

THE SAUDI H1 2026 THESIS

A Working Brief for Investors and Founders



Kirill Sosnin

Founder of the analytical studio Blank.

blank .

Blank is a strategy and market intelligence studio working with investment funds, startups, and corporate clients.

We combine deep research, structured thinking, and hands-on experience to help businesses make confident, well-grounded decisions.

We turn information chaos into clear direction, strong positioning and persuasive narratives for local markets, and define a practical strategy for entering them.

Blank has specialized for several years in comprehensive international research on technology markets, venture ecosystems, and investment trends. During this time, the team has authored dozens of industry studies, strategic reviews, and market intelligence reports for investment funds and technology companies.

This research focuses on analyzing key transformations within the technological and investment landscape of Saudi Arabia and the broader region. Our objective was not merely to collect data, but to develop a holistic understanding of the market by identifying structural trends, highlighting high-potential sectors, and evaluating the dynamics of investment activity.

We believe that the value of such research extends beyond documenting the current market landscape. It serves as a strategic navigation framework for companies and investors. Understanding which technological directions are shaping the future economy, where investment demand is concentrating, and which business models demonstrate long-term resilience is becoming a critical competitive advantage.

We hope that the findings of this research will serve as a practical tool for managerial decision-making, market expansion, and the development of long-term business growth strategies.



Anna Shevchenko

CEO Gingo Foundation



Gingo Foundation is a nonprofit organization advancing innovation that drives real-world impact.

Foundation empowers entrepreneurs, investors, governments, and corporations to transform bold ideas into scalable solutions that strengthen economies and create lasting positive change worldwide through initiatives such as the Cultivator Program, the GP/LP Program, and others.

Over the past four years, Gingo has been building innovation ecosystems and helping founders and investors connect across the Middle East and beyond. Working with governments, corporates, and venture funds, we have seen how strategic research can unlock new markets and turn ambitious visions into executable roadmaps.

Saudi Arabia today is one of the most dynamic environments for innovators and capital providers, driven by the country's bold Vision 2030 agenda. For international companies, this transformation brings both opportunity and responsibility: to localize meaningfully, to build long-term partnerships with Saudi stakeholders, and to contribute to the development of a resilient innovation economy rather than pursue short-term gains.

With this report, Gingo is also launching a new line of Market Intelligence publications. Our ambition is for these publications to become a catalyst for innovation, as our cultivator programs and other ecosystem initiatives mature and scale. By combining on-the-ground ecosystem building with rigorous market analysis, we aim to equip founders, corporates, and public-sector leaders with the insight they need to design solutions that truly fit local contexts while being globally competitive.

This joint research with Blank is part of that commitment. It goes beyond surface-level market overviews to unpack how foreign companies can align with national priorities, design the right entry strategies, and navigate the evolving investment landscape. Our shared objective is simple: to help ambitious teams make better decisions as they localize operations, talent, and capital in the Kingdom.

We hope these insights will be useful to founders, executives, and policymakers who are building the next generation of companies in Saudi Arabia – and that they will foster more cross-border collaborations fully aligned with Vision 2030's long-term goals.

Meet Blank – your strategy & market intelligence partner

We've supported the international expansion of dozens of companies and helped facilitate an investment in a business that went on to become a unicorn.

Strategy, digital transformation roadmaps, and educational programs for corporates. We help established companies think and move like the startups they're trying to catch.

New market entry research, venture ecosystem mapping, opportunity screening and more. We find the white space before it gets crowded.

Market analytics, competitive intelligence, technology scouting, go-to-market strategies and sector deep-dives.



Launch



Scale



Transform

Regional Profile



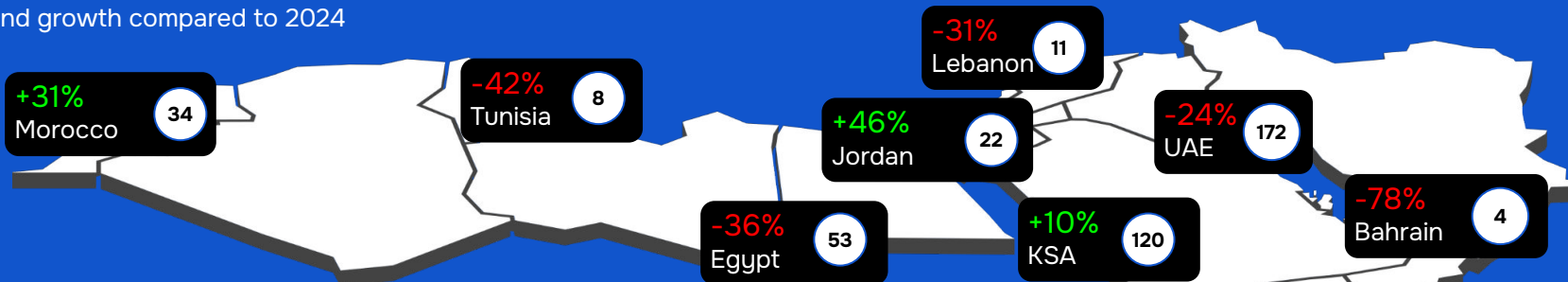
1 Saudi Arabia is the only MENA market growing deal activity year after year

The 2025 deal map makes the point. The UAE, the region's largest ecosystem, contracted 24% as it matured into a market of fewer, larger, later-stage rounds; Egypt fell 36% under continued macro pressure. Jordan (+47%) and Morocco (+31%) grew faster in percentage terms, but from bases of a few dozen deals, where a single round can swing the entire figure – the kind of growth that rarely repeats two years running.

Saudi Arabia is the exception: not the fastest mover in any single year, but the one ecosystem that has expanded its deal count consistently, year after year, while the rest of the region swung. **That consistency – not any one record print – is what now distinguishes the Kingdom as MENA's structural growth market.**

Number of venture capital deals in the country in 2025 and growth compared to 2024

Resource: Tracxn



N – number of deals (equity only)

2 In 2025, Saudi Arabia drew nearly half of all venture capital raised across MENA

In 2025, the MENA startup market remained small relative to global venture capital – roughly 1% of worldwide investment – yet it was one of the few emerging regions to grow both funding and deal activity, with total investment reaching \$7.5 bn.

Saudi Arabia is **the most funded ecosystem in the region and the highest annual total ever recorded by a single MENA market**, driven by landmark rounds including Tamara, Ninja, Tabby and Property Finder.

Against this backdrop, the 2020–2025 trajectory reads less like catch-up and more like benchmark-setting: Saudi Arabia has become the reference point against which other emerging venture markets are measured.



3

Saudi startups raised \$1.7 bn in 2025: twice the total recorded in 2024 and ten times the level seen in 2020

In 2025, Saudi Arabia's venture market reached a new all-time high. According to MAGNITT's annual report, total investment hit \$1.7 bn – the Kingdom led the MENA region both by funding volume and deal count, closing 257 transactions over the year.



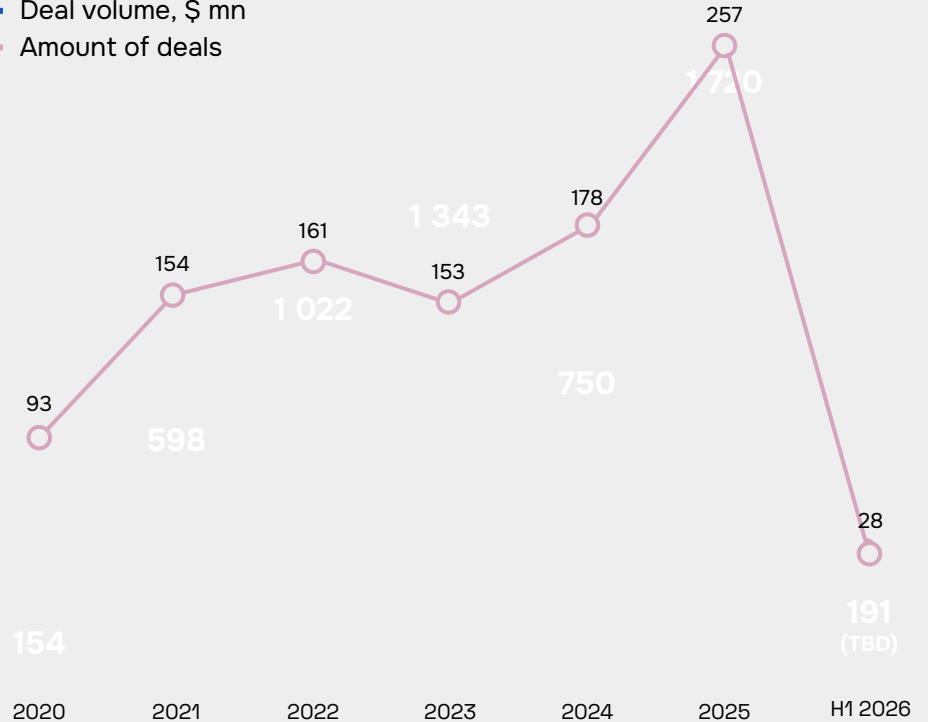
Regional geopolitical tensions have slowed investment activity in 2026. The structural foundation, however, remains intact. Sovereign-backed vehicles like SVC continued to deploy through the quarter, deal count held up better than dollar volumes, and the IPO pipeline – Tabby, Tamara, Ninja – is advancing on schedule.



As geopolitical uncertainty gradually eases, H2 2026 is well-positioned to absorb the deferred deal flow and reaccelerate. The record base of 2025 is not a ceiling – it is a foundation.

Startup funding in the KSA

Deal volume, \$ mn
Amount of deals



4

Gulf sovereign wealth funds turn capital into a driver of technological growth

Sovereign wealth funds in the Middle East, most notably Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), are increasingly acting as anchor investors for high-growth companies. This strategy is reinforced by institutions such as the Saudi Venture Capital Company (SVC), as well as regulatory sandboxes across the Gulf that allow new financial and technological models to be tested with minimal bureaucracy and clear rules of engagement.

Equally important is the role of technology parks across the GCC. In practice, these function as special economic zones, offering modern infrastructure and turnkey services. They form a backbone for small and medium-sized businesses and tech initiatives, supporting growth through grants, accelerator programs, and industry events. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar stand out as the anchors of the region's innovation agenda.



The big picture: trends across sectors 1



IoT: smart sensors for business needs

ICT in the GCC is operating at the technological frontier. One of the clearest reasons is that IoT is finally moving beyond pilots and into day-to-day operations. Take Averos: its technology is used for navigation at Riyadh's international airport, for tracking medical equipment in hospitals across the UAE, and for customs inspection at Khalifa Bin Salman Port in Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia is also emerging as a magnet for capital in this space. In 2024, Perfect Vision raised \$20 mn to scale its industrial IoT offering; in 2025, WakeCap closed a \$28 mn Series A to expand wearable devices that monitor safety conditions on construction sites.



Blockchain for fintech use cases

Blockchain found its strongest foothold in fintech, with several real-world deployments. Saudi Arabia's Al Rajhi Bank uses solutions from Ripple Labs to support international money transfers, while Abu Dhabi-based Al Hilal Bank applied blockchain technology to issue a \$500 mn sukuk, an instrument comparable to bonds.

Although there is no standalone law governing cryptocurrencies in Saudi Arabia, **innovation is enabled through the sandbox run by the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA)**, which allows companies to test solutions before market rollout. 2025 also saw the launch of pilot projects focused on real-world asset tokenization, including experiments in **real estate tokenization**.



High-tech leisure

Saudi Arabia is building an “experience economy” with real scale behind it: the General Entertainment Authority pledged investments of up to \$64 bn into the domestic entertainment sector by 2028. On top of that foundation, the kingdom's mega-projects are taking shape – “**cities of entertainment**” such as **NEOM and Qiddiya**.

Under Vision 2030, sport and esports are framed as pillars of the future economy. In late 2025, a PIF-led consortium agreed to acquire Electronic Arts for \$55 bn – the largest leveraged buyout on record – and in November 2026 Riyadh hosts the inaugural Esports Nations Cup. The kingdom continues its high-profile push across global sport, backing LIV Golf and deepening ties with FIFA and Formula 1.



E-commerce and its broader ecosystem

Covid-19 accelerated the rise of marketplaces worldwide, and the Gulf was no exception. In the UAE, e-commerce already accounts for roughly 12–14% of retail sales, and that share is still climbing. The region’s ecom scene looks this way: alongside global giants like Amazon and Alibaba, a strong layer of regional players emerged: Noon, Desertcart, Ninja.

Crucially, ecom growth doesn’t happen in isolation. It pulls adjacent industries forward, fintech first and foremost. A vivid example is Tamara, a Saudi BNPL startup that reached unicorn status after its Series C in 2023. It raised additional funding again in 2025, with \$2.4 bn announced (\$1.4 bn upfront and \$1 bn spread over 3 years).



MedTech for national health

Telemedicine is no longer a temporary fix from the Covid era. The UAE government describes it as a fully fledged channel for receiving medical consultations. In Bahrain, the space is being advanced by Doctori, a consultations platform licensed by the National Health Regulatory Authority.

In Qatar, the focus is increasingly on digital therapeutics for chronic conditions: local player Droobi Health (diabetes care) partnered in 2024 with India’s Smit.fit and has been scaling up. Venture interest, meanwhile, is shifting toward clinical decision support, practice management tools, and remote patient monitoring.























Sustainable development

By 2025, investors from the GCC had deployed more than \$5 bn into climate startups worldwide, with Saudi investors accounting for ≈75% of that total. Inside the region itself, climate tech activity eased slightly after its 2022 peak, and the focus shifted toward more “pragmatic” priorities: clean energy, resource management, and technologies for agriculture.

The GCC also has a structural advantage: ultra-low costs for solar power generation. According to PwC, 6 of 10 cheapest solar projects globally are located in GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia’s Al Shuaibah Solar PV Project.

Largest venture investments in the GCC in 2025

| # | Business model | Country | Company | Deal Volume | Stage | Investors |
|---|--|---|---|-------------|----------------|--|
| 1 | Fintech → BNPL e-commerce solutions provider |  |  | \$2.4 bn | Debt financing |   APOLLO |
| 2 | Fintech → P2P financing for small and medium businesses |  |  | \$690 mn | Debt financing | J.P.Morgan  |
| 3 | Deeptech → Smart contact lenses, the computing interface of the future |  |  | \$250 mn | Series A |  |
| 4 | Retail tech → Online grocery shopping service |  |  | \$250 mn | Series C |    |
| 5 | Fintech → BNPL e-commerce solutions provider |  |  | \$160 mn | Series E | WELLINGTON MANAGEMENT*    |

The region accounts for just 1% of the world's unicorn startups

However, most of these companies reached unicorn status between 2023 and 2025.

There are roughly 1700 unicorn startups worldwide today, and the Gulf countries already hold a small but visible share of that total: 13 unicorns across the GCC, including 9 in the UAE and 4 in Saudi Arabia.

The most valuable of them, Tabby, is now headquartered in Riyadh and was valued at \$4.5 bn in an October 2025 secondary transaction – the highest-valued fintech in MENA.


The next change to this map will likely come not from new rounds but from listings: Tabby and Tamara have filed for Tadawul IPOs, with Ninja preparing to follow – in Saudi Arabia, graduating from unicorn to public company is becoming the default route.

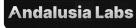



Saudi Arabia 



   



4
unicorns


the UAE 

V I S T A

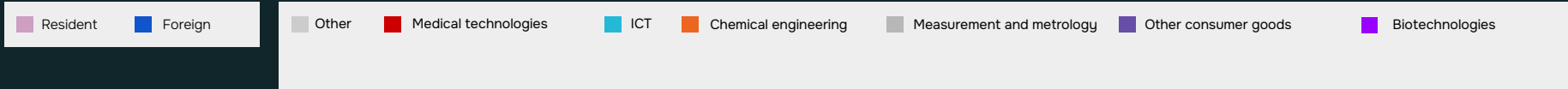
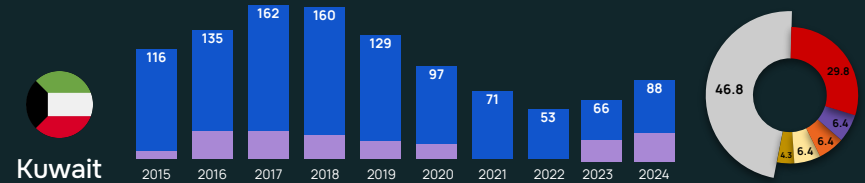
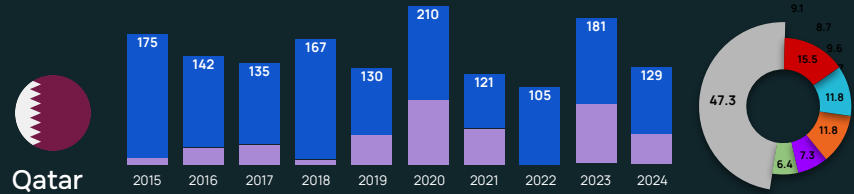


9
unicorns

Statistics on intellectual property filings:

What R&D areas attract the most interest from entrepreneurs?

1

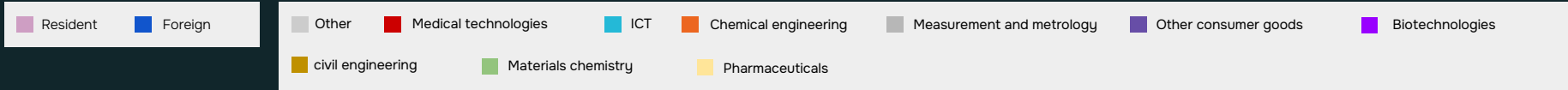
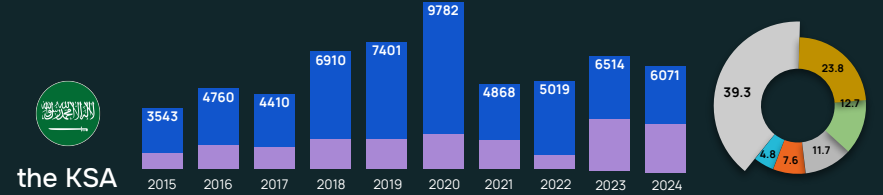


Across GCC countries, three fields currently dominate the R&D landscape: medical research, chemical engineering and advanced materials, and civil engineering. At the same time, the contribution of digital innovation stands out. A significant share of intellectual property filings relates to software-based solutions, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (8.7%) and Qatar (11.8%), according to 2024 data.

Statistics on intellectual property filings:

What R&D areas attract the most interest from entrepreneurs?

2



The UAE’s patent activity profile is particularly telling. In 2024, applications filed by non-residents significantly exceeded those from domestic applicants – 902 versus 282. This imbalance has persisted for years and highlights the Emirates’ strong appeal as a jurisdiction for international companies.

Saudi Arabia presents a different pattern. In 2024, the total number of patent filings was roughly 5.5 times higher than in the UAE. Equally notable is the applicant structure: resident filings outpaced those from foreign entities – 3141 versus 2930, pointing to a stronger domestic demand for protecting locally developed innovations.

Venture Investments in Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia: Dashboard

Population characteristics

35.3 mn

Population



\$1067

Minimum monthly wage:
SAR 4000



\$36 200

GDP per capita



20%

Corporate income tax rate + 2.5%
Islamic Zakat tax



Financial characteristics

\$35 bn

Direct foreign investment
in 2025

0.27

SAR / USD

5

Special economic
zones



Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy, is rapidly reducing its reliance on oil by building a robust startup ecosystem. At the heart of this shift is Vision 2030, a national strategy focused on creating a more agile, competitive economy.

To support this transition, the government is implementing reforms designed to streamline regulatory procedures, establish special economic zones, expand financing instruments, and strengthen investor engagement through the Ministry of Investment, the successor to SAGIA.

Overview of Saudi Arabia's foreign investment policies across key business sectors

1

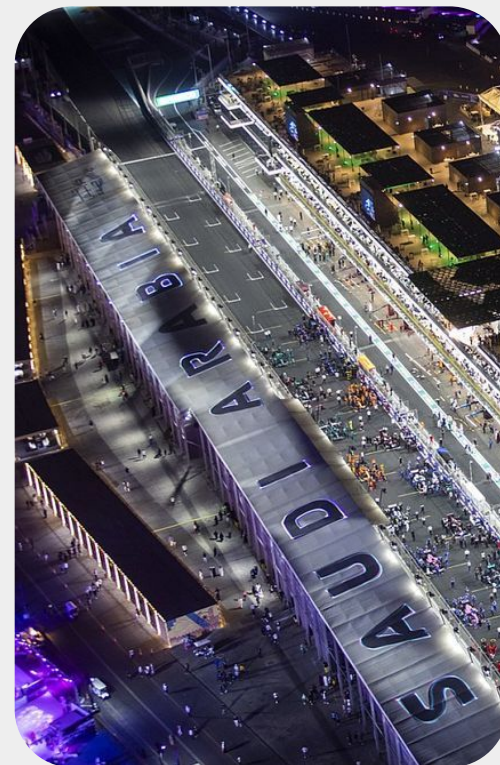
The National Investment Strategy, launched by Saudi Arabia in 2021, positions private enterprise and foreign capital as core drivers of economic transformation and reduced dependence on hydrocarbons. **By 2030, the country aims to raise the private sector's contribution to 65% of GDP, while increasing FDI inflows to 5.7% of GDP.**

By 2025, progress is visible, though a noticeable gap remains. According to the latest data, the private sector accounted for 47% of GDP, while FDI stood at approximately 1.6% of GDP.

Media and Entertainment

Saudi Arabia is developing its live events and entertainment industry in a systematic, state-backed way. A turning point came with the launch of Saudi Seasons in 2019: Riyadh Season alone drew 12 mn visitors in its first 90 days, and it quickly expanded into an entire ecosystem of formats: from the Esports World Cup to Formula 1 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix in Jeddah, Formula E, Dakar Rally, the Saudi Cup, as well as WWE shows and the Red Sea International Film Festival.

At the same time, the country is explicitly courting foreign capital. In 2025, the General Entertainment Authority, together with Ministry of Investment, brought 29 investment opportunities to market (theme parks, water parks, and VR projects), offering investors a ready-made pipeline.



Overview of Saudi Arabia's foreign investment policies across key business sectors

2



Mining Industries

In 2020, Saudi Arabia introduced new legislation that opened the mining sector to foreign investment. The goal was to systematically develop the kingdom's mineral resources, estimated to be worth \$2.5 tn.

Among the key milestones are major joint ventures led by state mining company Ma'aden, including partnerships worth \$12 bn in the aluminum sector and \$7 bn in phosphate fertilizers. Supporting this investment push is also a flagship industry platform – the annual Future Minerals Forum in Riyadh, which serves as a global showcase for investors.



Construction

The kingdom is systematically courting foreign investment into its giga-projects, the so-called “economic cities.” At the center of that agenda is NEOM, a city-of-the-future concept made up of multiple clusters, including THE LINE and Oxagon. In 2025–26 the giga-project portfolio entered a phase of reprioritization, with emphasis shifting toward phased delivery ahead of milestone events such as the 2029 Asian Winter Games and FIFA World Cup 2034.

In parallel, other flagship developments are moving forward: The Red Sea Project and Qiddiya. The former is building premium tourism infrastructure; the latter is shaping a major cluster for events, entertainment, and sport.



Tourism

Saudi Arabia's government is building dedicated financial “rails” to channel private investment into tourism. **One of the key instruments is the Tourism Development Fund**, with capital of \$4 bn. It is complemented by **the Kafalah program, which provides loan guarantees** of up to \$400 mn, reducing banks' risk and making financing more accessible for businesses.

In addition, in the early 2020s the Tourism Development Fund signed cooperation memorandums with local banks to co-finance projects across the hospitality sector.

Overview of Saudi Arabia's foreign investment policies across key business sectors

3



Transport and Logistics

A defining development of recent years has been the launch by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of **the National Transport and Logistics Strategy**, a roadmap for modernizing the sector and boosting its competitiveness.

Within the same framework sit new initiatives such as **Riyadh Air**, the kingdom's **second national carrier after Saudia**, established in 2023, along with a proposed \$147 bn investment program over the next 8 years.



5G and IoT

Saudi Arabia is positioning itself to become a global leader in 5G/6G and Internet of Things technologies. The benchmark is clear: by 2040, the country plans to **raise R&D investment to 2.5% of GDP**.

To sustain that trajectory, Saudi Arabia is building institutional platforms such as science parks and special economic zones designed to commercialize innovation by bringing government, business, and researchers into a single, connected ecosystem.



In brief: SEZ advantages

5%

the corporate income tax rate for 20 years instead of the standard 20%

0%

customs duty exemptions on imported equipment and manufacturing components within SEZ

Special

tax regime aligned with OECD principles, designed to reduce the risk of double taxation

0%

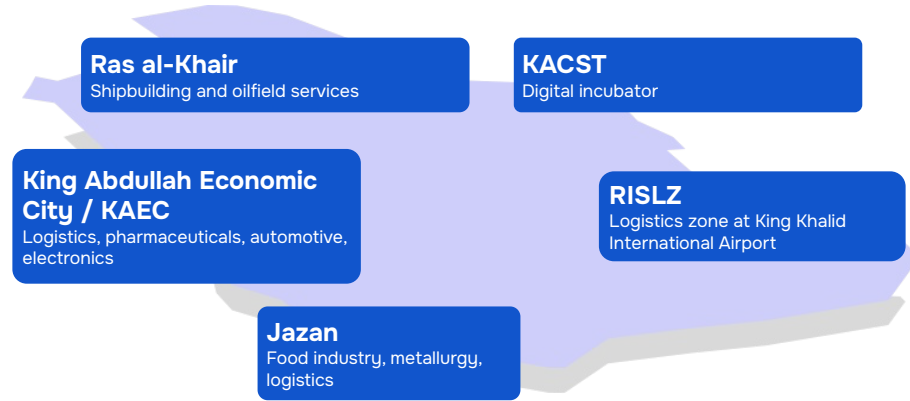
withholding tax on profit repatriation from SEZ to foreign jurisdictions

For 5 years

flexible rules for attracting foreign specialists instead of local labor

0%

VAT on goods circulating within the SEZ



Until 2016, foreign companies in Saudi Arabia were not allowed to hold 100% ownership of limited liability companies (LLCs). Over the past decade, the rules have been significantly liberalized. **Today, fully foreign-owned businesses can be established both within special economic zones, where tax regimes are typically more investor-friendly, and outside SEZs, although requirements there are often stricter.**

Market entry has been substantially **simplified under the new Investment Law, in force since February 2025**. The previous foreign investment license (the "MISA license") has been replaced by a unified investor registration that applies equally to local and foreign investors. Foreign investors can now operate in any sector outside a defined list of excluded activities; the law also codifies protections against expropriation, an incentives framework, and access to alternative dispute resolution. Sector-specific approvals and capital commitments still apply in selected activities – for example, non-GCC investors in wholesale and retail trade with 100% ownership typically commit at least SAR 30 million (~\$8 million).

Technology parks and research clusters in Saudi Arabia

Saudi technology parks and research teams based at university campuses such as **King Saud University, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals** play a significant role in advancing the knowledge economy.

Biotechnology and Medicine



Riyadh Techno Valley



Riyadh Techno Valley strengthens the business ecosystem by building collaboration programs between startups and venture partners, including **angel initiatives run jointly with Flat6Labs**. At King Saud University, the Aspiring Entrepreneurs programs help students and alumni take their first steps into entrepreneurship.

Petrochemistry



ICT



KAUST Research and Technology Park

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, the kingdom's flagship education hub, supports SMEs through programs such as SME Maharat and Knowledge Partnership, as well as through access to laboratories, talent pools, and intellectual property advisory services.

KAUST also provides dedicated funding instruments:

- **Near Term Grand Challenge Program** – grants of up to \$2 million for startups that have reached the proof-of-concept stage.
- **Research Translation Funding Program** – up to \$1 million to commercialize KAUST-owned IP over two years.
- **Impact Acceleration Grant** – \$50-100k grants to develop early project work and validate hypotheses.

Beyond the support mechanisms already mentioned, two initiatives are also worth highlighting:

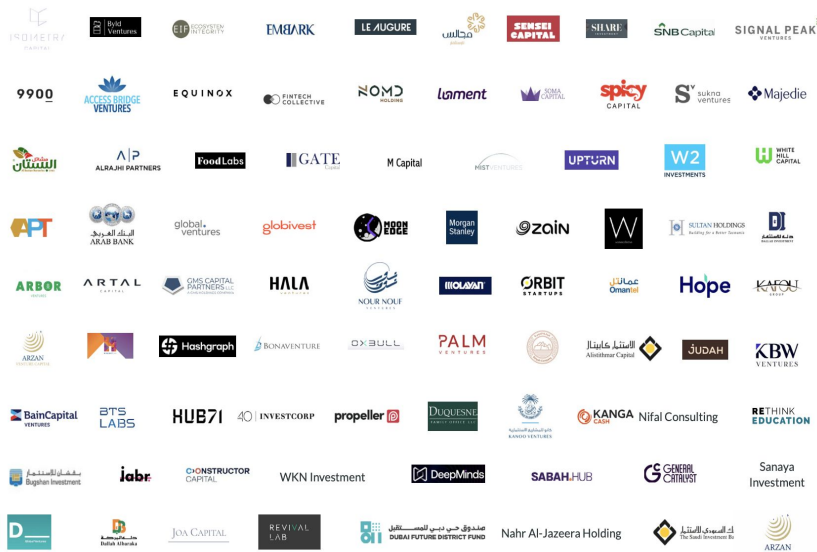
- **Badir Program for Technology Incubators and Accelerators** – a national network of tech incubators, offering mentorship, training, access to funding, and go-to-market support for innovation teams.
- **Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming, and Drones (SAFCSPP)** – runs programs and hackathons that encourage international tech teams to launch pilots and build solutions in Saudi Arabia.



Map of key Saudi Arabian startup investors

Investors from Saudi Arabia still set the tone in the kingdom's venture market, accounting for roughly 45% of all active participants. Approximately 10% comes from the United States business angels and funds. Across the wider region, the pool of unique players continues to broaden year after year.

Min 1 Deal



2-3 Deals



























4+ Deals



Fintech leads by the share of deals. SaaS and gaming rank second and third.

Transactions by sector in 2025, % of total transactions

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|-------|---|---------------|------|---|-----------|------|
|  | Fintech | 22% |  | Health tech | 2.8% |  | Insurtech | 1% |
|  | SaaS | 17.5% |  | Edtech | 2.4% |  | Mobility | 0.5% |
|  | Gaming | 7.6% |  | Legislative | 1.9% |  | Media | 0.5% |
|  | Logistics | 6% |  | HR | 1.9% |  | Web3 | 0.5% |
|  | AI | 6% |  | Foodtech | 1.9% | | | |
|  | Proptech | 5.2% |  | Cybersecurity | 1.4% | | | |
|  | E-commerce | 4.3% |  | Deeptech | 1.4% | | | |
|  | Contech | 3.8% |  | Automotive | 1% | | | |
|  | E-services | 2.8% |  | Agritech | 1% | | | |
|  | Martech | 2.8% |  | Spacetech | 1% | | | |

The startup community should look closely at how deals break down by stage and by sector. On the one hand, there's a clear surge in non-mega activity. Non-MEGA deal volume is up 101%, with growth concentrated in seed and early-stage rounds. On the other hand, **some experts are pointing to a “Series A gap.”** For growth investors, that concern can become an entry point, creating opportunities to invest from a stronger negotiating position.

And the headline figure of 257 deals isn't just a statistic. It represents **an expanding base of fast-scaling companies that will soon need real tools for scale.** This is especially visible in FinTech: startups raised \$506 million across 55 deals, and as they move into the growth phase they will increasingly demand cloud infrastructure, enterprise software, and other systems that make expansion operationally possible.

In the first 6 months of 2025, the number of exits matched the total recorded throughout all of 2024

M&A activity across MENA accelerated in 2025, with momentum led by the UAE and Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the market is getting younger: **half of the startups acquired in 2024-H1 2025 were less than 5 years old.**

The year's most significant shift has been the speed of regulatory approvals. In January 2025 alone, Saudi Arabia's antitrust authority approved 202 economic concentration transactions, a record level, and the trend continued throughout the year. **The average review time fell to 4.1 days, the fastest pace ever recorded.**

M&A activity dynamics in the KSA, 2024



Participants in M&A transactions in the KSA, 2024-H1 2025

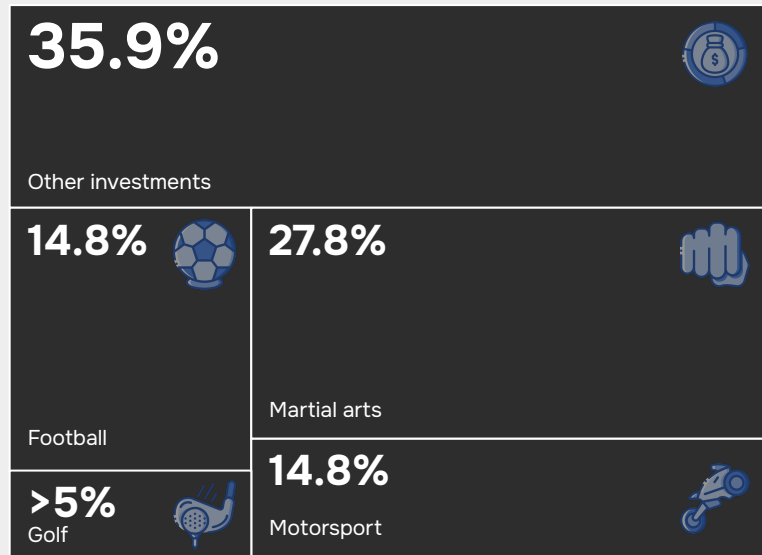
| | Acquired | | Acquirer |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | amanvision إيمان فيجن | 2024 IT | طارق طارق TAWAREF |
| 2 | عاين AYEN | 2024 Proptech | إيكونيك Econic |
| 3 | Rasseed | 2024 E-commerce | نانا nana |
| 4 | Taskedin | 2024 Enterprise soft | EDAFA |
| 5 | tweeq | 2024 Fintech | tabby |
| 6 | ShopUp Sary | 2025 E-commerce | SILQ |
| 7 | miran | 2025 Sporttech | welves |
| 8 | Pubbles | 2025 Media | MUSH SOCIAL |
| 9 | modLa | 2025 Fintech | T2 T2 |
| 10 | رداط RODAATT | 2025 Marketing | YALLA SPONSOR |

Sport occupies a far broader role within Vision 2030 than simple entertainment. For Saudi Arabia, it is **a tool for strengthening international image** and boosting tourism appeal. The domestic sports market is expanding at roughly 18% CAGR, compared with annual growth of about 0.5–2% in the United States and Europe.

At the same time, the kingdom's share of the global sports market remains relatively modest, but its growth potential is substantial. This outlook is supported by **plans to host the FIFA World Cup 2034 and by active investment in sportstech, including initiatives such as the NEOM Sports Open Innovation Program**. In parallel, the country is expanding its global footprint through major commercial events, including tournaments by Ultimate Fighting Championship and shows by WWE. The Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit has already become a symbol of this strategy, helping cement Saudi Arabia's presence on the global motorsport map.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| 2026 Tennis  | 2026 Equestrian  | 2027 Football  |
| 2026 Gaming  | 2029 Multidisciplinary  | 2034 Football  |

Sports supported by Saudi Arabia in 2020-2025, % of investment



1.6%



3%

The sports sector contributes to non-oil GDP

Growth forecast by 2030

In 2022, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled **the National Gaming and Esports Strategy**, aimed at transforming Saudi Arabia into a global hub for the gaming industry.

- As part of this push, **the sovereign wealth fund Public Investment Fund (PIF) established Savvy Games Group** and launched a \$38 billion program to support esports teams and develop gaming technologies. Major moves, such as the \$4.9 billion acquisition of Scopely and the launch of the Esports World Cup, illustrate the scale of these ambitions.
- **Through the Esports World Cup Club Partner Program** (with a total allocation of up to \$20 million), selected clubs receive up to \$1 million per organization to **fund content production and marketing** around the tournament in Riyadh. Partners include Fnatic, G2 Esports, Team Liquid, Natus Vincere, Team Vitality, Virtus.pro, Team Spirit, and others.

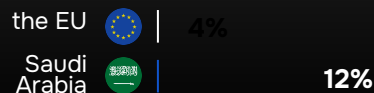
Looking further ahead, the kingdom aims to create 39,000+ jobs and launch 30+ games developed by local studios. With the first-ever Olympic Esports Games scheduled to take place in Riyadh in 2027, Saudi Arabia's ambitions in the sector increasingly appear within reach.

Government support is reinforced by strong consumer demand. By various estimates, around 25% of the population plays mobile games 5 days a week. What's more, this is a paying audience, so as many users making regular in-game purchases:

Consider their gaming donations "moderate",
% of Saudi Arabia's gaming population



Consider their gaming donations "substantial",
% of Saudi Arabia's gaming population



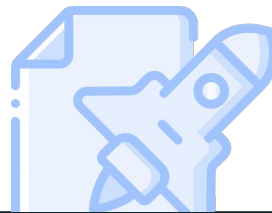
1

In 2025, Saudi Arabia's venture market hit a new high—\$1.7 billion across 257 deals, and in H1 2025 the kingdom accounted for more than half of all venture investment in MENA. In other words, Saudi Arabia is currently the main hub for the region's startup and investor community.



2

The startup ecosystem is sustained not only by private demand, but also by powerful state-backed participants. PIF, Saudi Venture Capital Company, and other development institutions effectively act as anchor LPs, reducing risk for other players. In parallel, regulatory sandboxes are enabling new models to be tested.



3

In 2025, fintech was the most active segment, with \$506 million raised across 55 deals. But the next challenge for these startups is scaling. So, demand is likely to rise soon for cloud infrastructure, data centers, enterprise software, and compliance capabilities.



→



4

The market is maturing in terms of ticket sizes, and that shift could create a funding gap at the mid-stage (Series A) level. For growth investors, this opens a potential entry window and a meaningful negotiating advantage.



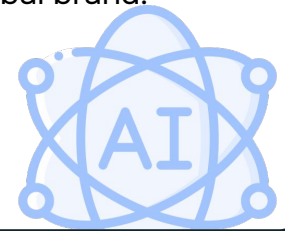
5

Saudi Arabia adopted an increasingly investor-friendly policy framework. Economic concentration transactions are approved by regulators in 4–5 days, 100% foreign ownership of LLCs became possible, and sector-specific support measures, along with incentives offered through SEZ, are in place.



6

Saudi Arabia is deliberately investing in the “economy of the future,” with tangible adoption of IoT in operational processes, as well as robotics and AI. At the same time, the country is making a major strategic bet on the entertainment sector, particularly sports events and gaming, positioning it as an exportable global brand.



About This Research

We took a comprehensive, multi-layered approach to build a clear, in-depth picture of the GCC venture ecosystem. Our methodology included:

Venture Deal Analysis

We collected and analyzed a broad dataset of venture transactions to identify key trends, investment patterns, and the leading players shaping the market.

Working with Databases

The team reviewed specialist databases such as Tracxn and PitchBook, compiling and cross-checking data on startups, funding rounds, and investor profiles.

Market Analysis

We conducted an in-depth market analysis, identifying emerging trends, sector growth dynamics, and potential points of technological breakthrough.

Use of Consulting Reports

We incorporated insights from leading consulting firms such as Bain, PwC, and MAGNiTT to strengthen our conclusions with industry benchmarks.

Expert Insights

We engaged industry experts to validate our findings and gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the venture landscape.

Additional Sources

To ensure a balanced and well-rounded analysis, we incorporated data from academic publications, government reports, and other relevant sources.



By bringing these diverse sources together, we built a cohesive view of the venture ecosystem: its key trends, challenges, and opportunities.

Specialized Databases and Data Portals

- United Nations data portal
- The World Bank
- TheGlobalEconomy.com
- Statista
- F6S
- Pitchbook
- Tracxn
- MAGNITT
- Crunchbase
- Dealroom

Industry Research

- MAGNITT, Saudi Arabia Venture Capital Report H1 2025.
- MAGNITT, Saudi Arabia Venture Capital Report 2024.
- Plug and Play Tech Centre, KSA 2023 Venture Investment Report.
- ZTO, Saudi VC Report, sponsored by impact46 and Waad Investment.
- Multiples Knowledge Hub, MENA Tech Startups funding rounds in 2024.
- WIPO, Saudi Arabia IP statistical profile.
- Wamda, 2025 in Review: Investments in MENA.

Articles and Other Sources

- PwC, Saudi Arabia: Establishment of new SEZ Report – 2023.
- Arab News: Saudi Arabia wraps up 2025 with mega investment events across key sectors.
- Wamda: Outliers, SVC launch 2026 Fellowship to build Saudi and MENA tech leaders.
- Invest Saudi
- MISA: Investor Guide - 2025.
- GEA: “GEA” Launches 29 New Opportunities in Collaboration with the Ministry of Investment
- SportsTechX, Saudi Arabia Sport Business & Tech Report

and many other...

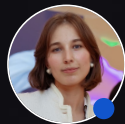
Thank you!

If you have a question or would like to start a collaboration, feel free to reach out to us.




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