily basis (the detour), it would have succeeded in evoking personal delight – all without having to directly sell a product.

Using indirect, attitude-driven and even experimental campaigns, brands have the opportunity to emerge with a deep emotional bond with consumers that permeates any billboard, online banner, social sweepstake or promotional kiosk from a competitor at point-of-sale.

Or, we could just watch another \$4 billion drive little real value for brands in the Middle East, while advertising agencies post another record year of earnings. After all, it's a tiny market – roughly half the spend per quarter in the UK.

No harm done. ■



**DANISH FARHAN,  
FOUNDER & CEO, XISCHE & CO**



OUR GREATEST  
CHALLENGE  
IS  
INERTIA

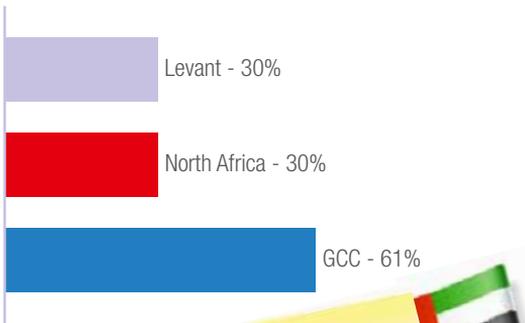
# INFOGRAPHICS

## DISSECTING THE REGION'S INTERNET HABITS

The Ipsos Gemius Online Audience Measurement in the Arab World is a study that tracks internet consumption and behaviour across individuals in the Middle East and North Africa. It covers 11 countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Lebanon, Kuwait, Iraq, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Qatar. A "Fusion panel" of data is presented for Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE, including both participating and non-participating websites. For all countries, "Cookie panel" data is included from more than 300 local participating websites, with Ipsos tagging websites pages with a specific script. The total software panel sample size is 20,219 and the total cookie panel sample size is 35,676. ■

### TOTAL MENA INTERNET PENETRATION IS 38%

### BREAKDOWN OF INTERNET PENETRATION RATES PER REGION:



Business-related and real estate websites see the highest reach, page views, visits, and time spent per visit in the UAE, compared to other countries.

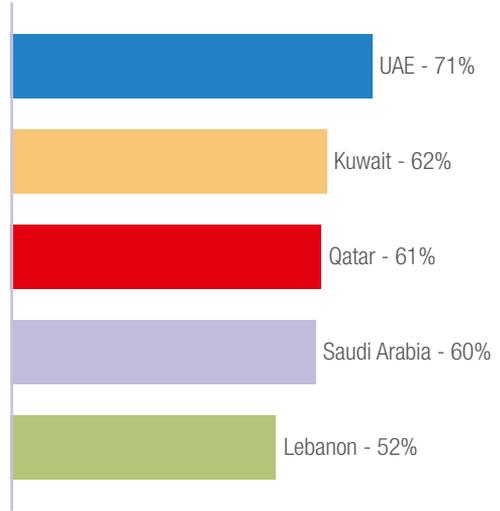
### COUNTRIES THAT SPEND THE MOST TIME ONLINE (total hours/month)

1. SAUDI ARABIA: 271.6 million
2. EGYPT: 137.5 million
3. UAE: 136.8 million
4. JORDAN: 62.8 million

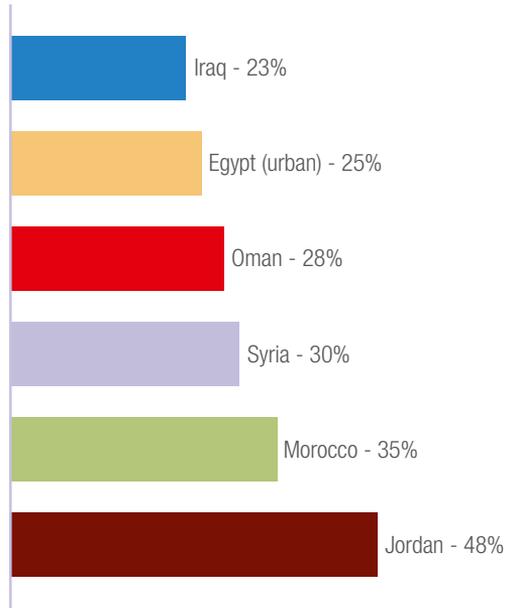


KSA had the highest reach, page views, visits and time spent per visit in websites on finance and stock market, recruitment, government and video sites.

### COUNTRIES IN THE ARAB WORLD WITH MORE THAN 50% INTERNET PENETRATION



### COUNTRIES IN THE ARAB WORLD WITH LESS THAN 50% INTERNET PENETRATION



## SMARTPHONE BRANDS MOST USED IN THE MENA REGION



## FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND LINKEDIN PENETRATION RATES IN THE REGION

### KSA:

- LINKEDIN 3%
- TWITTER 33%
- FACEBOOK 59%

### EGYPT:

- LINKEDIN 2%
- TWITTER 17%
- FACEBOOK 78%

### UAE:

- LINKEDIN 11%
- TWITTER 20%
- FACEBOOK 66%

### JORDAN:

- LINKEDIN 8%
- TWITTER 18%
- FACEBOOK 86%

## TOP 5 WEBSITES WHERE USERS SPEND THE MOST TIME

(based on average time spent per visit, by country)

Rank	KSA	Egypt	Jordan	UAE
1	noor.moe.sa (35)	facebook.com (25)	ammonnews.net (40)	facebook.com (17.5)
2	aljazeera.net (30)	twoo.com (23)	jawaker.com (38)	youtube.com (17)
3	youtube.com (25)	youtube.com (17)	aljazeera.net (27)	live.com (17)
4	haraj.com.sa (20)	anchorfree.net (16.5)	facebook.com (25)	gulfnews.com (16.5)
5	booking.com (20)	contactcars.com (16)	tagged.com (23)	emaratalyoum.com (16)

## WHERE DO PEOPLE IN THE MENA REGION ACCESS THE INTERNET?



87%

At home

14%

At the house of a friend, neighbor or relative

13%

At other places



8%

At public place and internet cafes

34%

At work

7%

At school

In **EGYPT**, both religion and dating websites are in the top 5 categories that users visit and spend the most time per visit.

Google, Facebook and YouTube have the highest average monthly internet reach across the **MENA** region.

Music websites have the highest reach, page views, visits, and time spent per visit in **EGYPT**, compared to other countries.

Users in **JORDAN** showed the highest reach of social networking, games and news websites.

The **UAE** sees the highest reach, page views, visits, and time spent per visit on email, compared to other countries.

## DATA-DRIVEN INNOVATION



The name Google originates from the word Googol, the number one followed by one hundred zeros, which was picked to signify the large quantities of information the founders set out “to organise and make universally accessible and useful.” A data-driven approach is an inherent part of Google’s culture, and data-driven innovation is our core competency. Underneath every large dataset there is a wealth of value waiting to be unlocked when it is organised, made accessible and has meaning attached to it, thus creating information.

Data-driven innovation, in the broad sense of the term, is profoundly transformative. Imagine all the value unlocked by humanity’s collective search queries and one can begin to comprehend how data

is transforming the world in which we live. From the farmer seeking methods to improve crop yields to the student researching medical applications of nanotechnology, the accessibility of vast amounts of information is creating ripple effects across society and will continue to do so.

Entire industries are experiencing a digital renaissance as the value of data is being uncovered. The advertising industry is a prime example of such an industry undergoing a data-driven transformation and programmatic advertising is at the forefront of this movement.

Google’s role is to provide the platforms that underpin the digital advertising ecosystem, thus enabling data-

driven innovation to truly flourish among advertisers, buyers and publishers.

### Data-driven advertising platforms

Demand Side Platforms (DSPs) such as DoubleClick Bid Manager allow marketers to target sophisticated audience micro-segments and define algorithms that invest proportionally to the value of those segments. This increases the efficiency of marketing spend and provides advertisers with transparency into their audiences. The transformation in how marketers today reach their audiences has ushered in a generation of 'Math Men' who approach media buying from a scientific perspective using automated trading desks, challenging the traditionalist offline world of media buying.

Sell Side Platforms (SSPs) allow publishers to maximise the value of each impression, dynamically allocating impressions to the highest bidder and automating the value-generating process of yield optimisation. Google's DoubleClick Ad Exchange is at the core of this digital advertising marketplace, intelligently brokering each impression as it is made available in real time via real-time bidding (RTB) technology. This enables very large volumes of impressions to be transacted in a scalable manner and efficiencies to be realised by both the buyer and the seller. The scope of the inventory exchanged is gaining in both breadth and depth as it expands across devices and ad formats, while also increasingly becoming more 'premium'.

Ad serving platforms such as DoubleClick for Publishers (DFP) can unlock the value of historical datasets by applying intelligent algorithms to forecast available inventory. Additionally, first party audience data can be put to use in order to dynamically create user segments, unlocking a source of value within datasets that were previously underutilised.

The most important outcome of programmatic advertising is that the end user is served the right ad in the right context at the right time, making them the ultimate beneficiary. As data-driven innovation continues to improve the efficiency and relevancy of advertising, users should cease to view advertising as obtrusive and begin to see it as a complementary component to their digital experiences. ■



### TARIQ EL-HAJ OMAR, STRATEGIC PARTNER MANAGER, GOOGLE



## GOOGLE EXEC MAKES BOLD PREDICTION ABOUT ONLINE POPULATION



Eric Schmidt, Google's executive chairman, has forecast that everyone on the planet will be online by the year 2020.

"For every person online, there are two who are not. By the end of the decade, everyone on Earth will be connected," says Schmidt, who appropriately used his Google+ page to make the prediction.

Given the vast reach of poverty around the world and the infrastructure and economic challenges of setting up digital networks in remote locations and areas of conflict, this is quite the statement.

His post comes on the heels of reports that Google has proposed an overhaul of its search results display in Europe. The proposal addresses concerns of the search giant showing monopolistic behaviour. According to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, Google's concession includes clearly highlighting its own specialised links, while still prominently displaying search results from at least three relevant links from rival services such as Yelp or TripAdvisor. ■

### Video ads fuel social media hopes for financial injection

Twitter is looking for ways to add video content and advertising to its services. The microblogging site is in talks with NBC and Viacom, according to reports from *Bloomberg*. Ad revenue will be reportedly split between Twitter and the video content providers. Twitter acquired Bluefin Labs, a social TV analytics company in February.

Meanwhile, Facebook reportedly wants \$1 million for its video ad slots due to launch this summer. This amount is for a 15-second video ad, which individual users will only see three times a day, according to *BusinessInsider*. Facebook has been considering autoplay video ads since last year. The final video formats are yet to be finalised.

Other than YouTube's video advertising formats and a select number of front pages in online publications, there are minimal video space alternatives for advertisers. Facebook could potentially tap into the relatively deeper budgets usually reserved for TV ad creatives. ■

### Paid-for social media reviews on the rise

Research firm Gartner forecasts a continued rise in companies paying for positive social media ratings and reviews. The study, entitled *The Consequences of Fake Fans, 'Likes' and*

*Reviews on Social Networks*, states that by 2014 between 10 to 15 percent of all social media reviews will be corporate-sponsored.

"With over half of the internet's population on social networks, organisations are scrambling for new ways to build bigger follower bases, generate more hits on videos, garner more positive reviews than their competitors and solicit 'likes' on their Facebook pages," Jenny Sussin, senior research analyst at Gartner said in a release.

"Many marketers have turned to paying for positive reviews with cash, coupons and promotions in order to pique site visitors' interests."

In the US, companies paying for positive reviews without publicly disclosure of the agreement could potentially face litigation. ■

## 5 QUESTIONS WITH ...

**How do you describe your job in one sentence to your six-year-old niece?** I make the iPad games you love playing.

**If Hollywood was to make a movie about your life, who would play you?** Probably Danny DeVito.

**What makes you angry?** Constant refusals to accept my 'The Entertainer' vouchers.

**If you were a superhero, what superpowers would you have?** Freeze time.

**Who is your favourite singer/band?** Anything Seattle based, circa 1991.

**PIERO POLI,**  
general manager  
for the  
Middle East,  
Havas Digital ME





### Mediaquest ramps up website portfolio

As part of its ongoing strategy to provide quality Arabic-language content online, publishing house Mediaquest – Dotmena’s umbrella company – has launched this May the digital edition of Marie Claire Arabia, the Middle Eastern version of one of the world’s most iconic fashion titles.

*Marieclairearabia.com* is the latest addition to Mediaquest’s growing portfolio of digital titles in Arabic. It launches simultaneously with the company’s newly revamped Arabic entertainment and fashion website, *Hayamag.com*, the online version of weekly title *Haya*.

The online makeovers are designed with a seamless user interface, allowing viewers to browse with ease through features and multimedia content. *Haya* has a circulation of 90,000 across the MENA region. The print version is also available for purchase in its digital format on the App store.

“There is a huge demand from readers and advertisers in the market for Arabic content online. Knowing that the online population is growing in the region, our focus for the past year has been on launching Arabic digital portals,” says Ayman Haydar, managing director at Mediaquest.

“The publishing sector is gradually creating a stronger online environment as advertisers continue to search for what works best digitally in this region. We are always working toward strengthening new verticals under dotmena and to bring our premium network to higher levels.”

He added, “I believe we are one-of-a-kind in our transparency, content, the flexibility of our offerings, our

executions and our out-of-the-box ideas; while still staying within the rules of the Interactive Advertising Bureau.”

Dotmena has exclusive regional partnerships with international companies such as online female vertical network Glam, as well as Time, Inc. The latter includes exclusive representation for Time Warner sites such as *People.com*, *ew.com* and *instyle.com* in the region. ■

### Print titles enter interactive frontier

Tablet versions of print publications under the Mediaquest stable are now available from the Apple Store.

A number of the company’s consumer and industry-driven Arabic and English titles are now available for digital subscription. *Haya*, *Marie Claire*, *Saneou El Hadath*, *Trends*, *Gulf Marketing Review*, *Communicate*, *Communicate Levant*, *Autocar Middle East/F1 Racing Middle East*, *Policy* and *Aficionado* have been digitised, extending reader experience to include multimedia elements. Enriched content such as photos, videos, recordings, animations, downloadable reports, and alternate editions are now accessible in addition to the print edition. Articles can also be shared on several social media platforms and via email.

“What you find from the tablet versions is that they are not just pdf versions of the magazine or their online counterparts. We have created them with the interactive experience in mind,” says Mohamed Bitar, head of interactive media at Mediaquest.

Single edition downloads are free for all publications and there are no plans to create a subscription wall. ■