

Session Title:

“From Mecca to Metropolis: Creating Superheroes for and from the Islamic World.”

Session Description:

With over half a billion people under 35 years old and an emerging middle class, the Islamic World represents a huge potential market for popular culture and entertainment. But despite the booming economies in several countries within the Islamic rubric, creators and entrepreneurs struggle with unsophisticated distribution and retail channels, government censorship, cultural barriers and a lack of skilled labor. All these impediments negatively affect literacy as access to homegrown concepts become restricted unless they are diluted down to tedious boredom. Foreign languages inevitably trump local languages as concepts that may concept childrens' imagination become restricted.

Naif Al-Mutawa has founded a company that manages to transcend these obstacles and take advantage of these emerging markets. Come listen to Naif's entrepreneurial journey raising funds from over 50 investors on four continents for the support of his own superhero creation “The 99”, the first group of superheroes based on an Islamic archetype. Featured in Newsweek, Time Magazine, Le Monde, The New York Times, The Guardian, La Republica and the front page of The Wall Street Journal, “The 99” has received unprecedented coverage for a fledgling media property from Tripoli to Tokyo and from Saudi Arabia to Sweden. Last month, Forbes named THE 99 as one of the top trends sweeping the world.

Come hear the story behind the story and find out how to leverage the regions untapped cultural legacies into concepts that promote literacy by appealing to children.