

SmartWoman Middle East

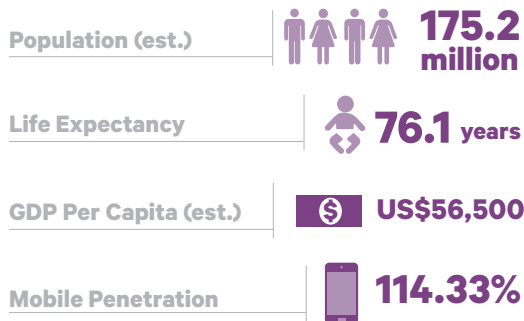
An online community for women entrepreneurs

SmartWoman Middle East is an app for an online community of women throughout the region that provides access to valuable expert information on a variety of business-related topics, including career development and entrepreneurship. The app helps women connect directly with each other and mentors to share experiences, build confidence, create jobs, develop their careers, expand their businesses and have economic impact in their communities. The app is multi-functional: part educational, part social networking and part community building – all provided in a female-focused environment.

Challenge

- In the Gulf region, there is a lack of local mobile apps created specifically for women. Of the apps that do exist, there are a limited number in Arabic and very few targeted to women that feature business or job creation information.¹
- There are few opportunities for women to gather, share experiences and do business with each other as the number of business associations for women is very small, and women are restricted from joining traditional business clubs.²
- Culturally, women in the region tend to be much more comfortable interacting with other women to discuss personal and professional matters.
- Businesswomen can be disempowered, as most of the decision makers and buyers of services and products in the region tend to be men.³

Middle East* 2016 Statistics**



Solution

- SmartWoman Middle East provides a comfortable environment for female entrepreneurs to talk to each other, as well as tools and resources for them to grow their businesses.
- The one-on-one shared experience communication environment is essential to a woman's professional advancement. The assurance that they are not alone in their experiences is comforting and helpful to women in a male-dominated business environment.
- The mobile app has privacy-supporting features including an 'ask an expert' function and a Question & Answer section, as well as a community-building capability, which is what users have requested.
- The next release will add a "crowdsourcing" feature so women can post personal experiences of being a female entrepreneur and share them with other users.
- Plans to expand the service with a feature enabling women to have more private discussions are underway.

*Based on an aggregate of the following countries: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

**Sources: CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>); mobile penetration data provided by Ovum World Cellular Information Service and based on market intelligence.

Impact

> 4,000

Over 4,000 Downloads in 8 Countries

This program launched in 2014, and as of 2016, SmartWoman Middle East has been downloaded a total of 4,040 times in 8 countries, including Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK and the USA.



1,600 Women Entrepreneurs

Of those 4,040 people who downloaded the app, approximately 1,600 who provided demographic data self-describe as entrepreneurs:

- 40% currently own a business; of these 78% have businesses that are less than 5 years old
- 30% want to start a business
- 75% of users report increased confidence to start a business
- 61% gained financial and/or business skills
- 37% gained self-empowerment and a sense of efficacy



Plans to Expand and Grow

Based on the success of the efforts to date, ChangeCorp plans to expand the one-on-one messaging capability for women and add crowd-sourcing functionality for entrepreneurs to share more information about their experiences.

Technology

- 3G- and 4G-enabled mobile devices.
- Localized, customized native app that can utilize the dynamic features of a smartphone, such as uploading photos.

Program Stakeholders



¹ Mobile Value Added Services: A Business Growth Opportunity for Women Entrepreneurs, Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, 2012, <http://www.cherieblairfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Mobile-Value-Added-Services-digital-report.pdf>

² Against all odds: Women entrepreneurs in the region, Middleeast-business.com, March 10, 2015, <http://middleeast-business.com/against-all-odds-women-entrepreneurs-in-the-region>

³ World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2016, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf

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