Facebook says 56 million 'like' it in Arab world

October 1 2013

A view of a tablet and a smartphone displaying the Facebook app's splash screen on May 10, 2012 in Washington, DC

Facebook announced Tuesday that it has 56 million active users in the Middle East and North Africa, where activists used the social media network to organise Arab Spring uprisings.

Half of these users returned to the website on a daily basis, Facebook

regional chief Jonathan Labin told a news conference in Dubai, noting a significant increase in the number of people connecting from mobile devices.

"Every month, 56 million people are active on Facebook across the MENA region, with 50 percent of those returning on a daily basis," Facebook said in a statement.

In total, "33 million people in MENA use a phone or tablet to access the service every month, while the number of daily active users on mobile has reached 15 million.

"People in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council countries) are particularly well-connected with a mobile connectivity rate of 196 percent—an average of two SIM cards per person," the US company added.

According to Labin, this increase in Facebook users offers great opportunities for advertisers.

"We are seeing an increase in the number of advertisers who are turning to Facebook to get their message to the people who matter most," he said.

Facebook's mobile advertising revenues have leaped from zero percent in the first half of 2012 to 41 percent of total advertising revenues in the second quarter of 2013.

In May 2012, Facebook announced the opening in Dubai of its sales office for the Middle East and North Africa, naming Dubai's Emirates Airlines and Doha-based Al-Jazeera television among its advertising clients.

Activists in several Arab world countries have used Facebook and other Internet social networking sites as a speedy, anonymous and efficient engine to organise protests and campaigns that swept the region since 2011.

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