

Saudi Arabia Telecommunications Report Q3 2016

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Abstracts

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BMI View: Saudi Arabia's telecommunications consumers show strong demand for higher speed data services in the wireless and wireline segments. Despite this, the mobile market has already reached maturation point and displays classic signs of slowing down, with penetration rates exceeding 167%. Based on a decline in the total number of mobile accounts in Q116, we believe that the market harbours a significant number of inactive accounts. Despite mobile market saturation, we remain optimistic that operators' investments in enhancing infrastructure capabilities will help generate new growth opportunities. Additionally, eEnterprise solutions are becoming a main pillar for the leading operators, with new datacentres and business solutions popping up regularly. Still, overall competition is keeping ARPU down and infrastructure development in a country as vast as Saudi Arabia is quite expensive. While investing heavily into their fibre backbones, operators are therefore looking to improve the efficiency of their infrastructure and are aiming to outsource towers.

Latest Updates & Industry Developments

According to the regulator's latest data, Mobile subscriptions reached 52.8mn at the end of 2015, while the penetration rate reached 167.4%. 3G and 4G accounts accounted for slightly more than 63% of total connections at the end of 2015.

The mobile market lost 800,000 connections in Q415 and 1.9mn more connections were lost in Q116. These losses were borne by all three operators and we attribute this development to the deduction of inactive prepaid accounts from their reported totals.



The wireline voice market grew to 3.8mn subscribers at the end of 2015, according to the regulator's data. However, demand for high speed data services is driving growth in the wireline broadband segment. Fixed broadband subscriptions grew to 3.56mn at the end of 2015, while mobile broadband subscriptions climbed to 20.19mn at the end of 2015. A rising prevalence of smartphones accelerated demand for data and content.



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