

Equity Note

Aditya Pugalia
Director, Financial Markets Research
+971 4 609 3027
adityap@emiratesnbd.com

Khatija Haque Head of MENA Research +971 4 230 7803 khatijah@emiratesnbd.com

www.emiratesnbdresearch.com

Saudi Arabia – An important milestone

MSCI confirmed that it will be including Saudi Arabia in the MSCI Emerging Markets index. The index provider said that the decision follows the implementation of a number of regulatory and operational enhancements which effectively increased the access to international institutional investors.

The fine print

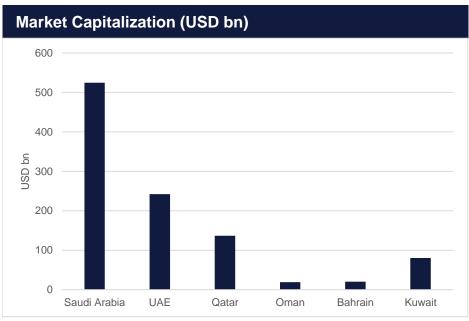
Saudi Arabian equities, on a pro forma basis, will have an approximate weight of 2.6% in the MSCI EM index with 32 securities. It will be a two-step inclusion process with the first one coinciding with the May 2019 semi-annual index review and the second one as part of the August 2019 quarterly index review.

The stocks and details of companies which will be included in the index are attached at the end of this document.

Importance

Size

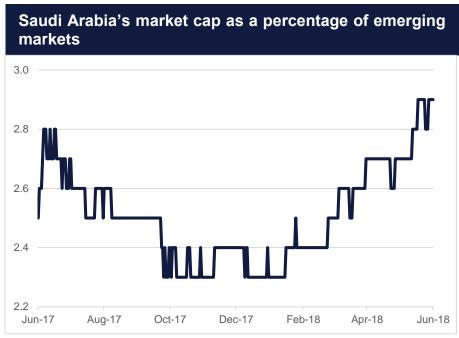
Saudi Arabia, with a market capitalization of USD 524bn, is by far the largest equity market in the GCC. In fact, the market capitalization is bigger than the combined market cap of all other GCC equity markets.



Source: Bloomberg, Emirates NBD Research

However, when compared to other large emerging markets i.e., India and China, the market capitalization is relatively small. For reference, the market cap of Indian and Chinese equity markets stands at USD 2,185bn and USD 6,741bn respectively.





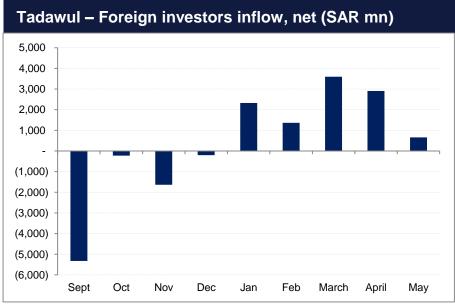
Source: Bloomberg, Emirates NBD Research

Ownership

The Tadawul is dominated by retail investors. Institutional investors own more than 87% of the total market but account for only c.30% of total trading volumes. The foreign ownership is low at 5% and when adjusted for strategic ownership, the ratio falls further to mere 2%. This is lower than foreign ownership in other GCC equity markets which are part of MSCI EM index i.e., UAE and Qatar. According to market estimates, the foreign ownership could increase to c. 8% over the medium term.

Flows

In anticipation of this decision, the stock market has seen sustained inflows from foreign investors in 2018. The total year to date inflows from foreign institutional investors stands at USD 3.4bn. This translates into roughly 8% of total inflows seen into broad emerging market equity funds so far into 2018.



Source: Tadawul, Emirates NBD Research



The inclusion of Saudi equities into the MSCI EM index could trigger passive inflows of c. USD 10bn. To put that into context, the average daily value traded on the Tadawul in 2018 in first five months of 2018 is USD 1.1bn. It is also worth highlighting that as of June 2017, nearly USD 1.7 trillion of assets / funds tracked the MSCI EM index. This included USD 1.3 trillion of active funds and USD 0.4 trillion of passive funds

Performance & Valuations

The Tadawul is the best performing market within the GCC universe with ytd returns of +13.0%. This is relative to +8.0% ytd gain in the S&P Pan Arab Composite index and -5.6% ytd decline in the MSCI EM index.



Source: Bloomberg, Emirates NBD Research

The market is currently trading at 15x 2018E earnings and 13.5x 2019E earnings. This implies a 12% (2018) discount to 5 year average PE multiple of 17x. However, it is trading at a premium to the broader MSCI EM index which is trading at a 2018E PE multiple of 11.8x and 2019E PE multiple of 10.8x. The trailing dividend yield for the Tadawul is 3.7% compared to 2.9% for the MSCI EM index.

From a historical perspective, the UAE and Qatar were trading at 14.2x and 11.4x PE multiples when they were included in the MSCI EM index. The broader EM index at the time was trading at 10.3x PE multiple. It is also worth highlighting that UAE and Qatar equity markets rallied +68% and +48% in the interim period of decision and implementation.

The macro picture

The inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the MSCI EM index marks the culmination of a series of measures over the last few years to open up financial markets for foreign investors. The desire to attract inward investment intensified after the sharp decline in oil prices from 2014 – 2017, which focused greater attention on the need to diversify the Kingdom's economy away from oil, and boost non-oil sector growth. Opening up financial markets for foreign portfolio investment is part of a broader plan to attract funding for economic diversification efforts. Other steps include the creation of the Public Investment Fund and a program to privatise some state-owned enterprises across several sectors of the economy.



We expect Saudi Arabia's economy to return to growth, albeit modest, this year following a recession in 2017. The -0.7% decline in GDP last year was entirely due to the cuts in oil production following the November 2016 OPEC agreement; Saudi Arabia had reduced output by more than required under the agreement which weighed on headline growth. The non-oil sector expanded by 1.0% last year, according to preliminary estimates. We expect both oil and non-oil sector growth to rebound this year, by 0.5% and 2.3% respectively. While households have been faced with higher taxes and cuts to energy and utilities subsidies, the government has provided a cash stipend to the lowest income households, as well as reinstated public sector bonuses to help mitigate some of the impact of the higher living costs on consumers. Overall, central government spending is expected to rise by around 13% this year.

The big picture

The benefits of increased inflows from foreign institutional investors is obvious. However, the intangible benefits of attracting newer set of sophisticated investors should result in improved standards of financial disclosures and corporate governance. It is also possible that there will be a positive impact of Saudi Arabia's inclusion on the broader region given the increased weightage of the overall region in the broader EM index.



MSCI Saudi Arabia index - Constituents

Name	Price (SAR)	Market Cap (SAR mn)	Price Change (ytd, %)	BEst P/E (BF 12m)	BEst P/B (BF 12m)	BEst Div Yield (BF 12m)
Advanced Petrochemicals Co	52.20	10,273	14.43	13.99	3.07	5.62
Al Rajhi Bank	85.20	138,450	32.84	13.21	2.55	5.34
Al Tayyar Travel Group	26.40	5,535	-2.40	10.05	0.85	5.42
Alinma Bank	21.28	31,920	11.85	13.50	1.46	4.19
Almarai Co	58.80	58,800	10.31	25.16	3.73	1.46
Arab National Bank	32.00	32,000	32.00	9.49	1.26	4.18
Bank Albilad	23.58	14,148	16.51	12.92		3.48
Banque Saudi Fransi	32.20	38,812	17.06	9.62	1.15	4.54
Bupa Arabia For Cooperative	89.90	7,192	-3.49	12.60	2.50	3.72
Co For Cooperative Insurance	72.00	9,000	-24.03	18.15	3.35	2.59
Dar Al Arkan Real Estate Dev	11.36	12,269	-24.97	31.13	0.64	
Emaar Economic City	12.10	10,285	-11.24			
Etihad Etisalat Co	18.90	14,553	26.84		1.07	
Jarir Marketing Co	176.00	15,840	19.89	16.71	8.78	5.17
National Commercial Bank	47.80	143,400	34.79	12.37	2.40	3.32
National Industrialization C	21.16	14,154	33.54	11.07	1.42	
Rabigh Refining And Petroche	28.20	24,703	73.33	13.23	1.99	0.87
Riyad Bank	15.64	46,920	25.30	10.78	1.21	5.02
Samba Financial Group	30.60	61,200	31.27	11.09	1.40	5.48
Saudi Airlines Catering Co	89.20	7,314	12.49	14.52	5.44	6.12
Saudi Arabian Fertilizer Co	60.00	25,000	-6.25	18.45	3.47	4.64
Saudi Arabian Mining Co	56.40	65,902	8.90	38.21	2.31	0.02
Saudi Basic Industries Corp	125.80	377,400	22.49	16.48	2.11	3.92
Saudi British Bank	29.85	44,775	10.00	9.92	1.26	4.99
Saudi Cement	50.20	7,681	8.16	16.68	2.65	6.16
Saudi Electricity Co	21.74	90,582	3.62	20.69	1.17	3.29
Saudi Ind Investment Group	28.00	12,600	47.76	10.93	1.62	3.86
Saudi Kayan Petrochemical Co	14.48	21,720	34.13	14.47	1.34	
Saudi Telecom Co	86.40	172,800	26.46	16.53	2.63	4.68
Savola	38.70	20,665	-0.91	24.59	2.22	2.75
Southern Province Cement Co	41.60	5,824	-14.43	15.81	1.77	5.39
Yanbu National Petrochemical	72.80	40,950	25.21	14.67	2.28	5.82

Source: MSCI, Bloomberg, Emirates NBD Research



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Emirates NBD Research& Treasury Contact List

Emirates NBD Head Office 12thFloor Baniyas Road, Deira P.OBox777 Dubai

Jonathan Morris

General Manager Wholesale Banking Jonathan M@emiratesnbd.com

Aazar Ali Khwaja

Senior Executive Vice President Global Markets & Treasury +971 4 609 3000 aazark@emiratersnbd.com Tim Fox

Head of Research & Chief Economist +9714 230 7800 timothyf@emiratesnbd.com

Research

Khatija Haque

Head of MENA Research +9714 230 7803 khatijah@emiratesnbd.com

Athanasios Tsetsonis

Sector Economist +9714 230 7629 athanasiost@emiratesnbd.com

Mohammed Altajir

FX Analytics and Product Development +9714 609 3005 mohammedtaj@emiratesnbd.com Anita Yadav

Head of Fixed Income Research +9714 230 7630 anitay@emiratesnbd.com

Edward Bell

Commodity Analyst +9714 230 7701 edwardpb@emiratesnbd.com

Hessa Al Khawaja

Research Associate +9714 609 3015 Hessaalkh@emiratesnbd.com Aditya Pugalia

Director, Financial Markets Research +9714 609 3027 adityap@emiratesnbd.com

Daniel Richards

MENA Economist +9714 609 3032 danielrich@emiratesnbd.com

Sales & Structuring

Group Head - Treasury Sales

Tariq Chaudhary +971 4 230 7777 tariqmc@emiratesnbd.com

London Sales

+44 (0) 20 7838 2241 vallancel@emiratesnbd.com

Saudi Arabia Sales

Numair Attiyah +966 11 282 5656 numaira@emiratesnbd.com

Egypt

Gary Boon +20 22 726 5040 garyboon@emiratesnbd.com Singapore Sales

Supriyakumar Sakhalkar +65 65785 627 supriyakumars@emiratesnbd.com

Emirates NBD Capital

Ahmed Al Qassim

CEO- Emirates NBD Capital AhmedAQ@emiratesnbd.com

Hitesh Asarpota

Head of Debt Capital Markets. +971 50 4529515 asarpotah@EmiratesNBD.com

Investor Relations

Patrick Clerkin +9714 230 7805

patricke@emiratesnbd.com

Group Corporate Affairs

Ibrahim Sowaidan

+9714 609 4113 ibrahims@emiratesnbd.com

Claire Andrea

+9714 609 4143

clairea@emiratesnbd.com