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About Marmore

Marmore MENA Intelligence is a fully-owned research subsidiary of Kuwait Financial Center 'Markaz'. Since 2006, Markaz Research has been at the forefront in disseminating thought-provoking, hard-data backed research reports. Marmore continues that legacy with a focused approach to providing actionable solutions for business leaders and policymakers.

Since its inception, Marmore has published over 700 research reports and covered more than 25 varied industries and infrastructure segments; all focused primarily on the GCC economies. (To view our Research Library, please [click here](#))

With over 30 policy and regulatory research studies published, Marmore has partnered with renowned regional think-tanks and opinion-leaders to publish some of these intellectually provoking policy research papers. These research studies aim to initiate dialogue and propose better solutions to existing economic conundrums. (To view our Policy & Regulatory research report, [click here](#))

Marmore provides research-based consulting solutions to help understand current market conditions, identify growth opportunities, assess supply/demand dynamics, and make informed business decisions.

Almost on a weekly basis, Marmore publishes thematic economic, industry, policy and capital market reports. Marmore has been recently conferred **"Research Provider of the Year - 2018"** award by Global Investor, a Euromoney Group company. To learn more, visit www.marmoremna.com

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

- Over **700** reports/insights published
- Over **63** Client projects executed
- Frequent media citations and conference participation
- Active social media presence



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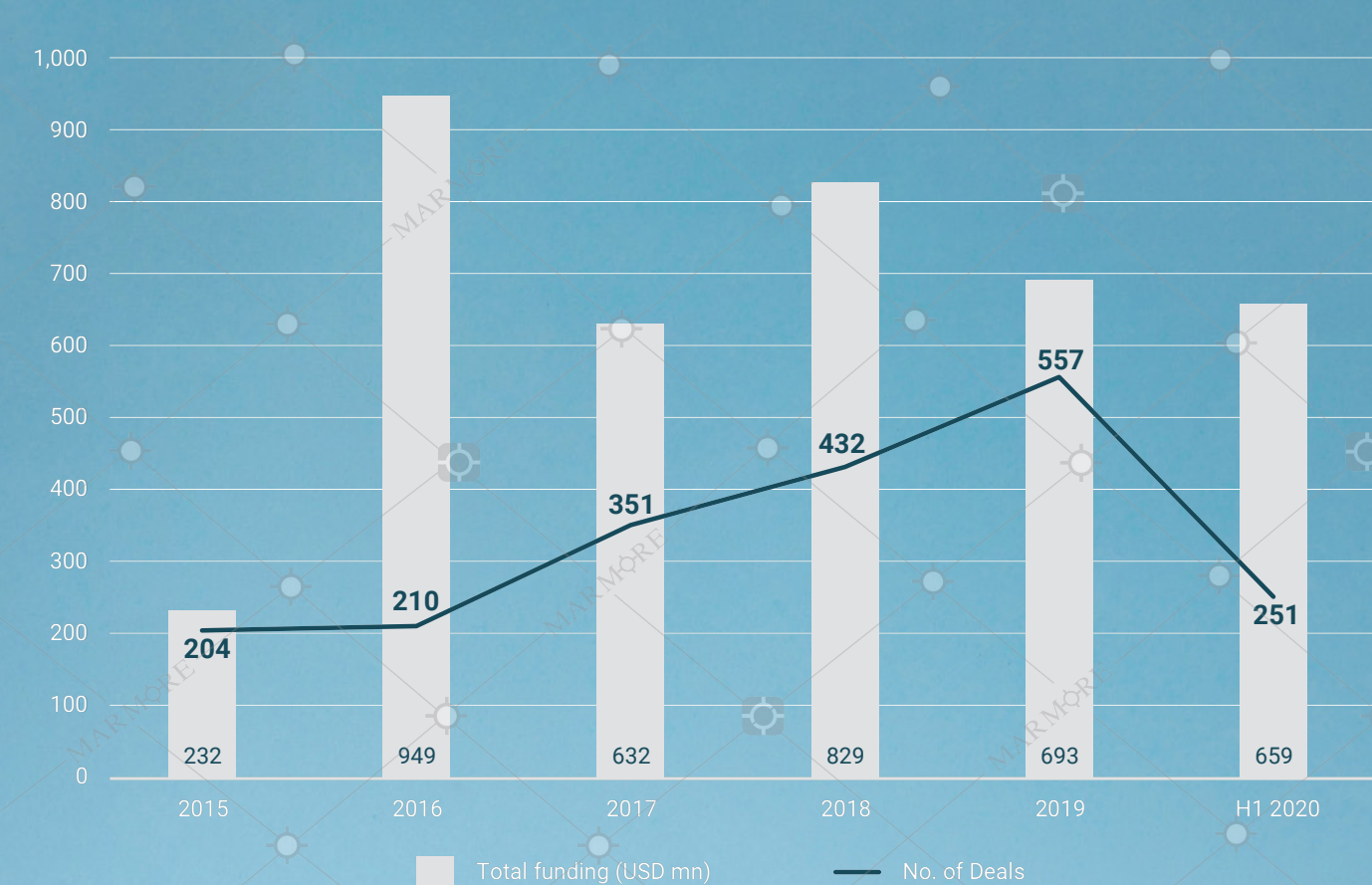
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Pandemic provides regional FinTech a chance to prove their worth

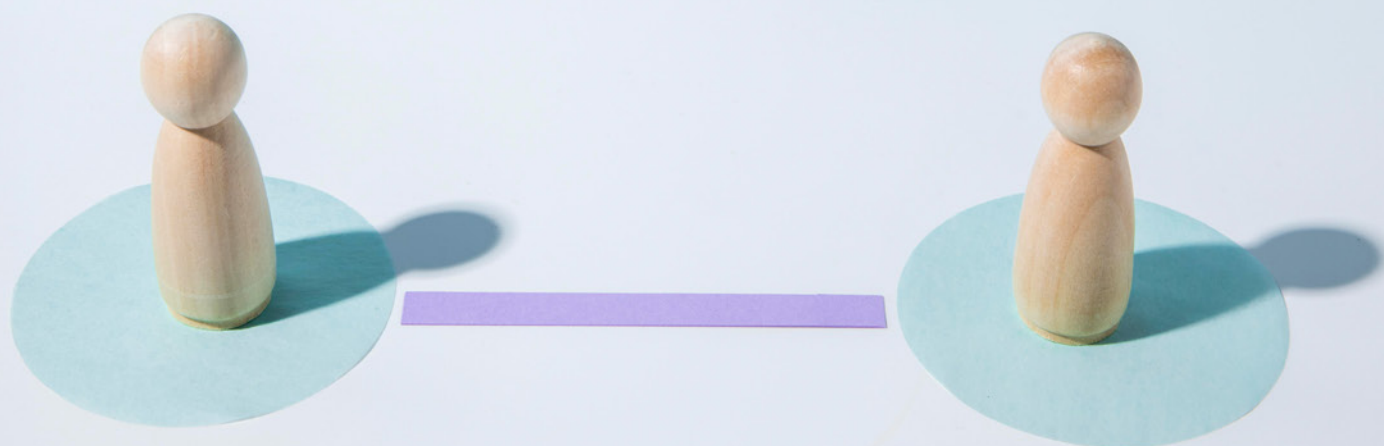
In the first half of the year, MENA-based start-ups raised USD 659million, an increase of 35% compared to the same period in 2019. According to MAGNiTT **MENA Venture Investment report**, UAE accounted for the largest share of funding at 59% followed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Funding of MENA-based start-ups by number of deals and total funding amount



Source: MAGNiTT

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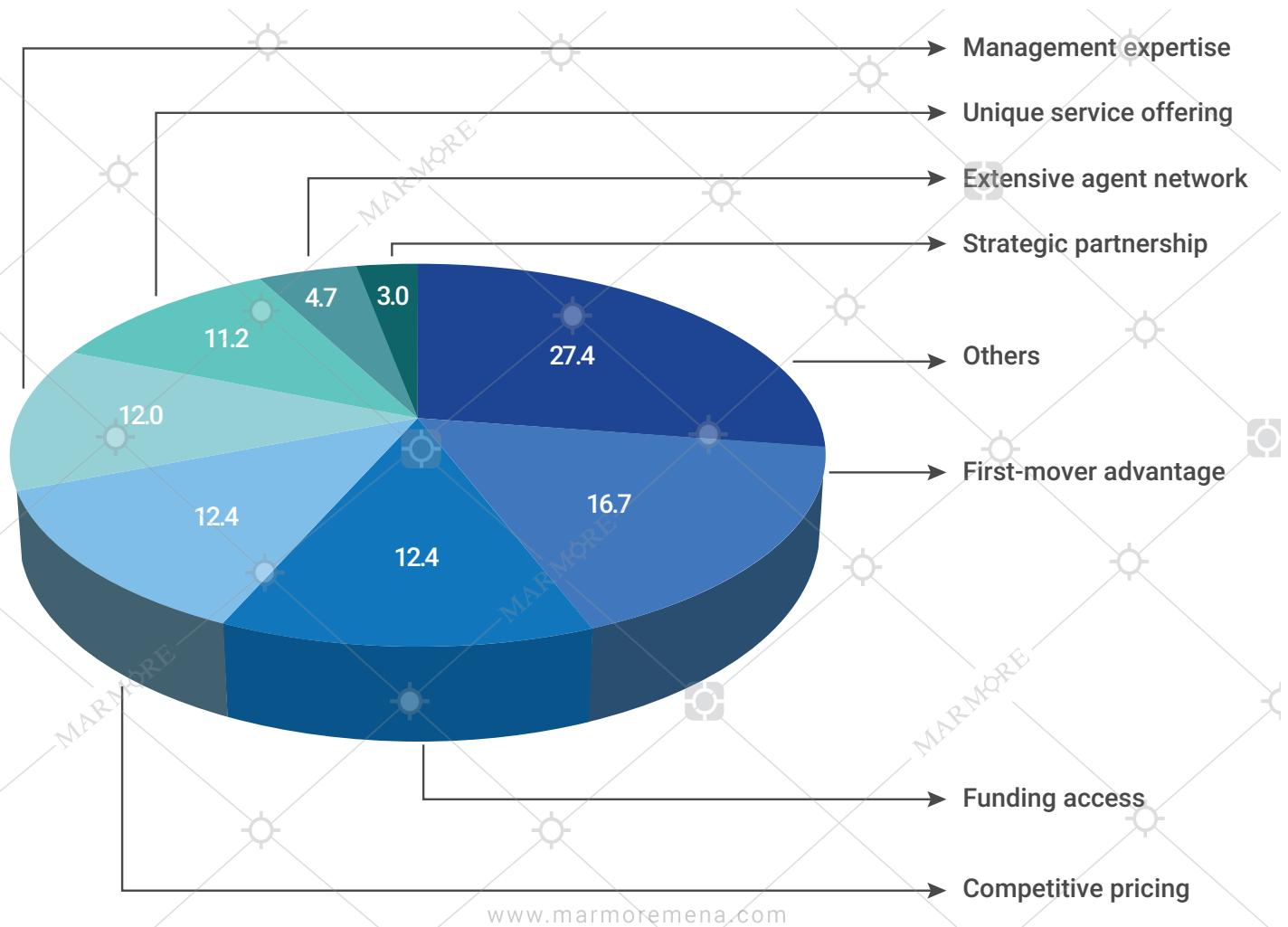
Investors' positive sentiments were further validated in the recently released report by INSEAD business school in partnership with MAGNitt, which surveyed the [COVID-19 impact on MENA start-up ecosystem](#). The survey revealed that investors' appetite remains strong and their focus has shifted to industries such as e-Commerce, FinTech, EdTech and HealthTech that are impacted positively by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consequently, FinTech (accounting for 16% of all deals) stood first by number of deals in H1 2020. This is followed by e-commerce and logistics that accounted for 14% and 10% of all deals, respectively.

Recent survey by [Tellimer Research](#) cites 'access to funding' as being critical to ensure establishment of a successful fintech franchise. It argues that ample capital is required to sustain the first mover advantage by,

1. Investing in technological infrastructure
2. Carrying out promotional marketing activities to build sizeable customer base. Often includes carrying out service at a price lower than what it costs.

Factors critical for FinTech Success



Source: Tellimer Research

The region is yet to see presence of a FinTech firm in its public equity market, however, the private equity market in the MENA region is abound with fintech players and investors.

Some of the leading FinTech players in Kuwait include,

Leading FinTech players in Kuwait

Sl.No	Firm	Description	Founded Year
1	Tap	Payment gateway and bill payment app	2012
2	MyFatoorah	Payment acceptance solution for merchants.	2015
3	Ajar	Rent payment & property management solutions	2015
4	Ajaraty	Online rental payment and property management software	2012
5	Payle	Mobile wallet for offline payments	2015
6	YallaBit	Digital asset exchange service	2017
7	FinFirst	Online lending marketplace for loans	2015
8	Bookeey	Mobile wallet for payment at stores and money transfer	2016
9	Ataabi	App-based mobile payment gateway	2018
10	Zain Cash	Mobile money account with cash withdrawal option	2015

Source: Tracxn

Among various FinTech segment, we witness sizeable traction in the payments and lending space. This is aided by the government support to improve their payment infrastructure in association with local banks. For instance, in Kuwait, the central bank is set to modernize the Payments and Settlement process through introduction of new payment platform – [Kuwait National Payment System \(KNPS\)](#). Similarly, Dubai has launched [Unified Payments Network, UPN](#), an inclusive platform that will bring together all payment service providers, and unbanked as well as underbanked merchants, to facilitate cashless transactions.

Leading central banks in Singapore, Sweden and Canada have trailed digital currencies developed by them. On similar lines, the central banks of UAE and Saudi Arabia started a pilot program to launch a shared digital currency – “Aber”, to facilitate cross-border transactions and transform the remittance industry. The results of the study were released recently.



Banks and Digital Initiatives

COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of digital banking worldwide. There are more digital banking transactions taking place during the virus outbreak, indicating a strong acceleration in fintech adoption.

Digital Solution Providers

To facilitate regional banks to seamlessly offer digital service and fast track their transformation, Dubai-based Codebase Technologies launched its [Digital Banking as a Service platform – Digibanc™ SaaS](#).

[Aion Digital](#) that offers digital onboarding solutions had its product approved by three regulators in the GCC region. The latest regulator being the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

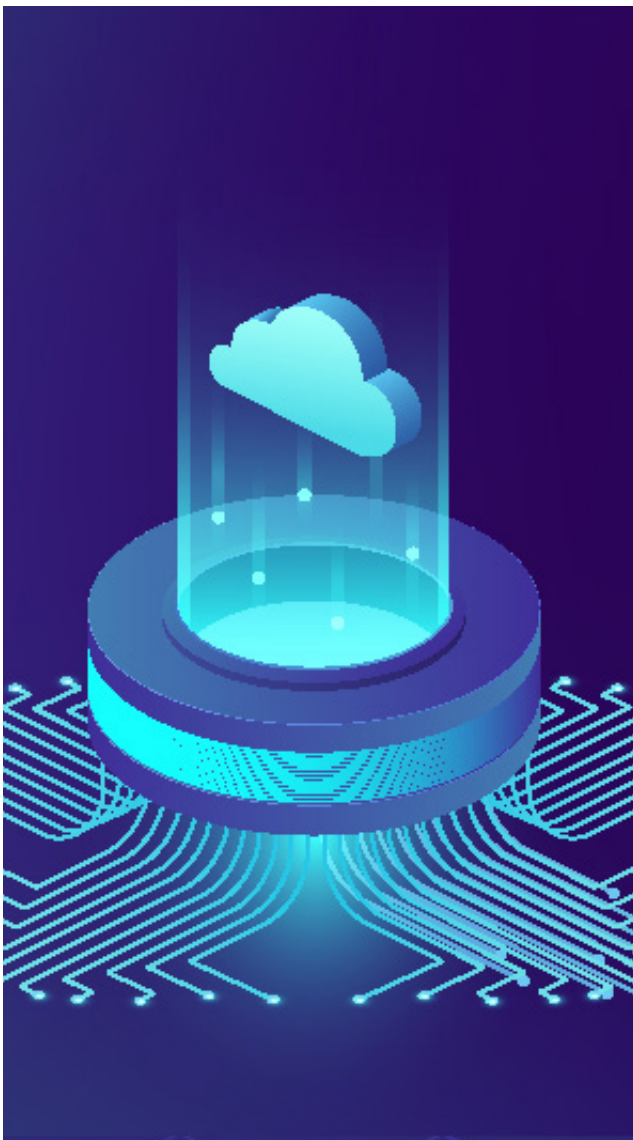
Kuwait Banks offer Digital Account Opening Service

Following its entry, both [National Bank of Kuwait](#) and [Kuwait Finance House](#) offered the service opening bank accounts digitally from the comfort of home, within minutes and without the need to visit branch.

SMEs adopt Digital means to drive sales

A recent survey by Facebook in partnership with World Bank and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that the regional businesses have adopted digital means to boost sales. Although conditions remain challenging for Small and Mid-size Businesses, business owners and managers were resilient. Many had acted creatively to found new ways to reach customers, increasing the proportion of sales they made digitally during the course of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Cognizant of the rapid digital adoption by businesses, banks followed suit to offer digital banking platforms that provides full suite of services such as cash management, trade finance and liquidity management solutions digitally to its business clients. [Emirates NBD has unveiled its next-generation global corporate banking platform, 'businessONLINE'](#).



Case Study: Emirates NBD boosts digital user engagement by 300% using A.I

Emirates NBD has elevated its customer-centric marketing strategy by delivering 1-to-1 personalized customer experiences via its website. The company achieved this using Lemnisk, a real-time personalization solution built on an intelligent and secure Customer Data Platform (CDP).

[Emirates NBD intends to use Lemnisk](#) to integrate multiple touchpoints and use its personalization-driven channel orchestration ability to craft unique customer journeys, engage intelligently, and personalize stories with an aim to achieve 75% personalization on the website.

Other Notable Developments



Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB) announced the launch of the first [Emirati customer care chatbot](#). The chatbot will be able to understand the Emirati dialect, as well as classical Arabic and English, and will respond to general requests and give customers access to information about their account and finances.



FAB's [payit](#) – the digital wallet service has tied up with Schoolvoice's comprehensive education technology for UAE schools. This allows schools to send and collect their payment requests in real-time.



Noor Takaful, a Dar Al Takaful Company, the UAE's second largest Islamic insurance entity, launched a [fully-digital savings plan](#).



Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) has partnered with the property portal Bayut to launch the [ADCB Dream Home Platform](#) that helps prospective buyers on Bayut, get access to ADCB's instant pre-approvals for a seamless home buying experience on a unified digital platform.



While other banks have been focussing on enhancing customer experiences, [Al Baraka Banking Group](#) launched a [new digital learning portal](#) to effectively scale up its training.



SECURITY

The banks in the region have been quick to adopt digital solutions and enhance customer experience, risk of offering digital services has also raised manifold. According to [latest report by AG's digital](#), instances of carding, data exposure, and hacktivism have escalated to become the highest rated digital risk categories in 2020 in the Middle East region.

To counteract the cyber risks, [Saudi SAIB has partnered with Trend Micro to secure its digital estate](#). SAIB has deployed Trend Micro's Deep Discovery Inspector to monitor network traffic in its traversal routes inside data centers, between hosts and across endpoints that will enable quick response against malicious activity such as ransomware delivery or advanced persistent threats.



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