

Hotbed¹ for Online Entrepreneurs²

The more turbulent³ the Middle East⁴ seems to become, the more entrepreneurs are staying home, in a sense. The region of the Middle East and North Africa is the fastest growing in the world when it comes to⁵ online businesses. As **David Knott** reveals⁶, there are a number of factors involved, but in this part of the world, any movement⁷ forward is good news.

An Area Ripe for⁸ Change

The uprising⁹ in Egypt very famously erupted¹⁰ on Facebook, when images of the body of a young man beaten to death by Egyptian police appeared¹¹ on the social networking site¹². It was developed into its own page, called "We are all Khaled Said," named after¹³ the young man. Three months later, the page had 250,000 members across the region, whose online stance¹⁴ inspired real-life¹⁵ revolution.

The anger and frustration that many youths¹⁶ in Egypt felt was easily expressed¹⁷ on Facebook and across the Internet, both avenues¹⁸ that people in the region have been taking to¹⁹ at a very rapid pace²⁰. In Egypt alone, Web users increased from 1.5 million in 2004 to 13.6 million in 2008 and across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Facebook users tripled²¹ from 2010 to 2012, a trend that is continuing, with nearly a million new users joining every month.

¹ **hotbed** 'hotbed wylęgarnia, siedlisko

² **entrepreneur** ,ɒntrəprə'nɜ:(r) przedsiębiorca

³ **turbulent** 'tɜ:bjələnt burzliwy, niespokojny

⁴ **the Middle East** ðə 'mɪdl i:st Bliski Wschód

⁵ **when it comes to sth** wen ɪt kʌmz tə 'sʌmθɪŋ jeśli chodzi o coś, jeśli mowa o czymś

⁶ **to reveal** tə rɪ'vi:l ujawnić

⁷ **movement** 'mu:vmənt ruch

⁸ **ripe for sth** raɪp fə(r) 'sʌmθɪŋ dojrzały do czegoś

⁹ **uprising** 'ʌpraɪzɪŋ powstanie

¹⁰ **to erupt** tu ɪ'rʌpt wybuchnąć

¹¹ **to appear** tu ə'piə(r) pojawić się

¹² **social networking site** 'səʊʃl 'netwɜ:kɪŋ saɪt strona społeczności internetowej

¹³ **named after sb** neɪmd 'ɑ:ftə(r) 'sʌmbədi nazwany na czyjąś cześć, w hołdzie komuś

¹⁴ **stance** stæns postawa

¹⁵ **real-life** riəl laɪf prawdziwy, faktyczny (tylko przed rzeczownikiem)

¹⁶ **youths** ju:ð młodzież, młodzi ludzie

¹⁷ **to express** tu ɪk'spres wyrazić

¹⁸ **avenue** 'ævnju: ścieżka, droga

¹⁹ **to take to sth** tə teɪk tə 'sʌmθɪŋ przyjmować coś, obierać coś

²⁰ **at a rapid pace** ət ə 'ræpɪd peɪs z dużą szybkością, szybko

²¹ **to triple** tə 'trɪpl potroić (się)

²² **denizen** 'denɪzn mieszkaniec (danego obszaru)

²³ **to take a shine to sth** tə teɪk ə ʃaɪn tə 'sʌmθɪŋ przekonać się do czegoś, polubić coś

²⁴ **according to** ə'kɔ:dɪŋ tə zgodnie z, według

²⁵ **science** 'saɪəns nauka

²⁶ **incredible** ɪn'kredəbl niezwykły

²⁷ **barely** 'beəli ledwie

²⁸ **plenty of room for sth** 'plenti əv ru:m fə(r) 'sʌmθɪŋ sporo miejsca na coś, sporo możliwości dla czegoś

²⁹ **lack** læk brak

³⁰ **aptitude for sth** 'æptɪtju:d fə(r) 'sʌmθɪŋ zdolność do czegoś, uzdolnienia w jakimś kierunku

³¹ **to exist** tu ɪg'zɪst istnieć

³² **the ways of the past** ðə weɪz əv ðə pɑ:st tradycje

³³ **Arab Spring** 'æərəb sprɪŋ Arabska Wiosna (o serii pokojowych i zbrojnych powstań w regionie Bliskiego Wschodu od roku 2011)



Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Facebook users tripled from 2010 to 2012.

It is not just social media that the denizens²² of MENA are taking a shine to²³. According to²⁴ the *Christian Science Monitor*, e-commerce is growing faster here than in any other part of the world. In 2011, online sales increased by an incredible²⁶ 70 percent. Yet for all this growth, the Internet is still not that developed in the region, with barely²⁷ half the population of MENA regularly going online; so there is still plenty of room for²⁸ further development.

Lack²⁹ of Traditional Jobs

The region is also home to a great number of young people, as many as 100 million between the ages of 15 and 29, with an aptitude for³⁰ digital technology. Young people there are seeing where the future lies, and what potential exists³¹ online, particularly since they can very clearly see how the ways of the past³² have failed the region. Again, in Egypt at the time of the Arab Spring³³, out of a population of 80 million, 48 million were poor, with over three million unemployed³⁴.

Across the region, in 2000, there was a workforce of 104 million. With such rapid population growth, there needs to be roughly³⁵ twice as many jobs by 2020 if there is to be full employment at that time, considering³⁶ those currently unemployed and future college graduates³⁷. Current college students with an eye towards³⁸ the future are seeing that there may not be the jobs they had once expected and are looking to create their own. They are joining groups at university, forming³⁹ partnerships with other youths, and seeking out⁴⁰ investors for their own businesses.

Investors Are Catching On⁴¹

At the outset⁴², many investors are understandably⁴³ put off by⁴⁴ the tumult⁴⁵ in MENA, but according to Egyptian venture capitalist⁴⁶ Ahmed Alfi, the situation is ideal for growing investments: “When there’s turmoil⁴⁷ and disruption⁴⁸, that’s the time to buy.” When the political scene in a country seems to be collapsing⁴⁹, it’s actually a great opportunity, in his eyes. He talked to the *Christian Science Monitor* about his home country saying, “That’s the bottom⁵⁰ of the market. Egypt has everything going in its favour⁵¹.”

A good example of Mr Alfi’s philosophy in work is the company MarkaVIP, which is headquartered⁵² in Amman, Jordan. The company’s founder⁵³, Ahmed Alkhatib started the online retailer⁵⁴ in 2011, when the Arab Spring and associated social unrest⁵⁵ was at its peak⁵⁶. Since he had worked for western e-commerce companies Amazon and Zazzle, Mr Alkhatib was able to convince⁵⁷ foreign investors of the value⁵⁸ of his »

- ³⁴ **unemployed** ˌʌnɪmˈplɔɪd bezrobotny
- ³⁵ **roughly** ˈrʌfli z grubsza
- ³⁶ **considering sth** kənˈsɪdərɪŋ ˈsʌmθɪŋ zważywszy na coś
- ³⁷ **college graduate** ˈkɒlɪdʒ ˈɡrædʒuət osoba, która ukończyła college
- ³⁸ **with an eye towards sth** wɪð ən aɪ təˈwɔːdz ˈsʌmθɪŋ mając coś na oku, planując coś
- ³⁹ **to form** tə fɔːm utworzyć
- ⁴⁰ **to seek sb out** tə siːk ˈsʌmbədi aʊt wyszukiwać kogoś
- ⁴¹ **to catch on** tə kætʃ ɒn przyjmować się, zyskiwać na popularności
- ⁴² **at the outset** ət ðə ˈaʊtset na (samym) początku
- ⁴³ **understandably** ˌʌndəˈstændəbli zrozumiale, w sposób oczywisty
- ⁴⁴ **to be put off by sth** tə biː pʊt ɒf baɪ ˈsʌmθɪŋ być czymś zrażonym
- ⁴⁵ **tumult** ˈtjuːmlɪt tumult, wrzawa
- ⁴⁶ **venture capitalist** ˈventʃə(r) ˈkæpɪtəlɪst inwestor kapitału wysokiego ryzyka
- ⁴⁷ **turmoil** ˈtɜːmɔɪl wrzawa, burzliwy okres
- ⁴⁸ **disruption** dɪsˈrʌpʃn zamęt
- ⁴⁹ **to collapse** tə kəˈlæps upadać
- ⁵⁰ **bottom** ˈbɒtəm dno, tu: najniższy pułap
- ⁵¹ **to have everything going in sb’s favour** tə hæv ˈevriθɪŋ ɡəʊɪŋ ɪn ˈsʌmbədɪz ˈfeɪvə(r) wszystko się składa bardzo pomyślnie dla kogoś
- ⁵² **to be headquartered** tə biː ˌhedˈkwɔːtəd mieć swoją siedzibę
- ⁵³ **founder** ˈfaʊndə(r) założyciel
- ⁵⁴ **retailer** ˈriːteɪlə(r) sprzedawca detaliczny, sklep
- ⁵⁵ **social unrest** ˈsəʊʃl ʌnˈrest niepokoje społeczne
- ⁵⁶ **peak** piːk szczyt
- ⁵⁷ **to convince** tə kənˈvɪns przekonać
- ⁵⁸ **value** ˈvæljuː wartość

endeavour⁵⁹, and it has paid off⁶⁰. Just two years since opening, MarkaVIP has 350 employees and operates in eight countries across the region.

Foreign investors are not the only ones making moves in MENA. Local accelerators⁶¹ are appearing, many with the view to⁶² acting as angel investors⁶³ by helping very new start-ups⁶⁴ with seed money⁶⁵ and mentoring. For example, in 2010, a group in Jordan started Oasis500 in cooperation with the country's King Abdullah in order to give more opportunities to young Jordanian entrepreneurs. Twenty-two of the 28 start-ups initially⁶⁶ supported by Oasis500 have gotten further investment, as much as USD 2.1 mln.

Ancient⁶⁷ Culture with a Bright Future

It is still very much an upward climb⁶⁸. In addition to instability⁶⁹, many of the societies⁷⁰ in MENA have become overly bureaucratic and corrupt⁷¹ with an outsized⁷² emphasis on⁷³ religious and traditional values⁷⁴. This creates administrations staffed with⁷⁵ crooked⁷⁶, inept⁷⁷ workers, many of whom have received their positions due to⁷⁸ connections, and



university graduates focused on starting families, not businesses.

Additionally⁷⁹, despite⁸⁰ the fact that women account for⁸¹ around half of the university graduates in the region, they currently make up⁸² only about 21 percent of the workforce there. What many women are finding, though, is that the Internet is not as male-dominated⁸³ as the traditional job market, and it allows for

women to work from home, still abiding by⁸⁴ some of their oldest-held traditions, related to⁸⁵ the family and the mingling⁸⁶ of the sexes. Most importantly, the Internet is a meritocracy⁸⁷, where women like Jordan's Fida Taher, founder of the online recipe⁸⁸ company Zaytouneh, can find success, regardless of⁸⁹ their gender⁹⁰ or background⁹¹.

As well as opening avenues for long-suffering⁹² members of society, the governments in the region, like King Abdullah's, are progressively⁹³ doing more to produce young people with the necessary skills to succeed⁹⁴ in the new, high-tech economy. Groups like Oasis500, in cooperation with the Jordanian government, are working to educate young entrepreneurs not just on the technological aspects of modern business, but on the philosophies and work ethic⁹⁵ needed. Oasis500 runs weekly boot camps⁹⁶, teaching participants⁹⁷ the basics⁹⁸ about starting and running a business.

The development of a vibrant⁹⁹, online economy will not occur overnight¹⁰⁰, but the more success organizations like Oasis500 enjoy, the more both young people and the regional governments will see greater possibilities for the future here, good news not just for the Middle East, but for the entire¹⁰¹ world. ■

⁵⁹ **endeavour** ɪn'devə(r) przedsięwzięcie

⁶⁰ **to pay off** tə peɪ ɒf opłacić się

⁶¹ **accelerator** ək'seləreɪtə(r) przyspieszacz, tu: spółka która intensywnie się rozwija lub wspiera rozwój innych

⁶² **with the view to doing sth** wɪð ðə vju: tə 'du:ɪŋ 'sʌmθɪŋ mając zamiar coś zrobić

⁶³ **angel investor** 'eɪndʒl ɪn'vestə(r) anioł biznesu (US)

⁶⁴ **start-up** stɑ:t ʌp młoda spółka

⁶⁵ **seed money** si:d 'mʌni kapitał startowy

⁶⁶ **initially** ɪ'nɪʃəli pierwotnie, oryginalnie

⁶⁷ **ancient** 'eɪnʃənt starożytny

⁶⁸ **upward climb** 'ʌpwəd klaɪm droga pod górę, ciężka sytuacja

⁶⁹ **instability** ,ɪnstə'bɪləti niestabilność

⁷⁰ **society** sə'saɪəti społeczeństwo

⁷¹ **corrupt** kə'rʌpt skorumpowany, zepsuty

⁷² **outsized** 'aʊtsaɪzd wielki, ogromny

⁷³ **emphasis on sth** 'emfəsɪs ɒn 'sʌmθɪŋ nacisk na coś

⁷⁴ **values** 'vælju:z wartości

⁷⁵ **staffed with sb** stɑ:ft wɪð 'sʌmbədi wypchany kimś, gdzie pełno kogoś

⁷⁶ **crooked** 'krʊkɪd skorumpowany, nieuczciwy

⁷⁷ **inept** ɪ'nept nieudolny

⁷⁸ **due to** dju: tə dzięki, przez

⁷⁹ **additionally** ə'dɪʃənəli co więcej

⁸⁰ **despite** dɪ'spaɪt pomimo

⁸¹ **to account for X** tu ə'kaʊnt fə(r) wynosić X, stanowić X

⁸² **to make up X** tə meɪk ʌp składać się na X, wynosić X

⁸³ **male-dominated** meɪl 'dɒmɪneɪtɪd zdominowany przez mężczyzn

⁸⁴ **to abide by sth** tu ə'baɪd baɪ 'sʌmθɪŋ stosować się do czegoś (praw, nakazów)

⁸⁵ **related to sth** rɪ'leɪtɪd tə 'sʌmθɪŋ związany z czymś

⁸⁶ **mingling** 'mɪŋɡlɪŋ mieszanie się, obcowanie (z kimś)

⁸⁷ **meritocracy** ,merɪ'tɒkrəsi merytokracja

(tam, gdzie liczą się umiejętności i dokonania)

⁸⁸ **recipe** 'resəpi przepis

⁸⁹ **regardless of** rɪ'ɡɑ:dləs əv niezależnie od

⁹⁰ **gender** 'dʒendə(r) płeć

⁹¹ **background** 'bækgraʊnd pochodzenie

⁹² **long-suffering** lɒŋ 'sʌfəɪŋ cierpiący bez skargi

⁹³ **progressively** prə'ɡresɪvli stopniowo, coraz bardziej/więcej

⁹⁴ **to succeed** tə sək'si:d odnieść sukces

⁹⁵ **ethic** 'eθɪk etyka

⁹⁶ **boot camp** bʊt kæmp intensywny kurs/szkolenie

⁹⁷ **participant** pɑ:'tɪsɪpənt uczestnik

⁹⁸ **basics** 'beɪsɪks podstawy

⁹⁹ **vibrant** 'vaɪbrənt żywy, ożywiony

¹⁰⁰ **overnight** ,əʊvə'naɪt natychmiast, od razu

¹⁰¹ **entire** ɪn'taɪə(r) cały