

# Analysis of mtv networks: the arabian challenge essay sample

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



With the boom of globalization and the world's growing love of celebrities, it was about time that the music and youth entertainment industry tapped into the consumer hungry Arabian market. MTV saw this opportunity as a move that could unite the Arabian population by showcasing local talent on a world stage, as well as bringing international stars into the region. The market for an international music channel in the Middle East was untapped at that time, but the market showcasing local music was saturated.

Despite this, the region offered massive opportunities for growth if MTV could successfully translate and adapt their strategy into one that could be successful in a culture that had major differences to their business culture. MTV Networks (MTVN) expanded into the Middle East with MTV Arabia in November 2007, through a partnership with Arab Television Network (ATN). Besides the United States, the Middle East would be MTVN's largest audience at approximately 190 million viewers. To compensate for the different culture and local tastes, MTV needed to be fully aware of all the differences between each Arabian demographic and other markets around the globe that MTV had already entered.

“ Experts felt that one of the biggest challenges faced by MTV while launching MTV Arabia was the prevalent culture in the Arab world. Discuss the Arab culture. How is it expected to pose a challenge to MTV?”

The Arab culture presents two major problems for MTV: The first is that the Arab culture traditionally does not respond well to the typical content that MTV broadcasts, and the second is that the Arab culture is vastly different than any market MTV has previously entered.

The assertion that what MTV caters and what Middle Eastern culture doesn't line up well assumes that MTV will be catering to the entire Middle Eastern population. The case implies that beyond just region, how traditional a person from the Middle East is also depends upon their age (younger being generally less traditional, while the elders tend to be more traditional). This would partially negate the challenge that MTV faces of adjusting their programming to local tastes, as their younger target demographic is more aware of the international music culture because of the Internet and accessibility. Because of the secondary impact on a region broadcasting can have, it is still important that MTV maintains the friendship and openness towards governments, and assure them that the programming and content they will offer will not go against what they feel is appropriate. This is especially important because of anti-American sentiments following early 2000s entry of American troops into Middle Eastern countries.

The case stated that MTV thought the anti-American sentiments were not something to worry about, but being quick to look over those would be a mistake. Arabians are very relationship-oriented when negotiating business, meaning they want to trust, respect, and get to know businesspersons before dealing with them. Reassuring locals that there is no reason for MTV to be grouped in with those sentiments should be treated as an important hurdle to clear before moving too far forward (Al-Awsat, 2006).

There was an apparent contrast between the " explicit hip-hop music culture portrayed by MTV and the conservative social culture prevalent in the Middle East" (Deresky, 2014) when MTV Arabia first entered the market. The

challenge here is finding a happy medium between MTV's 'notoriously risqué programming' and very culturally sensitive Arabian traditions while maintaining MTV business culture and the 'edge' that made the network so popular in the first place.

The big difference between MTV business culture and Middle Eastern countries' culture is the predominant religions and how they affect business. MTV is an American company and therefore were accustomed to Christianity. MTV had already made moves into other markets where Christianity was not the main religion or there was not a major following of religion from their target market in the first place, but moving into a market that nearly all adhered to Islam needs to be treated differently than other situations.

The extent to which Islam infiltrates culture in Middle Eastern countries varies, creating another challenge for MTV. For example, Egypt is a country that is more relaxed with religious traditions such as hijabs (clothing for women covering nearly their entire bodies), whereas Saudi Arabia is socially traditional. This difference in culture between Middle Eastern countries also affects the local taste. MTV needs to revise programming or editing of certain programs for different regions to completely cater to the Middle East. Operating in the Arabic language was another challenge with expanding into the Middle East, albeit one that MTV easily countered by working with a large proportion of locals and with the partnership alongside Arab Media Group.

“ Critically analyze MTV’s strategy in the Middle East. Comment on its entry strategy and also its strategy of providing mixed content to the market. Do you think MTV will be able to succeed in this market?”

MTVN’s strategy is to have a global presence with a local outlook, and this was consistent with their entry into the Middle East. Analysts of MTV Arabia agree adopting a decentralized structure letting local staff remain autonomous was a large part of MTV’s success, as this “ led to innovation and rapid expansion” (Deresky, 2014). MTV Arabia showcased a 60% international music and 40% Arabian music mixed content strategy, further assuring their audience that they’re dedicated to promoting local talent. When taking the relative disbursement of international music stars with local talent, this emphasis on Arabian music becomes very apparent. 45% of content is also created and produced locally in an effort to specifically provide to pan-Arab youth audiences. MTV Arabia respected the culture by contributing to the Arab society alongside AMG and hiring culturally sensitive editors, but did not dilute its brand by not airing any of the material that makes it so popular in the first place.

This mixed content strategy proved to be effective in catering to the local culture because they could edit out portions or omit programs all together that went against non-alcoholic, religious, or public sexuality traditions, yet still keep the comedy programs and reality shows; both of those examples would be made locally in order to better grasp regional tastes. Some examples of how MTV would censor MTV Arabia would be to edit music videos or just outright ban certain videos, or just moving them to a late-night

schedule where they would not receive nearly as many views. All of these points together equal a channel “ made by the Arabs, for the Arabs” which is just another aspect of how MTV was able to gain traction. Involving the locals is a critical step towards being completely accepted and supported by all stakeholders. Despite being a western company, MTV has shown a great understanding of the relatively highly regulated and complex Middle Eastern market. Their partnership with Arab Media Group (AMG) has greatly improved visibility in local media as well as making local resources easier to access.

The partnership also helped MTV Arabia be received better by locals, as they were seeing MTV enter alongside AMG instead of starting up a channel on their own, showing commitment to the local outlook of their entry strategy. As MTV Arabia’s target market was the under-25 demographic, (65% of the Arab population), showing Arab musicians and artists meant that MTV would be a great way for Arabs to showcase themselves and to gain traction in the industry. This aspect of MTV Arabia’s strategy gave them a competitive advantage, as they were the only music channel to do this upon entry. As long as MTV maintains its strategy, they will succeed in this market. They had a very strong integration plan in place upon entry and had clearly done their research to know what to expect in terms of cultural norms and traditions. This moral relativism has enabled MTV to move past challenges that have arisen with their expansion, and has moved them from ‘ getting a foothold’ in the market to having a real shot at taking over market share in this market to achieve long-term success.

“ How successful has MTV been in this market to date? What, if anything, do you think MTV should have done differently? What should the company do now?”

MTV Arabia changed its name to MTV Middle East in August of 2011 to better encompass their market, and a few months later, launched a support website to handle the growing demand for music video requests, another medium to view live performances, and vote for artists (Newbould, 2013). This further progressed their handle on the Arabian youth market. MTV has been very successful in this market to date, in no small part due to their understanding of the cultural awareness. Using the resources that they have already built from other ventures, MTV are consistently able to bring a lot of attention to Arab artists, which maintains their support. Bringing in major international music stars to do performances and starting up music festivals with big-name main show performers has skyrocketed their popularity among the locals (UK Essays, 2013). On top of being a main source of entertainment around the world, MTV brings a massive amount of entertainment to their target demographic of under-25 Arabians.

This is represented by their strong foundation in social media: to date, they have over 47 million likes on Facebook, as well as nearly 10 million Twitter followers and the better part of 2 million Instagram followers (Yee, 2013).

One thing MTV could have done differently would have been to enter the Arabian market earlier than they did. The case mentioned that there were already a lot of free-to-air music channels, stating “ In Saudi Arabia alone, there are more than 200 free-to-air sat casters and 50 music channels”

(Deresky, 2014). There were no international music channels before MTV Arabia entered the market, so they were quick enough to claim that market share, but the local music channel market was already filled with competitors.

Despite their success with MTV Arabia, they missed an opportunity to be first movers in the Middle Eastern music market - an opportunity that could have resulted in a much larger impact. What the company should do now is consider another expansion into untapped markets that could use international exposure, like the more developed regions of Africa. The case mentioned that there are many African rappers and musicians that aspire to become better known. MTV Arabia has been a win-win for MTV and the Middle Easterners, and if implemented properly, an expansion into other markets could rewrite the same story. There is also possibility for much more good to be done in terms of taking on social issues to contribute to society and further improve MTV's international reputation.

## Conclusion

MTV Arabia (MTV Middle East) has found a new grey area of marketing in the Middle East that lies somewhere between the two extremes of becoming a completely Arabian channel that has lost focus of its original intent, and encouraging Arabian youths to live out an American lifestyle of watching, buying, and creating only American content. They have implemented a strategy that successfully emphasizes both worlds. As El Bataji (2008) explains, "... [MTV Arabia] encourages Arabs to indulge in western forms of



expressions, but they also encourage these budding artists to make music relevant to their world." A prime example of this middle ground is the Arabian youth making a rap video about women's rights in the region, which then gained international traction through the outlet of MTV Networks.

That is how MTV Arabia is achieving their goal of unifying the Middle Eastern region with their expansion: it was a risqué topic to be broadcasted, as MTV would have intended, but effective as a way for their target market to feel they are truly a part of something.

To put it differently, MTV Arabia has made two major advances in the Middle Eastern broadcasting market: they have adapted their western business to cater perfectly to an audience that originally had sour tastes about Americans entering in the Middle East, and further adapted their definition of what is 'cool' or 'in' and made it attractive to the region, without offending or offsetting locals (El Baltaji, 2008). Given the challenges originally posed by this expansion alongside cultural, social, and political divides between Western and Arab worlds, this is a massive accomplishment for MTV.

#### References:

Al-Awsat, Asharq (2006). " MTV eyes Middle East market." Retrieved 16th July, 2014 from [www.asharq-e.com](http://www.asharq-e.com) Arab News (2007). " MTV Arabia begins broadcasting." Retrieved 16th July, 2014 from [www.arabnews.com](http://www.arabnews.com) Deresky, Helen (2014). International management: managing across borders and cultures. (8th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson El Baltaji, Dana (2008). " I want my MTV." Arab media society, Issue 5, Spring 2008. Retrieved 10th July 2014

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-mtv-networks-the-arabian-challenge-essay-sample/>

from [www. arabmediasociety. com](http://www.arabmediasociety.com) Essays, UK. (2013). " MTV Arabia entry strategy." Retrieved 16th July 2014 from <http://www. ukessays. com>

Newbould,

Chris (2013). " Has the MTV generation grown up and switched off?" Digital Production Middle East. Retrieved of 16th July 2014 from [www. digitalproductionme. com](http://www.digitalproductionme.com)

Yee, Willert (2013). " MTV networks: the Arabian challenge." Retrieved 16th July 2014 from [www. prezi. com](http://www.prezi.com)