

TOP APP TRENDS
DOMINATING MENA
— **IN 2015** —

arabnet
BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

FOREWORD

Mobile devices have already surpassed computers as the primary channel for internet access across the globe. This trend is set to continue as the overwhelming majority of the next billion internet users across the globe will primarily access the Internet over mobile. It will also create unprecedented opportunities for app developers across markets and domains.

The Arab region is no exception, with a booming market for mobile apps, and success stories like Tribal Rivals and Anghami generating hundreds of thousands of downloads and dollars. At the same time, significant opportunities for regional mobile apps remained untapped - from education to travel to content for children. However, app developers have very limited data to help them navigate these opportunities and identify the gaps to tackle.

To this end, ArabNet is proud to present the most comprehensive research report to date on app consumption trends in the MENA region. In collaboration with On Device Research, ArabNet conducted a survey of 2,500 individuals across 5 countries and analyzed the results by market, age, gender, and income level to elicit actionable insights for those working in this space.

More broadly, ArabNet is thrilled to present this report as the first product of its Business Intelligence division, which will leverage ArabNet's reach and insights to provide the industry much needed transparency and data on which to build. A number of reports are already in the pipeline, including a comprehensive report on technology investments in MENA to be released by the end of the year.

We hope that this report will help you build a better business. We also look forward to hearing your feedback, as we strive to improve our reports and make them more beneficial to you.

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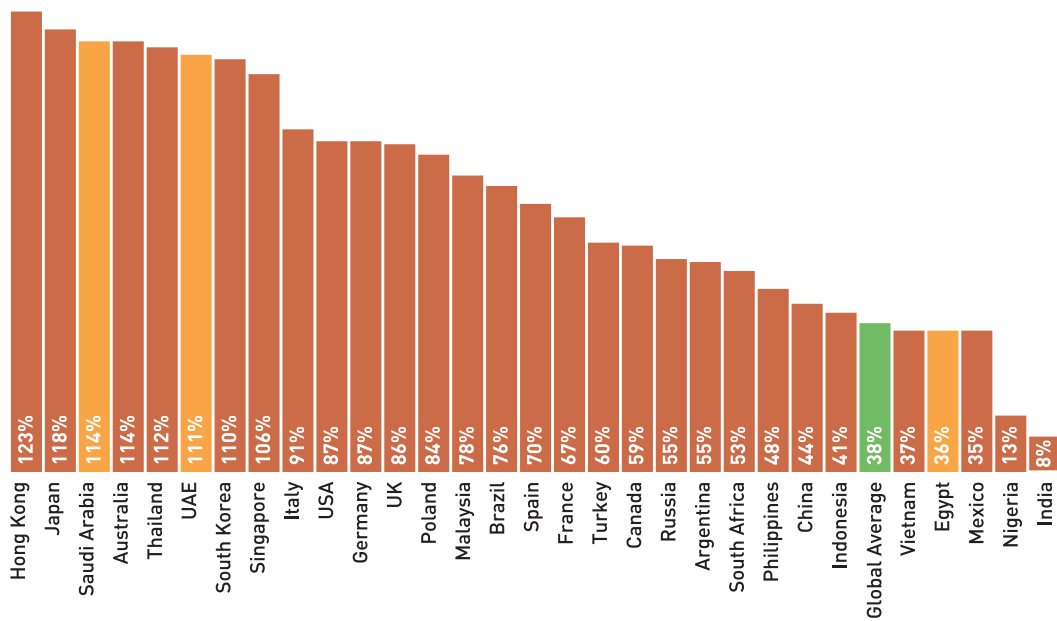
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND INFO: GROWTH AND MOBILE ECONOMY STATS IN MENA

FIGURE 1: MOBILE BROADBAND

Active 3G & 4G Connections, Compared to the total population (Jan 2015)

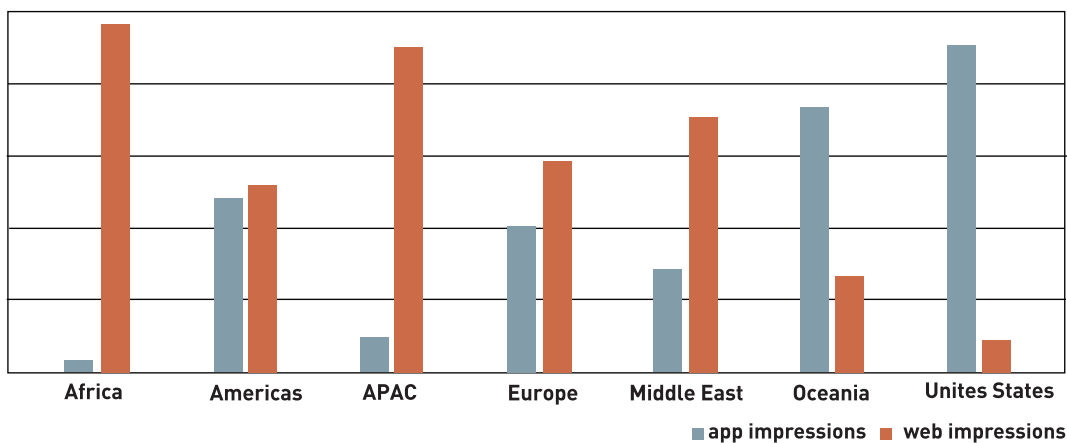
The global mobile app economy is booming. Mobile internet speeds are rapidly increasing, with 38% of global mobile connections now classified as 'broadband' (3G or 4G) according to the 'Digital, Social & Mobile Worldwide in 2015' report by We Are Social. In the MENA, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates lead the way with mobile broadband penetration of over 100%, while Egypt remains close to the global average at 36%. This increase in broadband penetration has naturally led to a rising volume of mobile web and app interactions.



Source: <http://wearesocial.net/tag/statistics/>

FIGURE 2: APP VS. WEB BY REGION

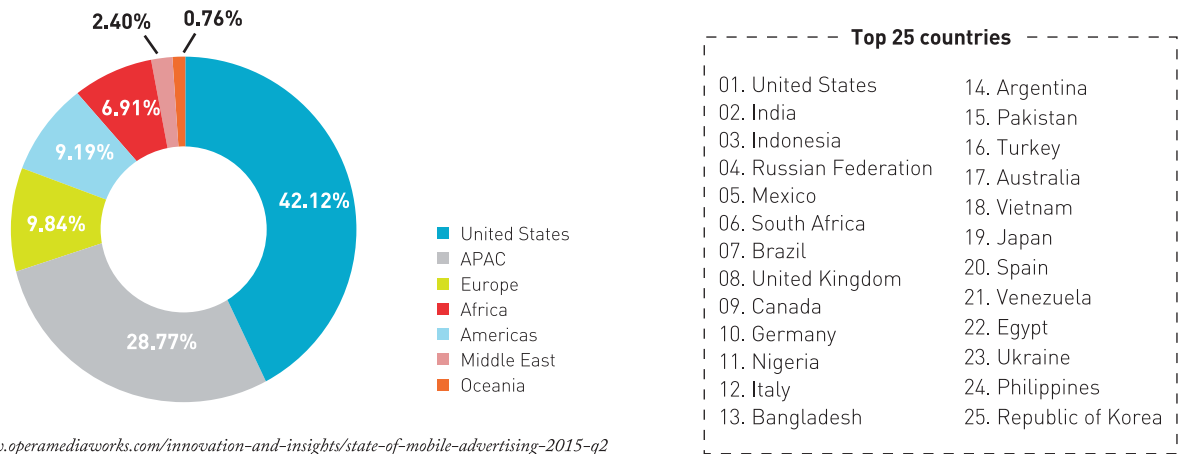
In parallel, the 'State of Mobile Advertising - 2015 Q2' report by Opera Mediaworks found that mobile apps are increasingly responsible for the majority share of global traffic and revenue generation. According to the 'Insights App Engagement' report (Q1 2015) by App Annie, revenue from app stores and in-app advertising grew by 70% in 2014, compared to the previous year.



<http://www.operamediaworks.com/innovation-and-insights/state-of-mobile-advertising-2015-q2>

FIGURE 3: GLOBAL MOBILE APP TRAFFIC AND REVENUE GENERATION

The Middle East and Africa are steadily increasing their share of the global mobile app market according to Opera Mediaworks. Together, they account for 10% of the global mobile app traffic and revenue generation in Q2 2015, up from just 6% in 2014. Moreover, as of Q2 2015, Egypt has joined the top 25 countries in terms of the highest traffic and revenue generation.



<http://www.operamediaworks.com/innovation-and-insights/state-of-mobile-advertising-2015-q2>

ABOUT THE STUDY: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

With this rapid growth in the MENA app economy, ArabNet, in collaboration with On Device Research, embarked on a study to understand the behaviors, trends, and opportunities that are critical to doing business in this space.

ArabNet is presenting this report for app publishers, developers, investors, and agencies looking to make the most of the opportunities available in the app economy in the MENA region. This report will help them understand the trends, habits, spending budget, profiles, and preferences of users in order to make informed decisions on development and expansion strategies.

The report findings are based on a study conducted in May 2015 on the mobile app economy in the MENA region, specifically in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Representative samples of 500 smartphone owners from each country completed a survey administered by On Device Research. The report will present the survey findings along three main themes: 1) App download, usage, and discovery patterns; 2) Top app categories and Arabic apps; and 3) App spending and payment behavior.

The findings will be further analyzed based on age, gender, and household income – on both a country and regional level. Where they exist, outliers will be highlighted and explained, if possible.

It is important to note a few points on statistical significance here. First, the city of the respondents did not prove to be a differentiating factor, and therefore will be left out of the analysis. Second, the salary ranges in the survey for the United Arab Emirates are lower than they should be and do not reflect the higher earnings of UAE workers relative to other countries. As a result, insights related to incomes in the UAE may be skewed. Finally, and based on the survey sample, the results have a 2-3% margin of error.

DOWNLOAD, USE & DISCOVERY

DOWNLOADS



FIGURE 4: HOW MANY APPS HAVE YOU DOWNLOADED IN APRIL 2015?

According to the survey results, 42% of the sample population has downloaded more than 5 mobile apps in the past month. This indicates the presence of a large population of 'frequent downloaders' who actively look out for new apps to download and engage with.

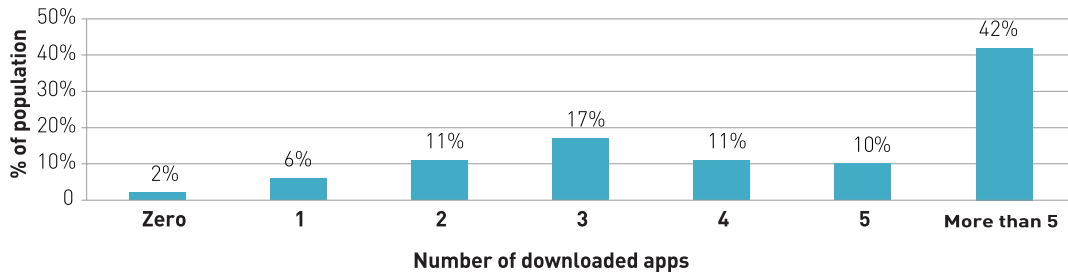


FIGURE 5: HOW MANY APPS HAVE YOU DOWNLOADED IN APRIL 2015 (BY COUNTRY)?

On a country level, the United Arab Emirates (dominated by Arab expats and westerners) recorded the most downloaded apps followed by Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. No significant difference is seen between the download activity among males and females - 53% of males and 50% of females have downloaded 5 or more apps in the past month.

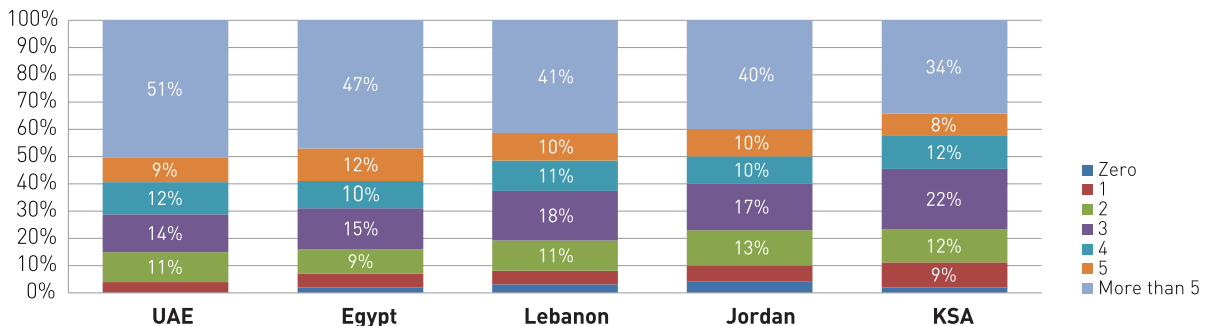
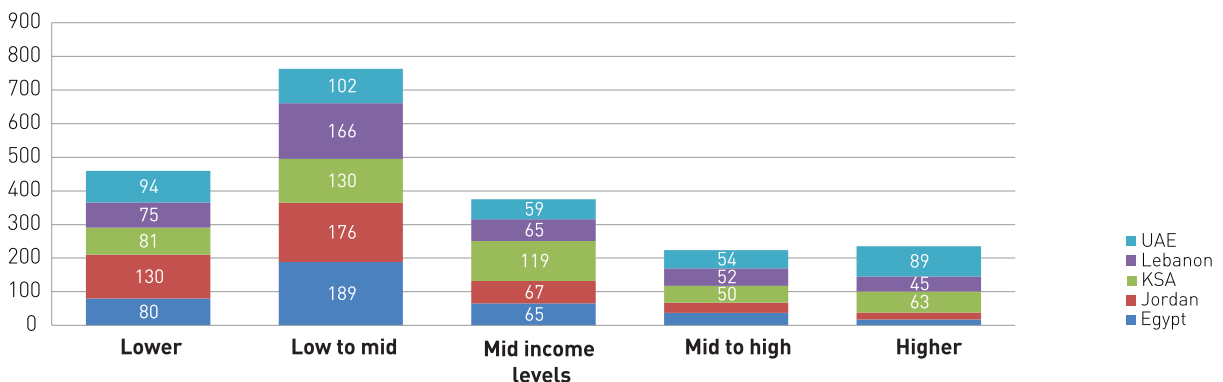


FIGURE 6: HOW MANY APPS HAVE YOU DOWNLOADED IN APRIL 2015 (BY INCOME LEVEL)?

On the other hand, looking at downloads by income level does show a clear trend, with lower income categories downloading more apps than the higher income categories. In fact, the lower two income brackets in the survey downloaded more apps than the top three income brackets combined.



USE

FIGURE 7: HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE ALL THE APPS THAT YOU CURRENTLY HAVE ON YOUR DEVICE?

When asked about how frequently they use the apps they have downloaded, a quarter of respondents said they use all the apps on their smartphone on a daily basis. While this result may seem counter-intuitive, it appears consistently across countries in the survey as seen in Figure 8. Another quarter of respondents uses a few favorites every day and the rest once a week. Moreover, both genders and all age groups show the same results.

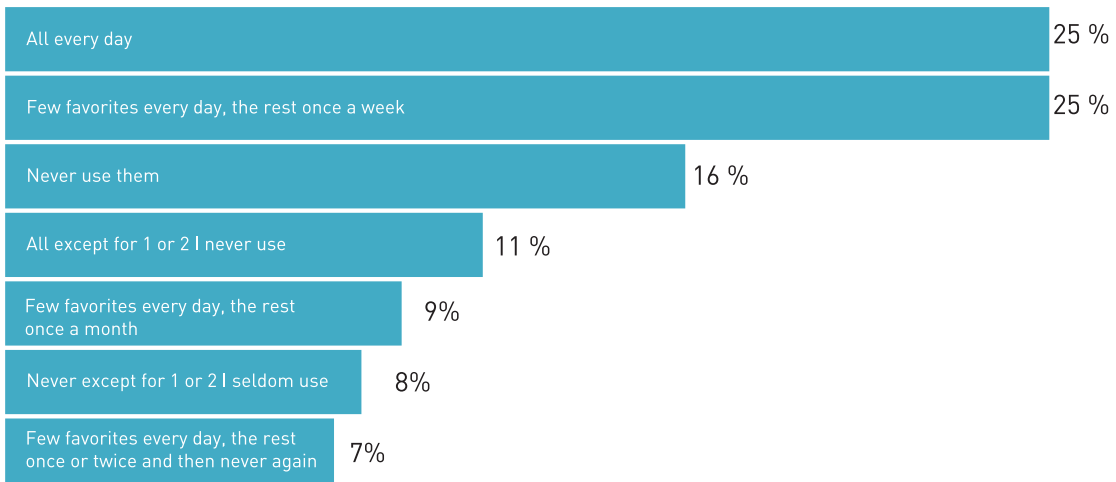
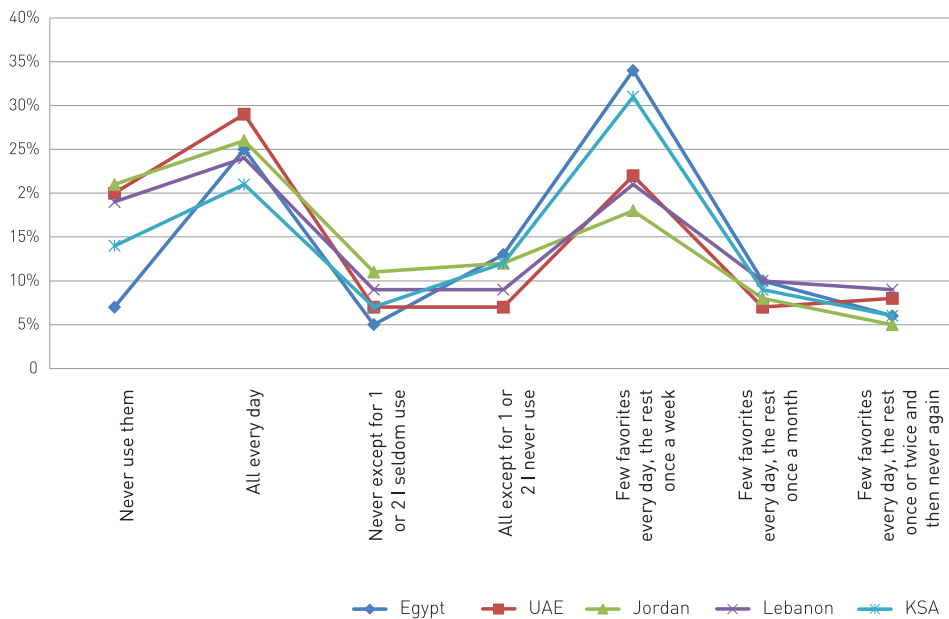


FIGURE 8: HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE ALL THE APPS THAT YOU CURRENTLY HAVE ON YOUR DEVICE (BY COUNTRY)?



DISCOVERY



FIGURE 9: HOW DO YOU FIND NEW APPS?

The highest percentage of respondents said they find new apps either by randomly browsing or by checking the featured/bestseller lists of the app store - unfortunately, app developers have limited control over these. On the other hand, recommendations by friends was the 2nd highest influencer of app download, and developers could focus on this factor to increase the discovery of their app.

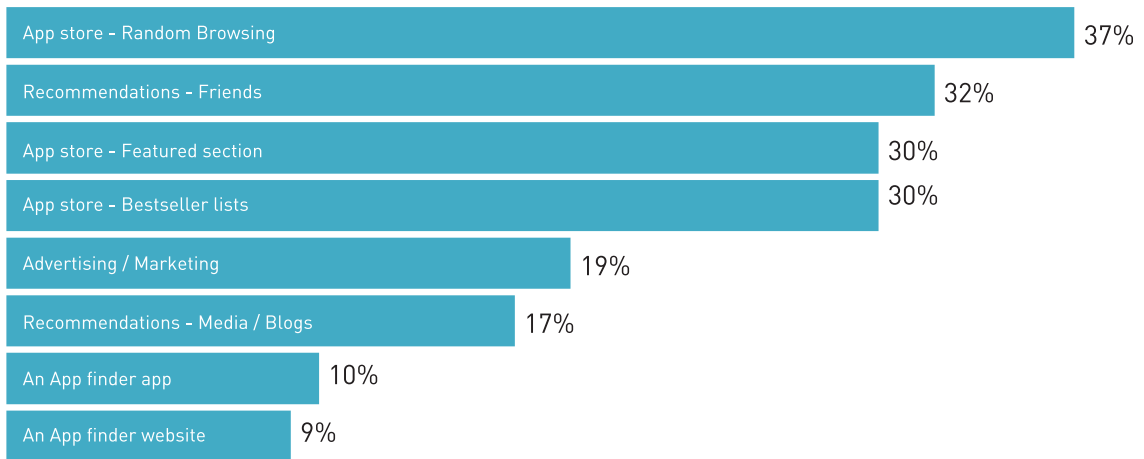
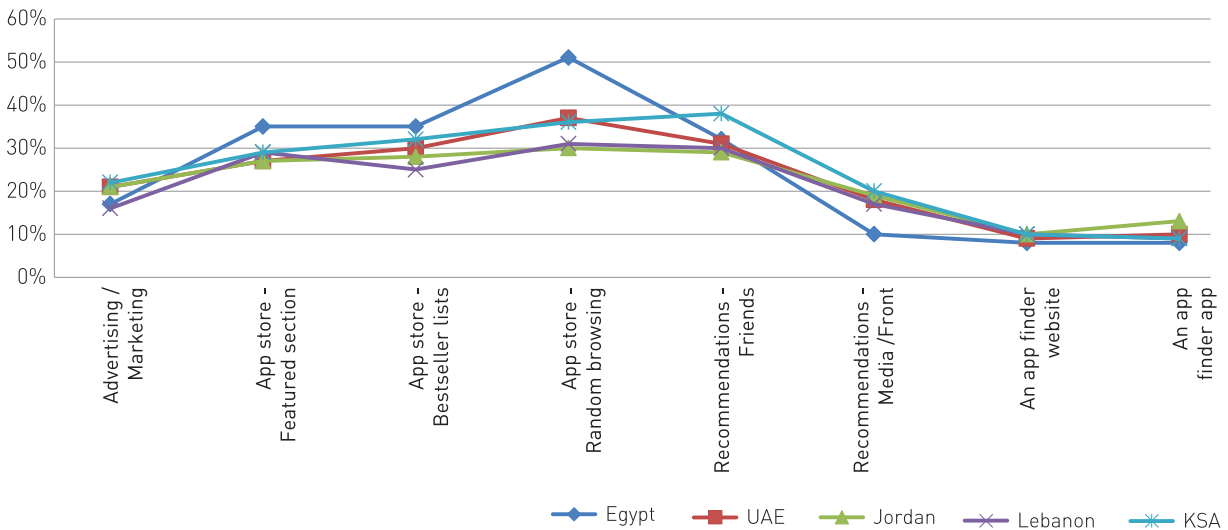


FIGURE 10: HOW DO YOU FIND NEW APPS (BY COUNTRY)?

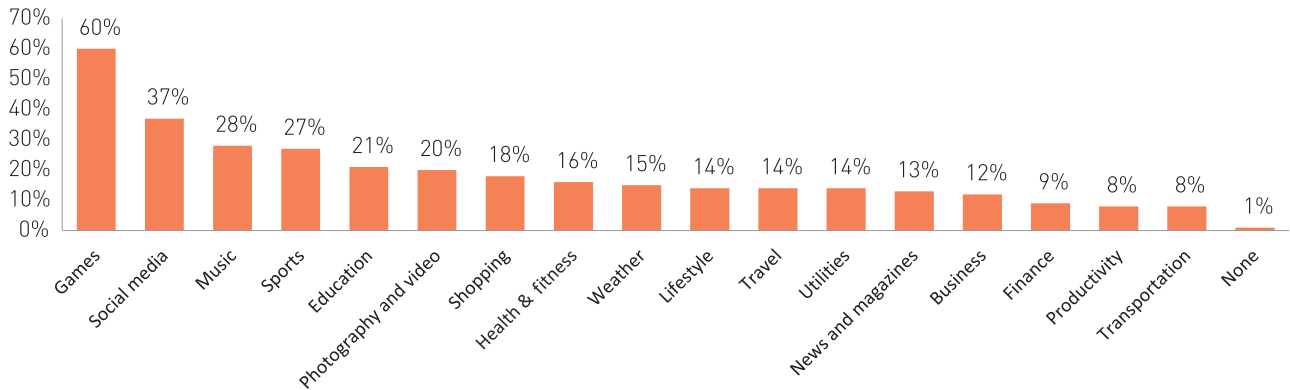
In Saudi Arabia, friends' recommendations are the top source of app discovery. On the other hand, app finding websites and apps (like App Shopper and Appstream), which are an important channel for app discovery in Western markets, have little impact on downloads in the MENA.



CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

MOST POPULAR APP CATEGORIES IN THE MENA

FIGURE 11: WHAT TYPE OF MOBILE APPS DO YOU DOWNLOAD THE MOST?



The three most downloaded mobile app categories in the region are games, social media, and music. These results are mostly consistent with global trends: based on statistics from App Annie’s Q2 2015 ‘Top Categories by Downloads,’ games continues to be the top category driving most downloads from all app stores, with social networking and entertainment also in the top 5. In addition, according to the report, eSports is the fastest growing category, and ArabNet’s survey found this to be the 4th most popular category in MENA.

However, these top categories are dominated by big global players – from Snapchat to King. Smaller players should look for opportunities in other categories that are less crowded, including photography & video, education, lifestyle, and health & fitness. These opportunities differ from market to market: in Lebanon, educational apps are in high demand; in the UAE, users are downloading shopping apps; and in Saudi Arabia, travel apps are very popular.

FIGURE 12: COMPARISON BETWEEN MOST DOWNLOADED APP CATEGORIES GLOBALLY, REGIONALLY, AND BY COUNTRY Q2 2015

	Q2 2015 (APP ANNIE REPORT)			Q2 2015 (ARABNET REPORT)				
	IOS APP STORE	GOOGLE PLAY	MENA	EGYPT	UAE	JORDAN	LEBANON	KSA
1	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games
2	Photo & Video	Tools	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media	Social Media
3	Entertainment	Communication	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Sports
4	Social Networking	Photography	Sports	Sports	Education	Sports	Sports	Travel
5	Lifestyle	Entertainment	Education	Education	Shopping	Education	Education	Photography and Video

<http://blog.appannie.com/category/app-annie-index/>

FIGURE 13: WHAT TYPE OF MOBILE APPS DO YOU DOWNLOAD THE MOST (BY COUNTRY)?

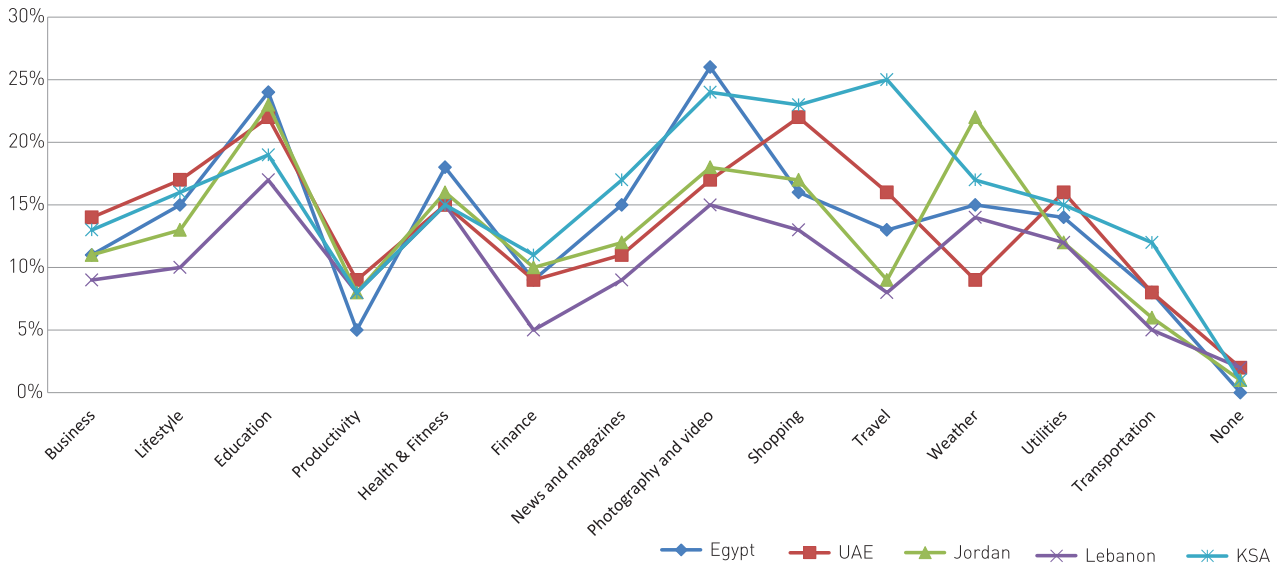


FIGURE 14: EXAMPLES OF TOP APP CATEGORIES BY COUNTRY

Figure 14 highlights some of the top apps in these countries and their categories to showcase the potential opportunity in this space.

KSA		UAE	
Photography & Video	Travel	Shopping	Lifestyle
Snapchat Video Download Browser YouCam Makeup	Booking.com Wego Flights & Hotels Fly Akeed	Souq.com Dubizzle Namshi MarkaVIP	Namshi Fashion Salatuk Tinder
Egypt		Jordan	Lebanon
Photography & Video	Health & Fitness	Health & Fitness	Education
B612 - Selfie from the heart Instagram YouTube	CosmoBody FitBest Smart Alarm Clock	CosmoBody WaterBalance All-in Fitness	iTunes U Subway Surfers Wash Clothes Qosas

Source: AppAnnie.com Top Charts – Data extracted on July 30, 2015

FIGURE 15: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN APP CATEGORY PREFERENCES BASED ON GENDER

When comparing male and female preferences across categories, some intuitive insights are confirmed. As shown in Figure 15, the Sports category is mostly dominated by males with a 12% difference between genders, while females show a slightly higher interest in music, health & fitness, lifestyle, and shopping apps.

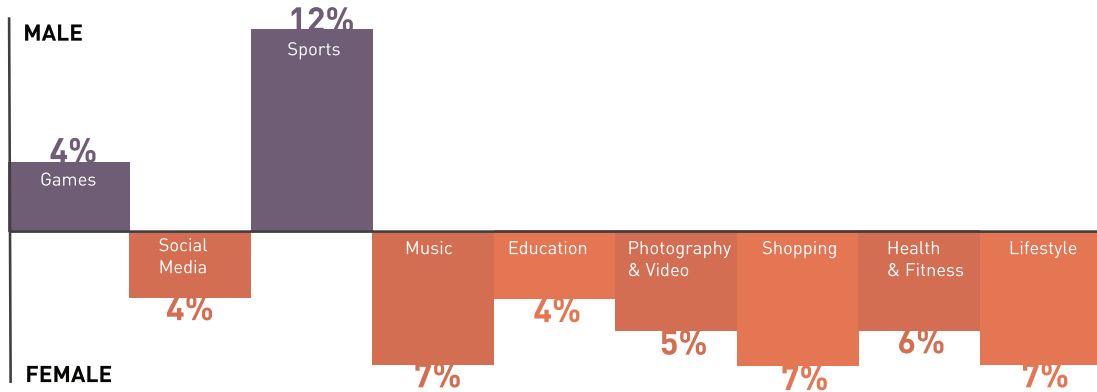
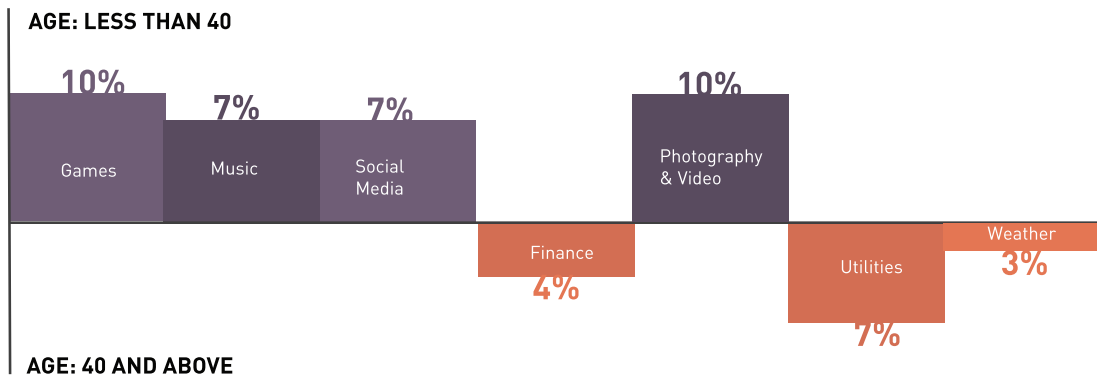


FIGURE 16: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN APP CATEGORY PREFERENCES BASED ON AGE GROUPS

Differences also appear when accounting for age, with respondents over 40 years old downloading more finance and utilities apps.



ARABIC APPS



FIGURE 17: DO YOU DOWNLOAD ARABIC APPS?

One of the most frequently cited issues in the MENA is the lack of Arabic content and applications. To better understand this opportunity, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their attitudes and behaviors around Arabic apps specifically. 62% of respondents said that they download Arabic mobile apps.

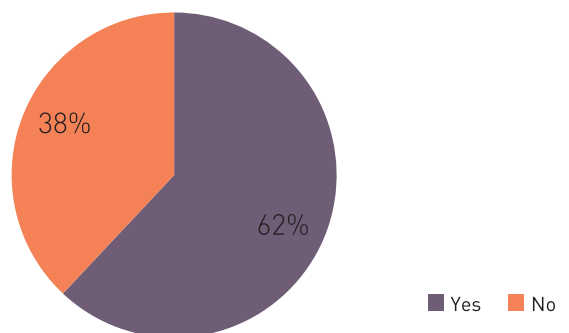


FIGURE 18: DO YOU DOWNLOAD ARABIC APPS (BY COUNTRY)?

The largest appetite for Arabic apps was in Saudi Arabia, with 81% of respondents downloading Arabic apps; the smallest was in the United Arab Emirates (39%), which may be attributed to the higher percentage of westerners living there. Age and gender do not appear to be differentiating factors.

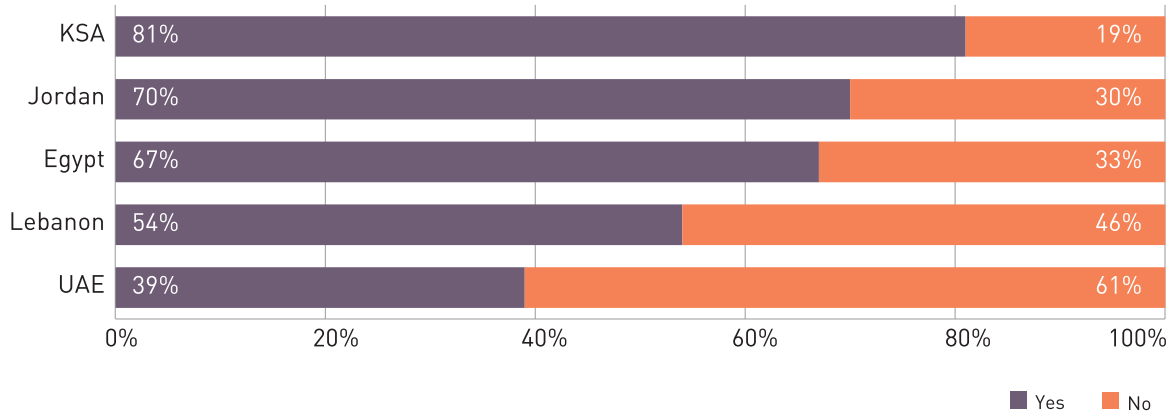
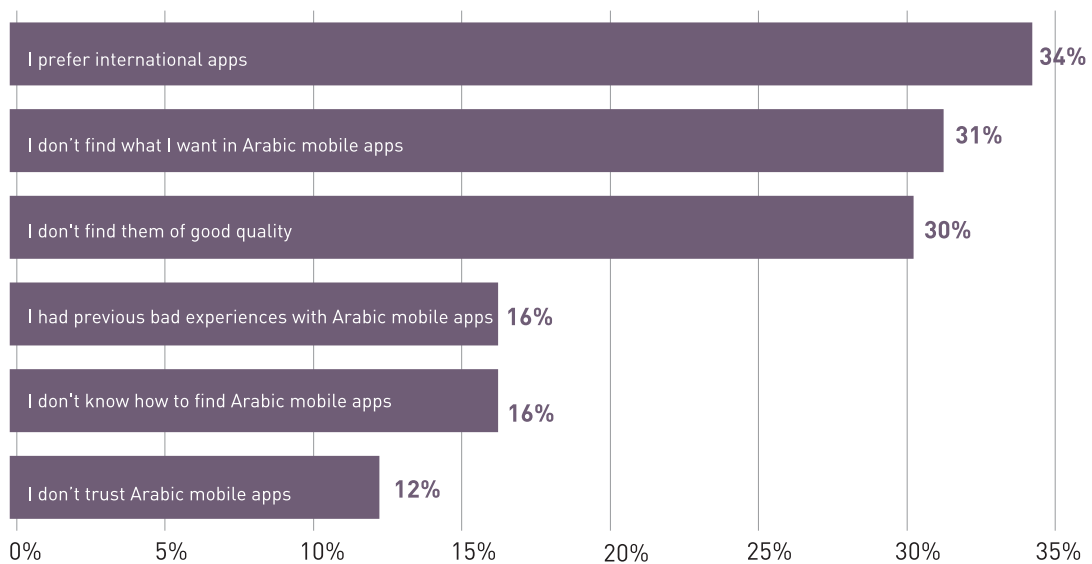


FIGURE 19: WHY DON'T YOU DOWNLOAD MORE ARABIC APPS?

Asked why they didn't download more Arabic mobile app, respondents did not seem to face much difficulty in finding Arabic apps or in knowing that they exist in the first place. The main issue for them was the low quality of Arabic apps that did not meet the wants/needs of the consumer, especially when compared to international apps. Developers and publishers should invest their efforts in creating interesting Arabic apps of competitive quality if they want to grab a share of the app market.



SPENDING & PAYMENT

APP SPEND



FIGURE 20: FREE VS. PAID APP DOWNLOADS PER COUNTRY

An important measurement of the app economy in the MENA is how much customers pay for apps and do in-app purchases, as these are two of the top monetization channels for app developers. When looking at spending habits, Saudi Arabia was the only country where the majority of respondents (51%) answered that they paid for apps, followed by Lebanon and the UAE (41%), with Jordan (34%) and Egypt (32%) lagging behind.

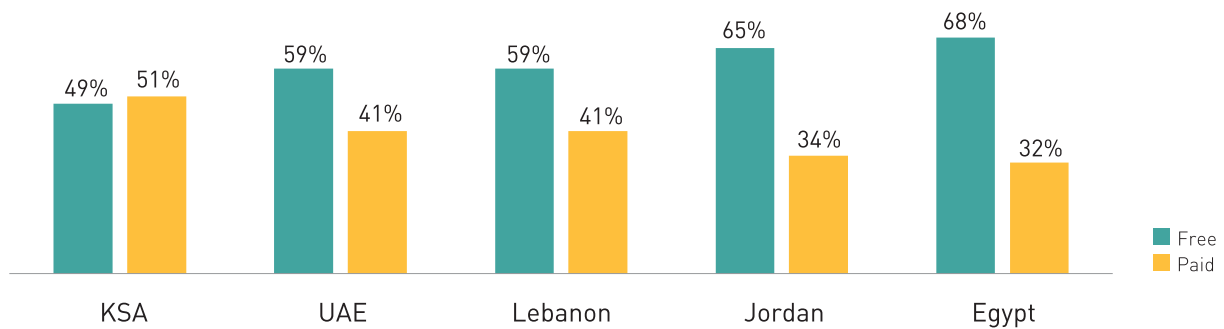


FIGURE 21: APP SPEND IN MENA

Across all surveyed countries, the most frequently paid amount to purchase a mobile app is between \$1 and \$2.99.

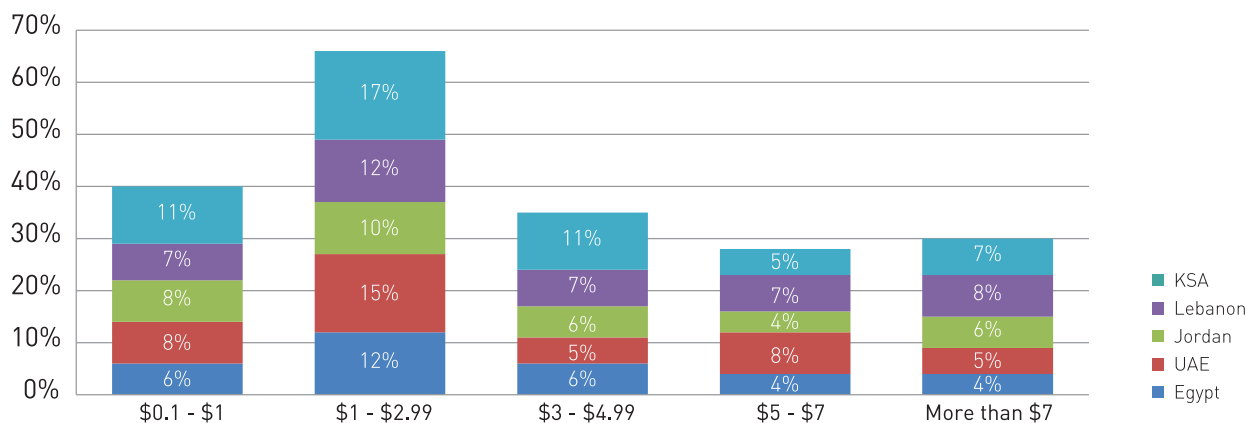


FIGURE 22: HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ON EVERY APP YOU BUY (BY INCOME LEVEL)?

Breaking down respondents' spending behavior by income, the survey data confirmed the intuitive insight that users in higher income brackets pay more to purchase apps. Another interesting insight that emerged is that 20% of the highest earners were paying more than \$7 to purchase apps. This indicates an opportunity for app developers and publishers to create high-value, high-priced apps that cater to this category of consumers.

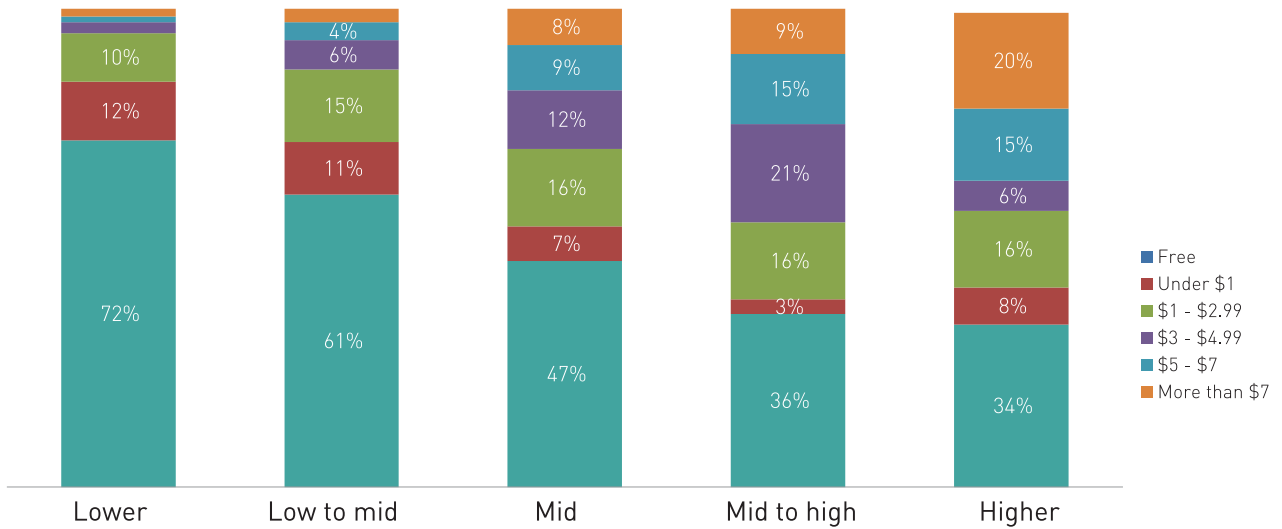
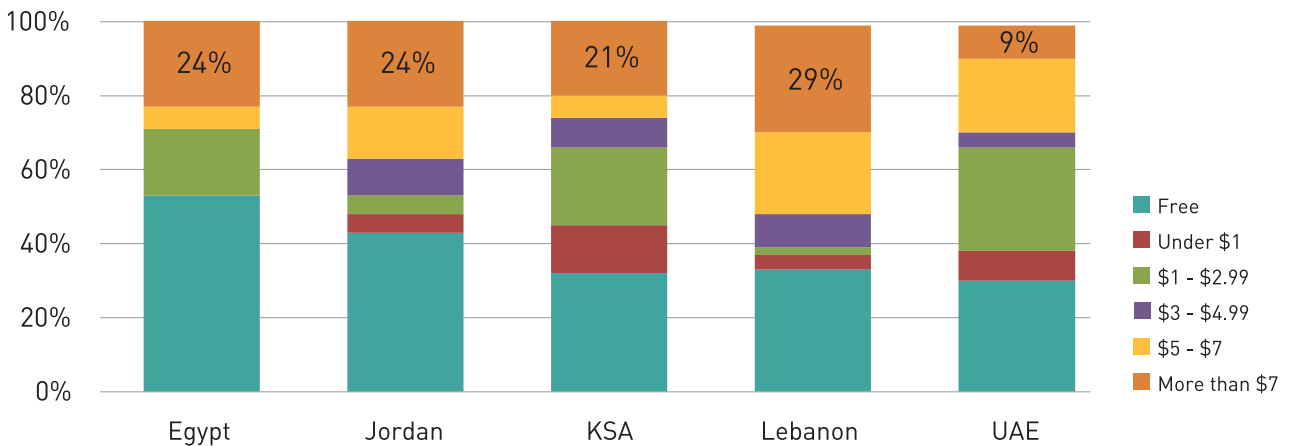


FIGURE 23: HOW MUCH DO HIGHEST EARNERS SPEND ON EVERY APP THEY BUY?

This result is consistent across all the markets surveyed (29% in Lebanon, 24% in Egypt and Jordan, 21% in Saudi Arabia) except the UAE. The reasonable explanation for this outlier – as explained in the Scope and Methodology section of this report – is the fact that the household income categories selected in the survey for the UAE are not reflective of the actual earning power and salary ranges in the state. The UAE should follow the same trend if a more representative sample were taken for that group.



IN-APP SPEND



FIGURE 24: NONE VS. IN-APP PURCHASES BY COUNTRY

The behavior around in-app purchases closely follows the trends outlined for app purchase behavior in the previous section. Saudi Arabia still ranks number one in terms of percentage of respondents who pay for an in-app purchase, followed by the UAE and Lebanon, with Egypt and Jordan lagging behind.

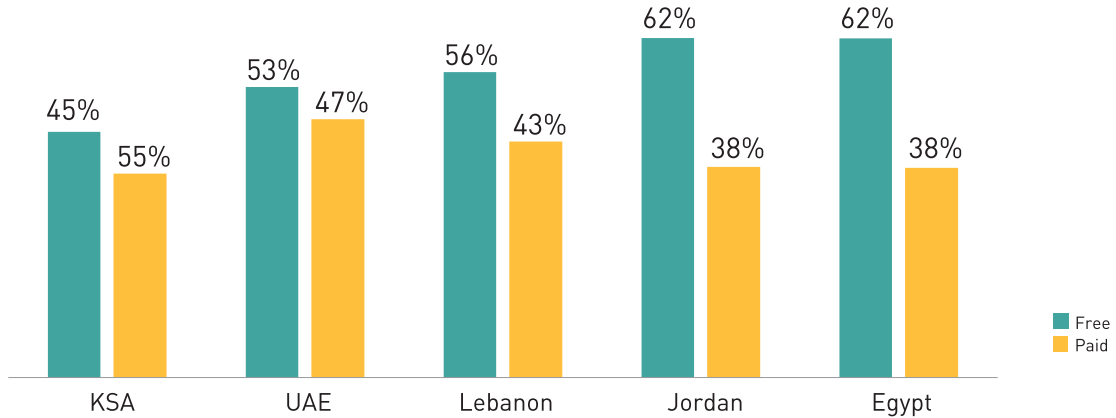


FIGURE 25: APP VS. IN-APP PURCHASES PER COUNTRY

This trend is clear when app purchases and in-app purchases are put side by side – and across the region there seems to be a slight preference for in-app purchases over app purchases.

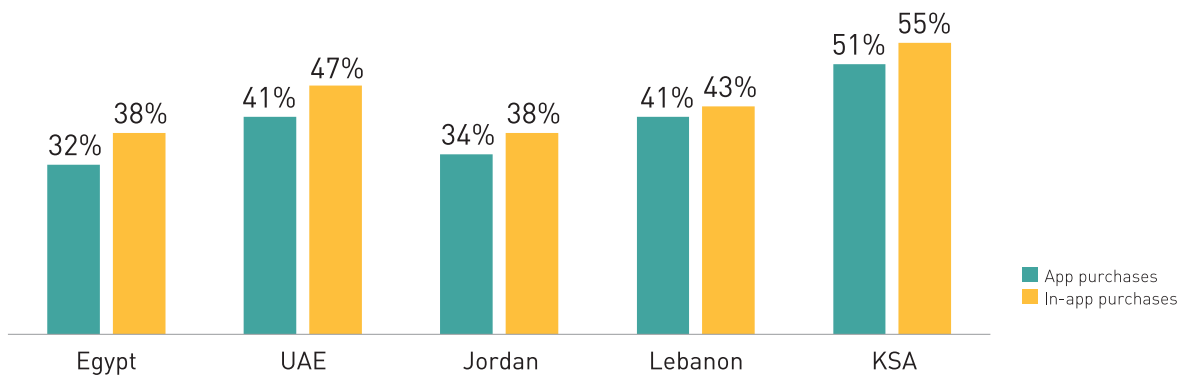
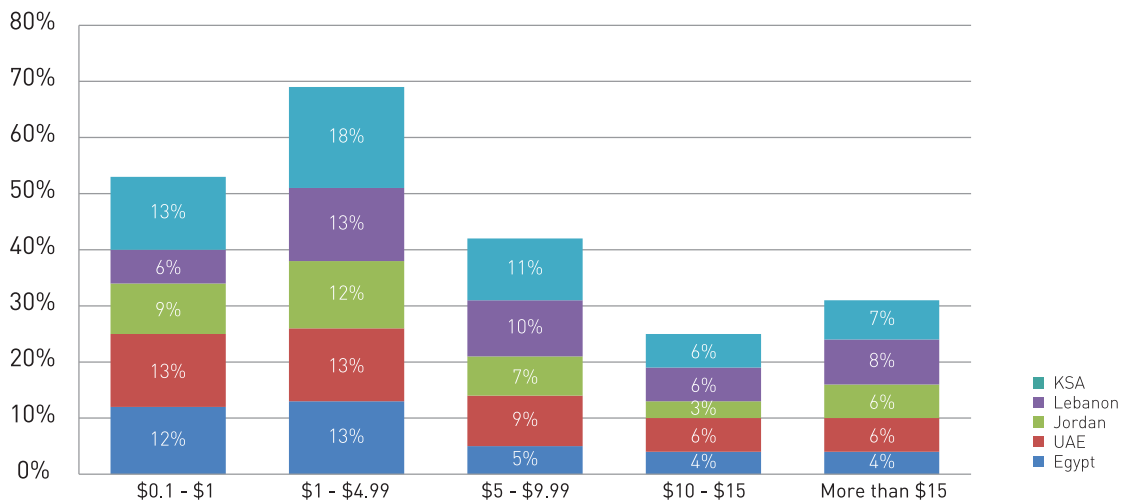


FIGURE 26: HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND, ON AVERAGE, ON IN-APP PURCHASES?

The most common amounts paid for in-app purchases across the MENA are \$1-\$4.99.



PAYMENT

FIGURE 27: HOW DO YOU PREFER TO PAY FOR AN APP?

In terms of payment preferences, while a large proportion of survey respondents would rather not pay anything at all, when they do pay they prefer to do so one time, up-front, with no further in-app purchase invitations or advertising.

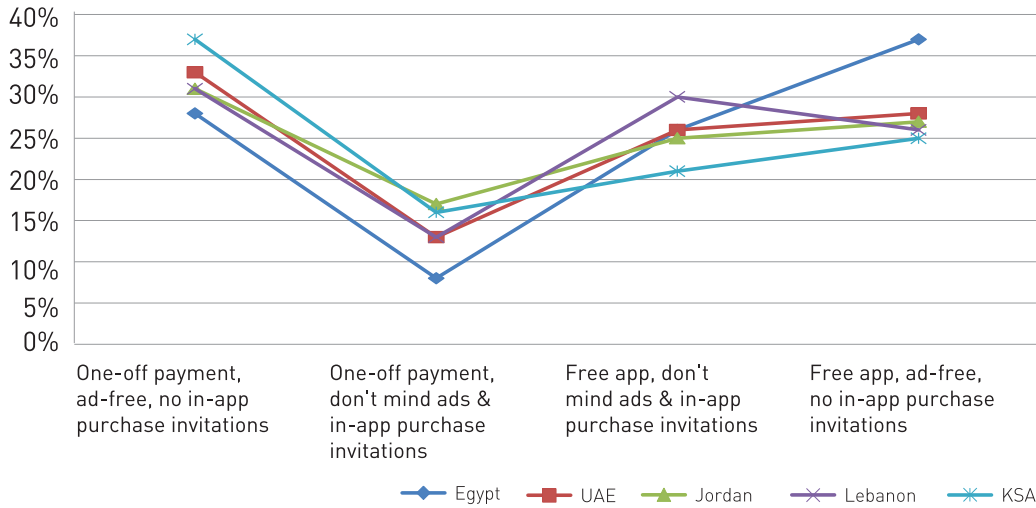


FIGURE 28: WHY DON'T YOU PURCHASE APPS/IN-APPS MORE OFTEN ON YOUR MOBILE PHONE?

The leading reason for not spending more on app and in-app purchases is that users are not finding interesting apps to buy or the apps they are looking for – this is consistent with the results of why users don't download Arabic apps (see Fig 19). Other top reasons include: having to share too much personal information, and not trusting the payment security. Among respondents, Saudi Arabians were the most influenced by negative feedback in the media, while Jordanians said it wasn't easy enough to purchase an app.

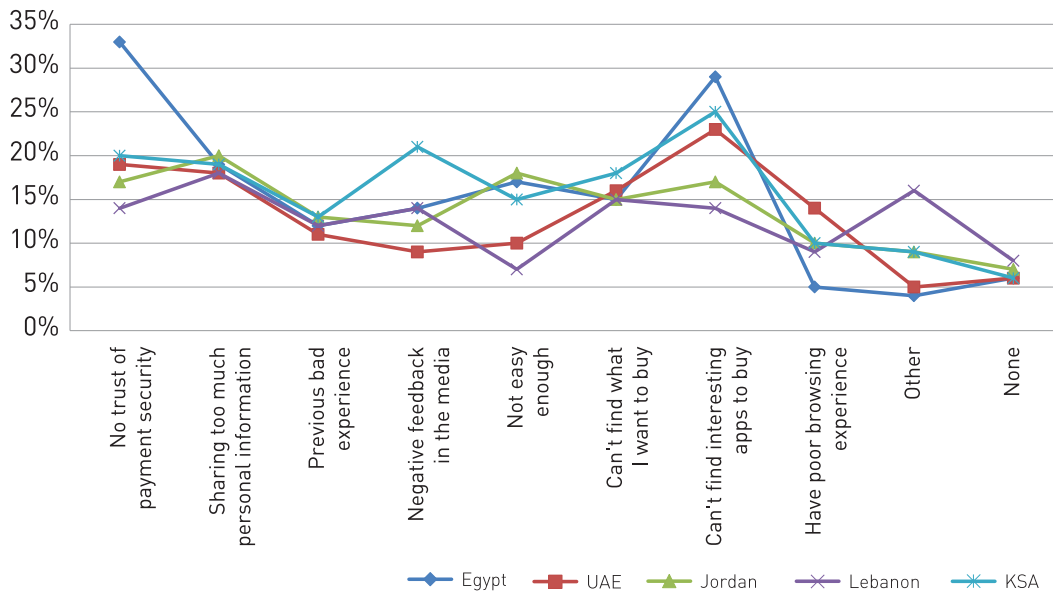


FIGURE 29: WHY DO YOU OR WOULD YOU MAKE ONE-OFF PAYMENTS WITHIN AN APP?

When asked what would push them to make one-off in-app purchases, most respondents said they would pay to avoid advertising and to access additional content - except for Egyptian respondents, who said they frequently pay to get shortcuts (usually in games) in order to reach the end of a level and/or to buy more lives.

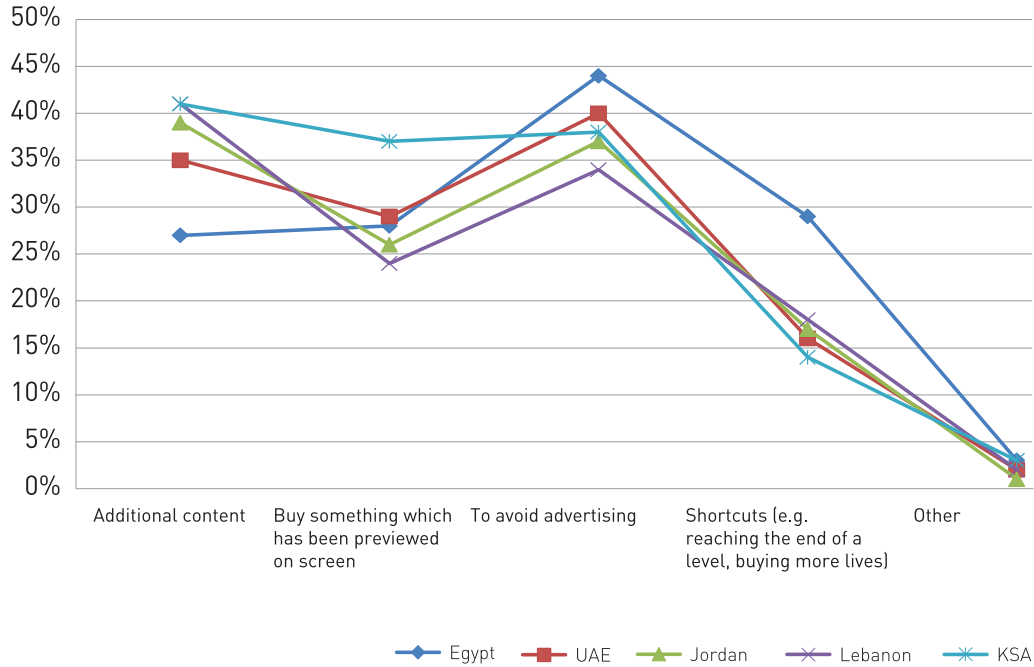
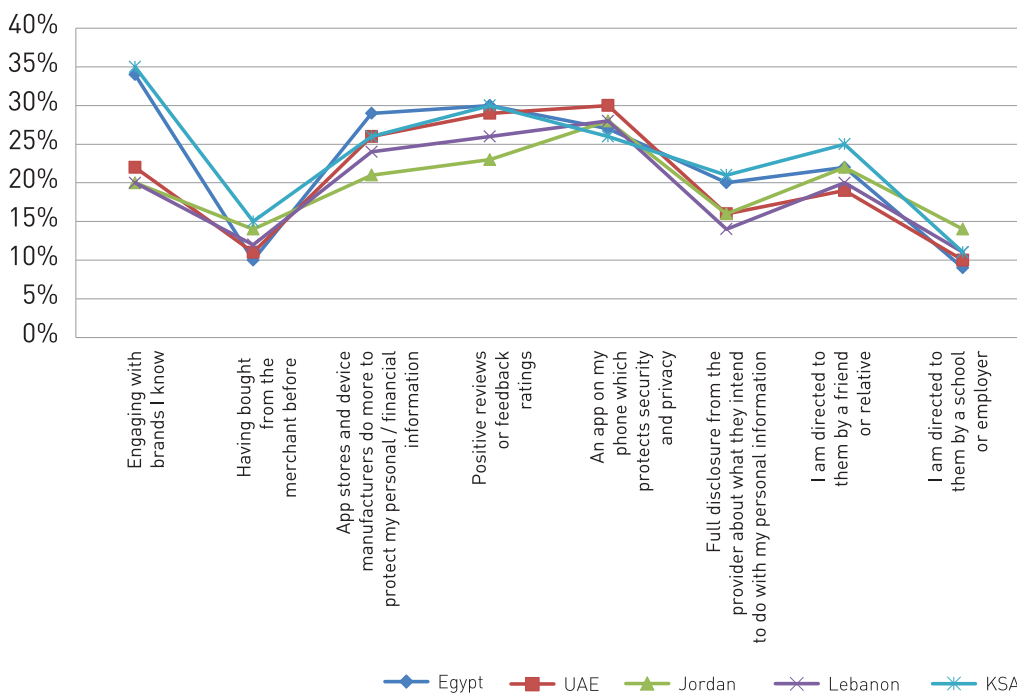


FIGURE 30: WHAT WOULD BUILD YOUR TRUST IN MOBILE APPS AND PAYMENTS?

Finally, all respondents agreed around the three main factors that would build their trust in mobile apps and payments: 1) positive reviews or feedback ratings, 2) having an app which protects security and privacy, and 3) app stores and device manufacturers who do more to protect their personal and financial information. Furthermore, engaging with brands they know was an important influencer for respondents in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the lowest impact was linked to app referrals by a school, an employer, or a merchant they have previously dealt with.



CONCLUSIONS

The MENA region is a fertile ground for mobile app investors, developers, publishers, and agencies alike. However, it is mandatory for them to equip themselves with in-depth knowledge of the app landscape, requirements, and trends before planting the first seeds and taking on new territories.

This report has presented new insights and confirmed previously highlighted trends into the MENA mobile app economy.

Its key findings are:

DISCOVERY, DOWNLOAD & USE

- There appears to be a considerable demand for mobile apps in the MENA. 42% of the sample respondents are 'frequent downloaders' who download more than 5 apps per month.
- The UAE (dominated by Arab expats and westerners) has the most downloaded apps, followed by Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.
- Lower income categories download more apps in general than higher income ones.
- They are also loyal, repetitive users. A quarter of respondents said they use all the apps on their smartphone on a daily basis, and another quarter said they use their favorites every day and the rest once a week.
- Developers should focus on generating positive word-of-mouth, a buzz, and good reviews for their apps. If the app has its place on users' favorites list, it will be used on a daily basis. Moreover, if the app hits the bestseller or featured list on the App store, it is more likely to be discovered by users. Friends' recommendations also play an important role in influencing what users choose to download.

CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

- Developers should look beyond the top 3 app categories (games, social media and music) which are dominated by the highly competitive global players. Sports, photography & video, and education apps are hot among the younger age groups, while utilities and finance apps are trending among the older generations.
- 62% of respondents said they download Arabic mobile apps, with the highest concentration of downloads being in Saudi Arabia. The least amount of Arabic app downloads was in the United Arab Emirates (39%), which may be attributed to the higher percentage of westerners living there.
- Market opportunities exist for developers to create new, improved and relevant Arabic apps in the underserved categories that users are looking for - in particular eSports, photograph & video, education, health & fitness, and lifestyle category apps.
- Males and females have the same trends across the study. However, some differences are observed when it comes to their most popular app categories. The sports category is mostly dominated by males. Females show a slightly higher interest in music, health & fitness, and shopping apps.

SPENDING & PAYMENT

- MENA users spend more on apps as their household income increases. Saudi Arabian users pay most for both app and in-apps, followed by users from the UAE and Lebanon, with Egypt, and Jordan lagging behind.
- Across all surveyed countries, the most frequently paid amount to purchase a mobile app is between \$1 to \$2.99 and \$1-\$4.99 for in-app purchases.
- A real opportunity exists for app developers and publishers to create higher-value, higher-priced apps that cater to high-income earners as the study shows that they are willing to pay more than \$7 to purchase an app.
- The leading reason for not spending more on apps and in-app purchases is users not finding interesting apps to buy or the apps they are looking for.
- While a large proportion of survey respondents would rather not pay anything at all, when they do pay they prefer to do so one time, up-front, with no further in-app purchase invitations or advertising.
- The most cited reasons behind paying for in-app purchases are: getting additional content and avoiding ads.
- App stores and device manufacturers should do more to protect users' personal and financial information.
- Publishers should leverage their apps' positive reviews and feedback ratings in order to build users' trust in mobile apps and payments.

APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONS



The report insights are based on the below questionnaire offered to the sample selected by OnDevice Research, within the respective markets of Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In addition to the below answers, the data include income and gender information. The sample criteria used are mentioned in the methodology section of the report.

1. Have you downloaded an app in the last 6 months?

- Yes No

2. How many apps have you downloaded in the past month

- 1 2 3 4 5 more than five

3. How often do you use all the apps that you currently have on your device? Which ONE of the following do you agree with most strongly?

- I never use any of them
 I use them all every day
 I never use any of them except for one or two which I seldom use.
 I use all of them every day except for one or two which I never use.
 I use a few favorites every day, the rest I use once a week.
 I use a few favorites every day, the rest I use once a month.
 I use a few favorites every day, the rest I use once or twice and then never again.

4. How do you find new apps? Select all answers that apply.

- Advertising/marketing
 App store - Featured section
 App store - Bestseller lists
 App store - random browsing.
 Recommendations - friends
 Recommendations - media/blogs
 Appfinder website (identifies the best new apps and sometimes offers discounts)
 Appfinder app

5. What type of mobile apps do you download the most? Select all answers that apply.

- Business apps
 Lifestyle apps
 Game apps
 Music apps
 Social media apps
 Education apps
 Productivity apps
 Health & Fitness
 Finance apps
 News and magazines
 Photography and video
 Shopping
 Sports apps
 Travel apps

- Weather apps
- Utilities
- Transportation
- None of the above

6. Do you download Arabic mobile apps?

- Yes
- If yes, what type of Arabic mobile apps do you download?
- Business apps
- Lifestyle apps
- No

7. Why don't you download more Arabic mobile apps? Select all answers that apply.

- I didn't know there are Arabic mobile apps
- I had previous bad experience with Arabic mobile apps
- I don't find them of good quality
- I don't find what I want in Arabic mobile apps
- I don't know how to find Arabic mobile apps
- I don't trust Arabic mobile apps
- I prefer international apps

8. How much do you spend, on average, on every app you buy, excluding in-app purchases? Select all answers that apply.

- I only download free apps
- Under \$1
- \$1-\$2.99
- \$3-\$5
- \$5-\$7
- more than \$7

9. How much do you spend, on average, on in-app purchases?

- I never do in-app purchases
- Under \$1
- \$1-\$4.99
- \$5-\$9.99
- \$10-\$15
- more than \$15

10. How do you prefer to pay for apps?

- A one-off payment before I download it. It must then be ad-free and I don't want to be asked to make in-app purchases.
- A one-off payment before I download it. I'm relaxed about whether it then contains advertising and invites me to make in-app purchases.
- I want it free at the point-of-sale. I understand this means there may be adverts or I may be invited to make in-app purchases
- I want it free at the point-of-sale. I do not want to see adverts or be invited to make in-app purchases.

11. Why don't you purchase/download apps more often on your mobile phone? Select all answers that apply.

- I don't trust the payment security
- I have to share too much personal information

- I had a previous bad experience
- I heard negative feedback in the media
- It is not easy enough
- I can't find what I want to buy/download
- I can't find interesting apps to download/buy
- I have poor browsing experience
- I have no need to buy/download apps
- I didn't know I could purchase/download items

12. Why do you or would you make one-off payments within an app?

- Additional content
- Buy something which has been previewed on screen
- To avoid advertising
- Shortcuts (e.g. reaching the end of a level, buying more lives)
- Other - please specify

13. What would build your trust in mobile apps and payments? Select all answers that apply.

- Engaging with brands I know
- I've brought from the merchant before
- App stores and device manufacturers do more to protect my personal/financial information
- Positive reviews or feedback ratings
- An app on my phone which protects security and privacy
- Full disclosure from the provider about what they intend to do with my personal information
- I am directed to them by a friend or relative
- I am directed to them by a school or employer

ARABNET BACKGROUND



CONNECTING

ArabNet is the hub for digital professionals & entrepreneurs in the MENA, creating online & offline platforms for them to connect & learn. At the forefront are ArabNet's conferences in the Levant, KSA and the GCC with Beirut, Riyadh and Dubai events attracting global, regional and local leaders and entrepreneurs to a collaborative and innovative environment.

INFORMING

Getting key insights and staying informed is crucial in today's rapid business world; Ergo, ArabNet publishes The Quarterly magazine highlighting the latest trends & news, exclusive interviews & reviews of up-and-coming digital startups, products & services in addition to its online news portal news.arabnet.me

LEADING

ArabNet also offers unique intel on the start-up, investment and digital ecosphere through exclusive reports reflecting on the latest market numbers and facts. This has been achievable thanks to an extensive relationship with key players in the MENA region one of the most comprehensive data registry for digital startups in the MENA to date.
<http://arabnet.me>

ON DEVICE RESEARCH BACKGROUND



On Device Research is a global mobile sample and research provider co-founded by Alistair Hill and Tim Cleminson in 2009.

A failed traditional research project in China was the Eureka! moment that showed them the potential of mobile – its ability to reach anyone, anywhere.
<http://ondeviceresearch.com>

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Data Partner

