

# Shisha Masters

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**6,000  
SHISHA  
LOUNGES  
IN THE  
PALM OF  
YOUR  
HAND**

**A  
CHAMPION  
OF  
Shish'Art  
de Vivre**

**MEET  
AMANI SALMA  
CHICHAMAPS  
FOUNDER**



**The Chichamaps mobile App covers 1,300 cities 6,000 lounges and 200 shops. We sat down with Amani Salma, founder and CEO of Chichamaps, a web and mobile platform that links managers of shisha bars with shisha lovers.**

Amani was born in Paris, France. She studied International Business and later on, Digital Marketing. She has always been passionate about new technologies and the digital world. Growing up in the suburbs of Paris, she was raised amongst two cultures, French and Lebanese.

**Can you remember the first shisha flavour or product you ever tried?** The first time I tried shisha it was in Lebanon, a double apple shisha. Now I find it a little intense.

**What is your favourite shisha flavour and why?** Now, my favorite flavor is mint from Al Fakher. Simple, tasty and timeless.

**When and why did you first decide to enter the shisha business?** As a regular shisha lover, I like to have an “afterwork” shisha with some friends once to twice a week. I like the chilled friendliness that naturally comes with a shisha atmosphere.

Somehow I realized that as soon as I was leaving my city or the country, I had no clue where to replicate these shisha moments. So I ended up doing endless research on the internet and social media platforms to find the perfect place. Evolving in the digital area, I witnessed how any need, even the weirdest one, had it’s dedicated app. I was surprised to find out that no proper application was available in the market back then. As I love challenges, and I have a strong web/marketing background, I decided to give it a try and do it by myself !

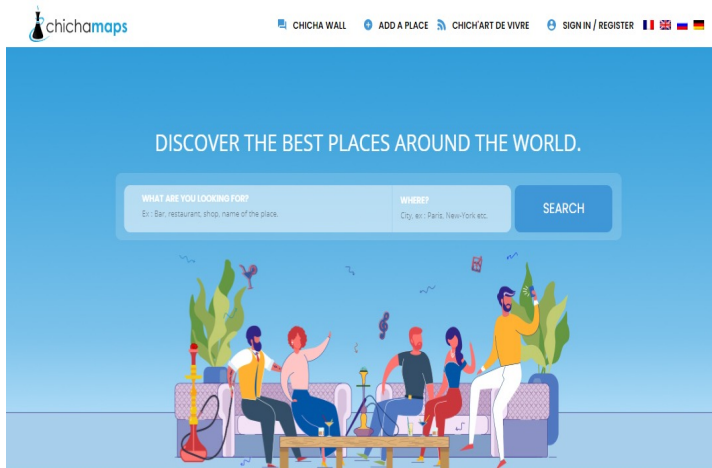


**“THE MAIN CHALLENGE I HAD TO FACE IN BUILDING THIS BUSINESS WAS TO BE BOLD AND ASSERTIVE AS A WOMAN IN A MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRY”**

**What challenges have you had to face in building your business?** Chichamaps is my first entrepreneurial project. Entrepreneurship comes with loads of challenges: rewarding challenges, but also harsh challenges. I think among the main I would say: putting my career on hold, building a strong and committed team, dealing with the unknown, and finally the main challenge I had to face in building this business was to be bold and assertive as a woman in a male dominated industry.

**How have you managed to survive through the pandemic?** My team and I managed to survive by stretching up our potential of adaptability to the maximum. We had to undergo several updates and pay close attention to the evolution of the pandemic in order to adapt our services accordingly and help our clients as much as we could.

**Where do you see the shisha business in 10 years?** I believe that the shisha business in ten years will be much bigger and very inclusive. For example, with more tobacco free shisha products for those who worry about nicotine content but who still want to enjoy its sociability, that I believe is the main reason why it became that popular today.



**Explore Chichamaps at [www.chichamaps.com](http://www.chichamaps.com)**

**If you could choose any company or business person in the world, which do you admire the most? And Why?**

I admire Melanie Perkins, the founder of Canva, not only because she is a female entrepreneur but also because she managed to democratize existing technologies for better use by more people, namely a web-based design platform.

**How would your colleagues or employees describe your business and management style?**

As I consider any single member of my team as an equal partner with ideas and opinions worth my consideration, I never really felt that I was "managing" them but mostly maybe guiding them with my vision of the project. Having a horizontal kind of management involved them even more and made them take part fully in the project.

**What goals do you have for your life business?**

As for Chichamaps, my goal would be to make it the main digital platform dedicated to the shisha industry on one hand, and on the other hand, I would like to use it as a tool to break all the stereotypes around this area. We use our blog "Chich'Art de Vivre" to that end by writing and posting several contents about the culture, the history and the people involved in this sector.

**What do you think is important in order to be successful in the shisha world?**

It is important to develop and nurture a strong network in order to be successful in the shisha world. Based on my personal experience, I can tell that shisha industry professionals are very open and keen to help.

**What would you recommend to someone who wishes to start a business in the shisha sector?**

As a Marketing Consultant, and no matter what the sector is, I would recommend anybody to take the time to study the market and to evaluate the needs of the customers before starting a business. Benchmarking empowers you to better understand the competition, to set clear business goals and finally to properly identify the gap between a specific market and its clients and provide the most adapted product or service.

**“IT IS IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE A STRONG NETWORK IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE SHISHA WORLD.”**

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*(Left to right) Amani Salma (CEO), Maya Akoum (Project Manager).*

**“WHAT MAKES A PLACE THE BEST TO ENJOY A SHISHA IS THE PEOPLE WITH WHOM YOU SHARE THIS MOMENT.”**

**Which qualities do you look for in new employees?**

I strongly believe that we can learn anything. I myself had the opportunity to do so many different jobs in my life so far, that have had nothing to do with my studies.

So when looking for a new employee I focus on personality. I would rather work with someone with little experience but who is curious, motivated and flexible, rather than someone with ten years experience who won't cope with the entrepreneurial mindset and agility.

**Considering all the individual parts of the shisha (hose, bowl, stem, head, coal) describe your perfect shisha set up.**

So far, my perfect shisha combo consists of a Wookah, a disposable hose, a kaloud lotus, the Al Fakher mint tobacco with the BlackCoco charcoal.

**Where is the best venue in the world to enjoy a shisha?**

In my opinion, what makes a place the best to enjoy a shisha is the people with whom you share this moment. It could be anywhere in the world, from the fanciest venue to the simplest one, by the sea or in some modest place. In the end, I'm quite adaptable as long as I can be with cool people and enjoy my mint shisha!