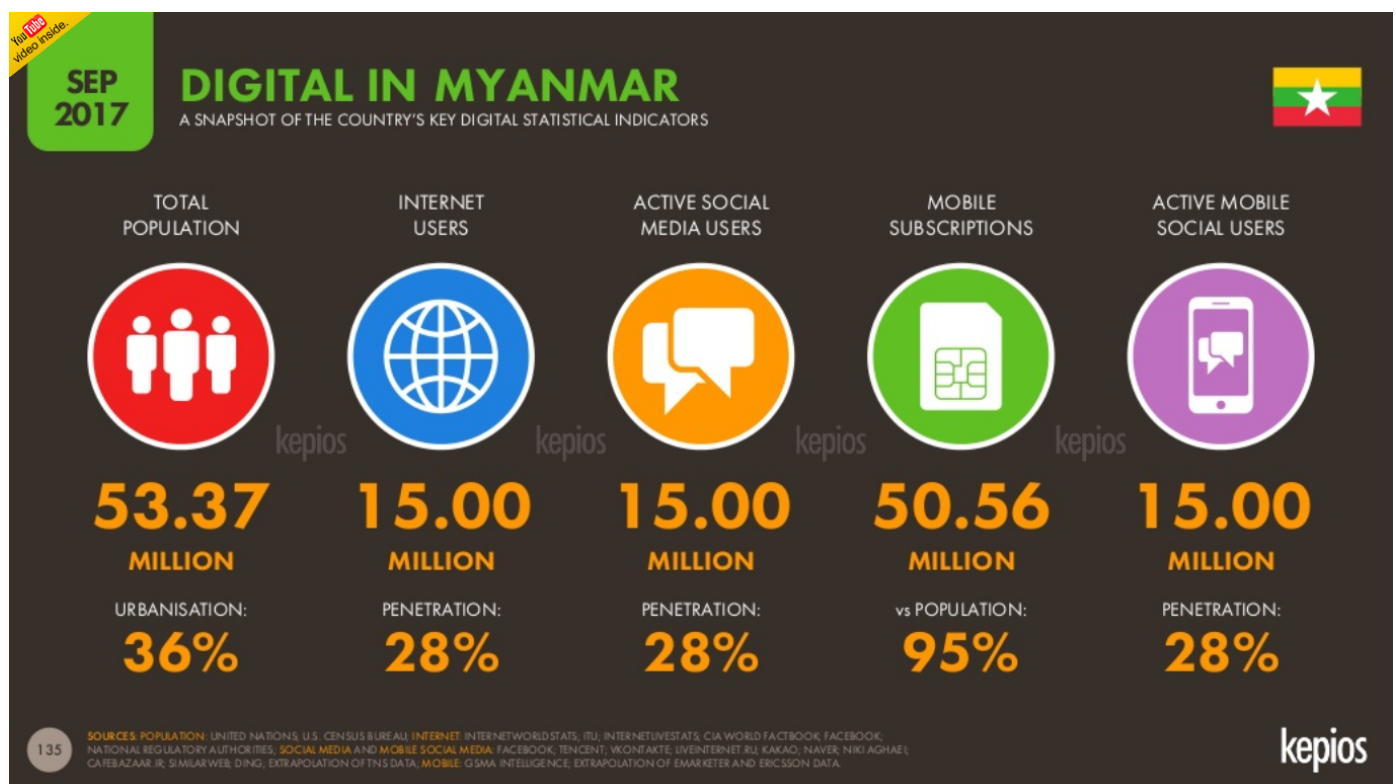




Myanmar to reach 28% Internet penetration and 15 million users

by Herbert Kanale / October 12, 2017 / 1 Comment



2 weeks ago, Kepios released the latest episode of its [global digital report](#). 9 months after the last report, the Internet penetration in Myanmar gains 2 more points and reaches 28%.

In total, that is 15 million people that connect to Internet on a regular basis. According to the same report, the number of active social users is the same: 15 millions. These users are also all **mobile**

users.

But is this data correct?

In a country where even the size of the population is subject to controversy, assessing internet penetration is easier said than done.

As we decided to investigate, we rapidly found that most of the sources are contradictory.

Governmental stats

In an [article from March 2017](#), the news website Coconuts Yangon claims that Myanmar counts 46 million users according to a report obtained from the Ministry of Transport and Communications. 89% of the country population would be connected to Internet according to the Myanmar government. Knowing that the average Internet penetration in APAC is [estimated at 47%](#), this sounds too good to be true.

Mobile operator stats



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In an [interview from November 2016](#), Lars Erik Tellmann, Telenor Myanmar CEO claimed that 64% of Telenor mobile base are internet users. If we apply the same penetration evenly across the complete Myanmar mobile base, the result is **32 million internet users**. That is **double** the numbers announced by Kepios and **50%** less than the numbers from the government.

What is an Internet user?

To get to the bottom of this mystery, it is important to understand that the definition of an Internet user is not something straightforward and may be subject to polemic.

Myanmar Internet penetration is essentially mobile and smartphone usage exceed 80% of the mobile base. As soon as a smartphone connect to the mobile network, Internet settings are

automatically pushed and installed on the device. The smartphone is ready to communicate with the Internet and could even start syncing applications and running updates on behalf of his owner.

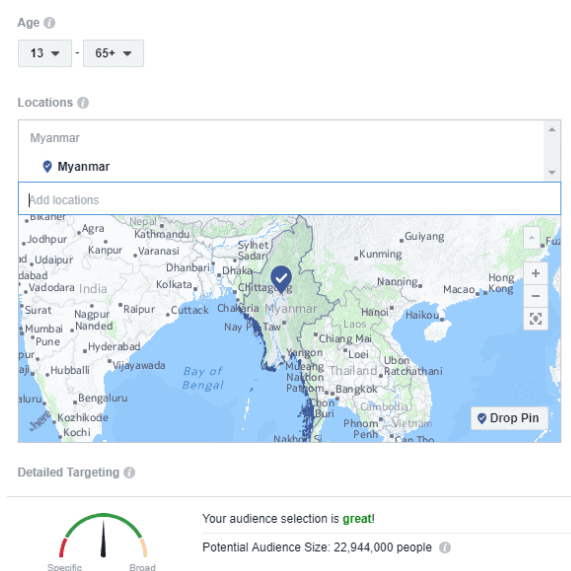
This data communication is billed by the mobile network and then the smartphone owner categorized as an Internet user. This unintentional use of internet will inflate artificially the mobile operator statistics and can explain the gap between Telenor CEO statement and the results found by Kepios.

So what is the truth?

A few facts and stats would suggest that the truth could be somewhere in the middle.

First of all, it could be tempting to look at Facebook users as the social network is so popular in Myanmar that some even say "Facebook is Internet in Myanmar". Kepios also states that every internet user in Myanmar is a Facebook user.

As there is no official figures about Facebook users in Myanmar, a useful workaround could be to check Facebook Ads. Facebook Ads is a powerful tool to advertise content across the social network. When creating the ads, the tool let you select an audience based on location, demographic, interest and so on... Based on your criteria, Facebook will give you an estimate of your ads audience.



By selecting an audience "Myanmar nationwide between 13 and 65 year old", we end up with an estimate target size of 22,944,000 users.

As we run the same test with other countries where the Facebook users are well known, we find out that the audience matches the number of Facebook users with an error margin of 10%.

In conclusion, using this technique, we could estimate the number of Facebook users in Myanmar to be between 20 and 25 millions. Quite far from Kepios statistics.

Facebook pages in Myanmar



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Taking a different angle, we decided to look at the top Facebook pages in Myanmar. According to [socialbakers](#), the biggest fan base in Myanmar is [7days News Journal](#) with 17 637 315 likes. Knowing that this page is in Myanmar language, we could assume that the page is mostly liked by fans located in Myanmar. Therefore, there is no way the number of Internet users in Myanmar could be only 15 millions.

Viber

Another app extremely popular in Myanmar is Viber. The messaging app has been releasing figures about its customer base in Myanmar over the past few years.

In December 2015, Viber celebrated 18 million users in Myanmar. Then in December 2016, the messaging app reached [global digital report](#). Viber figures are surprisingly higher than Facebook.

In conclusion, it is extremely unlikely that Kepios stats are correct. From our research, we would estimate 25 million internet users in Myanmar which would bring Internet penetration to 47%. As the numbers start to make sense, the internet penetration become hard to believe.

And what if the population headcount controversy was totally spotted on? What if we were able to get real figures through the prism of the Myanmar Internet user count? May the country population be underestimated, it would definitely explain why the Internet penetration looks so high.

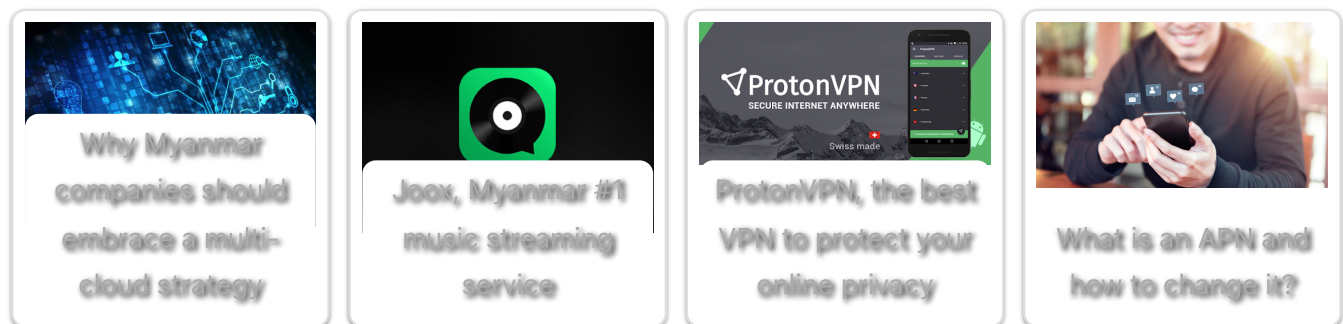
[Herbert Kanale](#)

Herbert is a *nom de plume*.

I am an experienced telecom professional blogging about the fastest growing Internet market in the world: Myanmar.



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1 thought on “Myanmar to reach 28% Internet penetration and 15 million users”

MESUTTMY

October 13, 2017 at 15 h 51 min

"In an interview from November 2016, Lars Erik Tellmann, Telenor Myanmar CEO claimed that 64% of Telenor mobile base are internet users. If we apply the same penetration evenly across the complete Myanmar mobile base, the result is 32 million internet users."

He said 64% of telenor customers, might not representing the whole country, FB is not accurate because i seen some people have few accounts, some people create fake account for purpose, so its not accurate also, For viber, some people are not using such as my driver, some people have a few number and few viber account, some people changing phone numbers thus viber account also changing, but the old registered viber account still counting for viber,

at the end still very hard to justify the actual numbers

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