QESMA W NASEEB

YOUTUBE PREMIUM ORIGINAL CONTENT

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Introduction

In recent years, digital media has evolved beyond mere entertainment, becoming a powerful space for cultural transformation, social commentary, and political expression. Nowhere is this shift more significant than in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where ongoing reforms have opened new avenues for content creation, especially around youth culture and gender roles

In this context, Qesma W Naseeb represents more than just a digital show; it is a production by M Networks, a joint venture between Merzigo and Melon Digital. Its YouTube operations and monetization are managed by Merzigo.

Launched on YouTube on March 2, 2024, the project was designed from the outset to challenge narrative norms, push boundaries in representation, and engage a digitally native Arab audience with content that is both emotionally resonant and culturally disruptive.

The show taps into an emerging desire for authentic storytelling, particularly narratives that center Arab women, question traditional matchmaking practices, and reflect the social tensions of a generation straddling reform and tradition. Qesma W Naseeb does not merely respond to this shift; it helps shape it. Through strong audience engagement metrics, viral moments across platforms, and meaningful discussions it has sparked, the show stands as a defining moment in Arab digital history.

This report analyzes the success of Qesma W Naseeb through both quantitative performance data and qualitative insights grounded in the region's sociocultural context. We also provide a comparative evaluation against similar formats such as MBC's Al Hawa Sawa and Netflix's Love Is Blind: Habibi, unpacking how the show's format, tone, and distribution strategy differentiated it in a crowded landscape.

Ultimately, this is not just a case study of a successful digital production; it is a blueprint for how creative collaboration, regional fluency, and strategic monetization can converge to create content that resonates deeply with audiences, shapes discourse, and positions all partners as leaders in the next phase of Arab storytelling.

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Qesma W Naseeb: An Overview

Qesma W Naseeb is an original Arabic-language, long-format reality dating show airing exclusively on the official YouTube channel Qesma W Naseeb. Since its premiere on March 2, 2024, it has completed three full seasons, totaling over 200+ episodes.

All episodes are fully accessible worldwide, with no regional restrictions, thanks to YouTube's open and borderless platform. The title translates to English as "Fate and Destiny", reflecting the core concept: bringing together men and women who are seeking meaningful relationships and potential marriage. Contestants live together in a shared environment that challenges their emotional, social and cultural boundaries, creating natural tension and authentic interactions throughout the experience.

Each episode runs between 90 and 130 minutes, featuring high production values, cinematic visuals, emotionally driven editing, and a distinctive musical narrative. Unlike most dating shows in the global or regional landscape, Qesma W Naseeb intentionally blends reality TV with documentary storytelling techniques. This hybrid format allows for in-depth character exploration, emphasizing emotional complexity and psychological depth over surface-level drama.

What truly distinguishes Qesma W Naseeb is its commitment to exploring deeper personal and social themes, from unresolved childhood trauma to family expectations, from identity struggles to the push-and-pull between modern individuality and traditional norms. These themes are not only presented through the contestants' stories but are also carefully embedded into the structure and tone of the show.

As a result, Qesma W Naseeb is not merely a dating show. It serves as a sociocultural reflection of Arab youth, capturing the rapid transformation in values, gender dynamics, and emotional expression taking place across the region. Its unique positioning at the intersection of entertainment and social observation sets it apart from similar programs like Netflix's Love Is Blind: Habibi or MBC's Al Hawa Sawa, establishing it as a culturally resonant and emotionally intelligent media product.

Qesma W Naseeb in the Spotlight of MENA's Trending Topics

Qesma W Naseeb has not only built a strong community among viewers but has also secured a prominent place in the MENA region's digital landscape. According to YouTube's official Global Trends Report, Qesma W Naseeb entered the "Trending Topics" list in MENA, becoming one of the most talked-about productions in the region.

This achievement reflects not only high viewership figures but also the organic interest and engagement from audiences on social media. Every new episode sparks hundreds of shares, comments, and discussions across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X.

By placing cultural authenticity, high production quality, and an accessible YouTube distribution model at the core of its content strategy, Qesma W Naseeb has become more than just a TV format, it has emerged as a regional cultural phenomenon.

Performance Data and Content Structure

As can be seen from the episode selection taken from each season below, the interest in the program has continued without waning since it first began airing.

13.9M views

6,7M views

11 M views

2,4M views

7,4M views

1 M views

Overall Channel Performance

Since its premiere on March 2, 2024, Qesma W Naseeb rapidly established itself as one of the most prominent and influential digital programs in Saudi Arabia and the broader Arab media landscape. By July 2025, approximately 16 months after its debut, the show had achieved remarkable success across multiple key metrics:

Table 1: Channel Performance Metrics
(Source: YouTube Studio Analytics, 2025)

Total Views	Total Watch Time (Hours)	Number of Subscribers
1,686,793,527	484,000,000	2,700,000

Table 2: Micro-level Analysis of Viewing Behavior
(Source: YouTube Studio Analytics, 2025)

Average watch time per view	Average total watch time per episode	Estimated retention rate (per video)
16.9 minutes	2.37 M hours	15%

The impressive total watch time of 2.37 million hours per episode reflects the show's strong ability to attract and sustain audience interest at scale. While the estimated retention rate of 15% for long-form episodes highlights the natural challenge of sustaining attention over extended runtimes, it also underscores the remarkable reach and impact of the program across a diverse and growing viewer base.

Since its debut weeks, Qesma W Naseeb has created a viral impact, drawing attention not only with its content themes but also with the transformation it has brought to viewing habits. As shown in Figure 1, nearly 80% of viewers follow the program via mobile phones. This extraordinary rate reveals that Qesma W Naseeb is produced with a mobile-first audience in mind and maximizes the benefits of YouTube's algorithmic structure. This data also demonstrates how well the program adapts to the culture of instant consumption and individual viewing dynamics.

Figure 1: Device Type Breakdown of Qesma W Naseeb Viewership
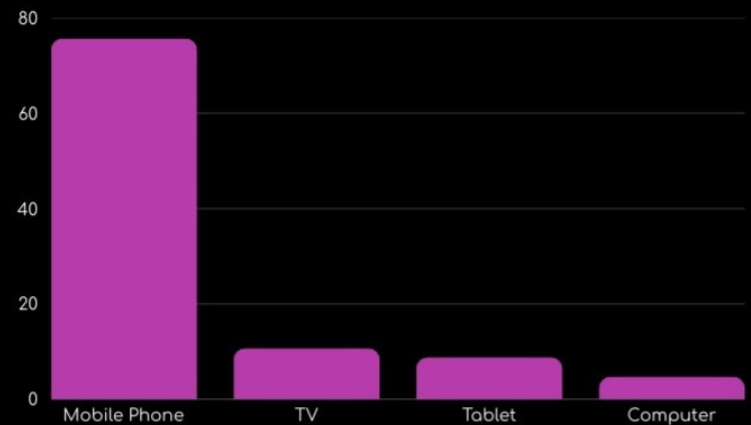

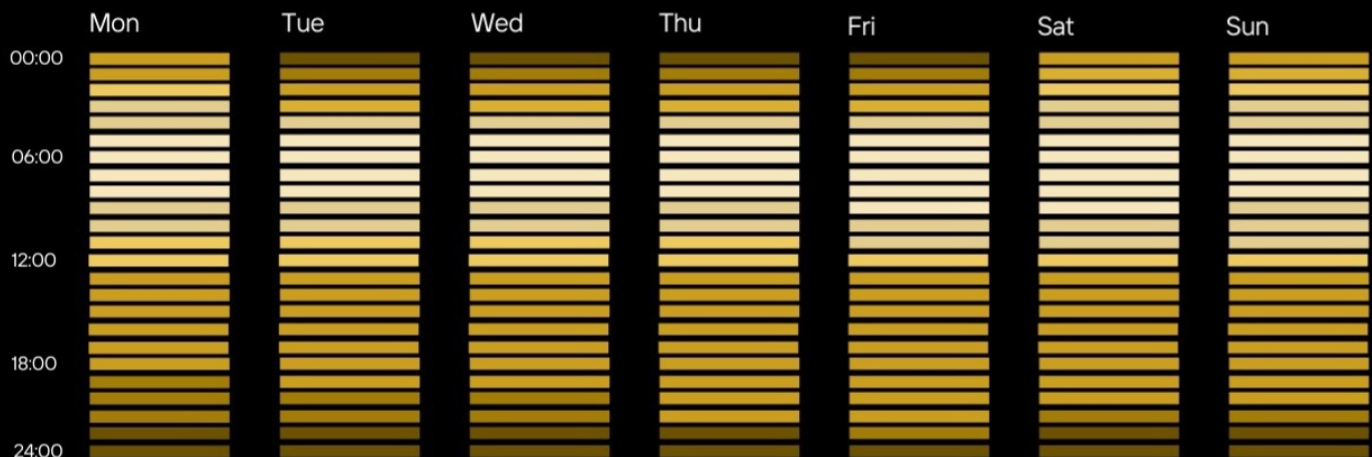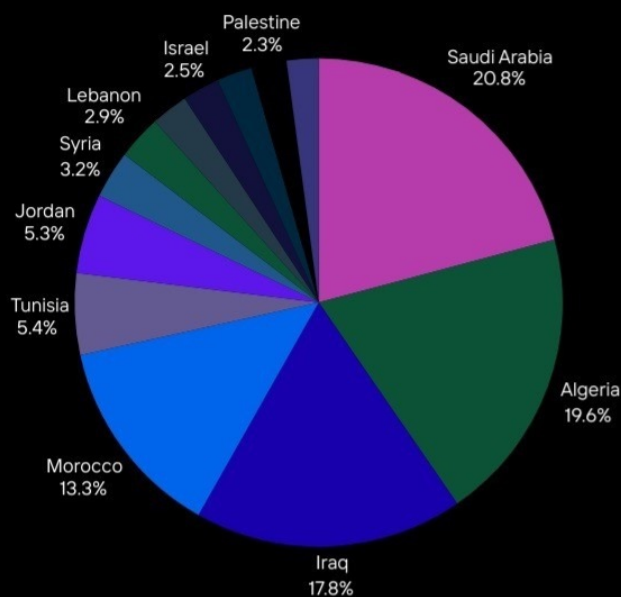
Figure 2: Peak Viewer Activity Times on YouTube

Figure 2 illustrates the times when viewers are most active on YouTube. A noticeable viewer density is observed almost throughout the entire day from Monday to Sunday, with a peak between 11:00 PM and midnight. This indicates that the audience is not merely passive consumers but a loyal community that anticipates the broadcast times and waits attentively. The formation of weekly and daily viewing routines proves that Qesma W Naseeb has transformed from just content into a habitual engagement for its viewers.

Audience Profile and Engagement

Pie chart — Geographical distribution:
- Saudi Arabia 20.8%
- Algeria 19.6%
- Iraq 17.8%
- Morocco 13.3%
- Tunisia 5.4%
- Jordan 5.3%
- Syria 3.2%
- Lebanon 2.9%
- Israel 2.5%
- Palestine 2.3%

The geographical distribution is as shown left, with Qesma W Naseeb's audience primarily located in the MENA region. The viewer base consists of 72.4% women aged between 18 and 34. High engagement levels are observed: the like-to-comment ratio stands at an impressive 63% (Source: YouTube Studio Analytics, 2025).

These data indicate that Qesma W Naseeb is especially popular among young adult women. This age group represents a viewer segment deeply integrated with social media and digital platforms, questioning social norms, and open to forming emotional connections.

This demographic structure confirms that both the content format and the language and narrative styles used in the program align well with the expectations of the target audience.

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Content Themes and Narrative Structure

The content success of Qesma W Naseeb is not solely based on the popularity of the romantic reality format. Rather, the series presents a multi-layered narrative situated at the intersection of social transformation, gender roles, and digital storytelling in the Arab world. In this context, the content themes that make the program unique and impactful can be grouped under the following four main categories:

Women's Autonomy in Challenging Social Norms: The female characters, who are among the main figures of the series, transform from passive viewers into active agents of the narrative. In Arab societies traditionally dominated by male-centered decision-making structures, the capacity of these women to choose their own partners, question the ways they form relationships, and clearly set personal boundaries represents a radical form of autonomy within the regional context (Abu-Lughod, 2013). This dynamic allows viewers to empathize and identify with the characters, while also resonating widely across social media platforms.

Creative Freedom Enabled by YouTube and Algorithmic Advantages: The program's release on digital platforms like YouTube, rather than traditional broadcasters, provides significant flexibility in both content and distribution. Minimizing restrictions related to copyright, censorship, and broadcast schedules allows creative teams to develop the narrative more freely and experimentally. Moreover, thanks to YouTube's algorithms, the content can directly reach audiences with a high potential for engagement. This facilitates the program's organic growth and enhances viewer loyalty (Burgess & Green, 2018).

The Clash Between Traditional Values and Contemporary Expectations: In the series, traditional values such as marriage, privacy, family honor, and religious sensitivities often clash with contemporary expectations like individual freedom, romantic love, and digital identity. This conflict not only creates dramatic tension but also sparks socio-cultural debates. The program's high viewership largely stems from this duality; while viewers encounter familiar norms, they are simultaneously exposed to alternative ways of life that they may not experience in their own lives (Kraidy, 2010).

High Cinematographic Quality and Cohesive Musical Storytelling: Although it is a YouTube-based production, Qesma W Naseeb offers a level of cinematographic quality that surpasses traditional broadcasting platforms. The color palette, camera angles, lighting, and scene transitions consistently maintain the viewer's visual engagement. At the same time, the integration of music rooted in Arab cultural codes into the narrative deepens the emotional expression. This cohesion ensures that the storytelling is both aesthetically and emotionally satisfying.

Sociocultural Context: Women, Digital Transformation and Vision 2030

In recent years, Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world have experienced a profound shift in both social structures and media ecosystems, driven by policy reforms and digital transformation. The Vision 2030 agenda has redefined the cultural landscape, opening space for creative industries, entertainment, and online content production to flourish. Measures such as lifting the driving ban for women in 2018, gradually easing guardianship rules, and expanding access to public and digital life have allowed a new generation, particularly women, to become visible, influential, and active in shaping cultural narratives (Freedom House, 2023).These broader reforms were further deepened by the landmark legal amendments announced in mid-2019 and 2020, which significantly dismantled aspects of the male guardianship system.

Women over the age of 21 were granted the right to obtain passports and travel abroad without a male guardian's permission, and new regulations recognized them as heads of household, enabling them to register births, deaths, and marriages. In the labor market, legal clarity was introduced to protect women from discrimination based on gender, disability, or age, paving the way for increased female participation in the workforce. While challenges remain, particularly in areas such as marriage laws and judicial rights, these changes mark a pivotal step toward gender equity and the empowerment of women as social and cultural agents (Word Report, 2020).

This transformation is especially visible in the rise of women across digital and social platforms. As DataReportal (2023) highlights, 79% of the Saudi population now uses social media. with female creators representing one of the fastest-growing segments. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become alternative arenas where women share their stories, challenge traditional expectations, and connect with audiences that extend beyond geographic and social boundaries.

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Sociocultural Context: Women, Digital Transformation and Vision 2030

Parallel to this social change, the emergence of influencer culture and the centrality of digital identity have reshaped the way audiences engage with media. In the new participatory ecosystem, viewers are no longer passive; they follow, comment, and amplify narratives, while participants themselves evolve into digital micro-influencers, extending the life of a program beyond its episodes. In this landscape, a show's impact is measured not only in views but also in how deeply it embeds itself in social media culture and community dialogue.

Qesma W Naseeb stands at the intersection of these cultural and digital shifts. By centering women's voices, emotional journeys, and intergenerational tensions, it resonates strongly with the 18–34 female demographic, which forms the majority of its loyal audience. Contestants enter the show as private individuals but emerge as public digital figures, often experiencing rapid growth in followers and influence, mirroring the broader story of Arab women embracing agency and visibility in the digital era.

Through its YouTube-first distribution, the program does more than reflect these societal changes; it actively participates in driving them. It exemplifies how policy-enabled openness, youth engagement, and digital participation converge to produce culturally authentic yet globally accessible media, reinforcing Qesma W Naseeb's status as a landmark of Arab digital storytelling.

Social Media Impact

The success of Qesma W Naseeb is not limited to its billion-level views on YouTube; it has also found strong resonance across social media platforms. In particular, follower data from Instagram clearly demonstrates the program's digital influence.

The show's official Instagram account maintains active content production with over 4,300 posts and has reached 2.6 million followers. This indicates an increase in digital visibility not only for the production but also for its participants. Some of the most notable contestants are shown on the right. For example, Farah Razem had around 100,000 followers before the competition, a number that rose to 1.2 million after the program.

These increases show that the show is not merely content consumed on television or YouTube, but a social phenomenon where viewers form connections with contestants and follow them individually. The dramatic rise in follower counts confirms that the program has expanded to much wider audiences through social media, enhancing user engagement and leaving a more lasting impact.
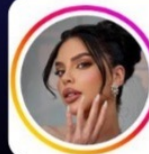
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Qesma w Naseeb - قسمة و نصيب

| 4.347 posts | 2,6M followers | 19 following |

Farah Razem

| 226 posts | 1,2M followers | 446 following |

Nada Abid

| 266 posts | 1,1M followers | 1.993 following |

Elie Abou Antoun - ايلي ابو انطون

| 2.081 posts | 947K followers | 987 following |

Jennyfer Azar جنيفر عازار

| 249 posts | 616K followers | 392 following |
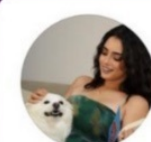
Jihane lavina

| 138 posts | 832K followers | 574 following |

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Regional Competing Formats

In the MENA region, dating shows are exceptionally rare, with virtually no long-running examples in recent decades. This lack of sustained formats makes direct performance benchmarking challenging, leaving only two relevant points of comparison: Al Hawa Sawa (MBC, 2004) and Love Is Blind: Habibi (Netflix, 2024). Both illustrate different approaches to adapting relationship-based formats for regional audiences.

Al Hawa Sawa

The history of Al Hawa Sawa ("Together in the Air"), which aired on MBC in 2004 and asted only one season, exemplifies the early challenges of Arab reality TV and serves as a cautionary tale for culturally sensitive programming. Marketed as the region's first dating reality format, the show featured eight women from across the Arab world living together in a luxury Beirut apartment, monitored 24/7 in a Big Brother-style setting. Male suitors were permitted to watch the women on camera and initiate contact before visiting the apartment to propose marriage. In its final episodes, selected women were expected to accept proposals on-air, culminating in televised weddings.

Despite the producers' insistence on respecting cultural boundaries, prohibiting explicit clothing, tattoos, and even form-fitting fabrics, the format quickly drew criticism. Religious scholars and conservative commentators accused the program of violating Islamic values, primarily due to its public framing of romance, mixed-gender interactions, and the expectation of marriage under media pressure. Accusations of participants flouting bans on cigarettes and alcohol further inflamed public opinion. The show ended in chaos when a finalist dramatically refused to marry her assigned partner on air, locking herself in a room and vowing to speak to the media post-show(The Guardian, 2004).

From an industry perspective, Al Hawa Sawa illustrates the fragility of imported or hybrid formats that lack deeper cultural integration. Unlike later successes such as Qesma W Naseeb, which prioritize emotional depth and participatory digital engagement, Al Hawa Sawa remained a fleeting experiment that triggered moral outrage but failed to create sustained audience loyalty.

Regional Competing Formats

Love Is Blind: Habibi

The debut of Love Is Blind: Habibi on Netflix (October 10, 2024) marked a significant step in the localization of global dating-reality formats for the Arab world. Hosted by Khaled Saqer and Elham Ali, the show followed the familiar Love Is Blind structure: single men and women interacted in isolated "pods", formed emotional connections without seeing each other, and, if engaged, progressed to cohabitation, family meetings, and a wedding ceremony within four weeks (The National, 2025).

The series consisted of 45–60 minute episodes, emphasizing high production quality and polished narrative arcs while incorporating regional representation, with 20 contestants from across the Gulf, Levant, and North Africa, primarily based in the UAE. Filming took place in Lebanon, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, with early episodes highlighting cultural respect and family involvement, and later episodes focusing on romantic tension and social friction during family visits and the luxury resort retreat (The National, 2025).

Viewership data demonstrates that the show achieved modest but notable impact in its launch window, reaching 1.3 million views in its first week and entering the Netflix Global Non-English Top 10 at No. 8 (The National, 2025).While it sparked initial social media conversation and provided culturally relatable moments, critics observed that it did not fundamentally innovate the format and lacked sustained emotional storytelling, resulting in limited long-tail engagement.

From a strategic standpoint, Love Is Blind: Habibi illustrates both the potential and constraints of Western-format adaptation in the Arab world. Its paywalled model and single-season run generated short-term visibility but did not foster the ongoing participatory ecosystem required for sustained success in the regional digital market. In contrast, free, mobile-first platforms like YouTube, leveraged by Qesma W Naseeb, provide borderless access and organic social amplification, turning episodes into cultural events with multi-season resonance.

Comparison with Qesma W Naseeb

When examined alongside previous and contemporary regional reality formats, Qesma W Naseeb demonstrates a distinctive and sustainable success model. Early experiments such as Al Hawa Sawa (MBC, 2004) highlighted the risks of reality television without cultural alignment. Despite strict adherence to conservative presentation and codes of behavior, the show's gender-mixed cohabitation format provoked public backlash, leading to short-lived curiosity and early cancellation with only one season.(The Guardian, 2004).The program generated debate rather than loyalty, offering no emotional depth or participatory community to sustain its narrative.

Two decades later, Love Is Blind: Habibi (Netflix, 2024) approached the market with global brand power and high production value, but its subscription-based, paywalled model restricted organic discovery in MENA's predominantly free-access digital ecosystem. While the show reached 1.3 million views in its first week and entered Netflix's Global Non-English Top 10, its 45–60 minute episodes failed to generate long-tail audience retention or a cross-platform influencer ecosystem (The National, 2025). The program achieved initial buzz but did not embed itself as a habitual viewing or social media phenomenon in the region.

In contrast, Qesma W Naseeb aligns content strategy, cultural resonance, and platform distribution in a way that neither predecessor achieved. Its long-format 90–130 minute episodes combine cinematic production and emotionally authentic storytelling, fostering viewer loyalty and habitual engagement across three seasons and 200+ episodes.Unlike Al Hawa Sawa, it avoids cultural backlash by embedding stories within relatable, intergenerational narratives; and unlike Love Is Blind: Habibi, it thrives in a free, open-access ecosystem optimized for mobile-first consumption, where episodes naturally benefit from YouTube's algorithmic discovery and cross-platform viral circulation.

Comparison with Qesma W Naseeb

Table 3: Comparison of Qesma W Naseeb, Love Is Blind: Habibi, and Al Hawa Sawa

Feature	Qesma W Naseeb	Al Hawa Sawa	Love Is Blind: Habibi
Broadcast Platform	YouTube	TV	Netflix
Broadcast Date	2024	2004	2024
Viewer Engagement	Comments and Real-Time Feedback	SMS and Live Voting	Passive Audience
Format Structure	Documentary-Dramatic, Unrestricted Narrative	Big Brother–Style Surveillance	Structured According to Reality TV Norms
Female Representation	Strong, Active, Selective Position	Limited, Within Traditional Roles	Balanced but Romantic-Patterned

Table 1 demonstrates how Qesma W Naseeb is the most contemporary and participatory model, combining emotional authenticity and cultural alignment with YouTube's interactive ecosystem, while earlier and imported formats remained either culturally constrained or platform-limited.

Table 4: Comparison Based on Key Metrics

Program	Platform	Broadcast Location	Number of Episodes	Estimated Viewership
Qesma W Naseeb	YouTube	Saudi Arabia	200+	1.4+ billion
Al Hawa Sawa	TV	Lebanese / Pan-Arab	~10	~ 10 million
Love Is Blind: Habibi	Netflix	MENA region overall	10	Global Top 10

Table 2 highlights the multi-dimensional dominance of Qesma W Naseeb. Its multi-season scale and long-form retention far surpass the short-lived reach of Al Hawa Sawa and the launch-window spike of Love Is Blind: Habibi, confirming that open, mobile-optimized, and culturally resonant formats achieve sustainable success in the Arab reality TV landscape.

This multi-dimensional approach—cultural authenticity, emotional depth, and free digital accessibility—transforms Qesma W Naseeb into more than a program: it is a community-driven digital event. By converting audience curiosity into loyalty and viewership into social participation, the show sets a new benchmark for sustainable reality programming in the Arab world, outperforming both past experimental formats and modern subscription-based imports.

Conclusion

2.7 M subscriber

475.4 M watch hours

The success of Qesma W Naseeb demonstrates how a culturally embedded narrative, cinematic storytelling, and YouTube-first distribution can converge to redefine reality television in the Arab world. Across three seasons and over 200 long-form episodes, the show has reached 1.69 billion total views, accumulated 475.4 million watch hours, and built a loyal subscriber base of 2.7 million, all within less than 18 months.

Unlike predecessors such as Al Hawa Sawa (MBC, 2004), which sparked backlash due to perceived moral oversteps and lacked cultural alignment, or Netflix's Love Is Blind: Habibi, which was constrained by a paywalled model and failed to generate sustained engagement beyond its debut week, Qesma W Naseeb represents a sustainable alternative.

Where others struggled to move beyond episodic content, Qesma W Naseeb transformed each release into a cultural event, thanks to the combination of emotionally resonant themes, mobile-first distribution, and YouTube's algorithmic reach. These factors allowed the show to bypass traditional gatekeepers, organically grow a loyal following, and embed itself in the daily media habits of its viewers.

Ultimately, Qesma W Naseeb is more than a reality series, it is a digitally native, culturally grounded phenomenon. Its strategic use of YouTube not only maximized discoverability and retention but also redefined how long-form Arab storytelling can thrive in the digital age. As a model of regional insight and creative autonomy, it sets the benchmark for the next generation of Arab media production.

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Viewership statistics, user interaction data, and graphs were obtained by Merzigo through YouTube Studio Analytics and the company's internal monitoring dashboards. Access to this data is restricted to internal use only.

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