# UAE’s AI companion market set to quintuple by 2030 as residents turn to chatbots for emotional support



As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to establish a foothold in daily life, residents of the UAE are increasingly embracing these technologies for companionship, relationship guidance, and emotional support. This significant shift reflects evolving social dynamics where digital solutions are sought after for personal interactions. According to Andreas Hassellöf, CEO of Ombori and Phygrid, “This rise in AI companion usage reflects a broader shift in emotional behaviour and relationship expectations in the digital age.” He notes that the UAE’s well-developed digital landscape, combined with high smartphone adoption, has led to a growing acceptance of AI as a viable companion.

Text-based AI companions remain popular, but a notable trend towards immersive, multi-modal experiences—incorporating voice and visual elements—is emerging. Hassellöf attributes the rise in AI girlfriend applications largely to younger demographics, a demographic significantly represented within the UAE's tech-savvy population. Notably, a staggering one in four adults globally has engaged in flirtatious exchanges with AI chatbots, highlighting a dramatic change in the way individuals, particularly digital natives, navigate romantic and emotional relationships.

Looking at the figures, the UAE’s AI companion market was valued at approximately $734 million in 2024 with expectations to soar to $3.6 billion by 2030, according to Horizon Grand View Research. This growth positions the UAE as a critical player in the AI landscape, currently accounting for 2.6% of the global market. Awareness and usage of generative AI among UAE consumers are remarkably high, with a Boston Consulting Group report indicating that 91% are familiar with such technologies and 34% actively engage with them—numbers that climb even higher among students, with 32% reporting weekly interactions.

The increasing reliance on AI companions can be traced, in part, to the social isolation many experience in modern life. Deepak Renganathan, an AI expert and author, explains, “People today don’t have time to truly listen to one another, which contributes to widespread loneliness.” Thus, AI companions offer an attractive solution, providing a safe, non-judgmental space for emotional expression. Renganathan emphasises the adaptability of these chatbots, which learn over time to recognise users’ emotional cues and preferences, tailoring interactions to offer supportive companionship.

Platforms such as Replika and Character.ai have emerged as leaders in this sector, providing users with a range of AI experiences—some even allowing for explicit content, though each has implemented guidelines to ensure respectful interaction. Hassellöf outlines several driving factors behind the appeal of these AI applications: they alleviate loneliness, users can customise their experiences, and advances in technology enhance the realism of interactions. He also notes that the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic has expedited exploration of alternative relationship forms, including those facilitated by AI.

However, mental health professionals caution about the potential psychological ramifications these AI companions might have, especially concerning traditional romantic relationships. Dr Nidhi Kumar, a specialist psychiatrist at Aster Clinic, warns that users could start comparing real relationships to idealised interactions with AI, which may lead to dissatisfaction or emotional detachment from human partners. Kumar advises that it is essential for couples to maintain clear communication about their use of AI companions, ensuring that they prioritise genuine human connections.

As the UAE progresses towards becoming a prominent player in the global AI landscape, its residents are navigating these new digital emotional terrains with a blend of enthusiasm and caution. With the potential to redefine companionship, these AI technologies offer both comfort and challenges that will likely shape interpersonal relationships for years to come.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[4]](https://www.middleeastainews.com/p/uae-ai-market-to-reach-46-billion)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[2]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[3]](https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/ai-companion-market/uae)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://gulfindustryonline.com/ArticleTA/431210), [[6]](https://dailyguardian.ae/abu-dhabis-ai-sector-booms-with-41-3-annual-surge-in-new-companies-news/)
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* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[2]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[5]](https://gulfindustryonline.com/ArticleTA/431210)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[3]](https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/ai-companion-market/uae), [[6]](https://dailyguardian.ae/abu-dhabis-ai-sector-booms-with-41-3-annual-surge-in-new-companies-news/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[5]](https://gulfindustryonline.com/ArticleTA/431210), [[6]](https://dailyguardian.ae/abu-dhabis-ai-sector-booms-with-41-3-annual-surge-in-new-companies-news/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[2]](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship), [[3]](https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/ai-companion-market/uae)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/tech/uae-residents-use-ai-for-love-friendship> - This article discusses the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) by UAE residents for companionship, relationship advice, and emotional support. It highlights the shift in emotional behaviour and relationship expectations in the digital age, with AI companions offering non-judgmental spaces for users to share their emotions. The piece also mentions the growth of AI companion applications worldwide, particularly among younger demographics, and the UAE's significant engagement with generative AI technologies, with the AI companion market projected to reach $3.6 billion by 2030.
3. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/ai-companion-market/uae> - This report provides an outlook on the UAE AI companion market, projecting a revenue of $3,593.6 million by 2030, with a compound annual growth rate of 30.3% from 2025 to 2030. It highlights the dominance of text-based AI companions in 2024 and the rapid growth of multi-modal AI companions during the forecast period. The UAE accounted for 2.6% of the global AI companion market in 2024 and is expected to lead the Middle East and Africa region by 2030.
4. <https://www.middleeastainews.com/p/uae-ai-market-to-reach-46-billion> - This article reports on a study by Abu Dhabi-based Trends Research & Advisory, which forecasts the UAE's artificial intelligence market to grow from $3.47 billion in 2023-2024 to $46.33 billion by 2030. The study attributes this growth to government-led initiatives, strategic frameworks, and private sector investments, aiming to contribute 14% to the country's GDP by 2030. It also highlights the UAE's efforts to position itself as a global hub for AI innovation and development.
5. <https://gulfindustryonline.com/ArticleTA/431210> - This article discusses the UAE's artificial intelligence market, which is projected to grow from $3.47 billion in 2023-2024 to $46.3 billion by 2030. The sector is expected to contribute 14% to the country's GDP by 2030, equating to approximately $100 billion. The article highlights the UAE's AI strategy, government-led initiatives, and private sector investments, making AI one of the most appealing investment spaces in the UAE’s economy.
6. <https://dailyguardian.ae/abu-dhabis-ai-sector-booms-with-41-3-annual-surge-in-new-companies-news/> - This article reports on the rapid growth of Abu Dhabi's AI sector, with over 400 AI companies registered by the end of the second quarter of 2024. The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry noted that, on average, one AI company was established every two days in the first half of 2024, marking a 41.3% growth compared to the previous year. This underscores Abu Dhabi's commitment to becoming a global hub for innovation and AI.
7. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business-technology-review/ai-set-for-unprecedented-growth> - This article discusses the transformative power of AI in the UAE's industries and its potential to boost the country's economy by 2030. It highlights the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's projected added value of $320 billion by 2030, with the UAE poised to lead this transformation, potentially contributing up to 14% of its GDP by 2030. The article also mentions the oil and gas industry's adoption of AI to enhance efficiency and innovation.