Dojo Content Portfolio: Joanne Rodrigues

The Dojo was an online blog run by JadoPado. It was a free guide & resource to help individuals build and grow a successful online business. Topics covered ranged from digital marketing and operations to social media and customer care.

As Content Lead, I wrote several articles (some listed below), and edited work written by junior writers.

The blog was taken down when JadoPado got acquired in 2017

https://web.archive.org/web/20170329063759/https://dojo.jadopado.com/

A Guide to Building Your Online Personal Brand

Taking control of your online personal brand and channelling it in a positive way can make you an attractive prospect to potential employers, clients and business partners.

By Joanne Rodrigues
APRIL 19 2017

What is Personal Branding?

What do you say when someone asks you 'So tell me about yourself'? How do you explain who you are? What kind of image and personality do you depict? We are surrounded by brands all day, every day. From our Adidas sneakers to our Starbucks mugs, do the brands we own define us or can we be brand-worthy on our own? In 1997, business writer Tom Peters coined the term 'Personal Branding' in an article for Fast Company Magazine. The article speaks about the importance of developing your own individual brand and becoming the 'CEO of Me'.

Essentially, personal branding is the process of developing your key strengths and selling points to make yourself identifiable and marketable as **YOU**. It is the power (ability?) to become influential.

Why Do You Need a Personal Brand?

We've all done it - Googled our names to see what comes up. In an age where we are so accustomed to living an online life, it is only natural that we leave behind traces along the way. From leaving online reviews for restaurants to sharing photos of our weekend holiday, our personal activities create plenty of material that reflect us.

Our cyber footprint matters today more than ever. In fact, 60% of employers use social networking websites to research job candidates. So why not use this digital footprint to your

advantage and control the personal branding that comes out of it. Taking control of your personal brand and channeling it in a positive way can make you an attractive prospect to potential employers, clients and business partners and make you recognisable in your industry and beyond.

Building an Online Personal Brand

Instead of handing over your business card when you want someone to remember you, what if they came over and introduced themselves because they've already recognised you? Building a personal brand can be a lengthy process but if done right, can benefit you in the long run. A personal brand needs to be memorable, so follow our below points and get started.

Be Authentic
First things first, you need to be true to yourself. People are not going to trust someone or any brand that they suspect of being fake. Be as authentic as you can be identifying key strengths you possess and goals you believe in. It's only when you believe in yourself that you can get others to believe in you too. Neil Patel, author and entrepreneur who has written a number of pieces on personal branding, says "You can't fake authenticity. It's hard to open up, to be real, to feel raw, and to share things that are, well, heartfelt".

The more relatable you are, the more trustworthy you will be to your audience. And there's nothing worse than lying about yourself just for some short term goals. For example, if you have stated an achievement in your CV, but is later uncovered by someone else to be false, it can be damaging not only to your career at the time but to your future reputation as well. Some ways of creating authentic content online can include regular blog posts, video series and podcasts that showcase your personality and beliefs in a creative and genuine way.

Manage your Social Media Presence
We've said it time and again - your online presence really matters in today's day and age. There are over 2.7 billion active social media users in the world today and the number is ever increasing day by day. In order to establish an online brand for yourself and stand out among the crowd you need to take control of your social media presence.

To start with, clear away those abandoned social media accounts that are lying dormant. If you do not use your MySpace, Orkut, Yahoo! and MSN accounts anymore it's time to either delete or clean them up. Next take a look at your current social media profiles for any inappropriate content you may have shared in the past. To make it easier for users to find you, ensure that your profiles are open to the public all the while remaining extremely vigilant with what you share with the public. Display a clear and professional profile picture that is consistent across all your platforms and a bio that concisely describes who you are and what you offer.

Network

One of the best ways to build your personal brand is by connecting and networking with as many people as you can in order to spread your message and influence. You and your brand cannot survive alone and having a useful set of contacts is always a good option. Over 85% of jobs are filled through networking so use it to your advantage to gain followers and clients. Attend local workshops and seminars, maybe even sign up to speak at events to share your knowledge and get people to know you. Connect with as many like minded and influential users on social media as you can. Share original content as well as content from other sources to build trust among your peers. Networking events are a great way to identify business opportunities and generate ideas.

Be Consistent

As you expand your online personal branding and digital presence, you influence is bound to get stronger. In order to maintain a strong branding that is still trustworthy as you grow it is important to remember to always be consistent. A consistent messaging will allow users to identify with your brand easily, and share your message with confidence. It also eliminates confusion in the mind of new followers. If you do need to move in a new direction make sure to give clear reasoning as to why and provide update all across your online platforms. You can even invite your network to share their thoughts and feedback and answer any questions they may have.

Stay Up-to-date

Technology is renovating and changing at a rapid rate so you need to stay up-to-date at all times. Adapt to new online platforms and learn new ways of communicating with your target audience. Today live-streaming has become a norm with key digital influencers providing

their followers with real-time video footage of their happening, from events and conferences to gala dinners and holidays. As times change so should your brand.

Talk About the Challenges
Not everything you share has to be made of rainbows and unicorns. Your audience will appreciate your struggles and strive to connect with your journey.

Kris Fade a popular radio host in Dubai boasts a following of over 32K on Twitter and 88K on Instagram. Fade shares regular stories about his struggle with weight loss, self esteem and motivation.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BNEjvIlhOul/

Share difficult moments you face as you build your personal brand, be honest with the obstacles you may face in your industry. It is the challenges that shape who you are and in turn make you as real as possible to a virtual audience, so give them snippets to connect with.

Apr 4 2017

Business Ethics and Client Etiquette in MENA

Meta Description: When it comes to Arab business culture it is important to get your professional etiquette on point. Learn more here.

Business ethics and etiquette differ in regions all across the world. Our handy guide to professional etiquette in MENA will help you learn a few things.

By Joanne Rodrigues

Business ethics and etiquette differ in regions all across the world. There are certain norms that are accepted in some countries that would be shunned upon elsewhere. With the ease of communication in today's world, the globe has become a much smaller place and companies are able to successfully run a number of international offices across multiple timezones at the click of a few buttons. That is why there is all the more reason for us to be fully aware of the corporate culture in the region we are dealing in.

The MENA region is a melting pot of cultures, not just from the Arab world but from across the globe. So it is important to learn and adapt to the corporate etiquette of the Arab world when meeting clients here. In order to succeed in your next client meeting in this region, keep the below points in mind.

Build a Relationship

Business is a very personal matter in the Middle East. Family businesses contribute to 60% of the GDP in Middle Eastern economies, and employ over 80% of the workforce. The key to a great client meeting is gaining trust, and the best way to do that is by establishing a good rapport with the prospective. Businesses in the region are more likely to partner and work

with someone who they can see a long-term trusting relationship with. Ask them about their family, their weekend and always wish them well at the end of the meeting. Ayman Ghanam, director of sales at JadoPado, says that he has led plenty of successful sales pitches and business meetings that involve 90% of non-business related topics. "We talk about a lot of topics from football to technology, family to society", says Ghanam. "The relationship that I build sometimes ends up being the difference between me and my competitor. It results in the client picking my offering over someone who may have a better product or even lower prices".

Be Flexible

It's one thing to be confident and another to be pushy. Business decisions in the MENA region are known to be slower than the rest of the world. Companies like to be wooed, but also don't like being rushed into making a decision. A lot of outcomes have to go through a whole hierarchy of decision-makers before getting finalised and this can take time. Be flexible in your approach and be prepared to re-work your schedule to suit your prospect's. Arab culture is very laid-back compared to the rest of the world. Herman Miller, a company that has been studying corporate design and culture for decades, conducted a research in 2011 about the culture and work styles in Dubai. According to the study, relationships are more important than schedules so be prepared to have your meeting run over. Handy tip: avoid scheduling important meetings back-to-back to avoid having to postpone one later.

Face to Face

In the Middle East, face-to-face meetings are very important. According to Ghanam, countries such as Saudi Arabia find it difficult to establish trust without meeting you in person. Approach your prospect with an open mind and be approachable to build trust. People love talking about themselves and the best way to get someone to open up is to ask them questions. Find out what your client's problems are and what issues they are facing so you can tailor your response accordingly. When possible, set up a number of introductory meetings over a meal or coffee where you can build a relationship and understand their business before selling to them. If this is not a possibility and you only have one chance of meeting them, spend the first few minutes making small talk and establishing a comfortable setting. A lot of clients are won through referrals in this region, so it is important to maintain a healthy and professional working network.

Blend into the Culture

The Middle East is a melting pot of cultures. In the UAE, over 88% of the population is made up of expats so it is important for you to be prepared to be as open-minded and embracing of different cultures at all times. Make sure you do sufficient amount of research into the background of the company and person you are about to sell to. A lot of established Arab companies in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Oman prefer to conduct business in Arabic. Many companies today make sure their sales team is a mix of people from different nationalities and backgrounds who can easily conduct business in different languages such as Arabic, English, Hindi, Urdu and Tagalog — some of the most commonly spoken languages in the region. Learn a few phrases and greetings in Arabic and incorporate them into your meeting.

Another key point to note when trying to blend into the mixed culture of MENA, is to learn to read signs and body language. Salespeople in MENA have to learn how to take no for an answer without actually hearing the words said. Contrary to other regions in the world, people in MENA don't like to give news that might be considered negative or bad. There may be situations where clients stop answering emails, messages and attempts to meet. This can be a sign that they are not able or willing to do business with you. It could just be bad timing but look for signs where you feel someone might be avoiding you, and make a note to try again at a later point in time. In Saudi Arabia, open criticism is generally avoided, as is directly saying 'no' to something. It is preferred to communicate disagreements indirectly or by subtly suggesting changes.

Time it Right

For a lot of people who move to the Middle East, it can take some time to get used to the days of the working week. In most MENA countries the work week is from Sunday to Thursday, but some companies do operate only Saturday to Wednesday, or work on some Saturdays. Be aware of your client's schedule before you plan a meeting. Some businesses prefer heavy meetings at the start of the week and look for lighter ideas towards the weekend, so set the tone of your meeting accordingly. Also bear in mind festivals and holidays. Ramadan is a very important time in the MENA region, and a lot of businesses do not wish to take on new projects and ideas during the Holy Month, and prefer to wait till after Eid festivities are over.

What are your thoughts on client and business etiquette in the Middle East? Share your tips with us below.

Digital Marketing Tactics to Attract Shoppers in Saudi Arabia

Meta Description: Broaden your reach by attracting online consumers in Saudi Arabia. View our digital marketing tactics here.

Expand your reach into the largest member of the GCC by taking a look at these digital marketing tactics for online shoppers in Saudi Arabia.

By Joanne Rodrigues

Last year we talked about how you can use digital marketing techniques to tap into the online market of Egypt. This year it's time for us to shift our focus to one of the biggest countries in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is home to over 20 million internet users, making up almost 65% of the country's total population and 40% of the total GCC population. Saudi is one of the fastest growing e-commerce markets in the world. According to a report on the Saudi Gazette, KSA had 3.9 million users conducting business online in 2016.

Online shopping is more popular among the young and female population of Saudi Arabia. In a country where women are not permitted to travel unaccompanied, e-platforms provide a safe and uninterrupted gateway to the outside world. Grocery shopping especially, has taken off significantly in the past few years. Online shopping services serve as the perfect option to do grocery without having to step out of the house. A 2016 study by PayFort showed that there was a 35% month-on-month growth in online groceries in the first six months alone. Millennials seem the most excited about using e-platforms to shop for groceries, with over 45% of the shoppers sitting between the 25-34 age bracket.

Mobile Marketing

A key takeaway from the study is that 78% of grocery shopping in Saudi Arabia is done on the go from a mobile device. This makes it even more important to focus a majority of your digital marketing efforts on this platform. A lot of young people prefer to shop for items as soon as they think of them, and enjoy the convenience of ordering at the click of a button.

According to statistics compiled by digital marketing agency DM3, mobile phones are the most used device by almost 50% of the population, and 34% of users are happy to receive weekly promotional messages on their mobile phones. Think with Google MENA has conducted a number of studies regarding mobile usage and purchasing trends in Saudi. Eighty-four percent of the under-25 population use their smartphones to research a purchase. This in turn has a higher rate of conversion among users who have been targeted on mobile and have started their consumer journey through their mobile devices. Google has also identified that 80% of consumers who research products on mobile phones think about acquiring a brand they had previously not thought of, simply due to relevant information targeted to them through their phone during their time of research. The trend drives home the importance of mobile optimisation as well as using pertinent keywords in line with SEO strategies to hike up your visibility.

Fifty-two percent of mobile users in KSA prefer SMS promotions and 36% prefer promotional messages through emails, says the DM3 report. Make adequate use of all mobile outlets to make sure you target the demographic you are after, especially considering the research time young people in Saudi invest before going ahead with a purchase. Consumers looking for electronic items such as laptops are more likely to research on mobile devices before a purchase. The skincare industry does not get a lot of prior mobile research in Saudi Arabia, however 86% of purchasers admit to watching video content related to skincare and beauty on their mobile devices during their purchase journey. Even though only 22% of users make purchases through mobile, the number is steadily on the increase and even more so with appropriate targeting on their purchase and research journey.

Video Marketing

We recently spoke about the importance of video marketing, outlining trends and benefits of video in the MENA region. Saudi Arabia is home to the highest YouTube consumption per capita in the world. Video content plays a huge part in Saudi culture, especially among the youth. Forty percent of consumers, across all categories, discover a new brand through video content, according to a Think with Google study. Use video to educate your audience, not only about your product but also to provide demos, instructions and product reviews. Over 85% of youth under the age of 35 use YouTube to learn or find out how to do something.

Learn more about video marketing techniques here.

Social Media

Social media plays a huge role in Saudi Arabia, with residents spending a quarter of their day using social media. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the country, followed by Twitter and Instagram, according to a research by YouGov. Social media offers an attractive visual platform to showcase your brands and products alongside your customer's natural news feed. Pay attention to your tone of voice on social media. You can create company profiles to keep in touch with and gain insight on your target audience.

Social media influencers, especially for tech products, play an important role in persuading Saudi customers to make a purchase. Twitter stars such as Faisal Alsaif and Sultan Alfardan are go-to names for tech reviews. Read our full social media guides here.

Obstacles Of Online Shopping in Saudi

So with all the ease and flexibility of shopping from the comfort of your own home, why is Saudi Arabia still behind in the e-commerce game?

Authenticity
The Saudi Gazette has reported that many shoppers are still skeptical about the authenticity of the quality they get from online social media sites. Because they are not able to physically inspect the item of choice, they are left to trust the online merchant 'blindly'. A number of women in Saudi Arabia prefer to shop from international websites rather than local ones, as they feel international sites have a better reputation and get better reviews. Make sure your online business gets reviewed by happy customers and provide them with platforms to share their positive experiences, whether on your website or on social media.

Customer Service
Another point to focus on is stellar online customer service. According to the Saudi Gazette report, some customers feel that local online sellers in KSA are either not responsive or not willing to help, resulting in unhappy shoppers who do not return. Fahad Wardi of saltnlamp.com says that the key to online customer service is to make sure you provide a fast response and ensure that your clients know they are dealing with humans and not an automated system.

Wide offering
Saudi Arabians prefer convenience over everything else, especially when it comes to shopping for bulk items like groceries. If 90% of their items can not be found online, users will not proceed with the transaction as it would mean they would need to make a trip to the grocery store to obtain them anyway. Variety is key in this case, and with majority of the population living in big cities like Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam that has ever-increasing traffic, population and construction, providing shoppers a full range of products online make for an attractive selling point.

Payment

Due to unreliable or expensive payment gateway platforms, a lot of companies offer cash on delivery options, which can turn out to be unstable. Ensure your online customers that the payment gateway you offer is secure and safe, and offer lower rates on shipping and free online payment methods to encourage them to pay online.

Remember to fully localise your marketing to target Arabic speaking users. Almost 80% of online searches in KSA are conducted in Arabic, even though a lot of the population is comfortable enough to switch to English as well. With such a large emerging online consumer base, Saudi is a promising market to tap into. Make sure to employ the right mix of marketing strategies.

Have you tried online shopping in Saudi Arabia? Share your experience with us in a comment below.

E-Commerce Seller Insights — Infographic

Meta Description: Take a look at what our sellers had to say about their experiences in the e-commerce world this year. Check out the infographic about online selling now.

URL: e-commerce-seller-insights-infographic-2016
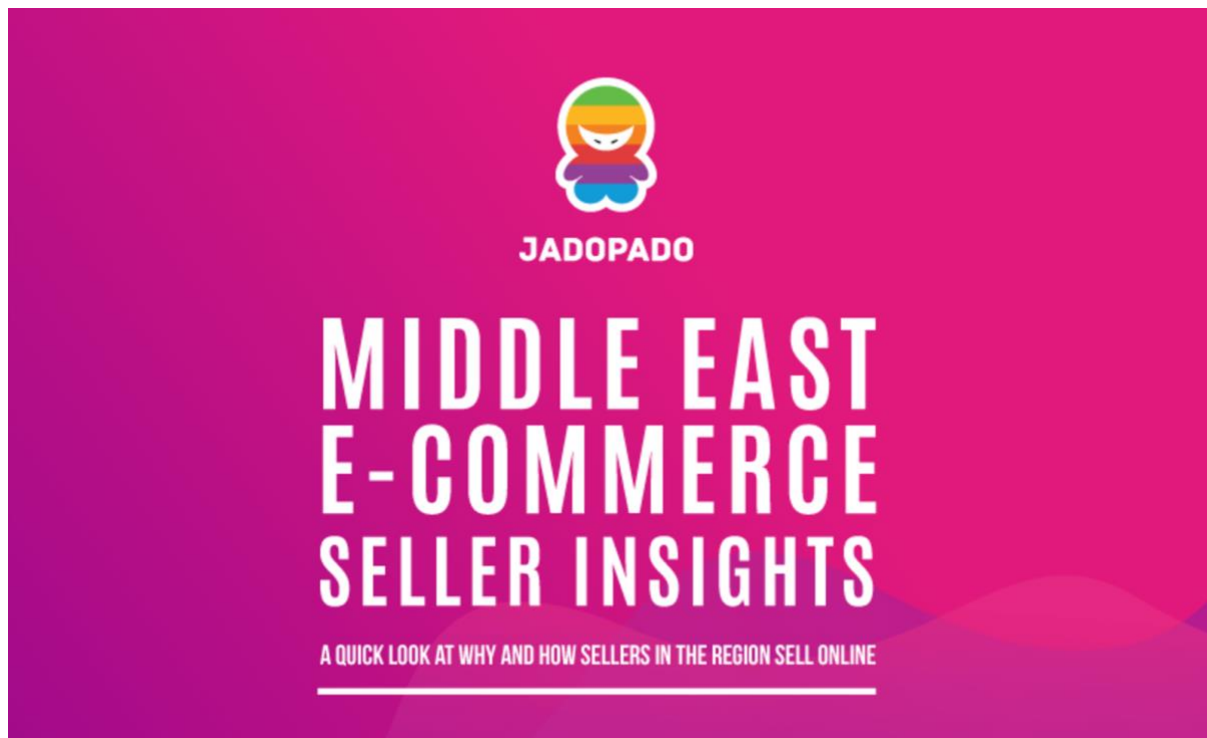
A snapshot of seller insights, trends and preferences in today's e-commerce world. Check out this infographic to know more.

By Joanne Rodrigues

A month ago we thought it would be a good idea to really get to know our sellers. We are always looking out for ways we can improve our platform as well as understand the market. We recently asked some of our sellers a few questions about why they [sell online](#) and how they go about it. It gave us a fairly good picture of what goes on in the e-commerce world.

Majority of sellers who responded to the survey were small businesses with less than five employees, which demonstrates the enabling role e-commerce plays in a competitive business environment. It comes as no surprise that over 60% of the sellers trade in electronic products. Other popular categories include [fashion & jewellery](#), [beauty](#), home & garden and toys & hobbies.

Multi-channel approach
The past few years have seen significant growth in the e-commerce industry of our region. That also reflected in our survey results as almost 70% of respondents started selling their products online between 2014 and 2016, with majority of new sellers starting out just in the

past year. It is evident that multiple selling channels are preferred as more than 60% of participants use three or more channels to sell their products online.

The two main reasons people start selling online are to attract more buyers and broaden their reach, and because online selling serves as an easy and convenient trading platform. The shift has reaped positive results for many with over 60% of our respondents gaining higher profit margins through online channels as compared to offline channels.

Wide reach
By selling online, most vendors are able to reach a much wider audience. Almost 75% of the our survey respondents stated that they sell internationally, and more than 63% of sellers make 1/5th of their sales from international buyers. Shipping costs seem to be the biggest hindrance to fulfilling international orders, with customs charges coming in second. Dubai-based courier company Aramex is the top preferred choice for our sellers, followed by FedEx and DHL. Over 31% of sellers choose to go ahead with a courier service to fulfil orders because of the speed of delivery. Other popular factors include the quality of service, competitive costs, flexibility and the wide reach of buyer destinations that courier companies can offer, making the delivery process smooth and hassle-free.

So what can sellers do to stay ahead of the game and plan their next steps for 2017? About 60% of our sellers are going to try competitive pricing, while more than 20% say they would like to improve their customer service. Some of the current incentives they employ to influence buyer purchase include offering discounts and promotions, free shipping and warranty. When it comes to marketing channels, social media appears to be a popular choice with more than half of the respondents using it to promote their products.

Infographic - https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/287838

March 22 2017

E-Commerce-Friendly Free Zones in the UAE

Meta Description: Setting up a free zone company in the UAE can be stressful. View our handy guide to get you started with your online business.

By Joanne Rodrigues

Free zones in the UAE offer a quick and economic platform to start your own e-commerce business. Our guide will answer a few questions you may have about setting up a business in a free zone.

The UAE serves as the perfect global trading hub due to its central location and easy access to Asia, Africa and Europe. Free zone trade is fast becoming the most popular economic option for start-ups, small businesses and e-commerce companies in the country. There are more than 40 free zones operating in the UAE, which play host to over 25,000 diverse companies. Most people prefer the ease and reduced costs that free zones offer, especially expatriates looking for full ownership of their business. Free zones in the UAE are designed to encourage and attract foreign shareholders to invest in the local market, contribute to the UAE economy and ease trade within sectors, all while benefitting from a tax-free environment.

When setting up your e-commerce business it is important to consider your logistics:
-   Do you require office space? In some free zones it is possible to simply set up a virtual desk or opt for more economical flexi-desks.
-   Do you need a warehouse for storage? Think about where your goods or services will be stocked and shipped from.
-   How many employees will you have? In most free zones, a visa allowance is issued according to how much office space you take up.
-   Identify where your buyers and audience are as in the strictest legal sense free zone companies can only cater to clients and conduct business within that particular free

zone or offshore and not on the mainland. In practice, some companies do so, but it's important to bear in mind the risks. Sufficient research should be done before taking any step. A way of getting around this is by designating a local intermediary or distributor, or opening a branch with a license from the Department of Economic Development.

Take a look at some of the most popular free zones in the UAE to help you decide which one would be the best option for your e-commerce business. While few offer a dedicated e-commerce license, many allow you to run an e-commerce operation on a license that's closest to the nature of your business activity. For example, if you want to sell multiple categories of goods online, they may allow you to do that with a general trading license .

DMCC
Voted 'Global Free Zone of the Year' in 2015 by The Financial Times fDi Magazine, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) is said to be one of the most popular and friendliest free zones for small businesses and start-ups to navigate around in the UAE. DMCC is located in Jumeirah Lakes Towers, surrounded by plenty of residential towers, offices, schools and commercial outlets. DMCC claims that all activity and communication is conducted online, which is especially beneficial when setting up an e-commerce venture. The free zone has a dedicated e-commerce licence that allows you to set up a digital marketplace as well as online transaction system. Take a look at its useful 'How To' guide to make a start.

The e-commerce license that DMCC provides is listed as an 'E-Marketplace Service Provider' under the Technology & Telecom business category. Activities in this license include businesses that provide an online platform to promote and aid financial transaction between consumers and sellers through a digital platform. Some activities like real estate and investments are not included in this license.

Dubai Internet City
As the name suggests, Dubai Internet City is a free zone that is information technology focused. Plenty of international brands such as Dell, Facebook, Microsoft, IBM and Oracle have their Middle East offices based in DIC as well as its neighbour Dubai Media City (DMC). An advantage to an e-commerce business would be the proximity and connectivity within the information technology and commercial network of the free zone. DIC works as a technological hub and provides you with 100% ownership of your business, state-of-the-art digital-focused infrastructure and up to 50 years of tax-free corporate income as in a number of other free zones. To obtain a license for a new e-commerce business in DIC, you would need to submit an application, a proposed business plan and shareholders' identification for review. Activities covered under the 'Internet and Multimedia' license include developing, consulting, support services and any distribution via an online platform, including acting as an intermediary between online entities.

If you are just starting out with a new idea and are looking for an incubator for your e-commerce venture, DIC's Innovation Hub is set to launch this year and will provide an ideal base to kickstart a small business by building contacts, creating new ideas and sharing knowledge. Currently the In5 Innovation Centre plays an important role in providing training and networking opportunities to technology ventures and is located in the Boutique Villas in Dubai Knowledge Village.

Dubai South

Previously known as Dubai World Central, Dubai South is one of the fastest developing areas in the city at the moment with the run up to the Expo 2020 as well as the new Al Maktoum International Airport. Dubai South is a fully integrated hub that is conveniently located very close to Dubai's city centre as well as easily accessible from Abu Dhabi and other emirates.

The commercial buildings in Dubai South offer a flexible commercial lease term, 100% foreign ownership of business, tax-free operation and competitive rates on cutting-edge technology and facilities. There are also shared office and temporary solutions for those who do not require a permanent office space. You can get a smart desk for AED 16,900 to use five hours a week and it includes two visas. A permanent smart desk with unlimited access costs AED 31,900 and is eligible for two visas. For an e-commerce venture you can either apply for a general trading license or a service license, after deciding which category your product will sit under.

Dubai Design District - D3

Fast becoming a trendy new art hub, Dubai Design District or D3, as it is popularly known, is a multi-purpose trade zone. The community brings together creative minds across the region to live and work in a common space. D3 is located off Al Khail Road, easily accessible from all areas of Dubai and away from the busy city centre.

The e-commerce license from D3 covers companies that wish to provide services and products through electronic media and over the internet. It also includes a company that acts as a go-between for products from a seller to client, through a web-based network. The license costs AED15,000 per year with a share capital of AED 50,000. As of now there is no flexi-desk option at D3.

Dubai Silicon Oasis

DSO is a fully government-owned free zone that provides living and working incentives that cater to the tech industry. As with the other zones, DSO offers 100% foreign ownership and tax-free operations. Its Tier 3 data centre and dedicated IT facilities are especially beneficial to an e-commerce business. The minimum required capital to set up a FZE or FZCO is AED10,000. An online application can be obtained by contacting DSO directly; make sure to have each shareholder's passport copy, no objection letter from current sponsor and a bank share capital letter. A license costs AED12,000 for two years and you are entitled to one visa per 9 sqm of rented office space. Legal entity options include:
- Branch - A company established in the UAE or any foreign country can register its branch in DSO.
- Free Zone Establishment (FZE) - Registered by a single shareholder.
- Free Zone Company (FZCO) - Registered by a minimum of two shareholders.

Fujairah Creative City

Launched in 2007, Fujairah Creative City (FCC) is one of the most efficient and cost-effective free zones available in the UAE today. Benefits to an e-commerce business in particular would be that if you do not have any physical goods there is no need to even rent a physical office space in Fujairah. Once you opt for an e-commerce activity within FCC, you can only act as an online intermediary between buyers and sellers, and not physically handle

the goods yourself. Fujairah Creative City provides various license options and packages to suit most types of small business models with flexible payment plans:

- Office Space package gives you up to 12 visas, a trade license for a year and lease to an office for a year.
- Baby Business package is perfect for small businesses and provides up to six visas, one-year trade license and basic office desk facilities that include receptionist, internet access, P.O. Box, sign board and even PRO services.
- Freelancer package lets you apply for up to three visas, trade license for a year and office desk that includes PRO services and a P.O. Box.
- Commercial License package does not include any visas but provides a trade license for one year.
- Single Owner license is for individual business owners and gives you a year's trade license.

Ajman Free Zone

Ajman Free Zone (AFZ) has been running successfully for over 25 years, and has seen substantial growth in the past few years. It offers 100% ownership of your business, competitive prices on resources and a fast-developing infrastructure with no restrictions on currency.

AFZ offers special e-commerce licenses as well as any marketing and technical support you may need. The Smart Office E-Commerce License from AFZ includes rental of office space, maintenance, sign board and a three-year visa for up to two people (which may have additional costs per person, but it depends on each case and business proposal).

RAK Free Trade Zone

Founded in 2000, Ras Al Khaimah Free Trade Zone (RAK FTZ) is home to companies operating in over 50 industry sectors and over 8,000 companies. The tax-free environment offers 100% foreign ownership, fast-track visa processing and a wide range of facilities and infrastructure. RAK FTZ is located in the northern emirates of the UAE and is a major player in the manufacturing of ceramic tiles, automobile parts and pharmaceutical goods. If your e-commerce business deals with any of these sectors, setting up with this free zone is a major advantage. It does offer an e-trading portal; however, details vary according to your business needs so it is recommended to contact its sales team directly for an accurate package. Minimum required capital is AED 1,000 and license fees and registration costs depend on your business proposal and activity.

The below guide will give you a quick overview of these free zones.

	License Fees (AED)	Number of Visas	Security Deposit (AED)	Registration Charges (AED)	Renewal Cost (AED)	Key Feature
DMCC	Trading License starts from 20,020 and can go up to 50,020 for General Trading.	Flexi desk up to 3 visas. Additional visas can be issued per 9 sq metres.	Available upon request.	Trading License starts from 9,020 and can go up to 30,020 for General Trading	20,010 every year.	Dedicated online services for e-commerce ventures.
DIC	15,020	2 visas with the cost of an Exclusive Desk at 35,000	Varies from 2,500 to 10,000.	3,520	Available upon request.	Digital-focused infrastructure and community.
Dubai South	General trading 25,000 and Service license 10,000.	Varies between 2 to 4 visas. For a business park office 1 visa per 8 sq metre.	10% of rent for fitted offices.	Contact directly for more information.		Fast developing and flexible for e-commerce ventures.
D3	15,000	1 per 80 sq ft.	No security deposit. However 25% of the lease agreement is collected at registration.	3,500	15,000	Beneficial for creative and artistic online ventures.
DSO	12,000	1 visa per 9 sqm.	10% of annual rent.	5,000	12,000	Digital and tech focused infrastructure.
FCC	30,500 - basic license for one year.	1-6 visas.	Available upon request.	4,000	26,000	E-commerce specific license and packages.
AFZ	28,250	1 visa per 7 sq metre.	2000	Included in the license fees.	As per payment package.	Special E-commerce license and fast growing community.
RAK FTZ	Start from 13,500.	Contact RAK FTZ directly for more information.				

The information presented in this article is accurate and reliable as of the date of publication, and we have taken great care to conduct thorough research for our readers. Laws and regulations in the UAE change at regular intervals, so we advise you to contact each free zone entity directly for your own business setup and accurate package details. Leave a comment below or take a look at our forums to share your thoughts and raise any questions you may have.

Effective Ways to Market Fashion Products Online

Meta Description: Read about the top online fashion marketing tips you should consider to generate sales.

By Joanne Rodrigues

With the ever-changing fashion landscape and the demand for immediate style-status increasing, the best time to focus on marketing your fashion products online is now.

Online shopping has changed the fashion industry like never before. Today's tech-savvy customers want what they want at the click of their fingers. Online shopping rates for fashion have gradually increased over the past few years, all across the globe. In India, fashion e-commerce attracts 24% of internet users a month. In 2015, over half of online shoppers in the EU bought clothing and sports goods, according to research firm yStats. Moreover, a compilation of stats by technology company Fabacus reveals that by 2019, the online fashion spend in the UK is expected to reach over 19 billion pounds.

Although small in comparison to the rest, the trend is no different in the MENA region. PwC conducted research in 2016 that showed that the most frequently purchased category for online shopping in the Middle East was clothing and footwear, although computer electronics are often the fastest-moving products online. With the ever-changing fashion landscape and the demand for immediate style-status increasing, the best time to focus on marketing your fashion products online is now.

Ways to Market Fashion Products Online

Social Media
Seems like the first and most obvious step. Big or small, almost every fashion brand today has a social media presence. Fashion is a social game. No one buys anything fashionable to just sit at home in. People across the globe use social media to keep track of latest fashion trends, see what their peers are buying and wearing and share their own fashion finds. According to research firm L2, 75% of shoppers discover fashion products through social media. Although these statistics seem more representative of US shoppers, there are chances that the scope is similar for shoppers across the globe.

A key advantage of social media is that not only can you flaunt your goods in a visually appealing manner, but also build a connection and interact with your customer. Use hashtags to ensure your customers do your marketing for you. In 2013, Nike teamed up with Instagram for its #NikePHOTOiD campaign that got its audience to use both the photo sharing tool as well as their favourite Nike trainers to create customised shareable content. Over 100,000

shoes were created in the first week alone, and 8% of users clicked through to purchase products.

Asos has been successful in using its #AsSeenOnMe hashtag to curate content not only for social media, but for its website as well.

By cashing on the share-factor of social media, more people will see your product and strive to be featured as well.

Use social media to communicate to your customers on a personal level. A lot of people tend to message a brand directly on Facebook or Twitter in search of quick answers to topics like availability or shipping. Make sure you have someone to tend to comments and messages on social media on a regular basis.

Take a look at our full social media marketing guides here.

Email Marketing
Email marketing does wonders for the online fashion industry. Engagement rates for email marketing of fashion products are notable with a click-through rate of 2.65% and an average open rate of 22.2% in 2015. Make sure you keep the email personalised as it can help build a relationship with customers, make them identify with your brand's voice and keep them coming back to your website by tailoring content specifically to them. Personalised email reminders for specific days in the year, like birthdays, announcements, sales, offers and clubbed bundles keep your customers updated about the latest in fashion and will stay on their minds when they want to shop.

Send regular newsletters with offers, new products and announcements. Pay close attention to your customers' behaviours such as their 'last session', 'not purchased but visited', 'purchased but not visited since', etc. Email reminders are great for avoiding shopping cart abandonment as it refreshes the chosen products in the customer's mind. There are plenty of email marketing solutions that can help you automate messages such as Emarsys, Silverpop,

Marketo, Mailchimp, amongst many others. Some of these are customised for e-commerce retail stores.

Remember to pay close attention to the design and presentation of your email to avoid looking like spam. Our thorough guide on email marketing can be found here.

Blogger Outreach & Fashion Influencers
Fashion Gurus, Influencers, Fashionistas, Bloggers — whatever you like to call them, the past few years have seen them work. Even celebrities who casually sport an item can immediately boost sales. In 2016, Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge, wore a pink Anita Dongre dress to a charity cricket match during a visit to India. As soon as photos of the event went public, the Indian designer's website crashed as hundreds of hopefuls logged on to find the same dress.

Now you don't necessarily need celebrity endorsement to market your fashion items, as today there are plenty of fashion bloggers and influencers out there with substantial Instagram following. Sixty-three percent of residents between the ages of 18 and 40 in the UAE rely on online advice before making a purchase of beauty and fashion items. Huda Kattan has become a household name in the region and internationally for her beauty tutorials. Known as the 'Kim Kardashian of the Arab World', her brand 'Huda Beauty' has over 18 million followers on Instagram alone. Her step-by-step video guides have managed to make her products, such as Huda Beauty's lashes, one of the top selling in the UAE and worldwide.

Influencers can charge anything from $1,000 to $5,000 per post, but unless specifically mentioned, it is still unclear to the general public which posts are sponsored and which aren't. Some top fashion influencers in the region include Nadya Hasan, Tala Samman and Mahmoud Sidani, although the number is growing very fast. Fashion influencers make sure to clearly label and identify the brands they are wearing, using tags and hashtags.

However, you need to consider the potential ROI before going all in, as some critics are unsure about the level of influence and conversions such influencers can deliver. Start small and test with a few to determine the scope.

SEO Content Creation

To expand on the above point about blogging, we cannot stress enough the importance of SEO in content creation. Create content that positions you as an influencer and voice of authority in the mind of your consumer. Use SEO techniques to search for keywords that your target audience is searching for and incorporate them in your product descriptions, titles and blog posts. Tailor your blog posts around key search terms, especially around seasonal trends and occasions. For example, just before a major holiday like Eid or Christmas you may notice that a lot of people are searching for festive gift ideas and new outfits. Create posts for top dresses for women, shoes for men, handbags for parties etc, to fit into each event. Gift guides work as a great all-in-one post to include as many items as you can based around a theme.

PPC & Paid Advertisements

A must in today's world and a good seasonal supplement to regular SEO work, PPC and paid ads are useful in targeting certain keywords. Paid ads on search engines ensure that your result is always on top and with the right keywords your brand can own many of the results on the page.

Use retargeting techniques to reach the same people who have visited your site but haven't bought anything by using Facebook ads. Users who have browsed through your website and then opened their social media accounts, will be able to see targeted ads featuring the same products on Facebook and be reminded of the products they left behind.

Rewards and Referral Programs

Now who does not like a discount? Two of the main reasons people shop online are for the convenience and saving on costs. If they can find an item at the click of a button and have it show up at their doorstep without having to spend any time and energy going to shops physically, it's already a plus point. Use referral codes and discounts to entice customers and encourage them to share amongst their online peers. When Obakashi used ReferalCandy, a referral marketing tool, they saw that on average referred customers spent 13.2% more. A lot of fashion brands offer first-time discounts for all new customers, as well as a discount via a referral code. This way customers are encouraged to spread the word and bring you new customers each time.

Getting Online Fashion Marketing Right

So what essentials do you need to keep in mind to make sure your fashion products are marketed the right way? A few things to keep in mind include:

Create Style Guides

Fashion is a great opportunity to cross-sell. Use it as a chance to 'sell a look' and suggest matching and similar items to go along with the chosen product.
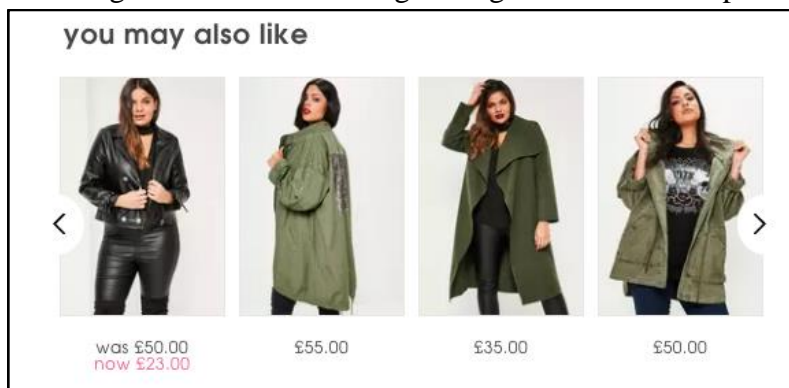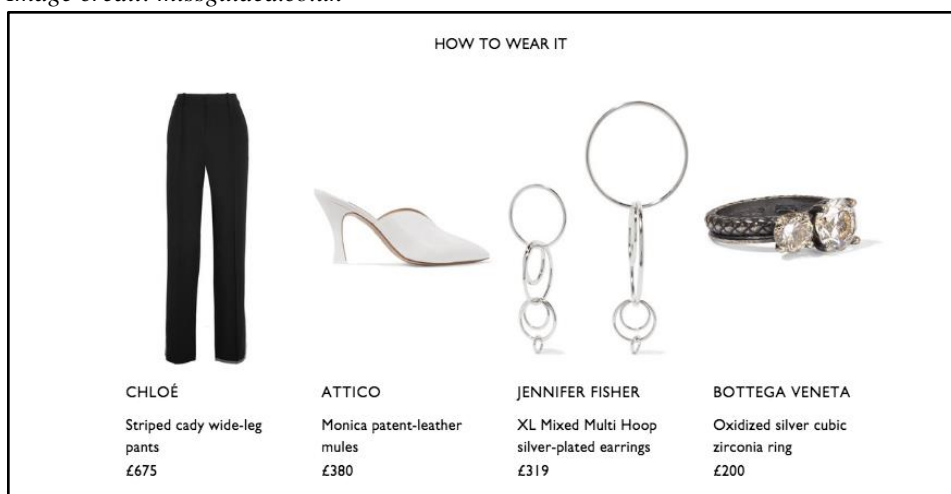

Image credit: missguided.co.uk

Image credit: www.net-a-porter.com

Pay Attention to Visuals

Visual aesthetics are everything when it comes to fashion. You need to make your product look as good as possible so that the customers know that it will make them look good as well. For standalone items and accessories such as shoes, jewellery and handbags, make sure to place the item against a plain white background and take pictures from all angles so the customer can see exactly what the colours and materials of the product will look like. Pay attention to the lighting to ensure it is as natural as possible so as not to distort the product's actual colours. For garments, it is helpful to have a model wear the items so the customer can visualise what it will look like when worn. Consider including product videos that have the model walking and moving about in the garment.

Read our full guide on video marketing here and our product photography guide here.

Give Full Descriptions

Essential for garments and clothing, make sure to give accurate product descriptions that fully illustrate the sizing and material of the item. Include a sizing chart if possible, with sizes and measurements from different countries. For example, a Size 8 in the US is equivalent to a Size 12 in the UK. To make it as clear as possible provide sizing in centimetres and inches, and describe the material and care instructions. If you are using a model in your product images, specify the size that the model is wearing so that the customer can visualise the item accordingly. Asos has a handy sizing chart on its website that can be found here.

Keep Stock

There is nothing more frustrating to an online customer than being told that the item they have chosen is out of stock, especially after they have already placed an order. Make sure your inventory is up to date and that your online store reflects this. If an item is out of stock temporarily and will be coming back soon, you can even ask the customer to set up an alert to get notified when the item is back.

Clear CTAs

Your main aim with marketing your fashion products online is that it turns into conversions. Make sure to include clear Calls-To-Action on each product page and marketing activity you do. For example, on social media your message needs to have buttons such as 'Click here' or 'View more', that the user can click on and then be taken to your website. On your product page, include CTAs like 'Buy Now' or 'Save for Later'.

Returns and Refunds Policy

Due to hygiene and quality assurance reasons, make sure you are specific about your return policy for fashion items. Items such as shoes, lingerie and jewellery may require a shorter return period due to hygiene. Be sure to specify that the item has to be returned in unused conditions and in the original packaging.

Conclusion

It may seem daunting at first, but don't forget that the fashion industry is essentially a creative one. Be consistent in your approach and your brand's voice. A luxury jewellery brand will have a completely different voice from a streetwear clothing line. Make use of as many creative strategies and outlets as possible to fully maximise the potential of marketing your fashion items. Do it in phases to see what works and what doesn't, and keep in mind seasonal trends and occasions that can have a huge impact on the demand for specific items at certain times.

What do you like about shopping online for fashion? What online marketing techniques have you tried to get your fashion products noticed? Leave us a comment below and share your thoughts.

How to Come up with the Right E-Commerce Business Idea

Meta Description: Coming up with the right new e-commerce business idea for you can be quite a challenge. Learn how to get started here.

Want to start an online business but unsure where to begin? Take a look at our guide to help you come up with the right e-commerce idea.

By Joanne Rodrigues
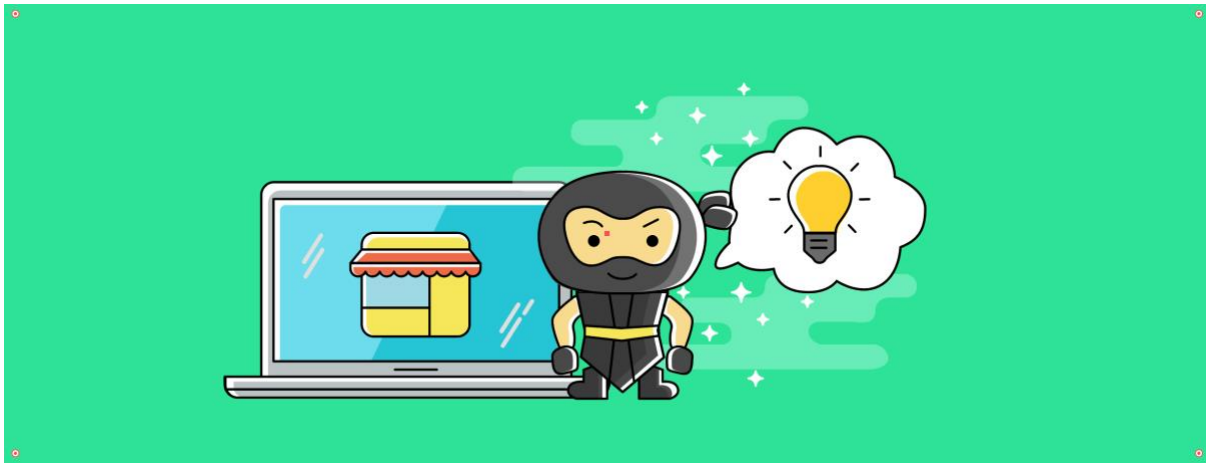
Starting a business of your own can be overwhelming and exciting at the same time, but how do you come up with a good business idea in the first place? While it is easy to sit and brainstorm creative ideas, it can be difficult to narrow down your thoughts to a feasible, good, and more importantly, the **right** business plan for you.

"An idea can only become a reality once it is broken down into organised, actionable elements," says American author and entrepreneur Scott Belsky who co-founded Behance, an online portfolio platform.

Today there are plenty and more e-commerce platforms offering users a variety of goods and services, all at the click of a button. So how can you come up with an e-commerce business idea to make sure it stands out among the crowd? Take a look at the below steps that you can take to generate the right e-commerce business idea:

Identify a Gap
Start off by identifying a gap in the market that you can fulfill. Emily Brooke, founder of Blaze — a technology company that revolutionised urban cycling — says that the key is to identify, understand and build on solving a problem that you know better than anyone else: "Find a problem that you really are obsessed with and understand it better than anyone else,

that's the only way to find a valuable answer." Even though a lot of markets are still undiscovered in the Middle East, the region has seen a 30% year-on-year top-line growth in the e-commerce industry. So we can just imagine the potential of tapping into niche and untouched areas. Go through your day-to-day routine to pinpoint activities and goods that you know you can improve on. Talk to your family and friends about their frustrations to help identify a gap in their life that can be resolved with an e-commerce solution.

Harness Your Skill

Do you know what you are good at? Many of us have been told what we are good at throughout our lives, but not many of us can identify these skills and channel them in a way that someone else can utilise them as well. Think of a skill you may possess that you would be able to turn into a business model; a skill that you can get people to pay you for. Maybe you are fluent in a language and can start your own online translation and tutoring service. Or you enjoy cooking and can open an e-catering platform. Whatever strengths you possess, try channelling them into an online platform to see if they would make sense and draw a crowd. Ask your family and friends what they think you are good at, and if they would purchase your skill on an online platform.

Do Your Research

Seems like the next obvious step, but many people tend to overlook it once they get excited about an idea. Research is important not only to expand on your idea, but to look further into the market, see what your competitors are doing and learn what your potential customers want.

Conducting market research is the most crucial and sometimes most difficult part about getting your business goal on track. Use it as an opportunity to bring to light how robust the demand is for your idea. Because e-commerce ventures are based online, it is not easy to physically meet and speak to your potential customers, users and competitors. Our physical behaviour in everyday life greatly differs from our behaviour and needs online. There are plenty of ways to conduct research online. Use keyword research tools like Google's Keyword Planner or Keyword.io to find out what users are searching for online.

Take a look at relevant social media to get a feel of what online users are talking about, what is being shared and what is trending. Seventy-one percent of residents in the UAE look for advice from social media influencers before buying a product, according to a recent research by PR agency BPG Cohn & Wolfe. Social media plays a major role in influencing buying decisions, by contributing as feedback, reviews and help resources.

You should also conduct traditional market research by sending out questionnaires and surveys and speaking to the public to get ideas and feedback on your idea. Take a look at what competition exists for your business idea, what your competitors are doing and how customers feel about the competition. Don't just look for flaws and gaps in your competitor's system, but also identify strengths and selling points that your customers like.

The key is to find out if there really is a market demand for your idea, and to make sure people will be willing to fulfil this demand through an e-commerce service.

Identify Your Goal

What is your main purpose in wanting to start an e-commerce business? Is it to make money? Perhaps you want to give back something to the community. Or maybe you want to contribute to a specific industry like education or healthcare. Whatever your goal is, you need to identify it in order to work towards it. You may even have a number of goals that you'd like to achieve, and there's no harm in that. Start by listing them down, then try to prioritise them. Once you have goals listed, jot down ways of achieving them; this will help you generate ideas. Think of ways you can achieve your goal online, and find out if there are existing e-commerce ventures out there that have attempted to do so.

Network

If you have business partners or people around you that you trust, arrange for regular brainstorming sessions to bounce ideas and scenarios off of each other. It is important to hear your idea from someone else's point of view and receive constructive feedback and criticism so you can think of ways of improving as well as alternative solutions.

Find out if there are any workshops or seminars in your city that you can attend. ArabNet and STEP are some big digital conferences that take place in the MENA region. Dubai Chamber also hosts a number of workshops throughout the year to encourage the growth of B2B e-commerce in the MENA region. These conferences and workshops bring together influencers in the digital, start-up and business world. They provide a learning space where you can generate ideas as well as meet and network amongst like-minded people and build a useful set of contacts. You may be even be able to identify business opportunities and new markets.

Shop Online

One of the most obvious ways to think of an e-commerce business idea is to become an avid e-commerce customer yourself. List all your day-to-day activities and expenditures and attempt to solve each of them online. You can rent a car, shop for groceries, buy clothes, book a restaurant, watch concerts and much more — all online. So why not everything else? Sign up to as many e-commerce platforms as you can, not just to look for gaps but also to look for ways you think you can improve them on your own or offer a better solution.

What new e-commerce business ideas have you thought of? What helps you brainstorm ideas? Leave a comment below to let us know your thoughts.

How to Market to Millennials in MENA

Meta Description: This tech-savvy generation receives information at the tip of its fingers and expects nothing less. Learn to market to millennials here.

Millennials are fast-moving, quick-talking and ever-clicking. Learn how to market to the youth of MENA with these handy tips.

By Joanne Rodrigues

There has been plenty of talk in recent years about millennials. Although the exact age range is debatable, a popular understanding, defined by demographers William Straus and Neil Howe, is that anyone born between 1982-2004 is called a Millennial. Young people, between the ages of 15-29 comprise of over 30% of the working population in most MENA countries, and is predicted to reach 75% of workers by 2025. This tech-savvy generation receives information at the tip of its fingers and expects nothing less. So how can you make sure your brand not only reaches them, but reaches them before anyone else?

Keep it Mobile
Millennials in MENA are constantly on the move and expect their lives to move along with them at the same pace. Google research indicates that over 30% of millennials in KSA use only their smartphones to go online and 34% of youth in the UAE watch videos on their smartphones multiple times a day. Create content that is easily accessible on mobile devices. Your brand needs to be as mobile as a millennial. The study also noticed that 43% of millennials in Saudi immediately look for an alternative site that is mobile optimised if they are faced with an issue on yours. The least forgiving and least compromising generation, millennials choose to spend their time for maximum return and refuse to accommodate less-than-perfect service. Your millennial marketing strategy should be an omni-channel approach — making use of all elements in online, offline and mobile platforms.

Make sure your brand's website and online elements are fully mobile optimised. This means taking into consideration page load time, image sizes, easy navigation and secure mobile payments options. Take a look at our full guide on mobile optimisation here to get started. Technology is ever changing so it is important to stay updated and innovate your marketing strategy ahead of the game. Think not just about mobile technology but wearable gear as well, that is increasingly sweeping the youth of today.

Be Relevant

Millennials move fast and your brand needs to keep up with them. Ensure your marketing strategy is not only up to date, but also open for last minute changes. News gets around at the speed of lightening in today's connected world, whether it is through Facebook or WhatsApp. Stay on top of current affairs and events to see how you can maximise on relevant content accordingly.

Make it Shareable

The youth of MENA spend a lot of their time on social media. In fact young millennials are more likely to turn to social media to discover news and content rather than television. Shareable content offers millennials the chance to build a relationship with your brand and trust you enough to share among their peers. Content that comes from people they trust establishes comfort and confidence in what they see and in turn they may re-post it. The Northwestern University in Qatar has been conducting an annual 'Media Use in the Middle East' survey since 2013. According to their 2015 results, and amongst over 4,000 respondents it was found that about 54% of internet users between the ages of 18-34 in the Middle East repost or share content created by others on social media. Make sure social sharing buttons are clearly visible with calls-to-action on your content. Use high-quality imagery and videos. Millennials are very picky about aesthetics and do not want to share content that may reflect badly on their own image, so visually appealing content is key.

Use social media to connect with your millennial audience. When you see that someone has shared your content, reach out to make him or her feel special. Make sure your online customer service and social media presence is always updated and available throughout the day.

Collaborate

As mentioned in our previous point, millennials trust their own peers over brands. So why not collaborate with the youth and use them as your own brand ambassadors? Millennials love user-generated content and look up to key millennial influencers as guides before making a purchase. Alongside, millennials also love to feel involved with their brand and look for ways to showcase their creativity and stand out among the crowd. User-generated content has 20% more influence over millennial spending than other types of media. 47% of millennials prefer user-generated content over branded content, and feel that real looking people in images gives their purchase authenticity and value. One of the biggest names in online fashion in the region is Namshi.com, that uses a mix of user-generated content and influencer marketing to build a community of amongst their fashion fans.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BRiAkeDjRbw/?hl=en
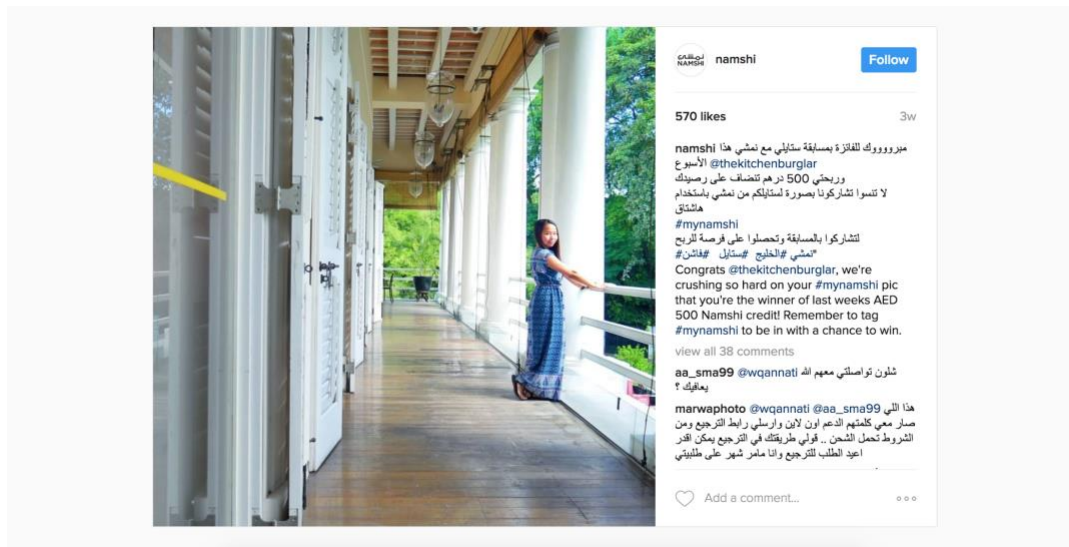
Offer Discounts and Freebies

Millennials try and save money on anything they can. A lot of young people follow brands on social media in the hopes of snagging some freebies, getting invites to exclusive events and getting shareable discount codes. Encourage young people to sign up to your newsletter and content so you can then entice them with discount codes. Take a look at any top influencers' Instagram account and you will see promo codes and discounts galore, personalised with their names and branding.

Make it Personalised and Exclusive

Millennials want to stand out from the rest of the crowd, and seek personalised products and services that make them feel special. Coca-Cola's 2015 "Share a Coke" campaign took the region by storm when the logo on each can was replaced by common names from the region as well as relationships like 'Ahmed', 'Sara' and 'Brother' and 'Sister'.

http://en.coca-colaarabia.com/news/press-releases/coca-cola-sharesthelove-with-the-uae-through-the-launch-of-share-a-coke

Using the hashtag #sharethelove or كوكاكولا_أحلى_مع# in Arabic, the youth across the MENA region were able to share personal photos and stories with Coke cans with their names on them.

Conclusion

Keep your marketing strategy simple. Millennials are a lot smarter and are able to pick up information at a much quicker pace than previous generations. Millennials are extremely diverse; try breaking down your strategy into smaller age groups, gender groups and even tailor to each country in the region.

How to Use Web Analytics to Boost Your E-Commerce Website

Meta Description: Take a look at the top web analytics tools and best features out there. Learn how you can use analytics to help your e-commerce business.

By Joanne Rodrigues

An overview of the most useful web analytics tools and features out there. Learn what works and how you can use data analytics to step up your e-commerce game.

So you've set up your e-commerce business, created your online identity and even employed a range of SEO techniques to boost your website traffic, but how do you know what works and what doesn't? With a physical store, you can keep track of customers going in and out of your shop, see what they look like, observe their shopping habits and even talk to them. With the help of various analytics tools available online, you can do almost the same with your virtual store.

Analytics can be used to measure and analyse your e-commerce website's performance, transactions, trends and activity to help you identify areas of success and, more importantly, how you can improve and plan your next steps. Without analytics you would not know which of your marketing strategies are working or what your customer's user journey is and how you can improve things.

Key Features of Web Analytics

Some of the benefits and features that web analytics can offer to your e-commerce business include:

- ***User Demographics***

A key benefit of using analytics to help your e-commerce business is the ability to virtually 'see' your customer. Find out where your customer is shopping from, what time of the day is popular for shopping and even what age group your main audience sits under. Recognise which countries are driving traffic to your website so you can tailor your plan accordingly. By identifying customer profiles and characteristics, you will be able to target your marketing material in a more streamlined way to make sure the right audience is reached, as well as plan ways to expand your approach into previously uncovered areas.

- ***Performance Review***

Analytics will help you keep track of your website's performance by seeing which products are performing best, which articles or pages are visited and shared the most, and use this information to boost these popular pages even more.

- ***Keyword Research***

A valuable component on any analytics platform, the keyword data feature helps you not only target more users, but target the right kind of users. Keyword research is essential if you want your e-commerce website to be featured on the top of a search engine's result page — for example, if a user searches for 'summer dresses' on Google, you would want your online business that sells summer [dresses](#) to be featured on the first page of the search results. The analytics platform will display top keywords and search terms that are used by users to find your website from a search engine. Use this data to make sure these keywords appear on your webpage and content. A useful tip: long-tail keywords are effective in uncovering user questions to help develop future content topics for your site.

- ***Bounce Rate***

A very common scenario is that if users click on a page and do not find what they are looking for, they will quickly exit the website.The bounce rate showcases how many of your website's users essentially 'bounce' away and will help you identify areas of improvement. According to a study by performance-based landing page optimisation firm [Conversion Voodoo](#), the average bounce rate for an e-commerce website is 33.9%. The first step to reducing your website's bounce rate would be to make sure the right audience is targeted using the right keywords and content that they are looking for. For example, someone who has searched for 'red shoes' should be directed to a page that caters to this search, and has relevant content related to this search. If users find that the page contains products that are very different from this, they will immediately 'bounce'. You should also make sure there are clear calls-to-action (CTA) on that page to give your customer a clear direction in taking the next step. According to Rakesh Soni, CEO of customer identity and access management platform LoginRadius, CTAs create a sense of urgency and nudge a visitor to take action

immediately and convert into a customer. Last year, Hubspot conducted a study that showed anchor text CTAs increased its conversion rates by 121%.

- *Social Media Monitoring*

There's no point in promoting your e-commerce business on social media channels if you do not track their performance. Even though channels such as Facebook and Instagram have their own built-in insights platform, you can also link them to your overall analytics hub to pull reports and compare. You can see exactly who your social media audience is, what posts are being shared, user engagement and their online interests to help you push products onto the right channels so they meet the right audience.

- *Customer Behaviour & Conversion Performance*

The conversion rate shows you how many of your website's user sessions result in an e-commerce transaction. By setting up an analytics tracking on your shopping cart and investigating your customer's journey on your website, you can identify any flaws in their user journey. By doing so, you can retarget customers who have abandoned their shopping cart, look into offering alternative payment options or set up a loyalty programme for returning customers. By tracking your conversions you can see which months of the year are the busiest for your online store, record how long it takes for a user to make a transaction and then manage your product inventory accordingly.

- *Campaign Reporting*

One of the best reasons to set up an analytics platform for your e-commerce business is the ability to churn out reports through the click of a button. From checking which of your marketing channels are performing the best to evaluating your target audience, you can conveniently and quickly set up customisable channels to easily showcase the performance of your campaign.

Popular Web Analytics Tools

With so many platforms out there, it may seem intimidating at first, so use the below guide to learn about some popular analytics tools for your e-commerce business to help you decide.

Google Analytics

One of the most commonly used free analytics platform, Google Analytics is quick to set up, easy to use and works on almost all e-commerce websites. The free tool offers plenty of features to track and analyse your website, and most of them are customisable according to your needs. An advantage of using Google Analytics is that you can use an existing Google Account to create an Analytics account, and always have your data and account synced for as long as you use it. A key element of Google Analytics for your e-commerce business is the 'E-commerce Tracking' feature that allows you to track transactions on your store in detail — from where your customers are purchasing from, to the time of each session.

Kissmetrics

Web analytics solutions provider Kissmetrics is a close contender to Google Analytics and provides an extensive list of features for an e-commerce business. A standout element from Kissmetrics is its ability to showcase a detailed user-based behaviour report that really gives you a breakdown of each customer's journey should you need it. Funnel Reports from Kissmetrics are popular amongst small and medium-sized businesses as they neatly visualise the customer's journey from when they add a product to their cart till they check out or drop out. Subscription plans start from $220 a month and include four basic report types.

RetentionGrid

This aesthetically pleasing tool is designed solely with the customer in mind. RetentionGrid is great to look at, easy to use and provides you with a clear and concise snapshot of your customer's retention patterns so you can plan ahead. The retention marketing tool segments your customers into a colourful grid. Customers are colour-coded to easily indicate loyal, new, promising, drifting, at-risk, red-alert and sleeper customers. You can then delve further into each category and take action like sharing loyalty programmes with promising customers, reminding drifting customers about promotions or even reaching out to the sleepers through email shout-outs.

RJMetrics

Powered by Magento, RJMetrics is a useful analytics resource for e-commerce businesses of all sizes. If you are just starting out, RJMetrics has an extensive library of guides and tutorials that can serve as suggestions for your online store. However, if you are already an established online business with a database, RJMetrics will easily connect with your existing database, extract relevant information and create a customisable information dashboard. Key features include privacy controls, automatic updated reports, database and cloud integration, and targeted email.

Woopra

What makes Woopra stand out from the rest is that it is known to be one of the best real-time analytics platforms, offering not just regular traffic data but also live tracking of user interaction. Use Woopra to build a customisable customer life-cycle, generate reports, conduct keyword analysis and set up real-time notifications so you get updates on the go. Woopra pricing starts at $80 a month, and it offers a 30-day free trial.

Conclusion

We recommend using at least two of these web analytics and e-commerce tools in conjunction with each to make the best use of the different features they offer. As you grow your business your targets change, and by employing a good mix of analytics tools you can make sure each of your objectives are met at each step.

The Importance of Video Marketing in MENA

Meta Description: In today's world, videos are watched everywhere and at any time. Take a look at how you can use video in your marketing strategy.

By Joanne Rodrigues

Video keeps viewers emotionally engaged and conveys information in an appealing way. Find out why a video marketing strategy is important in the MENA region.

What is Video Marketing?

The basic idea around video marketing is simple — using video as a medium of promotion. We are exposed to video messages on a daily basis. They appear almost everywhere we look, from television to social media, company websites to outdoor digital screens. Today a lot of our video marketing intake is through online media channels. According to a September 2015 study by Google, 79% of internet users in the UAE watch online videos on a weekly basis — the figure goes up to 82% among those under the age of 35. All companies today, especially those dealing as an online platform or e-commerce setup, should make sure video plays a significant part of their marketing strategy. Cisco predicts that by this year, 69% of all online consumer traffic will be a direct result of video content.

Video Consumption in MENA

People in the Middle East have always enjoyed watching videos, with television making up a large part of family and evening leisure time. Viewers take time to catch up on sports, reality shows, soap operas and more. Online video consumption has risen significantly in the MENA

region, with more users signing up to YouTube and sharing videos through social media over the past few years. The MENA region is one of the fastest growing online markets in the world, and technological advances in terms of internet speed and services has led to a wide variety and choice of online content, especially mobile video. Media agency UM MENA conducted a study in 2016 that showed that around 50% of the population in MENA watches videos online daily, compared to 30% in Europe and the US.

Benefits of Video Marketing

Enhanced User Engagement
The best feature videos can offer is the ability to totally immerse the viewer. Video content makes use of visuals, audio and text to clearly get the message across as well as establish an emotional relationship with the viewer. The multi-sensory medium allows brands to clearly portray what they need to and feed into the storytelling aspect of the viewer's mind and encourages brand recall.

Educate
Video offers multiple ways to educate and explain difficult concepts or new features. Some of the most popular videos on YouTube include recipes, beauty how-to's and product reviews. Searches for how-to videos on YouTube have seen a year-on-year increase of 70% and cover a range of topics from tech, beauty, travel and more. Use creative ways to showcase your idea using types of animation techniques, music and even famous people or famous locations. In a multicultural and multilingual region like MENA, it is essential to use as many creative tools as possible to get the message across clearly and concisely. Nike Women recently pushed out a video featuring young female athletes boxing, running, fencing and much more in public places. The video creatively uses an Arab female voice that says 'What will they say about you?' and then goes on to celebrate female athletes in the region, incorporating inspirational music, narrative in a local Arab neighbourhood setting.

SEO
By using video in your marketing strategy, you multiply the chances of being found on a search engine, namely Google. Moovly, a cloud-based multimedia content platform, says that the chances of appearing on page one of Google's search engine results pages increases 53 times if you have a relevant video on your page. Search for any common phrase on Google like 'How to boil an egg' and most often than not, majority of search results will contain content with video and images. Tag your video appropriately so Google can index it.

Increase Conversions
According to a study by marketing agency Eyeview, using videos on landing pages can increase conversion by 80%. Videos present information in an entertaining snack-sized format so viewers can digest facts quickly and easily, as well as speed up their decision-making process. Videos also ensure that users spend a sufficient amount of time on your page by keeping them engaged on additional pieces of visual content, not just text. Fashion

[shopping](#) websites such as ASOS use product videos on each of its items to provide customers with a closer-to-life look of the interested item on a catwalk model.

Case Studies

Here are some of our favourite video case studies from the region:

Coca Cola 'No Labels'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84OT0NLlqfM

Coca-Cola's 'No Labels' Ramadan campaign in 2015 caused quite a spark around the world. The video set out to teach us all a lesson: not to judge a book by its cover, or more precisely, not to judge people by how they look. The video went viral and generated over $30 million for Coca-Cola. The campaign was covered by media all across the globe, and was launched during a period of global intolerance and reinstated the idea of brotherhood, especially valuable during the holy month of Ramadan.

Key takeaways - Emotional content, element of surprise, perfect timing.

Careem 'Human Slingshot'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-uZJ97_ImE

The UAE's very own competitor to international name Uber, Careem is known for its popular tongue-in-cheek marketing approach. The 40-second video prank made the rounds on social media and spread like wildfire. Careem used this leverage to announce its new logo and branding and got everyone in the region talking about it and sharing the video.

Key takeaways - Shock factor, viral content, bite-size storyline.

Etihad Airways 'Flying Reimagined'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXlmF3eI9R0

Celebrity endorsements are always a risk. They can either be seen as a cheesy and desperate marketing ploy or can be taken as something loved by faithful fans. Etihad plays its cards right by featuring Nicole Kidman in its campaign, reinstating the idea of travel, luxury and elegance in this 60-second TV spot that also got shared online. The video makes use of an inspirational voice-over showcased across vivid images of Abu Dhabi's landmarks and elements of luxury [travel](#).

Key takeaways - Attractive imagery, celebrity endorsement, inspirational content.

How to Get Your Video Marketing Strategy Right

So what can you do to get your next brand video in line with the above great examples? Take a look at some helpful tips to get your views up.

Think of your audience

Always cater to your audience's needs. Keep the viewers and their region in mind when creating a video. Translating your video into the local language is a good start, but you should

also make sure to fully localise the actual content so they feel like you are marketing to them and not just serving them recycled content. Use SEO and keyword research to identify what each country's market is searching for. An automotive advert showcasing female drivers will do well in most of the MENA region as a fun and refreshing idea, but not in countries such as Saudi Arabia where women are not permitted to drive. Be aware of cultural and religious norms in every country and region to avoid offending the market.

Engaging Information

The faster we move in technology, the lesser our attention spans are. Short and sweet seems like the way to go when it comes to video content; the optimal length being under two minutes. Present your key information in a stylish and engaging way to make sure the viewers are hooked from the start of your video. This way they are more likely to watch the video till the end. Surprise endings, attractive imagery and inspirational content will keep viewers engaged for a longer period of time.

Content First

It's easy to get excited about your new marketing video and the thrilling visual platform to push your brand name out there. However, viewers don't like it when you appear too pushy and salesy. Make sure good quality content comes first when creating the plan for your video. If the video is attention-grabbing and share-worthy, viewers will automatically remember your brand. Create a story that is timeless, emotional and unique with only a subtle mention of your brand within the video or towards the end of it.

Single CTA

The call-to-action is the result you want to achieve with your video. Do you want viewers to visit your website? Or share the video on their social media channels? Or sign up to a newsletter? To avoid confusing the viewers with too many messages, decide on a single CTA and focus on that. You can end the video with an actionable message, or have overlaid annotations in between the video that can link out to your website.

Hosting

A video hosting service is where you can upload and share your video files. Very few companies build and own their own video hosting platforms and prefer to use existing platforms with an existing database of regular viewers. YouTube is the most popular hosting service for video content. It is the second largest search engine after Google, and you can manage your own channel and playlists, keep track of your views and engagement and embed the video into other websites. Facebook is also a popular social network that is used to host videos. A well-liked feature on Facebook is that the video autoplays when the user scrolls to it, immediately catching the viewer's attention. Another video hosting service that has risen in popularity in recent years is Vimeo. With no advertisements, better quality and a cleaner approach, the platform is popular among cinematographers, filmmakers and you are more likely to get constructive feedback on your video as opposed to the trolls on other social networks.

Subtitles

A generally overlooked element, subtitles are an important feature in today's online videos. With the ease of mobile data availability and more and more people viewing videos through mobile devices, it is key that your video is watched while users are on the move. A 2016 Google study revealed that videos watched on a mobile device had much higher chances of brand recall when compared to desktop. By providing subtitles, users who are in a crowded or noisy environment, or in a place where they are unable to play sound or understand the language, they can still follow the subtitles and get the message. Videos on both Facebook and Instagram auto-play on mute when you scroll through, so it is essential to add subtitles to these so your message doesn't go unnoticed.

Conclusion

In an age where everyone wants to be the brains behind the next big viral video, it's important to stick the basics. Don't start your video marketing strategy with popularity in mind. Remember to create good quality content that appeals to the emotional side of your target audience, and they will inevitably share your video amongst their peers.

Tips to Increase Customer Loyalty Through Email Marketing

Meta Description: Did you know that email marketing can be used to boost customer loyalty? Find out how here.

By Joanne Rodrigues

Summary: Improve customer loyalty and make them come back for more using these email marketing tips.

Focusing on customer loyalty ensures that your existing clientele is happy and keeps coming back to your brand on a regular basis. Last year we spoke about how you can increase customer loyalty in e-commerce. Now it's time to expand that thought and see how you can use email marketing to boost customer loyalty.

Why Should You Focus on Customer Loyalty?

Your regular customers already know about your brand, your quality and have established trust with your name. Think of the 80/20 rule, where just 20% of your existing customers will bring in 80% of your revenue. It is easier for you to retain these customers than attract new ones. Loyal customers should be treated as a valuable asset to your company. It can cost 500% more to bring in new customers than to maintain existing ones, so why not save effort and money by focusing on what you have?

Loyal customers can easily be turned into brand ambassadors. Because they trust you, they are more likely to spread the word and build awareness about your brand among their social circle. Loyal customers will speak about your brand in a positive way, and you will benefit from their word-of-mouth promotion.

Using Email Marketing to Increase Customer Loyalty

Personalised Emails

Personalise your email communication as much as you can. Use email analytics tools to define your audience. According to HubSpot's 2014 Science of Email Marketing Report, people are more likely to click on a subject line that has their name than a generic one. Customers will feel loyal to a brand that recognises them and their needs. Another way to personalise the email is by making your content relevant to the person or demographic you have sent it to. For example, a sale on gaming consoles will appeal to a younger age group of between 16 to 35 rather than those above the age of 40. Likewise, you can tailor stereotypical gender-specific items such as makeup and handbags to women and shaving gear and sports equipment to men.

Personal recommendations can be used to cross-sell other products and services. These can be related to items they have purchased, or even if they have viewed an item. This shows that viewers were considering the item, but something stopped them from purchasing it. By reminding them or providing them with alternative, similar options you are are arousing their curiosity once again, making them feel that they are important enough for you to care.

Sales and Offers

Now who does not like a discount? Customers will always keep coming back for more if they can sense a good deal. Regular sales, promo codes and discounts keep customers engaged. Set an end date for your offer so if a customer does not use it you can take it as an opportunity to send an email reminder about the discount. Make sure to mention the words 'discount', 'sale' or 'offer' in your subject line to entice the user to click on your email. Think of innovative methods of enticing your customer. Gamification is a fun way to connect with your consumer by turning a normal email into a game. Insert hidden codes, puzzles or other action items to get users to unlock experiences and incentivise them to engage for more rewards.

Referral Programme

Reward loyal customers through referral programmes, where they get an amount credited to their online account, or special discounts when they recommend friends or family. Referral programmes are significant because they encourage existing customers to share their experience in a positive way. A bonus to customers and their loyalty is that as soon as their friends and family convert, they will get rewarded, keeping them coming back for more. San Francisco based referral company Extole conducted internal research that showed that 84% of customers recommended products to their friends at least on a monthly basis and almost 30% did so once a week or more.

Birthdays and Occasions

People love getting birthday wishes and gifts, so there is a lot of potential to keep your customers happy and loyal with a simple email on their birthday, anniversary and other special occasions. Experian, a US based data and analytics company, conducted a study in 2014 with over 50 brands that showed birthday emails generating revenue over three times more than regular promotional emails. Address your customers by their name to keep it as

personal as possible, especially on their special day. Use words like 'gift', 'presents', 'special' and 'just for you' to make them feel appreciated.

Another way to connect with loyal customers is to wish them on festivals such as Christmas and Eid. Send them a special discount they can use just for a limited time. Many companies use it as an opportunity to promote the idea of gifting. Customers can be encouraged not just to shop for themselves but for their loved ones as well.

Thank You Notes

Customers like to be appreciated and the simplest way you can show your gratitude for their support is by a thank you note. Send shoppers a thank you email post purchase, and even if they have only visited your site without buying anything. This shows that you care and remind them to come back next time. Thank you emails can be sent to them simply for showing interest, purchasing, bringing in referrals, submitting feedback or asking a question, or for waiting for you to complete their transaction.

Reminders

Regular reminder emails can be used to bring back inactive and lost customers. Customers can get lost due to many reasons. Maybe they relocated and have no more use for your service, perhaps they found a cheaper and better alternative, or maybe they were only a one-time customer and forgot about you. In cases like this, it is important for you to take the first step and reach out to them. Use words like 'miss you' or 'come back' in the subject line to grab their attention. Provide them with an update of new products or services you may have added since they last checked. It would also help if you include an offer or promo code to help them stay loyal to your brand.

Provide a Variety

It's always good to shake things up a bit. You may have loyal customers who come back to your brand for the same thing regularly, but why not send them newsletters that showcase your other products and services? This will show them what else they can purchase from you and even share it amongst their friends. Try to play around with themes and special days like Mother's Day, Children's Day and even World Environment Day to provide a full range of products to your customer. Add value to your content; it doesn't always have to be about pushing products. Provide content that is engaging and share-worthy, that customers feel is relevant to them. You can also write stories about your values as a company, tips for your customers and stories that can add value to their shopping experience.

Have you seen any good email marketing campaign lately? Share your favourites with us in a comment below!

Top Free SEO Tools that MENA SMEs use

Meta Description: Take a look at our top pick of free SEO tools your small business can use in the MENA region.

Search Engine Optimisation is important to ensure the right people find the right business. Find out what top free SEO tools you can use in the MENA region.

By Joanne Rodrigues
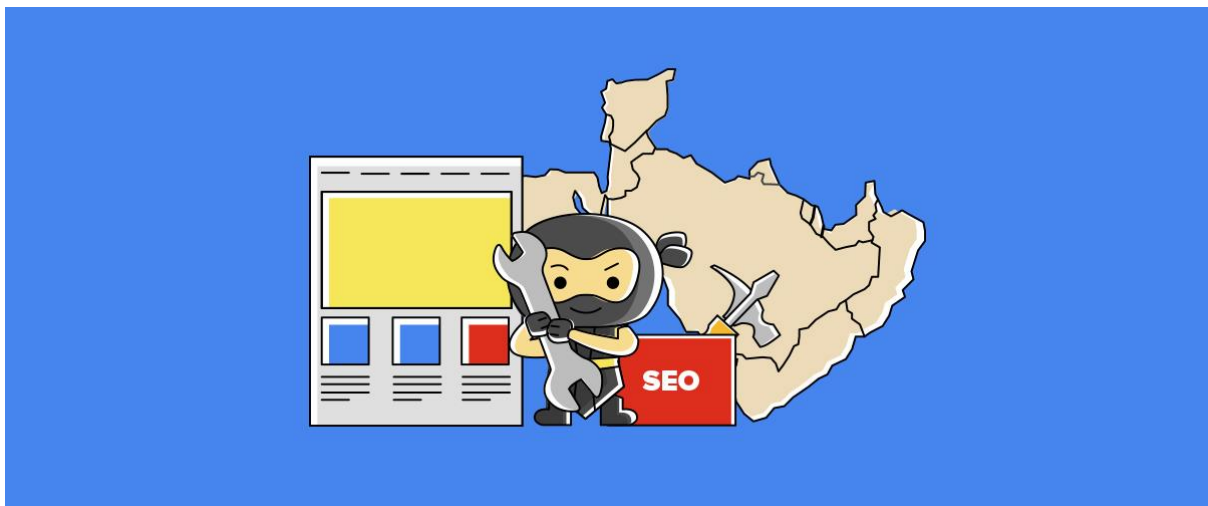
Setting up a website for your business and learning some basic SEO tips is just the start towards conquering the online business world. To really see an improvement in your website, online store and online performance, it is important to revisit your SEO strategy at least once a month to stay up-to-date with the industry and make use of any essential tools out there.

SEO in MENA

The MENA region is still significantly behind the world industry standard when it comes to SEO knowledge and application. Many companies do not know exactly how it works or feel like they do not need to invest in SEO from the beginning. Approximately only 1% of MENA businesses attempt to correctly apply SEO to improve their online presence and visibility on search engines.

Nigel Keelson-Anfu, an SEO expert for over 10 years, moved to Dubai from London in 2015. According to Keelson-Anfu, many businesses in the Middle East focus solely on churning out exceptional pieces of content without thinking of where and who is able to access it. "It is like building a house, but starting with the roof first!" says Keelson-Anfu. "Technical SEO is the science of search. It is about understanding how Google, and other search engines, access

and crawl your site and how they decide on which pages they will index and how quickly this can all be achieved. This is especially important when you consider the accelerated shift to smartphones – the UAE & KSA have some of the highest figures for smartphone penetration in the world."

In other words, there is no point in creating beautiful websites and publishing engaging content if no one is able to find it. This is where SEO comes in, and the great part about this is that there are plenty of free tools available in the MENA region that many of us successfully use.

Top Free SEO Tools

Google Search Console (GSC)
Previously known as Google Webmaster Tools (a term still many in the SEO circle continue to use), this online platform of resources from Google allows you to monitor and maintain your website's presence on Google's search results page. The Search Console is useful for adding quick html codes, monitoring your meta data and gaining a quick overview of your site's performance.

➔ Submit content for crawling. Under normal circumstances, it can take Google up to four weeks to index your website. To speed up the process and assist Google in making a decision faster, you can submit new web pages to the Search Console for Google to crawl.

➔ Use the tool to weed out errors and 404 pages on your website by crawling through your URLs.

➔ Submit your sitemap to the Search Console to help speed up the crawl process and let Google know how your site is organised.

Carlos Castañeda, our in-house SEO specialist at JadoPado, believes that the use of GSC is indispensable today. "It is probably the only SEO tool available that directly connects to Google and its staff, and is necessary in risky situations like Google penalties, unnatural spam links, indexation issues, redirects and 404s; issues that need to be solved as soon as possible," says Castañeda.

Google Keyword Planner
The Google Keyword Planner is part of the Google Adword platform. It allows you to research keywords, related search terms as well as obtain search volumes. The results display top keywords with the average monthly search volume for the period you have specified. You can filter your search results by country or countries, language, date range and more. By obtaining a list of keywords, you can make sure the right phrases and terms are used in your meta data as well as website content to target your chosen audience.

Google Trends

A helpful but overlooked tool, Google Trends gives you an overview of keyword and search term performance over a period of time so you can not only take a look at what is trending at the moment, but also analyse seasonal content to see what works when and helps you plan for future content.

We did a quick search for 'Best Schools in Dubai' and got the below graph.
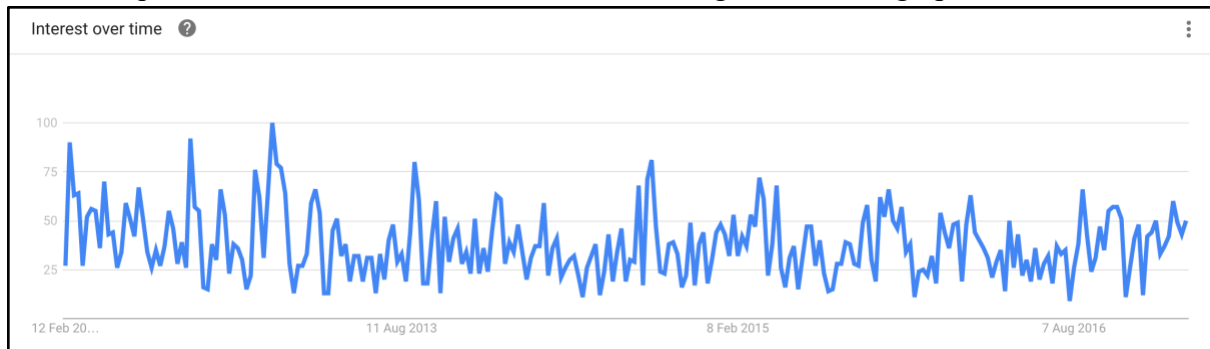
You can filter the date range you want accordingly to see search trends for your phrase over time.

On the same timeline, we included the phrase 'Best schools in Abu Dhabi' to compare the results.
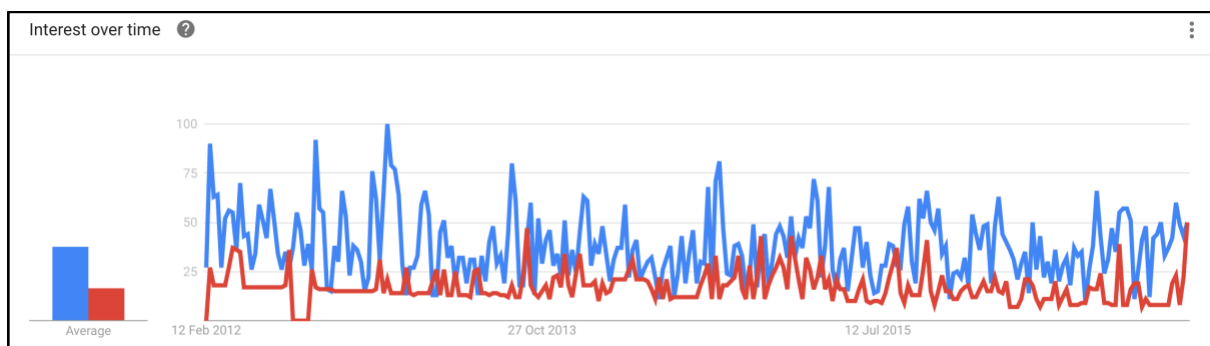
This tool is essentially useful for analysing seasonal drops and highs on page performance, exploring market opportunities and comparing content ideas.

Moz

Definitely one of the top SEO tools across the MENA region and worldwide, Moz has been an established name in the SEO industry since 2004. The platform has a suite of useful free and subscription-based SEO tools and guides.

➔ Open Site Explorer (OSE). Any SEO specialist knows that link building is one of the most important things you can do for your website. The OSE from Moz is a backlink analysis tool that can help you get started and develop your link building efforts. Link building is essentially the process of getting other websites to link to a page on your website. OSE allows you to identify opportunities for link building, track your inbound links and even take a look at your competitors' link building strengths.

➔ Keyword Explorer. A similar keyword research tool to Google's planner, Moz's platform is said to be better at showcasing long-tail keywords in its results, as well as additional filters on your search query.

➔ MozBar. A toolbar that you can simply add as an extension on your browser, MozBar displays instant metrics on your on-page searches, social and overall page. One of the key benefits of installing the MozBar on your browser is that you can immediately see your domain authority, view your meta tags and link metrics of not just your page but of your competitors as well.

Screaming Frog - SEO Spider Tool

One of the most popular crawling tools out there, Screaming Frog's Spider Tool lets you search and filter through your website's SEO data in an in-depth fashion. You can download link errors, meta data, image alt tags, response time, redirects, broken links and much more. With the free version you can crawl up to 500 URLs, which is a useful amount for a small website or blog.

Google PageSpeed Insights

Did you know that a large number of web users are likely to abandon pages that don't load within three seconds? A user's experience can be determined by your page loading time so it is important to sit up and pay attention. Google's PageSpeed Insight tool analyses both the mobile and desktop versions of your page and displays a summary of suggestions to speed up your page load time, including image optimisation, file compression and server response time improvements.

Microsoft SEO Toolkit

This is a downloadable toolkit that works only for Windows users, and includes a mixture of SEO tools. Use the Microsoft SEO Toolkit to get page load time insights, identify broken links, upload your sitemap to search engines and get URL information.

Wayback Machine

This nonprofit digital archive of the Internet is not exactly an SEO tool, but can be used as a great inspection tool to look at archived versions of web pages over time. Use it to find old redirects and URLs, view site changes from previous years and find old content.

A good mix of these tools is always recommended to make the most of your SEO strategy. Start your SEO strategy by conducting a sufficient amount of research. Abdullah Ojjeh, operations manager at finance comparison website Compareit4me, makes sure that keywords play a central role in producing top quality content. "Google's Keyword Planner tool shows the highest-ranking trends on what people are searching for, so we optimise everything — our product pages, our static pages, and our blog content — based on that data," says Ojjeh.

Dubai-based online insurance comparison platform Bayzat uses a mix of free and paid SEO tools to stay ahead of the competition. According to Poonam Sasane, SEO executive at Bayzat, content plays a key element in the company's SEO strategy so it also uses tools like

Copyscape, HootSuite, BuzzSumo and Scoop.it to achieve the best results for its SEO content strategy.

What's Next for SEO in MENA?

A common demand businesses in the Middle East pose to SEO specialists is the need to see results almost immediately. SEO is a long-term strategy that can take weeks and months to yield results. By tackling simple and easy fixes like image alt tags, meta descriptions and creation of useful and shareable content you will already be a few steps ahead in the SEO game.

Read our full SEO guide here to get started.

Another window to start tapping into is the localisation of SEO and Arabic content for MENA. Ojjeh at Compareit4me notes that "there's a lack of understanding on how to optimise Arabic content in the MENA region. And this is especially true in countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where around 97% of people browse in Arabic." Keep your audience in mind when creating content. Use the tools above to identify who your customers are, what they are searching for and in what language.

With plenty of potential to grow your website's SEO and online presence, make sure you take risks and play around with tools to see what works for you. Some SEO tools and techniques that work for others may not necessarily work for your business, so the key is to invest a sufficient amount of time in experiencing the tools and learning them.

Have any favourite SEO tools you use? Drop us a line in the comments section below to share your thoughts.