ONLINE MEDIA OVERVIEW

Algeria • Egypt • Jordan • Lebanon
Morocco • Palestine • Syria • Tunisia

Summary - April 2015

www.cfi.fr
Foreword

In the majority of Arab countries, online news and social media have changed the media landscape beyond all recognition. These days, from Casablanca to Beirut, from Ramallah to Alexandria, citizens access and provide information online. Blogs, pure-player news websites, websites based on traditional media: there is a wealth of riches on offer. Once passive spectators of institution-based media, it is now citizens themselves who, after just a few years, have become producers and disseminators of news.

Since 2011, CFI, the French media cooperation agency, has been monitoring this movement aimed at developing an online news offering in the Arab world through 4M. This initiative, launched in the wake of the Tunisian revolution, has enabled hundreds of journalists, developers and bloggers to take part in forums and conferences or to attend training courses. Within the context of 4M, CFI runs projects such as 4M Machrek, 4M “Transition numérique des quotidiens arabophones” and EBTICAR-Média, the aim of which is to follow up on development of the online news offering. A number of professionals have also had the opportunity to take part in 4M Forums in Tunis (2012), Cairo (2013) and Beirut (2014), and also 4M meetings organised in France.

All these projects mean that CFI is now truly in a position to observe the evolution of the online media in the Arab world and has a network of reliable partners. It is this “capital” that has enabled this overview to be achieved. We now wish to share the result more widely in order to illustrate the driving force that is these new news and media stakeholders in the Arab world.

Happy reading!

Étatien Fiatte
Managing Director
Introduction

This document is an abridged version of a wide-ranging survey conducted between July 2014 and January 2015, which attempts to provide an overall view of the complex, ever-changing and fluid landscape of the online media in the Arab world. It is based on over 45 in-depth interviews, 130 applications received by CFI as part of its EBTICAR-Media competition, supported by E.U., and the analysis of numerous reports, articles and assays. The focus is on eight of the nine countries originally covered by EBTICAR-Media: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Syria. Libya was intentionally left out owing to the absence of an application and a lack of recent, reliable data.

A DISPARATE LANDSCAPE

Analysis of data relating to each country studied illustrates the wide disparity in terms of their respective situations and the environment in which the online media are developing, particularly regarding the level of Internet penetration (which varies from 17 to 71%, depending on the countries studied), the dynamism of the online media, freedom of information, and the economic environment.

The monitoring of Internet penetration levels highlights, in particular, a significant gap between those countries which, for a decade or more, have invested in Internet infrastructure development, such as Lebanon or Morocco, and those countries that have been late-starters, such as Algeria and Syria.

Internet penetration levels (ITU 2013)
This regional divergence can also be seen in the dynamism of the online media sector and its popularity amongst audiences in individual countries. The number of news websites (as opposed to institutional websites or e-commerce websites, such as Amazon) amongst the 50 most visited websites in each country – according to Alexa statistics – varies significantly from country to country, and there are also variations in terms of the proportion of these media operated from each of the countries concerned.

MOBILE ACCESS – THE NEW ORDER

At least one operator in seven of the eight countries surveyed now offers 3G. The exception is Palestine, however, where bandwidth restrictions imposed by Israel prevent deployment of 3G services. Progress made by certain countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon, or Morocco – which introduced 3G in 2007 and where 25% of citizens have access to the service – enables them to plan a progressive transition to 4G, whereas Algeria, for example, granted the first 3G licences only in late 2013. Furthermore, the 3G or 4G access allowed is often supplemented by free wifi network access in many urban areas.

Rapid roll-out of mobile access is also being promoted by lower prices for Android tablets and smartphones from Asia and also, increasingly significantly, for those produced or assembled locally, as illustrated by the success of brands such as Condor (Algeria), Inar (Egypt), and Leader Phone and Evertek (Tunisia).

According to most experts surveyed, the growth in mobile access is revolutionising the way in which people “consume” news. This is reflected in the traffic statistics of the media consulted, which claim between 15% and 50% of their hits from mobile terminals.

Many media nevertheless are woefully backward in adapting their offering to suit smartphones and tablets, and sometimes provide neither an app nor a mobile or responsive-design website. The switchover towards an approach focusing on mobile access, or “mobile first”, is, however, seen by certain players not only as a necessity if evolutions in methods of consumption are to be addressed but also as an opportunity for the media to generate income via better-targeted advertising and innovative approaches. One illustration of this is the partnership between the pure player Algérie-focus and the Korean manufacturer Samsung.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SUCCESSES AND SETBACKS

It is difficult to set out clearly the major trends in terms of progress in the area of freedom of information in the countries under consideration or their particular impact on the online media, as the environment is one of great contrasts and unique local situations. The World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders nevertheless shows an almost generalised decline in freedom of information since 2009–2010, but stabilisation or even a slight improvement since 2014–2015.

Although countries in the Eastern Mediterranean are only slightly ahead of those in North Africa in terms of Internet penetration levels, it can be seen that the dynamism and popularity of the online media, as reflected in the Alexa statistics, markedly favours the former (notably, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) to the detriment of the latter (particularly Algeria and Morocco).
Many countries, also, have seen the further development and generalisation of the “soft” pressure exerted by political parties and figures and by the private sector, relying, for example, on administrative harassment or the cutting-off of funding via failure to allocate advertising budgets. This “soft” pressure – more difficult to detect and to report – is still just as effective and often leads to self-censorship within news ecosystems, particularly in the treatment of certain “taboo” subjects (royal families and their entourages, religion, national integrity, terrorism, and the like).

THE BOOM IN PURE PLAYERS

A number of countries have seen a dramatic increase in the sector of news pure players, which have often taken advantage of the inability of the traditional media to adapt to the constraints of the Internet and to turn the potential it offers to profit.

This trend can be seen particularly in Morocco, which is thought to have between 500 and 1000 pure players, including a large number of local news websites. The phenomenon exists also in Tunisia, with 180, including many webradio, and in Jordan, which had more than 500 in early 2013, although almost half were closed down in June of that year in the wake of a toughening of legislation governing their registration. The popularity of these pure players is illustrated by their many Facebook fans, who number in the hundreds of thousands and even millions in the case of the Moroccan Hespress.

Despite essential work on the part of certain pure players, such as Mada Masr in Egypt, Nawaat in Tunisia and the now defunct Lakome in Morocco, the pure-player sphere is characterised largely by very low standards of journalism: information is not verified, there is no investigative work, and abundant content is either biased or untrue. Yet this diversity has to be accommodated, since it is just one type of collateral damage in a healthy media ecosystem that on the one hand allows some of the media to guarantee their financial survival and independence, and on the other offers a legal framework guaranteeing freedom of information. Examples cited by the Moroccan journalist Aboubakr Jamaï are taken from the English-speaking media, namely The Sun and The Economist in the United Kingdom and the National Enquirer and The New York Times in the United States, which do not represent a threat to one another and are two inherent components of a healthy media ecosystem.

Despite the fact that the 2011 Arab Spring in some cases led to progress – notably, an unprecedented freedom of expression in the Tunisian media – the outcome was often superficial reform of the media sector (e.g. Morocco and Algeria). Furthermore, ineffectual legal safeguards for online media professionals remain in place. In some cases, reaction to the Arab Spring led to measures aimed at restricting freedom, such as a Jordanian decree which in 2013 led to the closure of half that country’s news websites. Elsewhere, there was increased repression, for example the measures taken by the Egyptian authorities against citizen-journalists and bloggers, or, at a different level, by the Syrian authorities against all independent media.

Generalisation of “soft” pressure
Given the competition between pure players in each country, where content is often largely redundant, and since the advertising revenue they compete for is low, a number of observers predict that the sector will consolidate around the more responsible players in the years to come, which could lead to a progressive improvement in their quality.

THE SLOW TRANSFORMATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

In a number of the countries studied, and particularly in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt, the traditional media have been successful in migrating their historical audience towards their online presence and thus feature highly amongst the most consulted news websites. However, in spite of the steps taken by certain media to switch to digital (notably Radio Mosaïque in Tunisia, Al-Masry Al-Youm in Egypt and Al Ghad in Jordan), the majority of the traditional media, particularly paper-format daily newspapers, does not appear to be capable of taking on new digital challenges and provides a kind of “minimum service” on the Internet, simply, for example, making the content of the paper edition available online once a day.

The media that have remained on the fringes of the digital revolution have not genuinely readdressed their internal organisation (they have no online editorial team, there is no merger of online and paper/radio editorial teams in the form of an “integrated editorial team”), frequently offering platforms that are one or two generations out of date (no mobile website, no responsive-design website, no mobile apps), have not devised online or mobile formats, and make only basic use of social networks by promoting the content of the latter without actually enabling their audience to interact and without seeking to retain their audience.

Lastly, most of these daily titles have done little to develop a viable economic model relying on their online presence, the organisation’s income being guaranteed by receipts from selling the paper version and from advertising in it. A number of dailies have, nevertheless, instituted a paying SMS alert service, for instance Al-Masry Al-Youm in Egypt which offers its readers five SMS alerts per day for the cost of EGP 30/month, i.e. around € 3.6. Other titles, such as L’Orient-Le Jour or Aujourd’hui le Maroc, have tried to impose payment on their online audience, but there are no results allowing this model to be validated to date.

The majority of the traditional media does not appear to be capable of taking on new digital challenges

THE EXPLOSION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

The dramatic rise in the popularity and influence of social networks and, first and foremost, Facebook, is, together with increased mobile access, undoubtedly the most striking trend and the one that is most shared throughout the region. According to Alexa statistics, Facebook is now the most consulted website in six of the eight countries covered by the present study and is ranked second in the remaining two countries. According to the Arab Social Media Report¹, the Arab world (22 countries) had over 86.3 million Facebook users in May 2014 – 25% of whom were in Egypt – as compared with 21.4 million in December 2010, on the eve of the Arab Spring, that is to say a 300% increase over four and a half years.

Facebook is the most consulted website in six of the eight countries covered by the present study

Facebook, and to a lesser extent Twitter, is redefining the way in which news is consumed and shared and is now an indispensable tool for promoting the content of news websites. Furthermore, it is a lever for creating communities around media brand names. Facebook is also the platform of choice when it comes to reader-verification of facts and for gathering user-generated content, particularly within the context of investigations conducted by the media and sustained by readers. An Internet within the Internet, Facebook has allowed the emergence of very popular media managed entirely within the social network, such as Les Envoyés Spéciaux Algériens and Quds News Network in Palestine.

Social networks are also a breeding ground for all kinds of abuse committed not only by the media but also by citizens: rumours, smear campaigns, buzz, a race to Like and to Share, and so on. The low level of media education in the case of a proportion of the audience, which is prone to take at face value anything that is published online and unable to distinguish between sources of information all placed on the same level by Facebook, compounds the deleterious impact of this abuse on the quality of news ecosystems. Therefore, and paradoxically, far from endangering the existence of professional media organisations, according to numerous experts the omnipresence of social networks renders such organisations even more necessary because only they are able to verify, categorise, analyse, rank and make sense of the constant flow of information on offer on Facebook and Twitter.

Re-publication, rumours, smear campaigns and buzz
What is more, the experts consulted speak as one in lamenting the lack of technological knowledge on the part of online journalists and media managers, which is an obstacle to realising the full potential of information technologies and restricts creativity and innovation, thereby limiting the emergence of new online media formats and models.

A lack of technological knowledge on the part of journalists

Some of those surveyed nevertheless maintain that training alone is not the answer in the case of journalistic practices, quality and innovation: only an independent and economically healthy media sector, requiring properly trained journalists, can make the most of, and by means of ongoing training and daily practice guarantee the future of, initial training in the international standards of quality journalism.

BREAKING FREE OF THE SHACKLES OF LANGUAGE

Online media development appears also to have encouraged a number of players to devise innovative approaches to language in order to adapt to the cultural or political changes taking place in the region and potentially to reach out to new audiences that were not catered for by the traditional media. In the Maghrebi countries, the appearance of numerous news websites and online radio channels using Maghrebi Arabic (or *darija*) illustrates not only a move towards establishing a new identity, but also a desire to be accessible to a broader public and, in Tunisia, a breakaway from the official language of the media (modern standard Arabic), which is seen to have too close an association with the former powers that be.

A number of news websites in French were launched in the noughties in several countries that were historically French-speaking, particularly Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, their aim being to appeal to a supposed digitally literate, French-speaking elite. However, there has been a significant decline in the number and popularity of news websites in French, mirroring the decline in the use of French in the education sector and in society as a whole. The shift away from French is naturally creating a niche for numerous sites in Arabic – modern standard Arabic or Maghrebi Arabic –and is also reflected in the very widespread use on social networks of *arabizi*, an informal form of Arabic transliterated into the Latin alphabet and using Arabic numbers, which arose out of the initial Internet forums and in text messages. Also worthy of note is the appearance of pure players in English such as, for example, Tunisia live, which are attempting to reach an international audience as well as a local population increasingly influenced by the culture of the English-speaking world.

TRAINING, QUALITY AND INNOVATION

All media stakeholders across the region highlight the lack of training for online journalists and, in fact, for all journalists, in good journalistic practices, codes of professional conduct and ethics. This lack of training has a direct impact on the quality of the online media, which are often criticised for their practically non-existent verification of the facts and their propensity to “re-publish” to the detriment of any investigation, and even their active role in spreading rumours and other superficial and biased content designed to cause a buzz and to generate social media traffic.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage of the population using Facebook. Source: Arab Social Media Report</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Facebook penetration levels" /></td>
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Lastly, it is striking to note that by freeing themselves from the straightjacket of the traditional media, several pure players have developed highly fluid multilingual practices within their publications, enabling them to be accessed by a broader public and to respond to the expectations of a cosmopolitan readership: the home page of the Tunisian Nawaat offers articles in Arabic, French and also English, the Moroccan Goud some columns in Arabic, with a title in danja, and Envoys Spéciaux Algériens post topics on Facebook with a header in Arabic and the main body of the text in French.

TENTATIVE STRUCTURING OF THE ONLINE MEDIA SECTOR

In a good many of the countries in question, the original journalists’ associations and trades unions, including those controlled by the State, have adopted a very conservative stance vis-à-vis the online media and even now give little consideration to digital-specific problems, such as ongoing training in online journalism, the impact of the citizen-journalist and user-generated content, the use of social media, etc. Furthermore, membership of many such organisations is conditional upon possession of a press card, which most of the time keeps the door closed to professionals working for pure players.

However, this failure to acknowledge and to take account of historical structures has only rarely encouraged the creation of online-media-specific structures: with the notable exceptions of Morocco, where the main players of the enduring online media sector got together in 2014 to form the Association de la Presse Marocaine Digitale⁴, and of Syria, where a number of networks are federations of independent and citizen media, in the main online, the countries studied have no structure that groups together and defends online journalists’ and media interests. The online news sector is still very young and its ultra-competitive approach is often taken to be the norm. These aspects sometimes appear to frustrate anything more than informal exchanges. The absence of communication between online media professionals is in contrast to the numerous exchanges and links that have grown up between social media players in each country and even at regional level, one example being the organisation of regular Arab Bloggers Meetings by the international blogger network known as Global Voices Online⁵.

ADVERTISING REVENUE IS INSUFFICIENT

As in the rest of the world⁶, the online media in the Arab world suffer from a lack of economic models enabling them to balance necessary investment with sufficiently large and regular income. Despite a high level of disparity between the countries in terms of online advertising investment per Internet user per annum⁷ (ranging from $ 0.1 in the case of Palestine and Syria and $ 7.8 for Lebanon), all the stakeholders surveyed stress without exception that advertising revenue alone cannot sustain the online media, aside, perhaps, for the case of content farms that re-publish en masse, with practically non-existent journalist input.

In addition to being very limited in the majority of the countries covered by the survey, online advertising revenue is largely captured by international services (Google, Facebook, YouTube, and the like) and only the most meagre share falls to the media in any one country. Nevertheless, this source of revenue should not be completely overlooked: more often than not, it is essential, even in those countries where advertising revenue is lowest, such as in Palestine, where several players point to the potential for working with local advertisers, particularly from the sectors of telecommunications or civil engineering.
THE SUBSCRIPTION MODEL – OASIS OR MIRAGE?

For reasons that are as much economic as technical and cultural, the subscription model appears in the main to be a non-starter, although a few media players are trying it out or have already tested the waters, such as L’Orient-Le Jour, with its paywall launched in July 2014, or Aujourd’hui le Maroc, which experimented with paid subscriptions in 2009. Only a few pay services, such as text alerts or subscription newsletters, or certain paid-for sections, such as personal announcements or classified ads, appear to have had any success amongst readers of certain online daily newspapers. However, it is expected that in the longer term natural competition from apps developed by these same titles and which offer, free of charge, services that are at least similar and often with more content, will sound their death knell.

INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC MODELS

Faced with the problem of funding themselves solely by virtue of online advertising and the virtual impossibility of the subscription option, a number of news websites have turned to hybrid, innovative economic models combining several income sources. Pure players with no associated daily newspaper or a radio website for which advertising income or sales would finance the media as a whole, are, as in the case of Hiber in Jordan or Mada Masr in Egypt, the most committed to this approach and frequently offer editorial (writing, translation, press review) or technical (website development) services, services for other media (training courses, “fixer” services) or for diverse institutions (audiovisual productions, etc.). There are many who offer a variety of printed items (mugs, T-shirts, stickers, and the like) via an online store, generate a co-working space or organise cultural events to ensure their survival. With income diversification, advertising sometimes becomes so ancillary an aspect that the decision is taken to abandon it entirely, which was the choice, for example, of Inkyfada in Tunisia. Lastly, international aid, which includes the EBITCAR-Media competition, is often necessary to allow the deployment of new independent initiatives and continues to be vital in extreme situations, as in Syria.
**ALGERIA**

**ESSENTIAL FACTS**

- The Internet penetration level is low but is set to be gradually offset by the roll-out of 3G from late 2013.
- There is little direct censorship but pressure is placed on news websites, particularly by means of the allocation or withholding of advertising budgets.
- There is no dramatic rise in the number of pure players.
- The three principal paper-format daily newspapers in the country dominate online news, although with little editorial or technological innovation.

**POPULAR NEWS WEBSITES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elheddaf.com</td>
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<td>Echoroukonline.com</td>
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<td>Ennaharonline.com</td>
<td>310 000</td>
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**EGYPT**

**ESSENTIAL FACTS**

- Half the population has Internet access but broadband and mobile access are uncommon.
- According to the Reporters without Borders index, there is less freedom of information in 2015 than under the Mubarak regime and repression against journalists and bloggers continues.
- The three principal paper-format daily newspapers in the country dominate online news, despite competition from numerous pure players.

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<th>Website</th>
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<td>Youm7.com</td>
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<td>Elwatannews.com</td>
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<td>Almasryalyoum.com</td>
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<td>Vetogate.com</td>
<td>1 400 000</td>
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The Lebanese population is characterised by a very high level of Internet connectivity, particularly owing to very widespread mobile access.

The online media sector is very dynamic, with a number of very popular news websites that are now stealing a march on the predominantly outmoded paper-format daily newspapers.

The environment is highly politicised, with all media being directly or indirectly linked to a faction or a political party.

46% of the population is on Facebook, and social media exchanges reveal the country’s marked political polarisation.

Online advertising investment is significant but insufficient to guarantee website independence from the world of politics.

In Lebanon there are at least tentative moves afoot to set up a pay-access website via a paywall.

ESSENTIAL FACTS

The Lebanese population is characterised by a very high level of Internet connectivity, particularly owing to very widespread mobile access. There is a level of freedom of information unparalleled in the Arab world, but citizen-journalists and bloggers are subject to regular pressure.

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ESSENTIAL FACTS

Jordan is seen as a pocket of stability in the region; the country did not experience the Arab Spring to the same extent as other countries and the media sector was largely unaffected.

In June 2013, 250 news websites were closed down in the wake of a royal decree requiring them to register with the authorities.

The online media landscape is dynamic, with hundreds of pure players, and the traditional media are struggling to establish an online presence.

Numerous pure players are marked by abuse ranging from yellow journalism to publication blackmail. These media serve as political tools and omit fact checking.

Jordan’s premium source of news is Facebook, to which 48% of the citizens subscribe.

Online advertising revenue is significant and attracts numerous commercial news websites, including content farms with very poor added value.

News websites to watch
ESSENTIAL FACTS

→ Over half the population has Internet access and a quarter benefits from 3G services.
→ The 20 February Movement ushered in a new constitution and new press code, ensuring press freedom and the legitimate status of the online media.
→ Despite this progress, arrests and “soft repression”, particularly in the form of administrative pressure or the cutting-off of funding, still take place.
→ The pure player sector has experienced dramatic growth, with over 500 news websites that include many small local media.

→ Numerous pure players are of mediocre quality and are involved in re-publication, plagiarism or yellow journalism.
→ Paper-format dailies in Morocco are largely now outmoded, except for Akhbar Al Yaoum, with its alyaoum24.com website.
→ The economic, technical and cultural environment in Morocco appears to be compatible with subscription-based online media, but to date there have been few ventures into that area.

News websites to watch
Goud, Le 360, H24 Info, TelQuel, Yabiladi.

MOROCCO

Internet freedom 56%
Internet penetration 46%
Word press freedom 130/180
Online advertising 2.5 $

PALESTINE

Internet freedom 47%
Internet penetration No data
Word press freedom 140/180

ESSENTIAL FACTS

→ High level of Internet penetration allowed by Israel’s infrastructures, but 3G deployment is made impossible by bandwidth restrictions.
→ Attacks on press freedom are still regular occurrences, and political parties have a stranglehold on media independence.
→ News websites are extremely popular and devote much space to political news.
→ Paper-format dailies are now being left behind by pure players and websites associated with TV and radio stations.
→ Facebook and Twitter are much-used by citizen-journalists to document the day-to-day life in the occupied territories or the consequences of periods of conflict.
→ News websites and social media reflect the high degree of political polarisation in society.
→ Online advertising investment is very low and prevents the media sector from becoming a viable industry.

News websites to watch

PALESTINE

Internet freedom 0.1 $
Internet penetration 180/180
Word press freedom 0.1 $

ESSENTIAL FACTS

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News websites to watch
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MOROCCO

Internet freedom 35/65
Internet penetration 0.1 $
Word press freedom 180/180
Online advertising 35/65

POPULAR NEWS WEBSITES

Website | Facebook | Twitter | Type
--- | --- | --- | ---
Hespress.com | 2 800 000 | 10 000 | 🌐
Kooora.com | 230 000 | 600 000 | 🌐
Hili2.com | 650 000 | 28 000 | 🌐
Elbotola.com | 850 000 | 7 300 | 🌐
Alyaoum24.com | 750 000 | 1 000 | 🌐

POPULAR NEWS WEBSITES

Website | Facebook | Twitter | Type
--- | --- | --- | ---
Alwatanvoice.com | 530 000 | 28 000 | 🌐
Maannews.net | 20 000 | 35 000 | 🌐
Wattan.tv | 680 000 | 2 000 | 🌐
Raya.ps | 700 000 | 3 000 | 🌐
Panet.co.il | 1 800 000 | 8 700 | 🌐
ESSENTIAL FACTS

Freedom of expression and the opening-up of the press sector are considered to be two of the principal achievements of the revolution, but anxiety persists concerning censorship and the surveillance technologies still in place.

The online media sector is experiencing dramatic growth, with around 180 active news websites, including numerous local online radio channels.

The online media landscape is, however, still dominated by the traditional media (radio stations and paper-format dailies) launched under Ben Ali.

Facebook is used by practically all Tunisian Internet users (4.6 million users) and for most of them is their point of access to the Internet.

Part of the online media landscape is developing within Facebook, with a number of highly popular news pages.

Facebook and pure players are often information battle grounds, feeding on false information, insults and unverified “scoops”, which are rapidly relayed to create a buzz.

Online advertising revenue opportunities have been reduced to zero by the war, which means that support from international sponsors is essential.

Online advertising revenue is very low and there is often pressure from advertisers to shape editorial content, which motivates news websites to experiment with innovative economic models.

News websites to watch

News websites to watch
Nawaat, Inkyfada, Tuniscope, Tunisia Live, Tunisie Bondy Blog.

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<td>Alazmenah.com</td>
<td>600</td>
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SYRIA

ESSENTIAL FACTS

Freedom of information is one of the first victims of the conflict, but this has promoted the emergence of citizen-journalists who are the only sources capable of covering events inside Syria.

Information from the field is abundant but it is difficult to evaluate its authenticity.

Citizen-journalists experience Internet censorship, network outages, surveillance of communications and also cyber attacks implemented by the Syrian Electronic Army and Daesh.

In Syria, there are a number of independent online media, some of whose websites are hyper-local, and there are several initiatives afoot aimed at bringing them together under a federation.

Facebook and Twitter are heavily used in Syria, not only as an independent-media incubator but also as Daesh’s self-promotion and terror weapon.

Online advertising revenue opportunities have been reduced to zero by the war, which means that support from international sponsors is essential.

Internet censorship, network outages, surveillance of communications and also cyber attacks implemented by the Syrian Electronic Army and Daesh.

Online advertising revenue is very low and there is often pressure from advertisers to shape editorial content, which motivates news websites to experiment with innovative economic models.

News websites to watch

News websites to watch
Nawaat, Inkyfada, Tuniscope, Tunisia Live, Tunisie Bondy Blog.

POPULAR NEWS WEBSITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sana.sy</td>
<td>300 000</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt.com</td>
<td>2 000 000</td>
<td>730 000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaamtimes.net</td>
<td>180 000</td>
<td>1 700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrianow.sy</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td>3 300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alazmenah.com</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TUNISIA
Sources

2. “40 operators in 16 Arab Countries Commercially Offer 3G/3.5G/3.75G”, Satellite Markets & Research, August 2014: http://www.satellitemarkets.com/market-trends/40-operators-16-arab-countries-commercially-offer-3g35g375g

Lexicon

3G et 4G: mobile telephony standards allowing Internet access at higher speeds than with previous standards (e.g. GPRS).

Arabizi: informal Arabic transliterated into the Latin alphabet and Arabic figures, spawned on the initial Internet forums and in text messages.

Content farm: a website offering content with low added value, produced en masse and optimised for search engines with a view to attracting the highest number of hits possible and generating a maximum of advertising income for minimum investment.

Fact checking: a journalistic practice consisting of verifying and validating factorial information in a dispatch, statement or political speech.

Yellow journalism: a type of journalism based on sensationalism, distortion or exaggeration of the facts.

Mobile first: a methodology involving designing a website and its ergonomics as a priority for the audience connecting to it from mobile terminals (and thus small screens).

Paywall: a subscription system allowing consultation of a website to be made subject to a subscription after a set number of free consultations each month.

Pure player (or “all online”): news website with content offered only electronically, with no association with the “traditional” media.

Re-publication: putting up news already disseminated on another website and doing so without analysis or any other added value, in general without attributing the original source of the content.

Responsive design: website development technology providing an optimised user experience irrespective of the consultation terminal (smartphone, tablet, computer).

Webradio: radio station broadcasting its programmes over the Internet rather than over Hertzian waves like traditional radio stations.