

MEDIA CONTACT

Nanci Martin

+974 3303 7672

nanci.martin@northwestern.edu

NORTHWESTERN RESEARCH REPORT FOCUSES ON

TELEVISION PROGRAMMING DURING RAMADAN

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) has released results from its Media Industries in the Middle East report, a cooperative effort between NU-Q and the Doha Film Institute (DFI), on television programming during the month of Ramadan. This is an important time for television in the Middle East, with a surge in all television viewing, particularly Arabic series.

The region-wide study, [Media Industries in the Middle East, 2016](#), was released earlier this year and it pointed to a general expansion of channels and offerings across all sectors, including broadcast, print, and digital media. The report showed that new content also tended to represent a wider variety, created by a broader diversity of content producers.

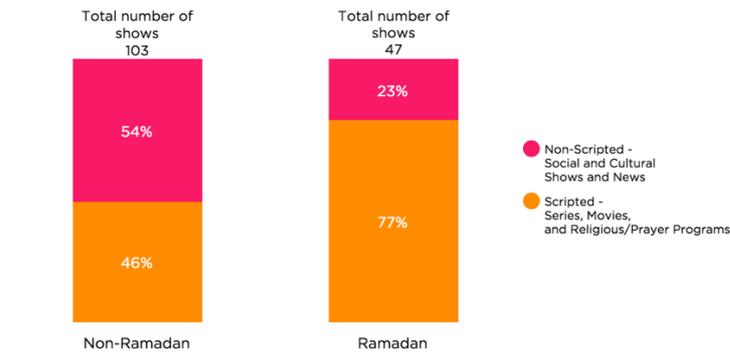
“Northwestern’s report on the media industry has provided additional resources to understanding the media landscape in this region,” Everette E. Dennis, dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar. “Over the past several years, we have been building a body of research that takes a keen look at media and entertainment consumption in the region. As we move into the Ramadan season, it is an apt time to explore our findings on Ramadan television programming.”

The report delved into 11 separate media sectors, including television, magazines, radio, religious TV and TV programming during Ramadan. In the chapter on Ramadan, the report found that on five top free-to-air, general interest channels three-quarters of all programs shown during Ramadan are scripted, compared to about half during the rest of the year. Drama is also mentioned as the most popular category. Prayers and religious programs also increase substantially, accounting for an average of eight hours of programming per week during Ramadan, versus two hours during non-Ramadan months.

During Ramadan, Arabic TV channels are more popular than at other times of the year. At five major stations in the report’s focus countries, almost half of the programming consisted of scripted material – that is about three times more than other months. Among the non-scripted programs, those with a religious theme become more important.

Ramadan TV programming schedules contain more scripted content

Monthly Programs During Ramadan and Non-Ramadan Period, 2015



Note: Channels analyzed (12pm-12am) - CBC; Dubai TV; Abu Dhabi TV; Sama Dubai; MBC1; MBC Masr. Reruns are not included. January, May, and September 2015 have been used as a proxy for the average Non-Ramadan months
Source: Arab Advisors Group (2015)

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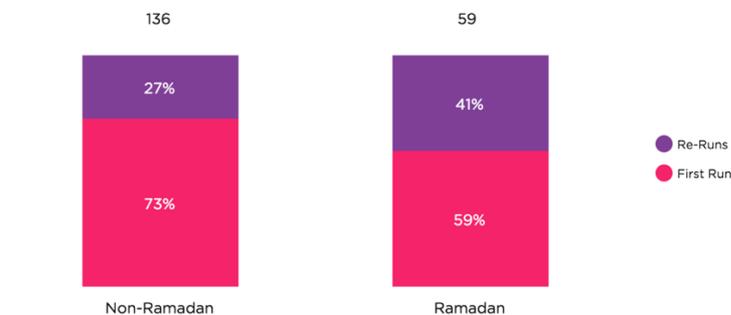
Joe Khalil, associate professor in residence at Northwestern, provided expert commentary for the report in which he said, “Entertainment television channels traditionally compete over the rights for the latest in Turkish, Egyptian, Syrian, and Gulf dramas – with increased production in UAE and Saudi Arabia. They also compete against government-owned television channels that tend to offer programs with ‘extra local flair’ – usually religious and social programming.”

Khalil noted today that events surrounding the migrant and refugee status for many Syrians has qualitatively transformed the Ramadan drama offerings this year across the region - offering creative and technical skills to Egyptian, Lebanese and Gulf productions. In addition, he said, that while dubbed and original series continue to be produced, “Gulf-produced children and adult animation shows have also become a regular feature of Ramadan offerings with a significant broadcast and online followers.”

The media industry report noted that television stations in the region prepare significantly for the Ramadan season and often broadcast a new episode every day, rather than once a week; however, the share of reruns versus first-run shows is also larger during Ramadan as channels show reruns on the same day so viewers can catch missed episodes of newly released series.

Most TV series aired during Ramadan are first runs

Hours of Arabic TV Series Aired per Week on Selected Channels, 2015



During Ramadan new episodes are shown daily, while during non-Ramadan new episodes are usually broadcasted weekly.
Note: Channels analyzed (12pm-12am): CBC; Dubai TV; Abu Dhabi TV; Sama Dubai; MBC1; MBC Masr. May 2015 has been used as a proxy for the average Non-Ramadan months

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About Northwestern University in Qatar

Northwestern University in Qatar draws from its parent organization, [Northwestern University](#) (Evanston, Illinois), a distinguished history, famous programs and an exceptional faculty. Founded in partnership with Qatar Foundation, NU-Q provides a framework through which students explore the world and, ultimately, shape its future through its distinguished schools of [communication](#), [journalism](#), and [liberal arts](#).