

Global study finds China and Middle East leading digital age

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A Chinese customer checks out his newly-purchased iPhone 4 at Apple's flagship store in Beijing on September 2010. China and the Middle East are racing ahead of the West in embracing the Internet according to "the largest ever" global study of online habits.

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The Digital Life study by global research firm TNS also found Malaysians are the most sociable online with an average of 233 friends on social media websites, while the Japanese are the least friendly with just 29.

TNS said the study was the "largest ever global research project into people's online activities and behaviour", surveying almost 90 per cent of

the world's online population through 50,000 interviews in 46 countries.

"This study covers more than twice as many markets as any other research," said TNS Chief Development Officer Matthew Froggatt. "It is the first truly global research into online activities."

Online consumers in rapid growth markets have overtaken mature markets in terms of engaging with digital activities, despite the benefit of more advanced Internet infrastructure, the study found.

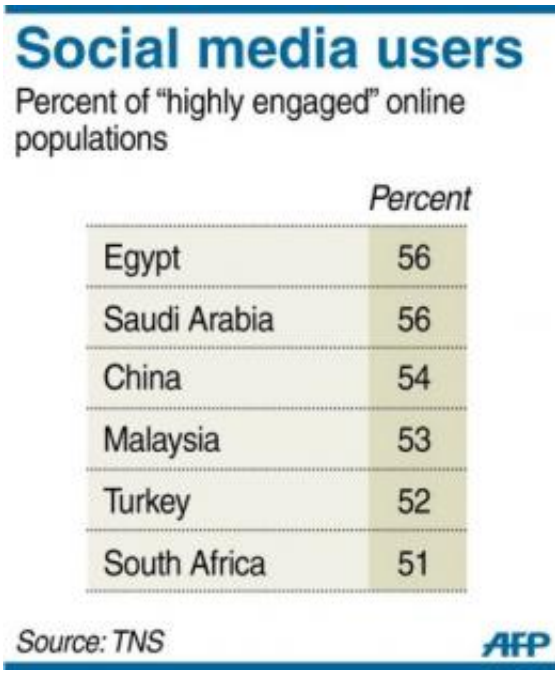


Chart showing the countries with the highest percentage of Internet users actively contributing blogs and joining social networks, according to a study by research firm TNS.

Egypt and [China](#) have much higher levels of digital engagement than mature markets such as Japan, Denmark or Finland, while blogging and [social networking](#) are gaining momentum at huge speed in rapid growth

markets.

James Fergusson, TNS's global director for rapid growth and emerging markets, said in Asia the Internet was "far more transformational when compared to developed Western markets which are far more functional."

"This is because the Internet reduces cultural, social and political barriers to self expression," he told AFP on Monday.

The research shows four out of five online users in China (88 percent) and over half of those in Brazil (51 percent) have written their own blog or forum entry, compared to only 32 percent in the United States.

And online consumers are spending more time on social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn than on email.

In rapid growth markets such as Latin America, the [Middle East](#) and China, the average time spent per week on social networking sites is 5.2 hours compared to four hours on email.

[Malaysia](#) tops the list of countries with the most friends at an average of 233 friends in their social network, closely followed by Brazilians with 231.

"Malaysians are very open to establishing friendships online," Fergusson said. "Whereas in Japan people tend to be more selective in choosing their online friends."

The study also reveals a marked global shift away from traditional media, with 61 percent of online users using the Internet daily against 54 percent for television, 36 percent for radio and 32 percent for newspapers.

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