

**SAUDI
FILM**
CONFEX

2024



SAUDI FILM INDUSTRY YEARBOOK

SAUDI FILM CONFEX EDITION

هيئة الأفلام
Film Commission



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Introduction

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1.1. | About This Publication

This is the inaugural statistical publication on the rapidly expanding and evolving film industry¹ in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

This publication by the Saudi Film Commission (SFC) was released in October 2024 to coincide with the Saudi Film Confex in Riyadh.

¹ Encompassing feature film, television series, short films, animation and documentaries

With key chapters covering the theatrical market, national incentive programme and festival and awards, this publication offers new insights into the remarkable progress made in the KSA film industry in recent years. It also underlines the strong progress that the KSA film industry has made towards the *Vision 2030* objective of creating an economically and socially vibrant, thriving and ambitious nation.

Included are preliminary data on developments within the KSA film industry in 2024 (until September 30th), referencing previous years for context. The forthcoming *Saudi Film Industry Yearbook* will include full and updated data for 2024, including additional metrics on cinema admissions and box office. It will also expand on this publication with new chapters on workforce development and film conservation and archiving.

Sign up to receive the *Saudi Film Industry Yearbook* [here](#) or scan the QR code.



1.2. | Overview of the KSA Film Industry

Since the release of the first Saudi films in the 1950s and 1960s, the KSA film industry has seen significant growth. The momentum accelerated in recent years after the first cinema opened in

2018, leading to a notable expansion in KSA's theatrical market, as well as growing success for local filmmakers (Figure 1).

Today, KSA has established itself as a key player within the Middle East and internationally, with major regional and global content investors already working in the Kingdom, including Netflix and

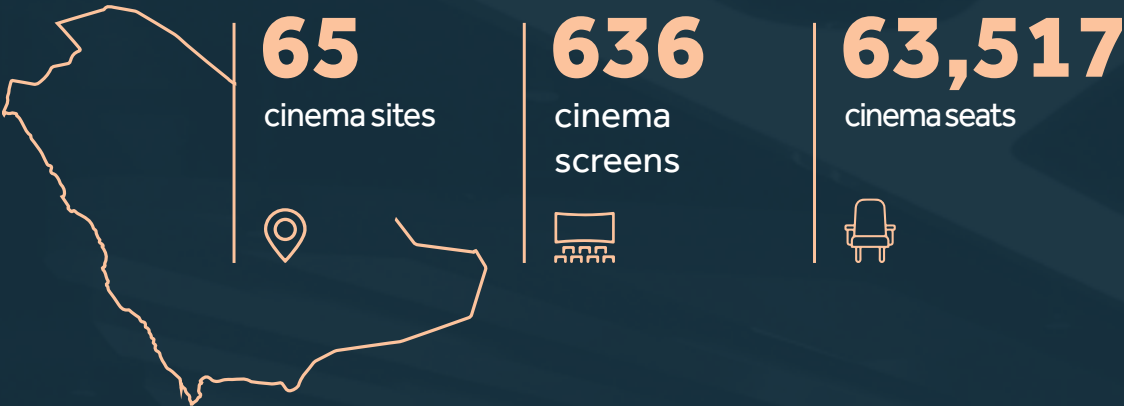
MBC Studios. The KSA film industry has proven itself as a key strategic growth industry in meeting the objectives of *Vision 2030*.

Figure 1 – Latest Developments in the KSA Film Industry



| Source: KSA Ministry of Culture's Report on the State of Culture report and wider research

Key KSA Film Industry Statistics – 2024
Until September 30th



68,000+

archived items have been preserved and cataloged



21
projects supported by the SFC's Cash
Rebate or Daw' Program in 2024 (to date)

296.57 Mn
total estimated production expenditure
from projects supported by the SFC's
Cash Rebate or Daw' Program in 2024
(up to September 30th)

As part of the
Gulf Cinema Festival:

Held in
Riyadh

on April,
2024

29 including 6 from KSA, screened as part of the
2024 Gulf Cinema Festival in Riyadh in April.



1,300+

people attended
screenings at the festival



Further industry statistics are included in this publication.

1.3. | About the Saudi Film Commission and its Support of the KSA Film Industry

About the Saudi Film Commission

The SFC is a KSA government body affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, established in February 2020. The SFC aims to advance the film industry and the production environment in KSA, in addition to stimulating and empowering Saudi filmmakers.

SFC's Vision:



Establish KSA as a world-class film centre in the heart of the Middle East.

SFC's Mission:



Build and foster the development of a creative KSA film industry and maximise its potential for local and international markets.

The SFC has played a pivotal role in supporting the rapid development of the KSA film industry through a range of initiatives, including:

Promoting the KSA film industry at events across KSA, as well as film markets and festivals worldwide



Creating valuable networking and collaboration opportunities



Providing workforce training opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge



Acquiring and preserving historical artefacts for film productions



Attracting inward production and investment through administrating the national KSA Incentive Program



Developing film-friendly regulatory frameworks and legislation, including overseeing film licensing



Supporting the growth and sustainability of the exhibition and distribution sector



These initiatives have resulted in several key successes since the SFC was established in 2020, including:

Supporting **49** projects through the SFC's Cash Rebate or Daw' Program, generating an estimated SAR **1.16 billion** in total production expenditure in KSA – including attracting major international projects, such as *Kandahar* (2023) and *Desert Warrior* (forthcoming) to film in KSA.



Providing valuable training and insights through **17 workshops** and **14 panels** at the 2023 Saudi Film Confex, as well as the 2023 Film Criticism Conference across five cities in KSA.



Introducing KSA films to more than **1,600** people in **Morocco** and **Australia** through the Saudi Film Nights programme.



Attracting **60,000** film industry professionals from **19** countries to the inaugural Saudi Film Confex in 2023 to connect and conduct business with the KSA film industry.



Successfully reducing licensing fees to boost growth and audience engagement.



Preserving and cataloguing more than **68,000** historical items, including **50,000** photo negatives, **10,200** newspaper clippings, **3,681** photographs, **466** film reels, **98** scripts, and **3098** posters.



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Production Infrastructure & Filming Locations

**2.1. Sign up to the SFC's Infrastructure
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2.1. | Sign up to the SFC's Infrastructure Database

Saudi Arabia's film production infrastructure has rapidly expanded, with advanced post-production facilities and cutting-edge studios meeting international standards.

The Kingdom offers diverse filming locations, from historic landmarks to modern urban settings, positioning it as a growing hub for global film projects.

How the SFC is supporting

The SFC is prioritising studio investment and development as a key objective. Priority interventions in this area include:

- Working to establish public-private sector co-investment

- Deepening the level of insight and knowledge regarding the current capacity, occupancy and quality of production infrastructure in KSA

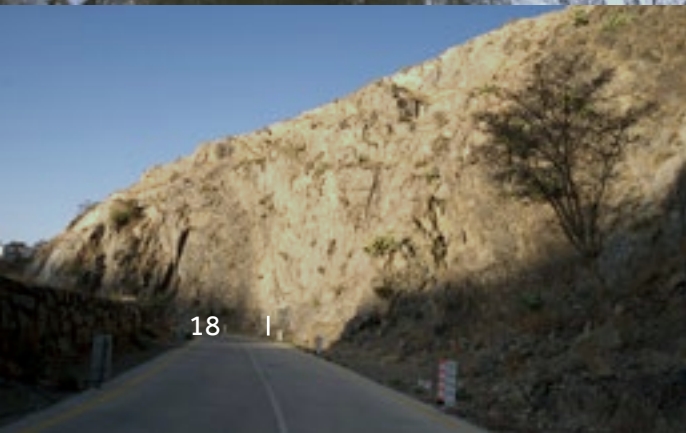
- Establishing agreements and cooperation across government entities to develop production infrastructure.

Join KSA's Production Network!

Figure 2 – Examples of Filming Locations in KSA



The Saudi Film Commission (SFC) is also developing a public database of production resources, including studios, service providers, vendors, and filming locations across the country. Gain visibility within the local and international film industry, connecting you with production teams seeking resources in the Kingdom. Join the network by contacting our infrastructure team at (SID@moc.gov.sa)



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KSA National Incentive Program

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Notes:

| All 2024 analysis in this chapter includes projects contracted as of the 30th September. It does not include projects contracted after this date

3.1. | Introduction

The SFC's KSA Incentive Program – which includes the Cash Rebate and the Daw' Program – has successfully attracted and supported significant international and domestic projects. KSA has benefited from over SAR 1 billion in production expenditure from projects accessing the KSA Incentive Program, as well as the creation of productions that showcase the wealth of KSA stories, facilities, talent, and locations.

Facts in Focus

Between 2020 and 2024 (up to September 30th), 49 projects have been supported by the KSA Incentive Program

2024 is set to have a record number of projects supported by the KSA Incentive Program – already surpassing the total in 2023

Between 2020 and September 30th 2024, the KSA Incentive Program is estimated to have generated SAR 1.16 billion (USD 310.26 million) in total production spend in KSA

The Cash Rebate has attracted productions and talent from a range of jurisdictions, including the US, the UK, and India

International productions accounted for the majority (61%) of the KSA expenditure generated through the Cash Rebate incentive

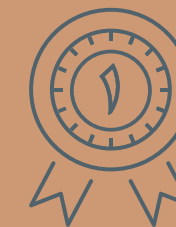
Most Incentivised productions occur in the Riyadh, Makkah and/ or the Eastern KSA regions.

How the SFC is supporting

The KSA Incentive Program has been instrumental in attracting international productions to KSA, as well as helping domestic producers to create and scale their projects. The KSA National Incentive Program offered by SFC consists of two tracks:



The KSA Cash Rebate was officially launched in 2023, following a three-year pilot. Targeted at both international and domestic productions, it focuses on growing the screen production sector, creating job opportunities for Saudis, and contributing to economic development, aligning with *Vision 2030*'s goals of cultural exchange and economic diversification.



The Daw' Program was launched in 2023. Targeted at domestic production, it focuses on the cultural and creative growth of KSA's film production sector.

3.2. | The Value of Incentivised Production



Total number of incentivised productions produced in KSA

Between 2020 and 2024 (until September 30th), 49 projects have been supported by the KSA Incentive Program – 31 through the Cash Rebate and 18 through the Daw’ Program (Figure 3). The majority of the Cash Rebate projects (15 projects) accessed the incentive in 2023, following a three-year pilot period (which supported 11 projects). Two domestic projects were supported by the Daw’ Program in its inaugural year in 2023, which increased to 16 projects in 2024 (as of September 30th).

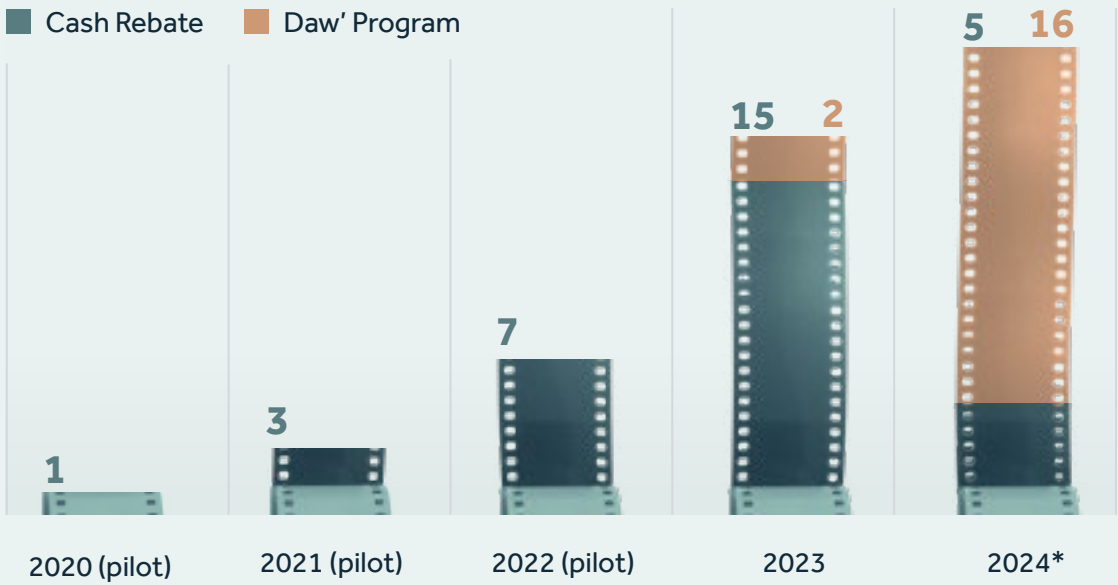
The number of projects already supported by the KSA Incentive Program in 2024 has already surpassed 2023, with five projects accessing the Cash Rebate, and 16 projects accessing the Daw’ Program.

Total number of international and domestic Cash Rebate productions

Between 2020 and and September 30th 2024, domestic productions made up the large majority of the number of projects accessing the Cash Rebate, accounting for 25 (80%) of the 31 projects (Figure 4).

The Cash Rebate is attracting productions from a range of jurisdictions, including US productions *Desert Warrior* (Rupert Wyatt, forthcoming), featuring Sir Ben Kingsley, and *Kandahar* (Ric Roman Waugh, 2023), with Gerald Butler, as well as a currently untitled project by UK director, Guy Ritchie. Indian film *Dunki* (Rajkumar Hirani, 2023) has also utilised the incentive. The domestic KSA production, *The Cello* (2023) was directed by US filmmaker Darren Lynn Bousman and stars Jeremy Irons.

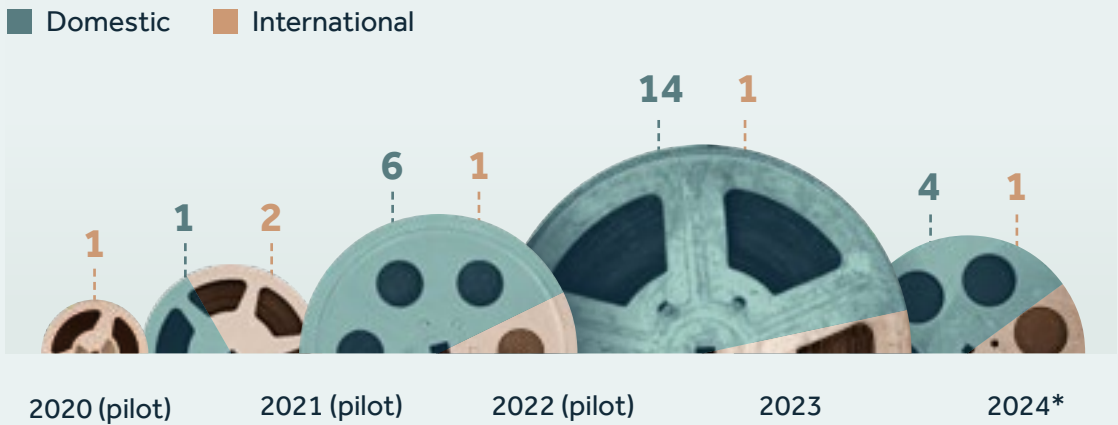
Figure 3, Table1 – Total Number of Productions in KSA Accessing the Cash Rebate or Daw’ Program, 2020-2024 (until September 30th)



	2020 (pilot)	2021 (pilot)	2022 (pilot)	2023	2024*
Daw’ Program	-	-	-	2	16
Cash Rebate	1	3	7	15	5

I Source: SFC (2024)

Figure 4, Table 2 – Total Number of International and Domestic Productions Accessing the Cash Rebate, 2020-2024 (until September 30th)



	2020 (pilot)	2021 (pilot)	2022 (pilot)	2023	2024*
International	1	2	1	1	1
Domestic	-	1	6	14	4

I Source: SFC (2024)

*until September 30th

Total production spend in KSA through the KSA Incentive Program

Between 2020 and 2024, the KSA Incentive Program is estimated to have generated SAR 1.16 billion (USD 310.26 million) in total production spend in KSA. The Cash Rebate accounts for the vast majority (90%) of this amount, generating an estimated total of SAR 1.05 billion (USD 281.72 million), compared to SAR 107.04 million (USD 28.54 million) via the Daw' Program.

As of September 30th 2024, 2021 generated the most KSA production expenditure via the Cash Rebate, generating SAR 479.03 million (USD 127.74 million) (Figure 5). This was chiefly due to a small number of very large productions in that year.

While most projects supported by the Cash Rebate were domestic productions (80%), international productions accounted for the majority (61%) of the overall spend in KSA, as they tend to be larger, higher-budget productions. The top three international productions account for more than half the expenditure attracted to KSA through the Cash Rebate.

The Daw' Program generated a significantly higher amount of production spend in KSA in 2024 compared with 2023, up to SAR 101.42 million (USD 27.05 million) from SAR 5.61 million (USD 1.50 million) in 2023 (Figure 6). This was chiefly due to an increase in the number of supported projects, but also in terms of the average spend per project,

Figure 5 – Total Production Spend in KSA Related to the Cash Rebate, 2020-2024 (until September 30th), SAR

2024 (until September 30th)

195.15 Mn

2023

271.74 Mn

2022 (pilot)

102.83 Mn

2021 (pilot)

479.03 Mn

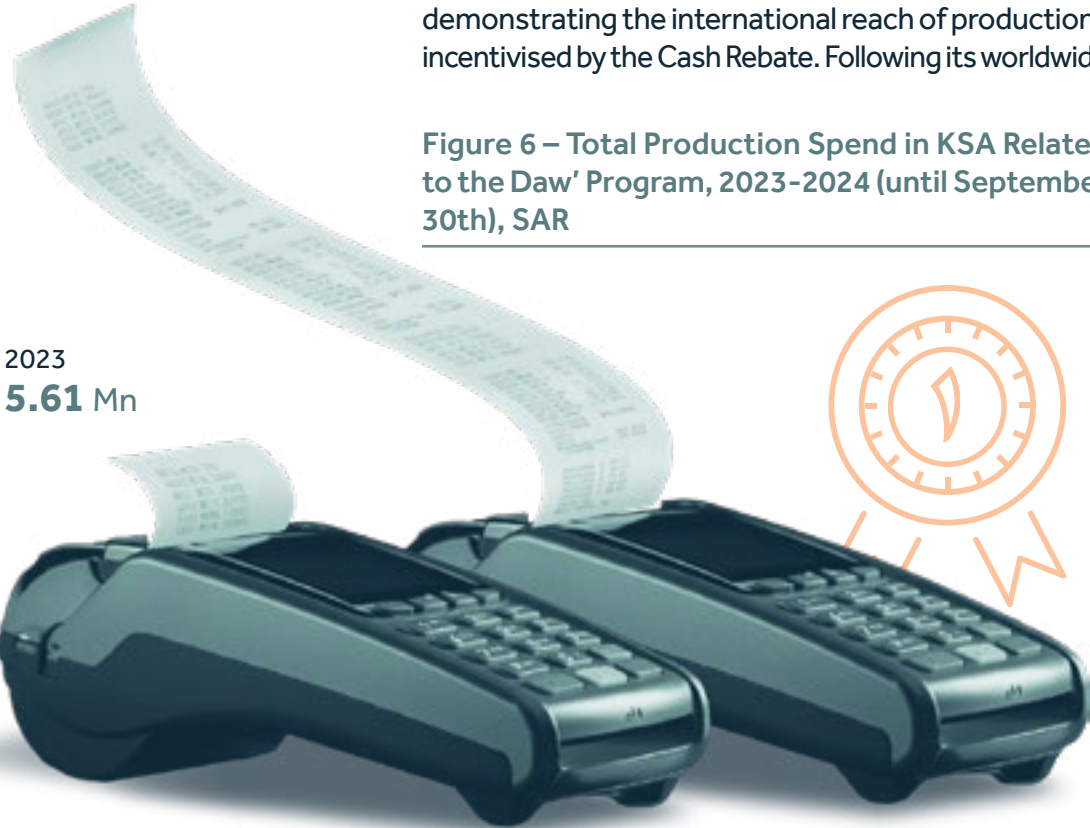
2020 (pilot)

7.70 Mn

| Source: SFC (2024)



2024 (until September 30th)
101.42 Mn



| Source: SFC (2024)

demonstrating the success of the programme in stimulating domestic activity.

Dunki (2023) was a global box office success, demonstrating the international reach of productions incentivised by the Cash Rebate. Following its worldwide

Figure 6 – Total Production Spend in KSA Related to the Daw' Program, 2023-2024 (until September 30th), SAR

Dunki (2023): An International Box Office Success Story, Bringing KSA to Global Audiences

Name of Production: *Dunki*

Production company: Jio Studios, Red Chillies Entertainment, Rajkumar Hirani Films

Country: India

Director: Rajkumar Hirani

Incentive: Cash Rebate

Plot summary: The film centres around four friends from a village in Punjab, India, who share a common dream of going to England, but have neither a visa nor a ticket. The story unfolds as a soldier promises to take them to England by any means necessary.



release in 2023, the film had a strong global distribution, with screenings in 32 countries and selling over half a million tickets. The film generated SAR 70 million in box office revenue globally. In KSA, the film generated SAR 3.40 million in box office revenues. The film was also reportedly India's eighth-biggest film of 2023 overall, in terms of global box office revenues.²

Dunki was also a streaming success. In the months following its release on Netflix, the film quickly attracted 11 million viewing hours.³ *Dunki* was in the Netflix Top 10 list in 16 countries for at least one week, including Pakistan (15 weeks), Bangladesh (13 weeks), India (seven weeks) and Oman (four weeks). The film's lead cast included some of Indian cinema's most celebrated names, including Shah Rukh Khan and Taapsee Pannu, instantly making it an attractive choice for viewers and contributing to its box-office success.

Dunki has performed well at festivals and awards. To date, the film has won four awards and received 24 nominations from Indian and international film festivals and awards. The film won awards for Best Supporting Actor at the Filmfare Awards and the Bollywood Film Journalist Awards, an award for Best Actress at the Bollywood Life Awards, and Best Lyrics

at the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival. The film also received key award nominations at the Filmfare Awards (Best Actor and Best Actress), Bollywood Life Awards (Best Director), and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor)⁴.

Dunki brought KSA's scenic locations to international audiences, boosting tourism interest across audiences. Following its release, key members of the cast praised the scenic beauty of these locations in interviews, noting, "The locations are beautiful, that's why we came here ... we hadn't seen these locations before." The cast praised the access to equipment and facilities, as well as the ease of filming.⁵ Soon after the film's release, the filming locations of Jeddah and NEOM were featured and promoted in Indian media as promising tourism destinations.

2 'Dunki': Shah Rukh Khan's Third Biggest Film Lands on Netflix. Collider, 15th February 2024.

3 Shah Rukh Khan's *Dunki* Clocks 11 Million Viewing Hours on OTT. Times of India, 29th February 2024.

4 IMDBPro (2024)

5 Shah Rukh Khan Lands At Red Sea Film Festival To Talk First KSA Shoot With 'Dunki' And Moving Into Action Movies With 'Pathaan'. Deadline, 1st December 2022.

Sattar (2022) is a successful domestic KSA production, with a strong local box office performance. Following its premiere at the Red Sea International Film Festival in 2022, *Sattar* went on to generate SAR 40.80 million in box office revenue in 2023, selling almost one million tickets. At the time of writing, *Sattar* is the highest-grossing KSA film in terms of KSA box office. The film was released on Netflix where it made the top 10 list in Bahrain (one week), Kuwait (two weeks) and KSA (five weeks).

As well as premiering at the Red Sea International Film Festival, *Sattar* was included in the programme for other film festivals, including the Saudi Film Festival and Rotterdam Arab Film Festival. The film went on to win the Best Actor award at the Joy Awards, where it also received a nomination for Best Feature.

The vast majority of the crew who worked on *Sattar* were Saudi nationals, including Ibraheem Alkhairallah, the film's writer and supporting actor⁶. The film provided valuable on-set experience to crew across all departments, which, in turn, helped to develop a talent pipeline for future domestic and/or international productions.

Sattar's success indicates the high commercial potential of Saudi-led stories. The film was praised for its authentic portrayal of Saudi culture, local characters, strong performances by the cast, and use of Saudi folk music⁷ – all of which contributed to its box office appeal. The film's tremendous

6 Source: SFC

7 Freestyle Wrestling Comedy 'Sattar' Sets Record At Saudi Arabia Box Office For Local Film, Kicks 'Avatar' From Top Slot. Deadline, 9th January 2023.

**Sattar (2022):
A National Box Office
Triumph of Saudi-led
Storytelling**

Name of Production: *Sattar*

Production company: Al- Shimaisi
Films, Muvi Studios, Telfaz11

Country: KSA

Director: Abdullah Al-Arak

Incentive: Cash Rebate

Plot summary: The film is the story of a man failing at both his professional and personal life, who decides to pursue his childhood dream of becoming a freestyle wrestler.



local market success shows the box office appetite of domestic audiences. For an emerging film production market, this helps inspire Saudi filmmakers wishing to take local stories to the rest of the MENA region and internationally.

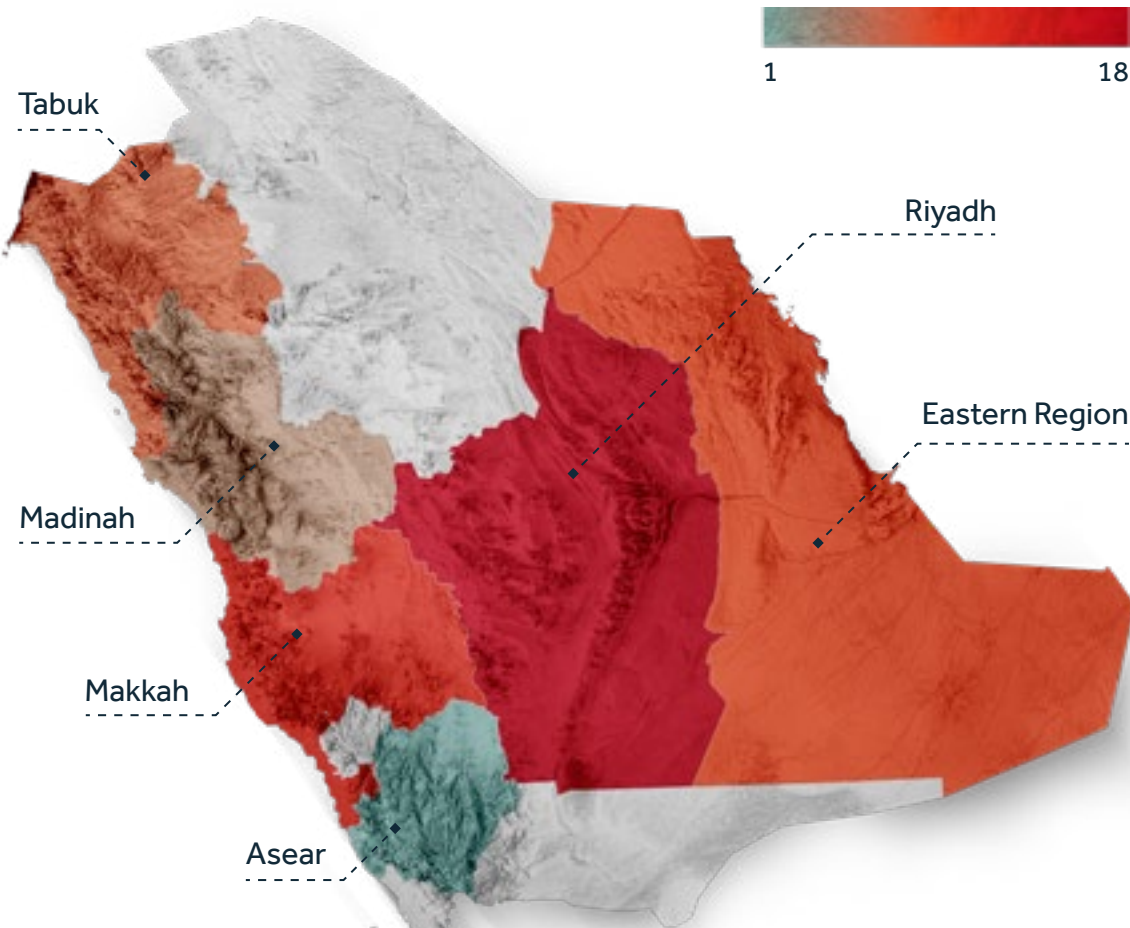
3.3. The Spread of Incentivised Production

Incentivised films shooting locations by KSA region

Projects supported by the KSA Incentive Program shot in locations across six of the 13 KSA regions (Figure 7). Most productions were shot in the Riyadh or Makkah regions (with 18 and 13 productions respectively), followed by the Eastern region (with nine productions).

Domestic productions supported by the Cash Rebate or Daw' Program typically shot in the Riyadh (18), Makkah (nine), and/or Eastern (nine) regions. In contrast, international productions supported by the Cash Rebate typically shot in the regions of Makkah (four), Tabouk (two) and/or Madinah (two) – likely attracted by the coastal locations in Jeddah, as well as the facilities and locations in NEOM and AIUla.

Figure 7, Table 3 – Incentivised Films’ Shooting Locations by KSA Region, 2020-2024 (until September 30th)



Source: SFC (2024)

KSA Region	Cash Rebate Projects	Daw' Program Projects	Total Projects
Riyadh	12	6	18
Makkah	6	7	13
Eastern	1	8	9
Tabouk	4	3	7
Madinah	3	1	4
Asear	0	1	1



04

Festivals & Awards

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4.1. | Introduction

The global reputation of the KSA film industry is growing as more KSA films are showcased through international festivals, the Saudi Film Nights events, and at the Kingdom's national film festivals. The markets, panels and training programmes attached to these festivals and events are also providing valuable opportunities for local filmmakers to develop their skills and foster new local, regional, and global partnerships.

Facts in Focus

A total of 29 films, including six from KSA, were screened as part of the 2024 Gulf Cinema Festival in Riyadh in April 2024. Over 1,300 people attended screenings at the festival, where Saudi film *Hajjan* won awards for Best Feature, Best Actor, Best Cinematography. *HWJN* won the Best Soundtrack award.

Approximately SAR 895,000 was awarded in prize money at the 2024 Saudi Film Festival in May 2024

Over 1,600 people attended the Saudi Film Nights events in Morocco and Australia, taking place in April 2024 and June 2024, respectively

How the SFC is supporting

Through its role supporting and organising film festivals and events, the SFC plays an integral role in fostering global partnerships and cultural exchange, including by:

Partnering with local or regional organisations, such as the Saudi Film Association and Gulf Cooperation Council, to organise annual film festivals in KSA

Supporting the development of the KSA film industry by running workshops, seminars and panels at local and international film festivals

Providing opportunities for KSA filmmakers to network and engage with members of the wider global film industry

Partnering with global production companies, such as Blacksands Pictures in Australia, to showcase KSA films to global audiences

4.2. | Film Festivals

There are currently two regular annual film festivals in KSA:

- Saudi Film Festival**
Launched 2008
originally titled the Saudi Film Competition
- Red Sea International Film Festival**
Launched 2021



In April 2024, the **Gulf Cinema Festival** took place in Riyadh. Organised in collaboration with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to support filmmakers and develop the film industries in the Gulf region, the festival rotates each year across the GCC countries.

Saudi Film Festival

The Saudi Film Festival is an annual film festival spotlighting Saudi films, filmmakers, and talent. Organised by the Saudi Cinema Association, in collaboration with the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) and supported by the SFC, the festival brings together filmmakers, producers, talent, and other industry stakeholders to engage, collaborate, and network during the event.

The 2024 edition was held between 2nd – 9th May in Dhahran City in KSA's Eastern region. It included screenings of 77 films, as well as masterclasses, panel discussions, book signings, a production market, and awards. Notably, the 2024 edition of the SFF also included a virtual production experience, demonstrating the festival's engagement with new and emerging forms of audiovisual content production. The 2024 Saudi Film Festival received more than 32,000 visitors in total.

Noting the Saudi Film Festival's reputation for supporting local and regional filmmaking talent, Mansour Al-Badran, the Vice President of the festival and cinema coordinator, said,

“The Saudi Film Festival has garnered a reputation for championing Saudi cinematic talent. While primarily focused on local filmmakers, the festival has also previously spotlighted rising talents from the wider GCC region.”⁸

As part of the festival, an awards ceremony was held across four different competition streams: the Long Feature Film Competition, the Short Film Competition, Documentary Film Competition, and the Unproduced Screenplay Competition. Separately, a production market also took place. A total of 36 awards were distributed, awarding financial prizes between SAR 15,000 and SAR 50,000 across the four

competition streams and the production market (Table 4).

Table 4 – Summary of Awards at the Saudi Film Festival, 2024

Competition Stream	No. of Awards	Total Financial Awards Given	Highest Award	Recipient(s)
Long Feature Film	9	SAR 275,000	Best Film (SAR 50,000)	<i>Within Sands</i> (2022)
Short Film	9	SAR 290,000	Best Film (SAR 50,000)	<i>Saleh's Story</i> (2024)
Documentary Film	6	SAR 200,000	Best Film (SAR 50,000)	<i>Donkey Race</i> (2024)
Unproduced Screenplay	6	SAR 130,000	Best Short Screenplay (SAR 25,000);	<i>Janna's Funeral</i>
			Best Long Screenplay (SAR 25,000);	<i>Teeh AlSa'aleek</i>
			Best Screenplay based on Saudi novel (SAR 25,000)	<i>Alhalah Alharejah</i> <i>Lelmadau K</i>

Red Sea International Film Festival

Launched in 2021, the Red Sea International Film Festival is one of the preeminent international film markets and festivals in the region. The last edition of the festival was held between 30th November and 8th December 2023, and attended by 40,000 visitors.

More than 130 KSA and international films screened over the 10-day Red Sea International Film Festival in 2023. Thirty-four Saudi films or co-productions were screened as part of the festival, including *HWJN* (2023), *Hajjan* (2023),

Mandoob (2023), *Norah* (2023), *Four Daughters* (2023) and *To My Son* (2023). This was a 40% increase on the number of KSA films screened at the festival in 2022, demonstrating the expansion of the KSA film industry⁹.

The 2024 edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival is scheduled to take place between 5th and 14th December 2024 in Jeddah.

8 Ithra Hosts Celebration of 10th Edition of Saudi Film Festival. Screen Daily, 3rd May 2024.

9 Report on the State of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2023. Ministry of Culture, 2023.

Gulf Cinema Festival

The Gulf Cinema Festival is a rotating annual festival that gathers dignitaries, cultural and media figures, filmmakers and the general public from the six GCC countries for a series of screenings, panels, training programmes, and awards.

Organised by the SFC, in collaboration with the GCC, the fourth edition of the Gulf Cinema Festival was held in Riyadh from 14th – 18th April 2024. The festival programme included screenings of 29 films from the GCC countries of Bahrain, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE, as well as three training programmes and six industry seminars for attendees.

At the opening of the festival, SFC CEO Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Qahtani said,

“This festival, which brings us together today, reflects the strong connection between ambition and the cultural strategy of the GCC countries, which play a significant role in enhancing cultural exchange, expanding infrastructure, drawing inspiration from successful experiences, and encouraging Gulf talents to offer more.”

A total of 29 feature films, short films and documentaries were screened at the Gulf Cinema Festival in 2024, including *Hajjan*, the Saudi coming-of-age feature



film, *Swim62*, a documentary from UAE filmmaker Mansour Al Dhaheri, and *Clouds*, a short film from Oman. The films were screened over three days and a total of 1,308 people attended the GCF screenings.

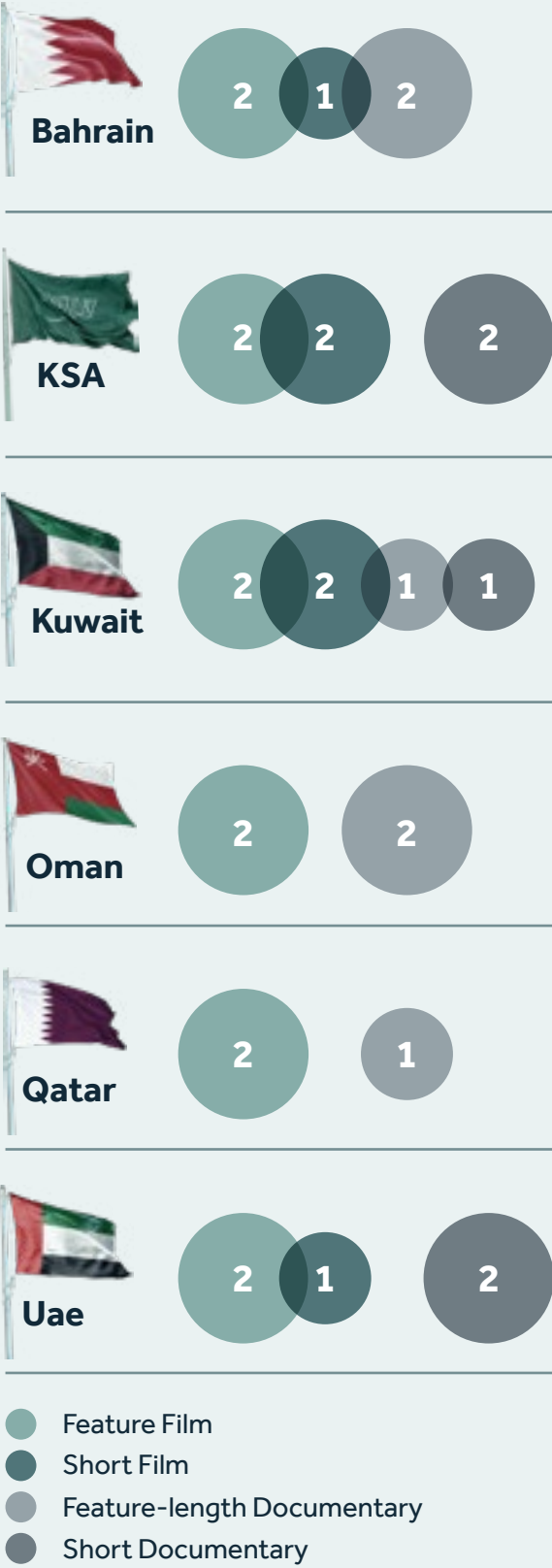
There was a relatively equal distribution of films across the six GCC countries at the Gulf Cinema Festival (Figure 8). Six films were included from KSA and Kuwait, with five Bahraini and Emirati films included in the festival programme. A smaller number of short films from Oman (four films) and Qatar (three films) were included in the festival programme.

An awards ceremony was held at the conclusion of the festival, presenting awards to films in the festival's programme across nine categories. The winners were nominated by a jury headed by

Ibrahim Al-Hasawi from KSA, who was joined by Bassam Al-Thawadi from Bahrain, Rawda Al-Thani from Qatar, Khaled Amin from Kuwait, Nujoom Al-Ghanem from the UAE, and Ibrahim Al-Zadjali from Oman.

Six of the 29 festival films received GCF awards across nine categories. *Hajjan* won three awards, including Best Feature, Cinematography, and Actor. Kuwaiti filmmaker Ziad Al-Hussein won two awards for Best Director and Screenplay for his film *Shiabni Hani*. Khaled Al-Kammar won the Best Soundtrack award for the Saudi film *HWJN*.

Figure 8 – Gulf Cinema Festival Programme, by Country of Origin and Type, 2024





4.3. | Events

Saudi Film Nights

Saudi Film Nights is a showcase event series for Saudi feature films and short films launched by the SFC. The second edition of Saudi Film Nights was announced in April 2024, highlighting Morocco, Australia, China, India and Mexico as the international settings for the travelling event. The Saudi Film Nights events in Morocco and Australia took place in April and June, respectively.

SFN includes screenings of a range of Saudi feature-length and short films, alongside Q&A sessions with directors or cast from the showcased films. The showcase aims to platform Saudi films and filmmakers, helping them to reach a wider global audience. More than 1,600 people attended the Moroccan and Australian events in 2024.

The event reflects the SFC's dedication to fostering global partnerships and leveraging cultural exchange and establishing strong relationships in global cinema for the exchange of expertise and knowledge.

Morocco

Saudi Film Nights – Morocco ran from 23rd April – 26th April 2024, with screenings held in Casablanca and Rabat. The event opened to a wide audience in Morocco, garnering over 945 general attendees, and 93 media attendees.

A total of five films were screened across both locations. Feature films *Hajjan* (2023), and *Al Hamour HA* (2023), and short films, *Me and Aydarous* (2022), *VHS Tape Replaced* (2023), and *Old Phone Number* (2022) were screened for audiences in Casablanca and Rabat. Notably, *Hajjan* (2023) was supported by the KSA cash rebate offered by the SFC.

Filmmakers of screened films noted their appreciation for the SFN in developing wider exposure of Saudi films and fostering connections between Saudi filmmakers and the wider international community. In Morocco Saudi Film Nights, Sara Balghonaim, the writer and director of *Me and Aydarous*, stated,

“It is a great opportunity to be part of a festival and share my film with Moroccan audiences for the first time in Africa and the Arab world.”¹⁰

Australia

Saudi Film Nights – Australia was held from 26th – 28th June 2024, with screenings in Sydney and Melbourne. Australian production company Blacksand Pictures partnered with the SFC to host the events at the Sydney Opera House and Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, and encourage collaboration between the Australian and Saudi film industries.

Four films were screened in Australia. In Sydney, audiences watched *Hajjan* (2023) and *Me and Aydarous* (2022), while in Melbourne *Al Hamour H.A.* (2023), and the short film, *Saleeq* (2023) were screened for audiences. Q&A sessions were held at both events, featuring visiting Saudi film representatives. Across both cities, Saudi Film Nights – Australia was attended by 674 general attendees and 30 media attendees.

Highlighting the significance of Saudi Film Nights in platforming Saudi films and creating networks with the Australian community, Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Qahtani, CEO of the SFC noted,

“We are also fostering collaboration between international film communities, including the Australian film industry, to exchange expertise and knowledge.”¹¹

¹⁰ Saudi Film Nights Kicks Off in Morocco, Puts Saudi Arabian Cinema in Spotlight. Morocco World News, 24th April 2024.

¹¹ Saudi Film Commission Launches 'Saudi Film Nights' in Australia, with Screenings in Sydney and Melbourne. Saudi Press Agency, 6th June 2024.

05



Theatrical Market

5.1. Introduction
pg 44

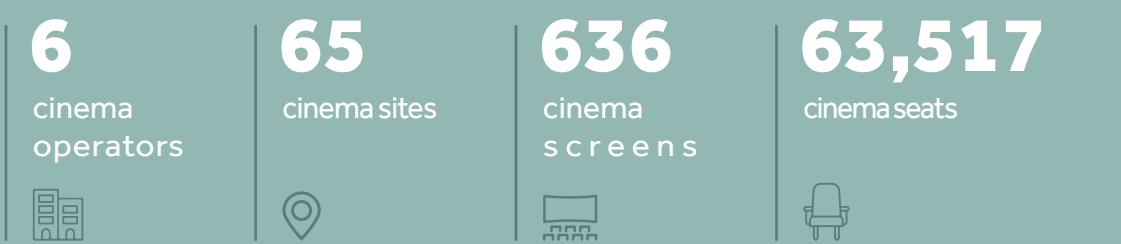
5.2. Cinema Infrastructure
pg 45

5.1. | Introduction

Since the first KSA cinema opened in 2018, there has been a notable expansion in the theatrical infrastructure across KSA. This has been critical in attracting and entertaining a new generation of Saudi cinemagoers.

Facts in Focus

KSA Currently has:



How the SFC is Supporting

Supporting the growth and sustainability of the exhibition and distribution sector

Promoting transparency through the publication of regular box office reports

5.2. | Cinema Infrastructure

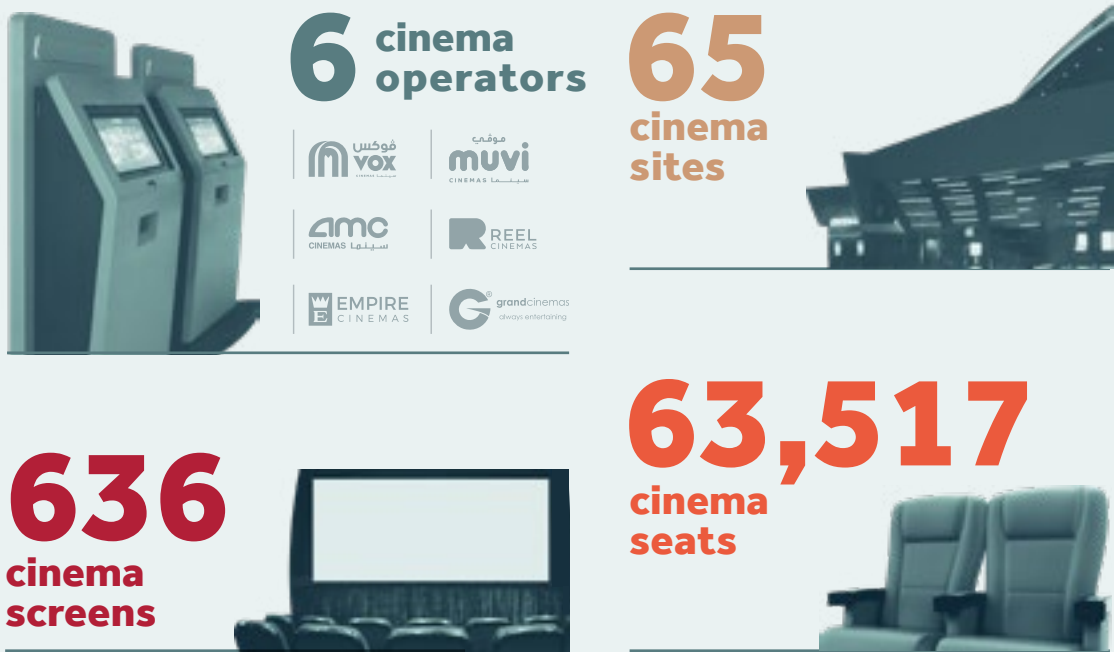
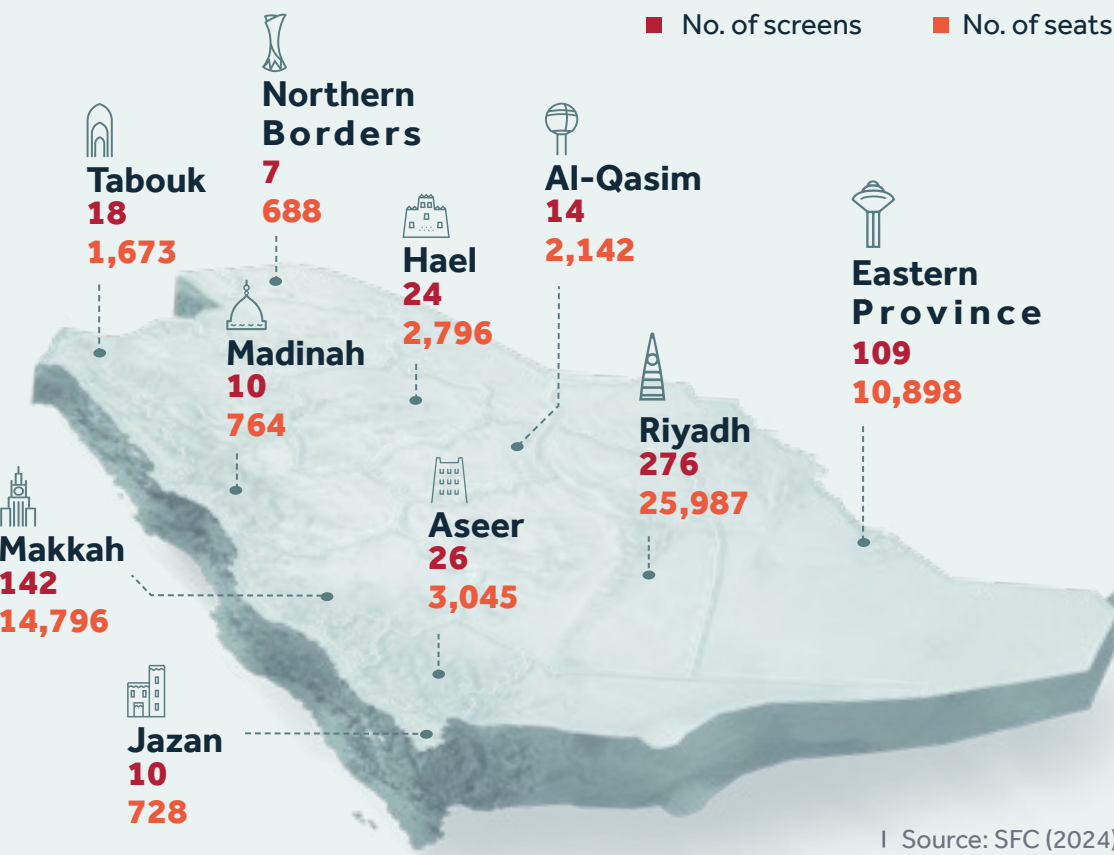


Figure 9 - Total Cinema Screens & Cinema Seats by KSA Region, 2024 (until September 30th)



| Source: SFC (2024)

Currently, the Riyadh region has the highest number of cinema screens in KSA, with 276 screens in operation (Figure 9, Table 5). This is followed by the Makkah (142 screens) and Eastern (109 screens) regions.

KSA currently has 63,517 cinema seats (Figure 9, Table 5). The Riyadh region has the most seats (25,987 seats), followed by the Makkah (14,796 seats) and Eastern (10,898 seats) regions.

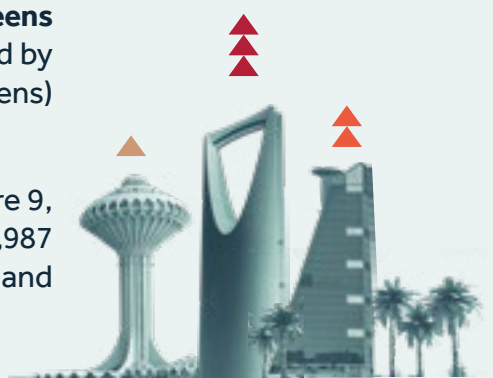


Table 5 – Total Cinema Screens & Cinema Seats by KSA Region, 2024 (until September 30th)

KSA Region	No. of Cinema Screens	No. of Cinema Seats
Riyadh	276	25,987
Makkah	142	14,796
Eastern	109	10,898
Aseer	26	3,045
Hael	24	2,796
Tabouk	18	1,673
Al-Qassim	14	2,142
Madinah	10	764
Jazan	10	728
Northern Borders	7	688

I Source: SFC (2024)

Currently, the highest number of cinema screens and cinema seats in KSA are in the city of Riyadh, with 268 screens in operation and 24,926 cinema seats (Table 6). This is followed by Jeddah, which has 121 screens and 12,805 cinema seats.

Table 6 – Total Cinema Screens and Seats by KSA City, 2024 (until September 30th)

KSA City	No. of Cinema Screens	No. of Cinema Seats
Riyadh	268	24,926
Jeddah	121	12,805
Khobar	27	2,057
Hassa	26	2,936
Hail	24	2,796
Taif	21	1,991
Tabuk	18	1,673
Dhahran	18	2,368

KSA City	No. of Cinema Screens	No. of Cinema Seats
Abha	17	1,690
Dammam	13	1,575
Jubail	10	810
Jazan	10	728
Madina	10	764
Khamis Mushait	9	1,355
Hafir Al Batin	8	790
Onizah	8	1,311
Arar	7	688
Hafouf	7	362
Buraidah	6	831
Majma'ah	5	751
Dawadmi	3	310

I Source: SFC (2024)

Currently, MUVI is the cinema operator with the highest number of cinema screens operational in KSA, with 205 cinema screens (Table 7). This is followed by VOX with 184 cinema screens, and Empire with 117 cinema screens.

MUVI has the highest number of cinema seats, with 24,790 cinema seats in total (Table 7). This is followed by VOX with 15,681 cinema seats, and Empire with 9,834 cinema seats.

Table 7 – Total Cinema Screens and Seats by KSA City, 2024 (until September 30th)

Cinema Operator	No. of Cinema Screens	No. of Cinema Seats
MUVI	205	24,790
VOX	184	15,681
Empire	117	9,834
AMC	84	8,189
Grand Cinema	32	3,757
Reel Cinema	14	1,266

I Source: SFC (2024)



Participate in our cinema survey [here!](#) or by scanning this QR code



06



Saudi Film Confex 2024

Thousands of leading film professionals and companies from around the globe attended the second edition of the SFC's Saudi Film Confex in Riyadh.

The diverse programme of workshops, lectures and panel sessions was opened by KSA Minister of Culture, **HH Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud**. Speakers included **HRH Prince Turki AlFaisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, discussing cultural diplomacy through cinema and film, and actor **Will Smith** discussing his career and perspective on the future of cinema.

Topics discussed as part of the conference programme included the impact of AI on filmmaking, the relationship between film and tourism, the importance of sustainability and film archives in the industry, and opportunities for producing films in KSA.

Watch the Saudi Film Confex 2024 live stream recording [here](#).

Get in touch with the Saudi Film Confex [here](#).

Saudi Film Confex 2024 Key Facts and Figures:



Speakers included:

HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Chairman of King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies	Abdullah Al-Qahtani CEO of SFC	Majed Al-Hoqail CEO of Cultural Development Fund	Will Smith Actor
James Gianopulos Former CEO of Paramount Pictures	Helen Hoehne President of Golden Globes	Zeinab Abu Alsamh General Manager of MBC Studios KSA	



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