Unlocking Potential: Addressing Societal and Economic Barriers for Qatari Youth in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector

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Abstract

This quantitative research examines the factors discouraging Qatari youth from pursuing careers in the tourism and hospitality sector. It explores socio-cultural and industry-specific barriers, evaluates the effectiveness of government and private initiatives supporting local employment in the field, and proposes strategies to enhance the sector's appeal to Qatari youth. The findings reveal that societal attitudes play a significant role in shaping career choices, with 31% of respondents perceived a lack of community acceptance and 30.3% expressing uncertainty about societal openness to such roles. Many participants also have associated hospitality jobs with a negative impact on self-esteem. Additionally, 17% cited religious concerns, believing that Islam does not endorse such professions. Beyond societal influences, financial and occupational factors contribute to the reluctance of Qatari youth to enter the hospitality industry. Low financial incentives and demanding working conditions—such as long hours and high-pressure environments—were key deterrents. Compared to lucrative sectors like oil, gas, and banking, hospitality careers offer fewer financial benefits and limited opportunities for professional advancement, making alternative industries more attractive to Qatari job seekers.

Keywords: *Hospitality Industry, employment, Qatari youth, Qatar National Vision 2030*

Introduction

Qatar boasts one of the richest economies globally, driven by its vast natural gas and petroleum reserves. These resources account for over 70% of government revenue, 60% of GDP, and approximately 85% of export earnings. This economic strength has propelled Qatar's ranking in the Global Competitiveness Report 2024 to 11th globally, reflecting its robust performance in areas such as government efficiency, economic resilience, and business sector competitiveness (Sawaly et al., 2024). However, Qatar's reliance on hydrocarbons has motivated its leadership to pursue economic diversification to meet the ambitions of Qatar National Vision 2030, which seeks to balance economic growth with human and environmental development (Al-Sulaiti et al., 2024).

In January 2024, Qatar launched the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) 2024-2030, the final stage toward achieving Vision 2030. This strategy aims to accelerate economic diversification, expand North Field LNG production, and position Qatar as a top destination for investors (Mysterybox, 2024). The diversification strategy has been accelerated by the success of the FIFA World Cup 2022, which highlighted Qatar's potential as a global tourism and hospitality hub. In 2023, Qatar welcomed over four million visitors, with tourism becoming a cornerstone of its economic diversification efforts (qatartourism, n.d). Record-breaking visitor numbers in 2024 underscore the growing significance of this sector, which has seen substantial investments, including $17 billion in infrastructure development for hotels, cultural sites, and sporting facilities (Ozturk & Al-Kuwari, 2021). These initiatives are expected to drive annual growth in Qatar's hospitality industry, projected to expand at a CAGR of 11% between 2025 and 2028, making it the fastest-growing sector among GCC countries.

It is forecasted that the Hotels market in Qatar will witness a substantial surge in revenue, with projections indicating a rise to US$0.54bn in 2025. Furthermore, it is expected that this upward trend will continue with an annual growth rate (CAGR 2025-2029) of 3.09%, resulting in a projected market volume of US$0.61bn by 2029. Additionally, the number of users in the Hotels market is expected to reach 1.23m users by 2029, with a user penetration rate of 35.5% in 2025, rising to 43.2% by 2029 (Alpen Capital, 2024).

Despite these promising developments, a significant challenge remains—the underrepresentation of Qatari youth in the tourism and hospitality sector. With over 127,000 professionals needed by 2030, the sector

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offers enormous opportunities. However, Qataris rarely pursue careers in this industry, influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and educational barriers (Hussain, 2024). Cultural values and Islamic principles discourage participation in roles involving practices such as serving alcohol or working in nightlife venues. Wages in the hospitality sector are perceived as substandard, and concerns about limited professional development opportunities further deter interest (Giousmpasoglou, 2024). Gender and religious restrictions also play a role, with societal norms and legislative limitations affecting women's workforce participation despite their strong presence in higher education. Religious beliefs similarly discourage some men from engaging in certain roles (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

The lack of specialized hospitality management programs in Qatar hinders professional development pathways for Qataris, further exacerbating the problem. Additionally, the predominance of expatriate workers in the hospitality sector creates cultural and linguistic barriers, making it challenging for locals to integrate (Alsuwaidi, 2020).

This research seeks to understand these barriers and propose actionable solutions to increase Qatari participation in the hospitality industry. It also aims to support Qatar's broader economic diversification efforts and contribute to the realization of its national vision. The objectives of this study are to analyze the socio-cultural and industry-specific barriers deterring Qatari youth from pursuing careers in hospitality, evaluate the support provided by government and private initiatives, and propose recommendations to enhance the attractiveness of hospitality careers for Qatari youth.

The study will try to answer the following questions:

What are the most critical socio-culture-related barriers facing Qataris who are trying to join the hospitality industry in Qatar? 2. What are the most critical hospitality industry-related barriers facing Qataris who are trying to join it? 3. How supportive is the government and private sector to Qatarization in the hospitality industry in Qatar? 4. What can be done to improve Qataris representation in the hospitality industry in Qatar?

Literature Review

The Hospitality Industry in Qatar: Growth and Future Prospects

Qatar's hospitality sector is projected to rise at a CAGR of 11.0% from US$ 0.9 billion in 2023 to US$ 1.5 billion in 2028, registering the fastest growth among the GCC countries. Qatar has grown as a global tourism destination driven by hosting large-scale sporting events and the continuous development of tourism-related infrastructure over the past two years (Alpen Capital, 2024).

The growth momentum that built up since the FIFA World Cup 2022 is expected to continue, owing to the strategies implemented by the government since the conclusion of the tournament (Hajjaj et al., 2024).

Qatar has also developed a number of tourist attractions, including various cultural and modern landmarks, such as the Meryal Water Park, The Pearl Island, and the Katara cultural village. Under its national tourism strategy, the country aims to attract about six million visitors annually and increase the tourism sector's contribution to GDP to 12.0% by 203086 (The Peninsula Newspaper, 2024). To achieve these targets, Qatar has placed its focus on hosting large-scale international events to attract tourists to the country.

In 2024 alone, Qatar has hosted over 80 events scheduled throughout the year, including cultural festivals, sports tournaments, e-mobility panels, summits, and others87. These efforts from the government to increase the number of international tourists in the country are expected to drive demand for accommodation and hospitality services across the country (Qatar tourism, n.d.).

Therefore, the hotel room supply in Qatar is projected to grow at an annualized rate of 6.3% from 2023 to 2028, and the occupancy rate is estimated to expand to 65.0% by 2028. Consequently, the ADRs are expected to grow at a CAGR of 2.1%, reaching US$ 125.0 by 2028 from US$ 112.6 in 2023, while RevPAR

is anticipated to rise at a CAGR of 4.5% to reach US$ 81.2 by 2028 from US$ 65.3 in 2023 (Alpen Capital, 2024) (see table 1).

Table 1. *Qatar Hospitality Market Forecast*

Particulars	2023E	2024F	2026F	2028F
Hotels	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.5
Serviced apartment	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.0
Key Operating Metrics				
Occupancy rate	58.0%	59.0%	61.5%	56.0%
ADR (US)	112.6	115.4	120.1	125.0
RevPAR (US)	65.3	68.1	73.9	81.2
Total Room Capacity	39.165	41.665	47.165	53.165

Source: Alpen Capital

Note: E- Estimated; F- Forecasted

Qatar's National Tourism Strategy 2030 aims to attract six million visitors annually and increase the tourism industry's contribution to the GDP to 12.0% by 2030. Following the successful leverage of momentum from the FIFA World Cup 2022, Qatar Tourism has announced multiple plans and programs over the past year to achieve the objectives outlined in the national tourism strategy. In December 2023, Qatar Tourism released the 2024 event calendar, featuring over 80 distinct events scheduled throughout the year, including cultural gatherings, sports championships, summits, and others. Moreover, Qatar has several hospitality-related infrastructure projects underway to meet the accommodation needs resulting from the anticipated surge in tourism.

Qatari Representation in the Hospitality Industry

In the state of Qatar, employment is largely associated with social experience and social status because the community or society in Qatar is collectivistic (AlHomsi, 2016). It means doing a job in Qatar is beyond personal interest and based on social class and society measures or views.

Qatar's hospitality sector struggles to attract Qatari employees. Shankman (2015) reported that out of 61,777 workers in the sector, fewer than 100 were Qatari. According to Fromherz (2017), this underrepresentation stems from factors such as low salaries, the small Qatari population, high work pressure, and cultural or religious beliefs, as many Muslim Qataris avoid working in establishments like nightclubs or hotels that serve alcohol.

Moreover, the practice that has been a witness in the Qatar hospitality sector is they usually hire non-Qataris to get the advantage of low salaries contrasts to the national wage scale. Thus, it has been estimated that the low wage scale in the Qatar hospitality sector discourages Qataris to join this industry.

A range of challenges deters Qatari youth from pursuing private sector jobs, with the most significant being the perceived lack of job security and insufficient benefits compared to the government sector. Many young people view government jobs as more stable, with superior retirement packages, higher salaries, shorter working hours, and reduced job pressures. Additionally, the private sector is seen as risky due to its vulnerability to economic fluctuations, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which heightens concerns about arbitrary or sudden terminations. This perception reinforces the appeal of government jobs, which are regarded as prestigious and more secure.

According to Al-Homsi, (2016), there are various reasons behind the less representation of Qatari people in the hospitality sector. The first reason is the Qataris population is not well suited to the market economy's needs and skills. Secondly, the Qatari population takes job opportunities from the public sector because of

the high wage scale and job security. He further argues that there are some social, cultural and religious barriers that limit the Qatari people to working in the hospitality sector.

Socio-Culture Challenges of the Hospitality Industry in Qatar

Sustainability has become an increasing area of concern in the hospitality sector globally over the past decades (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). While political and economic challenges are prominent, socio-cultural challenges also play a significant role, particularly in Qatar's hospitality sector.

Culture, as defined by various scholars, encompasses the repertoire of human behaviors and practices transmitted across generations. Sewell (2004) describes culture as the way of life of individuals or groups shaped by societal norms over time. Zittoun and Gillespie (2015) outline five key pillars of culture: values, beliefs, symbols, rituals, and thought processes. Kharel (2018) identifies eight components influencing cultural perception, including technology, social institutions, customs, language, values, education, aesthetics, and religion.

In Qatar, rapid globalization and economic growth have created tension between traditional cultural values and modern work practices. The hospitality sector, which caters to diverse international visitors, poses unique challenges to local employees due to cultural clashes. For example, practices such as the consumption and service of alcohol conflict with Islamic values, creating barriers for Qatari employees in the industry (ElShenawy, 2017).

> Key socio-cultural challenges in Qatar's hospitality industry include:

- **Cultural Conflicts**: Qataris emphasize collectivism and prioritize social values over financial gains. Practices like serving alcohol or working in nightclubs are often at odds with Islamic principles, deterring many Qataris from joining the sector (Nair & Choudhary, 2018).

- **Low Wages and Limited Labor Rights**: Qataris perceive wages in the hospitality sector as below national standards, compounded by concerns over labor rights and professional development opportunities (Gregoric, 2014).

- **Gender and Religious Restrictions**: Islamic cultural values, along with Qatari legislation, limit women's participation in the workforce. Despite making up two-thirds of students at Qatar University, Qatari women rarely pursue careers in hospitality (Harkness, 2012). Religious beliefs also discourage some Muslim men from working in establishments serving alcohol.

- **Education and Professional Development**: The lack of specialized educational institutions for hospitality management in Qatar hinders Qataris from pursuing professional growth in the sector (Gregoric, 2014).

- **Cultural and Language Barriers**: With 75% of hospitality workers being non-Qatari, local employees often face difficulties integrating due to cultural and linguistic differences. Additionally, the reliance on inexpensive foreign labor exacerbates these challenges (Harkness, 2012).

Industry Barriers of the Hospitality Industry in Qatar

Industrial barriers are obstacles that hinder individuals from entering or thriving in specific industries, often reducing employee productivity and performance (Zainol et al., 2016). In Qatar's hospitality sector, these barriers significantly impact local participation, leading to a high turnover rate and limited employment among Qataris.

Key internal challenges include the nature of the work, workload, and working conditions. According to Shankman (2015), the hospitality sector in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region sees low local participation due to long working hours and unfavorable conditions. Hospitality jobs often demand physical exertion and involve longer hours compared to other industries, deterring many Qataris, particularly younger

individuals, from pursuing careers in the sector. Employers in the industry prefer hiring young, attentive workers, but these conditions demotivate potential local applicants. Although 33% of the workforce in Qatar's hospitality sector comprises young individuals (MDPS, 2016), most are expatriates.

Additionally, the industry's reliance on low wages to reduce costs further discourages locals from joining. Hiring experienced employees is often costly, prompting employers to prefer expatriate workers willing to accept lower pay (Picolla & Irizar, 2018). Moreover, the physically demanding nature of many hospitality roles makes them less appealing to older workers (Sobh & Belk, 2011).

The influx of expatriates and immigrant workers presents another significant challenge. Studies indicate that 75% of Qatar's hospitality workforce comprises expatriates, while Qataris make up less than 0.1% (Nair & Choudhary, 2018). This reliance on foreign labor creates language and cultural barriers, complicating collaboration between local and expatriate employees. Cultural diversity often leads to conflicts arising from differing opinions and beliefs, further discouraging locals from entering or remaining in the industry (Sadi & Henderson, 2005; Zainol et al., 2016).

The hospitality sector's high-pressure environment exacerbates stress and dissatisfaction among employees. The demanding workloads and exhausting schedules contribute to high turnover rates, as employees seek less strenuous job opportunities (Chikwe, 2009). Additionally, issues like sexual harassment, though less frequently discussed, pose significant challenges for local workers and contribute to attrition.

Another barrier is the limited potential for professional growth in the hospitality sector. In many countries, young people work in hospitality during their studies to support tuition and living expenses. However, in Qatar, where the government often funds education, this practice is uncommon (Sadi & Henderson, 2005; Zainol et al., 2016). Consequently, Qataris perceive hospitality jobs as short-term roles with no clear pathway to a fulfilling career. The absence of defined career progression discourages locals from viewing the sector as a viable long-term option.

The hospitality sector's reliance on low-cost immigrant labor results in wage scales significantly below national standards. This disparity, combined with a lack of financial incentives, makes the sector unattractive to Qataris. Many locals prioritize financial stability and career prospects, which the hospitality industry fails to offer (Picolla & Irizar, 2018).

Official Support

The government support act as a fundamental driver of growth and success in the hospitality sector in Qatar. Qatar leadership identifies the tourism industry as one of the five key sectors that contribute to the growth of Qatar's economy and to improve private stakeholder participation (GCC Hospitality Industry, 2023). The government promotes a family-centered, friendly centered, culture authentic workplace to the Qatari people so that they are motivated to work in the hospitability sector. The existing government and private sector support to attract the Qataris people have not properly witnessed. Although, according to the Qatar National Vision 2030 the human resource development and advancement and developments in the hospitality sector are the fundamental aims that the leaders in Qatar will strive to achieve before 2030.

The government of Qatar launched huge investments recently to attract tourists from around the globe. However, there is not tangible advancement in their efforts to enroll Qataris in the sector. One of the most common reasons why GCC governments do not have a plan or a strategy to attract locals to the hospitality sector is the advantage of cheap labor by hiring expatriates (GCC Hospitality Industry, 2018); UAEBC, 2019). The private sector in Qatar plays a significant role in growing the private economy; Qatari people make up only 8% of private-sector employment in all industries in Qatar where 58% of them are in public administration and services (www.psa.gov.qa, 2019). Al-Horr and Salih, (2011), argue that to accelerate the labor market share with Qatari people the need to emphasize the private sector. It is the state's responsibility to provide opportunities to the people in the labor market along with competitive wages and other incentives. In this regard during 2000, the Qatar leadership first time announced a strategic Qatarization Plan that introduced a quota that emphasizing 50% participation of Qatari people energy, oil, and gas sector. Since then, comprehensive efforts have been made to promote Qatarization in all sectors by ensuring at

least 20% Qataris participation in private and semi-private firms. To some extent, Qatarization has been found in the oil and gas and energy sector but regarding the hospitality sector, no witness has been found. Al-Mansoori (2018), argue that Qatarization is a law that aims to promote local recruitment in Qatar in all sectors and all organizations in the country, but, it does not prove to be effective and active in the private sector like hospitality while presence can be found in oil and gas industries and bank. The hospitality sector does not focus on the government Qatarization process by knowing the fact that Qataris people demand a high wage scale which affects their profitability, thus they prefer to recruit expatriates for various hospitality jobs (Jureidini, 2014).

In order to enhance human resource development, Qatar leaders need to put efforts into Qatari participation in the labor market. Due to which one of the key pillars or aspects of Qatar Nation Vision 2030 is human resource development by educating the population, building a healthy population; physically and mentally and increase Qataris participation in the motivated workforce. in 2030 vision Qatar leaders highlight to plan a world-class educational system that equips Qatari people to fulfill the demand of Qatar industrial sector, development of formal and informal education system for Qatar young children, further, they have the plan to boost Qataris participation in the workplace through large investment in training programs and certifications, offer incentives to Qataris to enter in professional roles in the hospitality sector, a high-level training opportunity for all citizen as per their interest as well as rise opportunities and vocational support for Qataris women (Tan et al., 2014).
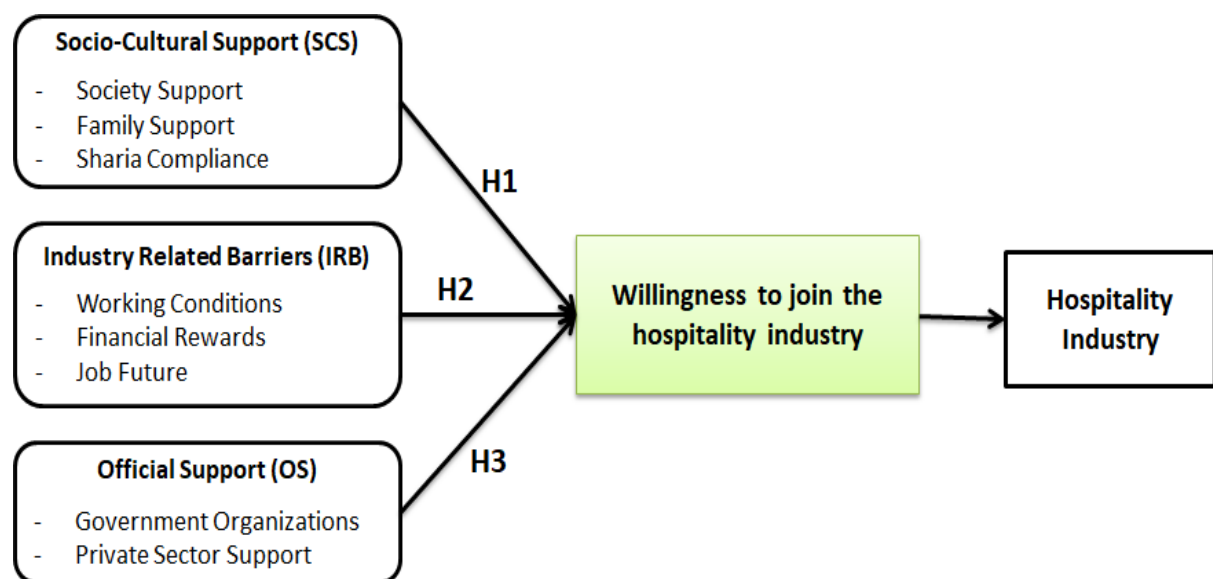
Theoretical Framework

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Figure 1 presents the variables that have an impact on Qataris willingness to join the hospitality industry. The literature review concludes that studying those variables and determining methods to reduce their impact will pave the road for motivated Qatari workforce in the hospitality industry.

The variables are also set to extract hypotheses for testing. The variables were driven from two major barriers sects, the hospitality industry (financial rewards, work nature, and job future), and the community barriers (social and religious). Those categories were classified based on the literature review readings and representation of what may prevent locals from working in the hospitality industry. Those variables and factors will be studied in order to understand the extent to which each of them affects Qataris who are willing to or thinking to work in the hospitality industry in Qatar. The variables above presented four hypotheses to be tested through this study which are presented in the following sections.

Hypotheses Development

Hypothesis 1: The current socio-culture environment in Qatar does not support or encourage Qataris to join the hospitality industry. In this hypothesis, the research assumes that the current socio-culture environment and the Sharia compliance in Qatar has several misconceptions about individuals who work in the hospitality industry and does not perceive the hospitality industry jobs as prestigious jobs to be occupied by Qatari nationals, especially for females.

Hypothesis 2: The current hospitality industry situation in Qatar is not encouraging for Qataris in terms of working conditions, financial rewards, and job future. In this hypothesis, the research assumes that the industry itself is not encouraging for Qatari individuals to join. The research assumes that the jobs in the hospitality industry in Qatar are not yielding enough for Qataris when compared to other industries such as government, banking, and oil and gas fields.

Hypothesis 3: The government and private sector support are not effective enough to attract Qataris to join the hospitality industry. In this hypothesis, the research assumes that both the government and the private sector are not paying enough attention to the Qatarization concept in the hospitality industry.

The above hypotheses are to be addressed and tested through statistical regression analyses after collecting the necessary data from the research target audience. The methodology chapter below explains the data collection processes.

Methodology

Research can be categorized as either descriptive or explanatory. This study adopts an explanatory research approach, which aims to establish relationships between different variables (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). As outlined in the conceptual framework and research hypotheses, this study measures and evaluates the variables influencing Qataris' willingness to work in the hospitality industry.

The study examines three key variables, each represented by eight measuring factors that contribute to the formulation of the research hypotheses within the theoretical framework. These variables serve as independent variables, assessed to identify and analyze the most significant barriers preventing Qataris from pursuing careers in the hospitality sector.

To achieve these objectives, the study employs a quantitative research methodology, enabling the collection and analysis of data from the target population—Qatari respondents—regarding their perceptions of hospitality careers. Table 1 presents the questionnaire matrix, illustrating the relationship between the research questions, objectives, variables, and hypotheses within the theoretical framework of the study.

Table 2. The Research Matrix

Theoretical Concepts	Research Questions	Research Objectives	Hypothesis	Related Questionnaire Questions	Measurement scale	Authors
Demographics and current representation in the industry in Qatar	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	*Questionnaire Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4*	Manipulated / Attitude Statements	(Hospitality Qatar, 2018; WTTC, 2018; Nduka, 2016; SCDL, 2018)
Socio-Cultural Impact	**Research Question 1:** What are the most critical socio-culture barriers facing Qataris for working in the hospitality industry in Qatar?	**Research objective 1:** To analyze the most critical socio-culture barriers for working the hospitality industry in Qatar	**Hypothesis 1:** The current socio-culture environment in Qatar does not support or encourage Qataris to join the hospitality industry	*Questionnaire Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8*	Five Points Likert Scale	(Rosinski 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Reisinger 2009; Kim, 2010; Naor, 2010; Wang and Matila, 2011)
Industry-Related barriers	**Research Question 2:** What are the most critical industry-related barriers facing Qataris who are trying to join the hospitality industry?	**Research Objective 2:** To analyze the most critical hospitality industry-related barriers for Qataris.	**Hypothesis 2:** The current hospitality industry situation in Qatar is not encouraging for Qataris in terms of working conditions, financial rewards, and job future.	*Questionnaire Questions 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13*	Five Points Likert Scale	(Jang and Park, 2011; Chen, and Choi, 2008; Lundberg et al., 2009; Sobh and Belk, 2011; Chon, 2013)

Government Support	**Research Question 3:** How supportive is the government and private sector to Qatarization in the hospitality industry in Qatar?	**Research Objective 5:** To analyze the current support provided by the government and private sector for Qataris to join the hospitality industry	**Hypothesis 4:** The government and private sector support is not effective enough to attract Qataris to join hospitality industry	***Questionnaire*** *Questions 14 and 15*	Five Points Likert Scale	(Crane, 2002 Ritzer, 2007)
Future Development	**Research Question 4:** What can be done to improve Qataris representation in the hospitality industry in Qatar?	**Research Objective 4:** To propose applicable recommendations aiming to motivate Qataris to work in the hospitality industry in Qatar	NA	***Questionnaire*** *Questions 16, 17, and 18.*	Open-Ended Questions / Manipulated / Attitude Statements	(Levitt, 1983, Alden et al., 1999; Ritzer, 2007)

Study Sample

This research aims to identify the key factors preventing Qataris from pursuing careers in the hospitality industry. Given that not all Qataris are suitable for hospitality careers, the study focuses on students from two major universities in Qatar: Stenden University Qatar and Qatar University.

Stenden University Qatar is the only institution in the country offering bachelor's and master's programs in hospitality management, making its students particularly relevant to this study. Meanwhile, Qatar University is the largest university in Qatar, supplying the labor market with thousands of graduates annually, including those in business and economics. As a result, students from these two universities represent the most relevant population for examining Qataris' perceptions of careers in the hospitality sector.

Since the research population is relatively small and accessible, Fisher (2007) recommends using the entire population as the sample. Therefore, the study population consists of all Qatari students from Stenden University and the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University. A convenience sampling method was applied, selecting 50 students from Stenden University and 300 students from Qatar University, resulting in a total sample size of 350 respondents.

Sample Size Calculation Using Cochran's Formula

To ensure statistical validity, Cochran's (1977) formula for sample size determination is applied:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0 = Initial sample size

- Z = Z-score (for a 95% confidence level, Z=1.96Z = 1.96Z=1.96)

- p = Estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic of interest (assumed to be 50% or 0.5 if unknown)

- e = Margin of error (typically 5% or 0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16$$

Since the study deals with a finite population (N), Cochran's formula is adjusted using the finite population correction (FPC):

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0 - 1}{N}}$$

Where:

- n = Adjusted sample size

- N = Total population of Qatari students at Stenden University and Qatar University

If the estimated total population of Qatari students in both universities is approximately 1,200, then:

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384 - 1}{1200}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{383}{1200}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + 0.3192} = \frac{384}{1.3192} = 291$$

Thus, the required sample size for a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error is 291 respondents. However, to ensure robust representation, the study opted for a slightly higher sample size of 350 respondents, including 50 students from Stenden University and 300 students from Qatar University.

This sample represents the potential Qatari workforce that could enter the hospitality industry. Since the students of hospitality and business programs are the most likely candidates for employment in the sector, analyzing their perspectives provides valuable insights into the barriers and deterrents they face. This approach ensures that the findings accurately reflect the attitudes of the most relevant demographic, aiding in the development of targeted strategies to enhance Qatari participation in the hospitality industry.

Questionnaire Design

The research matrix presented in Table 1 served as the foundation for designing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured to directly address the research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses, ensuring alignment with the theoretical framework. The variables identified in the framework were the primary focus of the questionnaire, capturing key factors influencing Qataris' willingness to work in the hospitality industry.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to measure attitudes and perceptions, along with a few open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights and preferences from respondents. This mixed approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the barriers preventing Qataris from pursuing careers in the hospitality sector. The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix I.

To facilitate data collection, the questionnaire was distributed online using SurveyMonkey, a widely recognized and trusted survey platform commonly used by students. The distribution process targeted Qatari students of both genders via WhatsApp and Twitter, ensuring broad reach and accessibility. Despite these efforts, the survey yielded 350 valid responses, which were subsequently analyzed to derive key findings.

Data Analysis

The SurveyMonkey output was entered in the SPSS software. This was done to produce correlation and multiple regression analysis. Correlation analysis is a statistical test that is usually used in numeric data collection in the quantitative research to find the relationship between the different variables. The correlation analysis uses the Pearson Product Management correlation coefficient, which is denoted as R. The R value should be between 1 and -1 in which the numbers closer to 1 are related and the numbers closer to -1 are of weak association (Zaid, 2015; Senthilnathan, S. 2019; BUMC, 2020). The correlation analysis was done to determine whether the independent variables are significant with the dependent variable. Also, the correlation matrix measures significance among the independent variables and the level of distinction among them.

Regression analysis is a statistical method that allows a person to examine the relationship between two or more variables. The method can also link predictors, moderators, and outcomes in multiple regression analysis models. The multiple regression analysis is used when the value of one variables depends on two or more variables (Golberg & Cho, 2004; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014). In the case of this study, the multiple regression analysis was done because each variable was based on a set of predictors. The multiple regression analysis was done to further analyze the correlation between the variables. To conduct the regression analysis, it was important to indicate the reliability of clusters presented in the questionnaire. Each set of questions falling under one variable was used as one group and had a singular reliability test. The analysis also included descriptive results to examine the relationship between variables and to test whether different groups – of respondents – have different opinions and perspective.

Ethical Issues

The research takes into account ethical consideration throughout its data collection process. The ethical consideration includes a fair selection of participants as the questionnaire enabled (once reached) all Qatari students' men and women to be part of it without any boundaries. Also, all the participants were ensured privacy and thus, no personal questions were presented throughout the study. The research also avoided any type of deception by presenting a straightforward approach and questions.

Results and Analysis

This part presents the quantitative study findings. A total of 251 responses were collected through the SurveyMonkey software. The findings are classified following the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. Accordingly, this part first introduces the socio-cultural impact and support to Qataris in the hospitality industry. It then presents the industrial related barriers such as financial rewards and work nature. Based on the barriers' analysis, the chapter concludes with the behavioral intentions of the respondents and what would encourage them to join the hospitality industry. In the discussion part, correlation analysis and multiple regressions analysis are done to measure the significance of the hypotheses.

Most of the respondents were females (68.9%). Also, 19.9% of the respondents have never received an offer or tried to join the hospitality industry in the country. On the other hand, 10% of the respondents are currently employed by hospitality organizations.

Table 3: Respondents' Gender

		Count	Column N %
Gender	Male	78	31.1%
	Female	173	68.9%
	Total	251	100.0%

The demographic information clearly confirms the low representations of Qataris in the hospitality industry. It is important to mention also that most of those who stated that they are working in the hospitality

industry are employed by Katara Hospitality. The company is not a hotel; it is a corporation that owns hotels in Qatar.

Socio-Cultural Support

In this section, respondents were asked whether their culture and society encourage them to the hospitality industry or not. It was found that most respondents were either not sure or agreeing. On the other hand, almost 25% of the respondents disagreed and think that their culture and community is not supportive enough.

Table 4. *Society Support*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
The community is unprejudiced and open-minded concerning Qataris working in the hospitality industry.	8.8%	22.3%	30.3%	29.1%	9.6%	**3.08**
The society culture encourages Qataris me to work in the hospitality industry.	9.6%	24.8%	29.6%	29.6%	6.4%	**2.98**
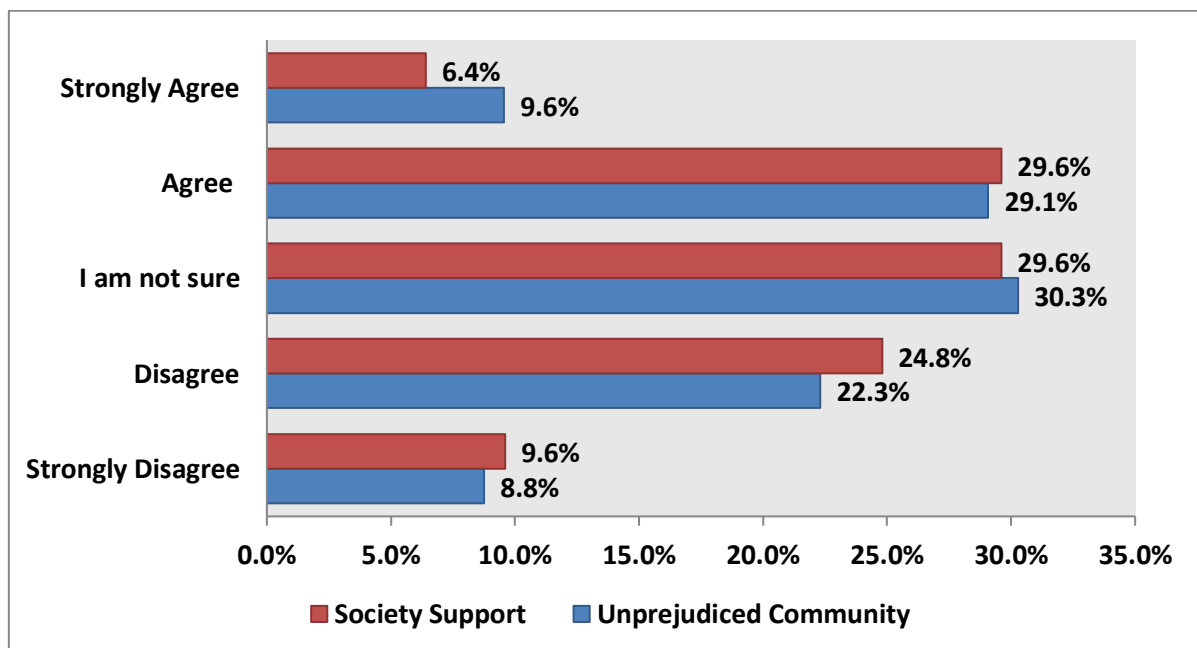
Figure 2: Society Support

These results indicate that the community and society in Qatar still has leverage on the choices of large portions of Qataris. It also says that the industry is not yet popular among the locals. The misconception of the industry and its nature may be one of the reasons behind then prejudging society.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem and a sense of pride in one's professional affiliation are key motivational factors influencing career choices. To examine these aspects in relation to the hospitality industry, respondents were asked whether working in the sector would instill a sense of pride. The findings indicate that 31.9% of respondents were uncertain, while 31.5% agreed that employment in the hospitality industry would be a source of pride. Conversely, 23% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that they did not associate the industry with a sense of personal accomplishment or prestige.

Table 5. *Self-Esteem*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
Working in hotels and hospitality organizations will make me proud.	6.37%	16.73%	31.87%	31.47%	13.6%	**3.29**

These results underscore the ambivalence among Qatari youth regarding the hospitality sector. While a significant proportion of respondents perceive the industry positively, a considerable number remain hesitant or regard it as unsuitable for their self-esteem. The high level of uncertainty suggests the persistence of misconceptions about the nature of work in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, these findings highlight ongoing societal reservations about careers in this sector, reflecting broader cultural and social perceptions that may influence workforce participation. Addressing these concerns through targeted awareness campaigns and policy interventions could be instrumental in enhancing the attractiveness of the hospitality industry as a viable career path for Qatari nationals.
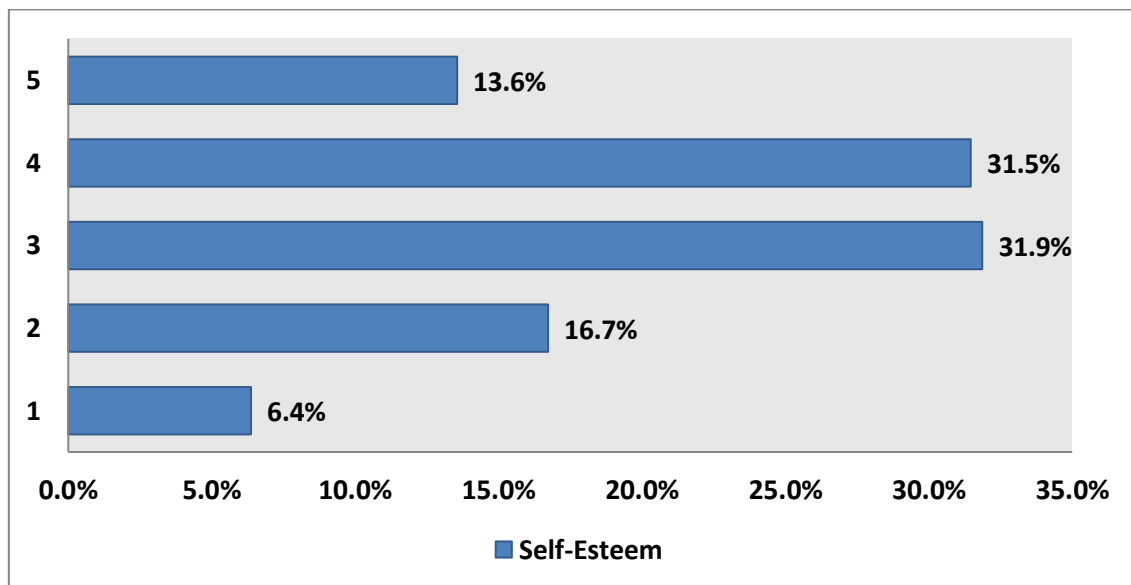

Figure 3: Self-Esteem

Religious Principles

The survey results, as depicted in Figure 4, indicate that a significant majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that Islam would not affect their willingness to join the hospitality industry, should they choose to do so. However, 25.2% of respondents expressed uncertainty, and approximately 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that religious concerns may still influence some individuals' perceptions of the industry.

Table 6. *Religious Principles*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
Islam does not affect peoples' intentions to work in the hospitality industry.	8.0%	9.2%	25.2%	34.0%	23.6%	3.56

These findings suggest that while Islamic principles are a potential factor in the reluctance of Qataris to enter the hospitality sector, their impact appears to be less pronounced than societal and cultural factors. The relatively lower level of resistance based on religious beliefs could reflect a broader shift in attitudes or a more nuanced understanding of the sector. However, the continued misconceptions about the nature of work in hospitality may contribute to reinforcing the notion that the industry is incompatible with Islamic values.
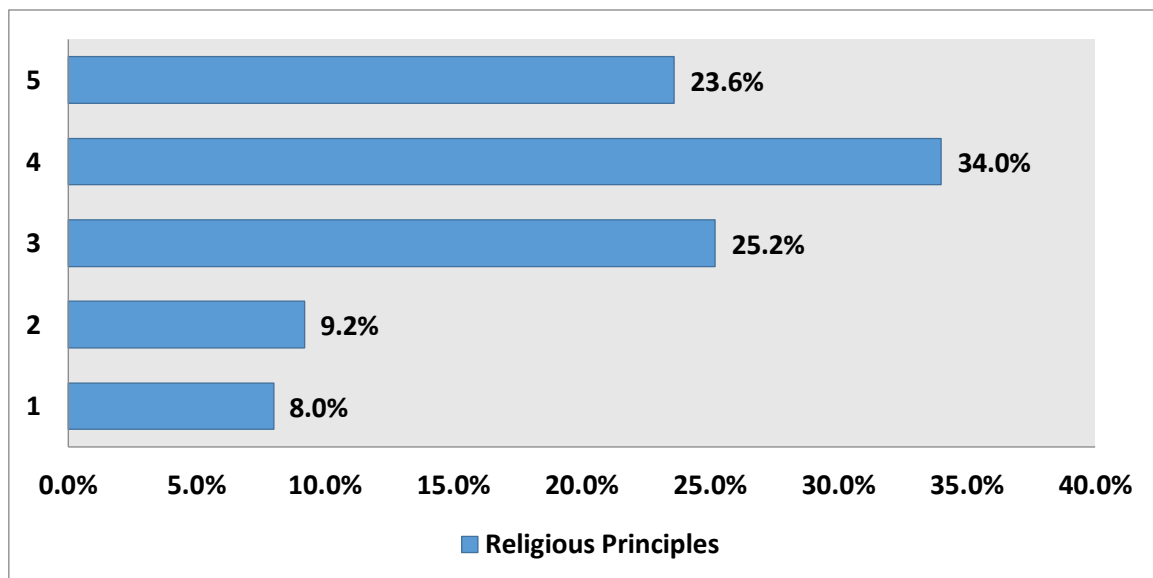

Figure 4: Religious Principles

Financial Rewards

The findings indicate that nearly 50% of respondents were unsure about the adequacy of financial rewards in the industry, possibly due to a lack of direct exposure or job offers from the sector. Among the remaining respondents, approximately 33% expressed satisfaction with the financial rewards offered, while the others either disagreed or remained uncertain.

Table 7. *Financial Rewards*

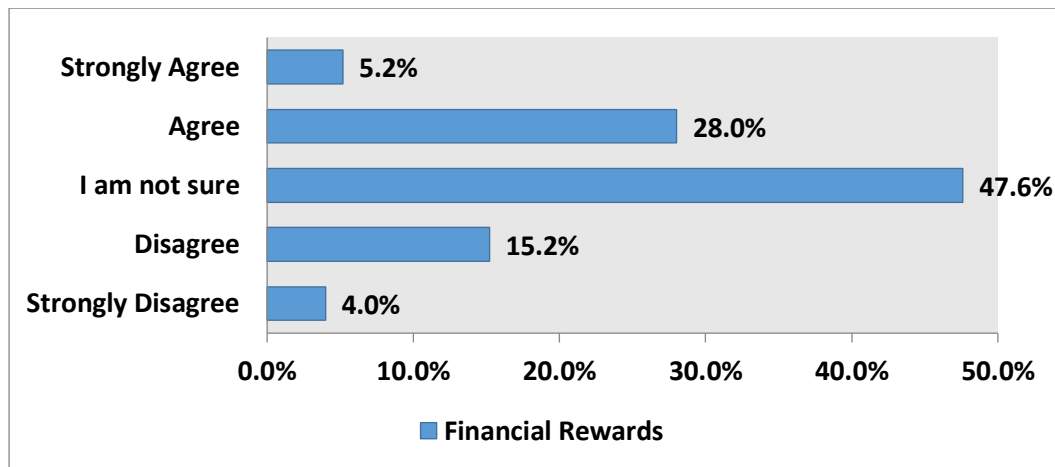|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
The financial rewards in the hospitality industry are satisfactory to me	4.00%	15.20%	47.60%	28.00%	5.20%	3.15

Figure 5: Financial Rewards

This data suggests that financial compensation in the hospitality industry is perceived as a significant factor influencing Qatari participation. The relatively low financial rewards in this sector, especially when compared to industries such as oil, gas, and banking, appear to discourage many potential candidates from entering the field. The substantial gap in compensation between these industries further reinforces the notion that the hospitality industry may not offer the same level of financial incentives as other sectors, thereby contributing to the underrepresentation of Qataris in hospitality careers.

Job Security

The results indicate that a majority (36.8%) of respondents were uncertain about the potential for career stability in the hospitality sector, while 34.8% agreed that the industry could offer job security, and 8% strongly agreed. Conversely, 15.6% disagreed, and 4.8% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a portion of the respondents view job security in hospitality as a potential issue.

Table 8. *Job Security*

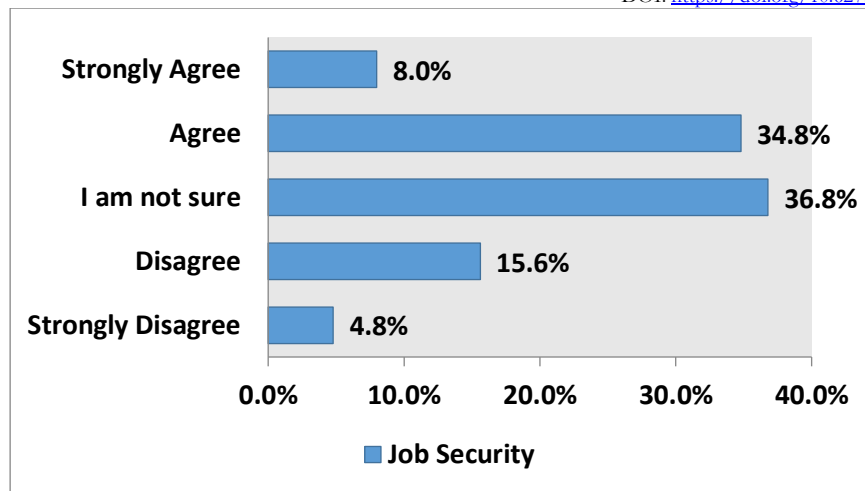|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
The hospitality industry can secure my career future	4.8%	15.6%	36.8%	34.8%	8.0%	3.26

Figure 6: Job Security

These findings suggest that, while job security in the hospitality industry does not appear to be a major deterrent for most respondents, it is still a factor worth considering. The uncertainty expressed by many respondents, coupled with the seasonal nature of employment in the industry, indicates that job stability remains a concern for a portion of the potential workforce. However, given that a larger proportion of respondents do not see job insecurity as a primary issue, this factor may not be a leading cause of the low representation of Qataris in the hospitality sector. Nonetheless, it remains a secondary consideration that may influence career decisions, particularly for those seeking long-term employment stability.

Work Nature

The nature of work in the hospitality industry significantly differs from that of many other sectors. Hospitality organizations often operate during weekends and holidays, with employees required to work longer shifts, typically a minimum of nine hours daily. In contrast, industries such as oil and gas, education, banking, and government generally offer shorter working hours (seven hours) and more extended vacation periods. Given these differences, respondents were asked to evaluate the suitability of the work nature and timings in the hospitality industry.

The findings reveal that 21.6% of respondents disagreed, and 20.8% strongly disagreed, indicating that they view the working hours and conditions in the hospitality industry as unsuitable. Moreover, 40% of respondents expressed uncertainty, indicating a lack of clarity or direct experience in assessing the work environment.

Table 9. *Work Nature*

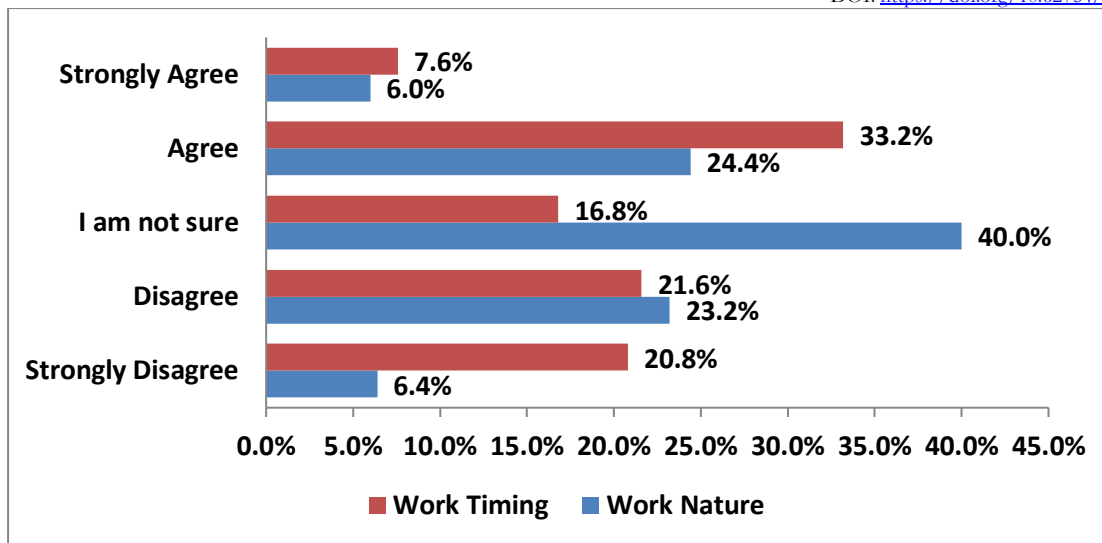|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
The work nature in the hospitality industry (i.e. working hours / atmosphere) is suitable for me	6.4%	23.2%	40.0%	24.4%	6.0%	3
Working in shifts, holidays, and weekends is fine by me if necessary to my job.	20.8%	21.6%	16.8%	33.2%	7.6%	2.85

Figure 7: Work Nature

These results suggest that the work nature, particularly the extended working hours and weekend shifts, could be a contributing factor to the underrepresentation of Qataris in the hospitality industry. Many respondents appear to prefer industries offering more predictable working hours and greater work-life balance. Given the attractive benefits and conditions offered by alternative sectors such as oil, gas, and banking, the hospitality industry's demanding work schedule may deter Qataris from pursuing careers in this field. Therefore, reconsidering work schedules and improving work-life balance within the hospitality sector may be essential steps in attracting more Qatari nationals to the industry.

Work-Life Balance

The findings indicate that 39.1% of respondents were unsure about the work-life balance offered by the hospitality sector, while the proportion of those who agreed or strongly agreed that the industry supports work-life balance was slightly higher than those who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 10. *Work-Life Balance*

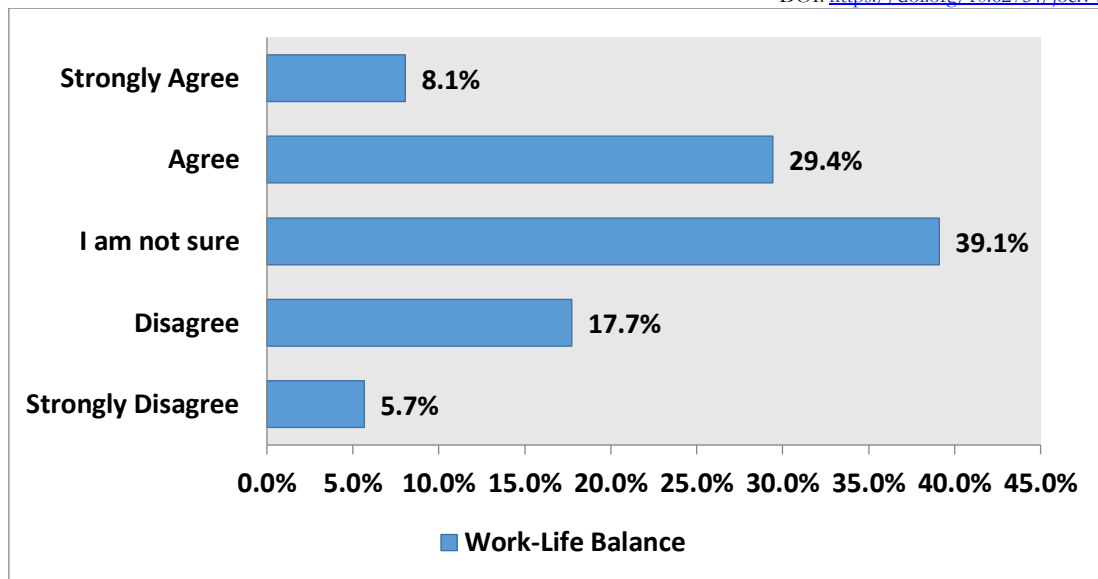|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
Working in the hospitality industry is good for my work-life balance	5.7%	17.7%	39.1%	29.4%	8.1%	3.17

Figure 8: Work-Life Balance

These results suggest that while work-life balance is recognized as a concern, it may not be the most significant barrier contributing to the underrepresentation of Qataris in the hospitality industry. Although respondents identified work-life balance as an issue, other factors—such as financial rewards, job security, and work nature—were considered more critical.

Government and Official Support

The findings of this study reveal that 40.2% of respondents were uncertain about the sufficiency of government support for the hospitality industry, while a smaller proportion expressed confidence in the support provided by both the government and private sector.

Table 11. *Government and Private Sector Support*

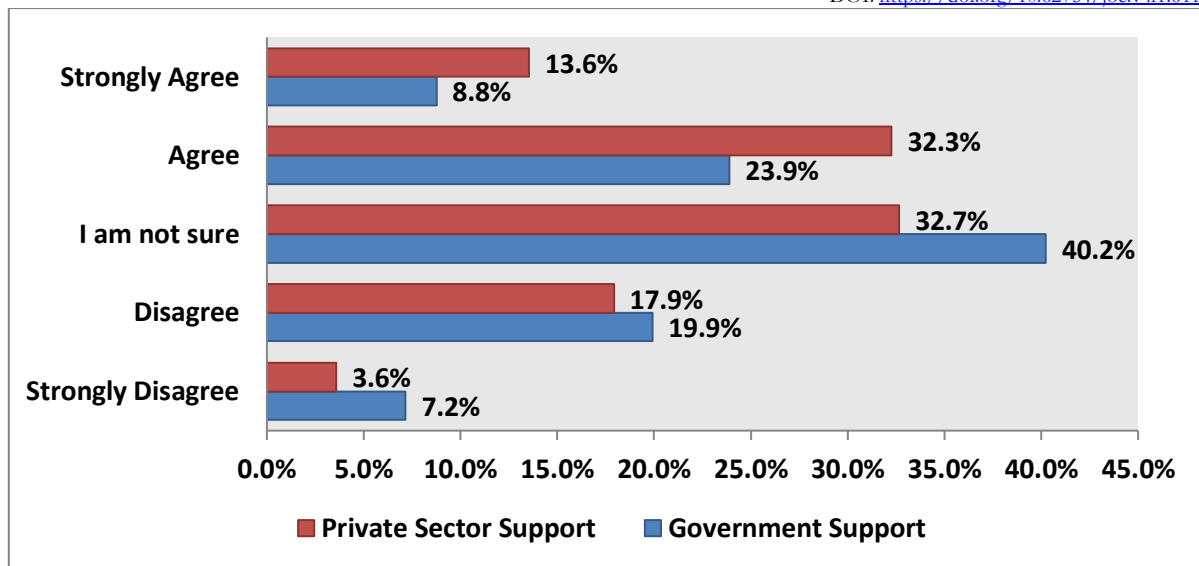|	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	I am not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Weighted Average
The private sector supports Qatarization in the hospitality industry.	7.2%	19.9%	40.2%	23.9%	8.8%	3.07
The government supports Qatarization in the hospitality industry.	3.6%	17.9%	32.7%	32.3%	13.6%	3.34

Figure 9: Government and Private Sector Support

These results suggest that the lack of sufficient government support may contribute to the low representation of Qataris in the hospitality industry. The absence of financial incentives or targeted initiatives that make the hospitality sector more attractive may discourage Qataris from pursuing careers within this field.

Behavioral Intentions towards the Industry

Motivators

As illustrated in Figure 10, the most significant motivator for Qatari respondents was salary. A notable 38% of participants indicated that they would be more likely to join the hospitality industry if offered a high salary. The second most influential factor was cultural respect, with 17% of respondents stating that they would be motivated to join the industry if they found a work environment that aligns with their cultural and religious values. Other factors, such as managerial positions (13%), convenient working hours (8%), and decent vacation policies (5%), were cited by relatively lower percentages of respondents.

Interestingly, 19% of the participants indicated that they would never consider joining the hospitality industry, suggesting a deep-seated reluctance to engage with the sector regardless of potential benefits.
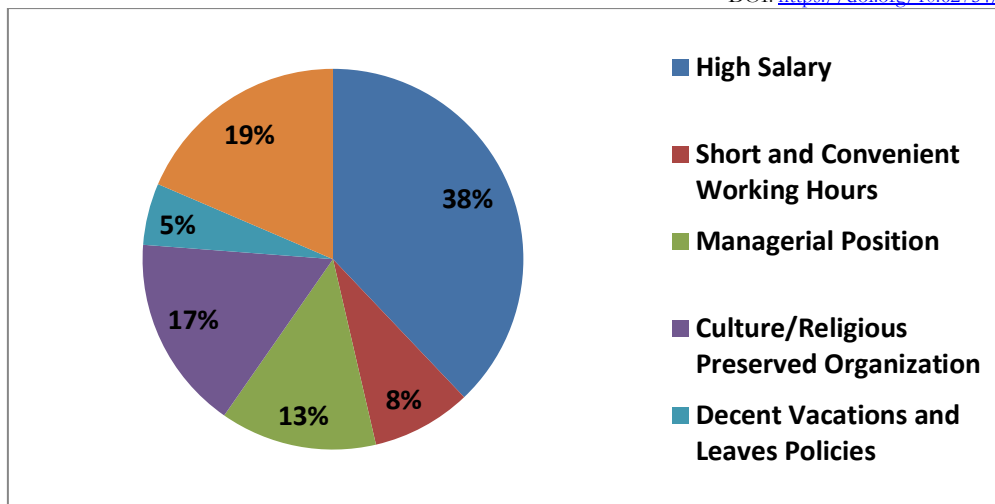
Figure 10: What would encourage Qataris to join the industry?

These findings highlight that financial incentives—specifically high salaries—are the most critical motivator for Qataris to consider careers in the hospitality industry. Conversely, factors such as vacation policies, working hours, and leave entitlements were considered significantly less important. This suggests that efforts to encourage Qatari participation in the hospitality sector should primarily focus on improving financial packages, while additional considerations, such as work-life balance, may not be as central to Qataris' career choices in this industry.

Join Intentions

The respondents were asked about their intentions to join the hospitality industry, providing insights into the future participation of Qataris in this sector. The results revealed a mix of opinions. A significant proportion of the respondents, 40%, stated that they will not join the industry, while 15% declared they would never consider joining. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents expressed that they might join the industry, indicating a potential for future participation.
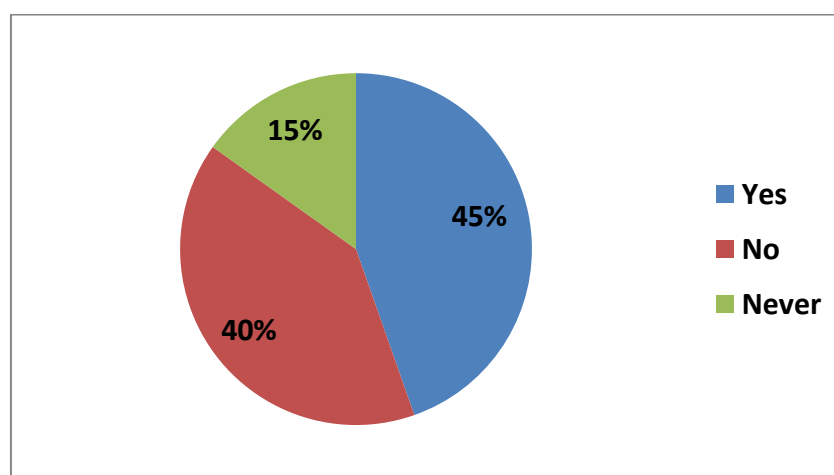

Figure 11: Future Behavior Intentions

These findings are somewhat promising. While only 10% of the respondents are currently working in the hospitality industry, the 40% who expressed willingness to join in the future provides a positive outlook. This willingness can be seen as an opportunity to increase Qatari representation in the sector.

Discussion

The primary aim of the questionnaire was to gain insights into Qatari students' perceptions of the hospitality industry, exploring three key areas: cultural and religious factors, industry-related variables, and the support provided by the government and private sector. The findings revealed varying degrees of importance attached to each of these factors by the respondents. Although all variables were deemed somewhat important, certain factors emerged as more influential in shaping their perceptions and attitudes toward the industry.

Religious principles were identified as a significant barrier for many respondents, particularly for those who believed that Islamic teachings may prohibit them from working in the hospitality sector. This finding supports existing literature, which highlights the role of cultural and religious norms in shaping individuals' career choices (Kim, 2010; Naor, 2010). These results indicate that religious values continue to influence Qatari students' decisions, although the majority of respondents did not perceive Islam as a major hindrance to joining the industry. However, for a substantial proportion of respondents, cultural and religious concerns remain central to their hesitance to enter the hospitality workforce.

Financial rewards were the most critical motivator for respondents when considering a career in hospitality. As expected, the majority of respondents emphasized the importance of competitive salaries, echoing findings from previous studies on employee motivation (Lundberg et al., 2009; Jang and Park, 2011). While the salary scale in the hospitality industry is perceived as lower compared to other sectors such as oil and gas, banking, and government services, it remains a key factor influencing Qataris' willingness to join the industry. This reflects a broader societal expectation for higher wages, particularly in the context of Qatari citizens' established benefits within public-sector employment.

Moreover, other industry-related factors such as job security, work nature, and work-life balance were considered less critical by the respondents. The hospitality sector's reliance on seasonal employment and its demanding work hours, especially during weekends and holidays, were noted as deterrents. While many respondents indicated uncertainty regarding the work-life balance in the industry, the majority acknowledged that flexible work conditions would be a positive incentive for joining the sector. However, the work environment and job stability were still not perceived as significant enough to deter them from entering the industry if financial rewards and career progression opportunities were met.

Government and private sector support was also highlighted as a critical factor in shaping Qatari participation in the hospitality industry. The findings suggest that the support currently provided by both sectors is insufficient to attract Qataris to the field. Although the government has initiated various Qatarization efforts, the absence of substantial financial incentives or job security within the hospitality industry compared to other sectors undermines the effectiveness of these initiatives. The lack of clear and tangible support mechanisms for Qatari employees in the hospitality sector is likely contributing to the industry's inability to attract and retain local talent.

When asked about the factors that would motivate them to join the hospitality industry, respondents overwhelmingly identified salary as the primary motivator. In contrast, cultural respect and managerial positions were secondary motivators. This finding aligns with the broader trends in labor market behavior, where financial considerations often outweigh non-financial benefits (Chon, 2013). Interestingly, 19% of the respondents indicated they would never join the industry, with cultural and religious objections being the primary barriers for this group. These results underscore the complex interplay between personal beliefs and career decisions, where financial incentives may not be sufficient to overcome deep-rooted cultural and religious concerns.

Correlation Analysis

One of the aims of this study is to clarify the significant relations among the factors presented in the nodes and clusters of the theoretical framework (see Figure 1). Accordingly, correlation analysis is the most appropriate method to statistically present the different relations among those different factors.

Table 12. *Correlation Analysis*

		Willingness to join the industry	Socio-Cultural Support SCS	Industry Related Barriers IRB	Official Support OS
Willingness to join the industry	Pearson Correlation	1	.356**	.429**	.174**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.006
	N	250	247	246	249
SCS	Pearson Correlation	.356**	1	.571**	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	247	248	245	248
IRB	Pearson Correlation	.429**	.571**	1	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	246	245	247	247
OS	Pearson Correlation	.174**	.378**	.368**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.000	
	N	249	248	247	250
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

By checking the level of significance for the person's correlation coefficients, it is found that all of them are significant which means that all variables are correlated with each other's as highlighted in the correlation table above. If the indicators are ranked in descending way, the correlation between the variables and the dependent variable (Willingness to join the industry), finds that the (IRB: Industry Related Barriers) is the highest correlated variable with the decision of joining the hospitality industry (.429), followed by the (SCS: Socio-Cultural Support = .356) and the least correlated factor is OS (Official Support = .174). This simply means that the industrial related barriers such as working hours, work nature, working in shifts and holidays, and the financial benefits are the most critical barriers facing the Qataris who might be willing to join the industry. In other words, if the payment and working conditions in the hospitality industry are as good and convenient as other industries, the social and religious barriers will have minor effect on Qataris' willingness to join the industry.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Before starting the regression analysis, it is important to explain the grouping of different clusters as shown in the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework presented three major independent variables which are the socio-cultural support (SCS), the industry related barrier (IRB), and the official support (OS). Each of these variables was presented in the questionnaire through number of items (questions). A reliability test was used on each variable using Cronbach Alpha to measure the reliability of the variable before enrolling it in the regression model.

Variables' Reliability Tests

Socio Cultural Support (SCS): Questionnaire Questions (5, 6, 7, and 8)

Table 13: SCS Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.872	4

Alpha Cronbach is above 0.7 (=0.827), this indicates that there is very high internal reliability for variable 1.

Industry Relation Barriers (IRB): Questionnaire Questions (9, 10, 11, 12, and 13)

Table 14: IRB Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.787	5

Alpha Cronbach is above 0.7 (=0.787), this indicates that there is very high internal reliability for variable 2.

Official Support (OS): Questionnaire Questions (14, and 15)

Table 15: OS Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.725	2

Alpha Cronbach is above 0.7 (=0.725), this indicates that there is very high internal reliability for variable 3.

Table 16: Reliability Tests Summary

All the Cronbach's Alpha tests are above 0.7 which indicates a high internal reliability of the chosen variables as shown in the table below:

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Socio-Cultural Support (SCS)	.872	4
Industry Related Barriers (IRB)	.787	5
Official Support (OS)	.725	2

Regression Model

- Dependent Variable:

  o Qataris' Willingness to join the Industry (Q17 I will highly consider working in the hospitality industry **after** graduation).

- Independent Variables:

  o Socio-Cultural Support (SCS)

  o Industrial Related Barriers (IRB)

  o Official Support (OS)

Table 17. *Regression Model Summary*

Model Summary [b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.927[a]	.860	.857	.52771
a. Predictors: (Constant), IRB, SCS, OS				
b. Dependent Variable: Q17				

To test the goodness of fit of the model, it is found that the value of R-Square is 0.860 which is a relatively high value. This means that the independent variables explain 86% of the variation in the dependent variable. This is a relatively good indicator.

Table 18. *ANOVA*

ANOVA [a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.949	3	8.316	20.167	.000[b]
	Residual	98.969	240	.412		
	Total	123.918	243			
a. Dependent Variable: Decision						
b. Predictors: (Constant), OS, IRB, SCS						

This table shows the output of the ANOVA analysis and whether there is a statistically significant difference between group means. It can be noted that the significance value is 0.000 (i.e., $p = .000$), which is below 0.05, therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean of the dependent and independent variables, but we don't know what's the effect of each variable separately.

Table 19. *Coefficients*

Coefficients [a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.178	.212		-.841	.401
	SCS	.157	.070	.162	2.233	.026
	IRB	.321	.067	.340	4.756	.000
	OS	-.009	.050	-.011	-.178	.859

a. Dependent Variable: Decision

To check the significance of each variable, it can be stated that (OS-Official Support) has relatively high p-value (>0.05). This indicates that it is not statistically significant and does not affect the Qatari's willingness join the hospitality industry. On the other hand, IRB (Industry Related barriers) and SCS (Socio-Cultural Support) both have relatively low p-value (<0.05) which means that they are significantly important variables affecting Qataris decision about joining the hospitality industry.

The figure below presents the overall significant performance of the theoretical framework components against the dependent variable 'Qataris' willingness to join the hospitality industry'.
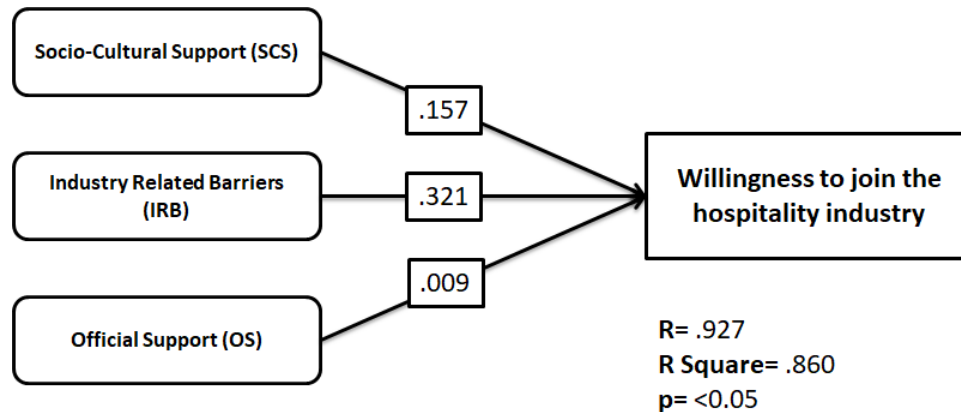

Figure 12: Significant Predictors for Willingness to join the Hospitality Industry

Research Questions and Hypotheses Evaluation

In this part of the study, a keen original thinking and insightful interpretation is provided to demonstrate the relationship between the results and the academic field of the study. The gaps in the identified literature review are presented in this section.

What are the most critical socio-culture-related barriers facing Qataris who are trying to join the hospitality industry in Qatar?

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the community in Qatar is not open-minded when it comes to working in the hospitality industry for almost 31% of the respondents. Also, around 30.3% were not sure whether the community would allow them to work in the industry or not. Similar percentages also believe that working in the hospitality industry is not good enough in the community with regards to self-esteem. This means that there is a misconception about the work nature in the industry and shows that society is not completely welcoming the idea of working in it. The religion was also a factor that around 17% of respondents stated that Islam does not support such jobs. Authors agreed with this findings (Gregoric, 2014; Zittoun and Gillespie, 2015; ElShenawy, 2017; Kharel, 2018) as they stated that the way the community perceive a certain industry is very important when people decide to join it. This starts with early education of industry related issues. Without proper acceptance from the public, people will feel left-out when working in the industry, and thus, they will prefer to join a more accepted industry. The religious challenges must also be considered. As mentioned in the methods' limitation, it was not possible to meet the respondents in person and discuss the religious issues further.

The literature review suggested similar ideas by claiming that Qataris might face cultural and even language barriers when they join the industry because it is currently filled with large number of non-Qataris (Harkness, 2012; Gregoric, 2014). In addition, the lack of educational institutes about the industry in the country provided it with misconception perception in the society. This is because reputed and profitable fields will always have institutes to supply it with work-force (Rosinski, 2010; Wang & Matila, 2011).

The results also show that Qataris, who consider Islam as their barrier, will never try to join the industry or think about it. This, in fact, indicates that the Islamic barriers are the strongest although it is not affecting everyone but its strength is over those who consider it as their primary barrier. The dilemma here is obvious since what is considered haram "such as traditional banking" can be tolerated more by the society and thousands of Qataris work in traditional banks in Qatar. It is not the same for the hospitality industry, thus, it cannot be determined whether more Qataris will join the industry if it is following Sharia (Shahida et al., 2011; Idris & AbdulWahab, 2015). Some respondents -in the open-ended question- stated that if the services and products provided by the hospitality industry are approved by Islamic laws and sharia, they would join. However, this can only happen in selective hotels but for sure not in the entire industry, especially when Qatar is hosting people from all over the world in the upcoming few years.

What is the most critical hospitality industry-related barriers facing Qataris who are trying to join it?

Many factors affect Qataris' willingness to join the hospitality industry when it comes to the industry benefits and working conditions. Many believed that the financial rewards are not enough in the industry and that it might not be a good place to plan for career growth. This is, in fact, true. The financial benefits in hotels and restaurants are very low compared to other industries in Qatar such as oil, gas, and banking. The financial rewards are definitely one of the most important reasons behind the low representation of Qataris in the industry. Also, the work nature and work timing in the hospitality industry can be one of the reasons behind the low presentation in the industry. This is because many Qataris will find it easier and more beneficial to work in other industries. This indicates that the financial rewards and working conditions are more important for most respondents when compared to cultural and social barriers. This is in line with the statement of Shankman (2015) stating that Qataris do not work in the hospitality industry because of the long working hours and inefficient working conditions and payments. The results also proved the statement of Chike (2009) about the high-pressure work nature of the industry.

These results are in line with the literature review. The literature review stated that the working conditions in the hospitality are difficult (Nair & Choudhary, 2018), working hours are long (Zainol et al., 2016), the work-life balance is difficult to achieve, and the pay is low (Picolla & Irizar, 2018). However, the literature review did not suggest solutions for any of these industrial-related problems. All the literatures discussed in the study evaluated the topic and an existing problem without providing any type of solution by the government or the private sector in the industry. The research overcomes this challenging fact by providing a set of recommendations to manipulate around the industrial barriers.

How supportive is the government and private sector to Qatarization in the hospitality industry in Qatar?

The government and private sector support for Qataris to join the hospitality industry is very low currently. Most respondents believe that the government is not doing enough to encourage Qataris to join the industry. It was concluded that the government support needs to be improved and that it might be one of the reasons behind the low representation of the Qataris in the hospitality industry.

The results show that the current government support is not a primary reason behind the low Qataris representation in the hospitality industry. However, the intentions to join will increase if there is enough support. In fact, this is true and in line with the statement of UAEBC (2019) stating that the GCC governments, including Qatar, prefer to have cheap labour instead of recruiting citizens with high salaries in such large industry. This is also in line with Al-Mansoori (2018) statement about the need to have larger governmental and private sector influence in the hospitality industry.

The official literatures and government sources in Qatar and the GCC reviews the issue of localization (Qatarization in the case of this study) as plans and promises without action plans or tangible results. The goals presented by the GCC hospitality Industry (2018), and the Public Service Authority in Qatar (PSA, 2019) generally discusses the willingness of the government to increase the Qatarization in the hospitality industry in the country. However, there are no statistics of Qataris working in the industry and there is no

publicity about the benefits of working in the industry as a Qatari individual. In addition, the fact that the research did not get in direct contact with officials from the government and the private sector representatives and hotels managers made it more difficult to evaluate the situation from their perspective. The social distancing and corona outbreak related measures waived the possibility of qualitative research. The correlation matrix results showed a significant relationship between Qataris' willingness to join the industry and government support. This means that this is a very important motivator.

What can be done to improve Qataris representation in the hospitality industry in Qatar?

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that financial benefits and managerial positions are the most important factors that might attract Qataris to join the industry. This means that encouragement should be more oriented towards financial packages. However, this is not the only factors. Other factors such as culture and society support, community awareness, and government support programs can lead to a successful and sustainable increase in the number of Qataris in the industry. These ideas can include students' scholarships, opening of hospitality schools and universities, and respecting local traditions and religion when recruiting Qataris. More about the recommendations and improvement of Qataris recruitment in the hospitality industry can be found in the appendices.

Many success stories in Qatar were reviewed in the literature review. The case of Katara hospitality shows that Qatarization in the hospitality industry is possible and it is, in fact, happening, but on a very slow motion. Katara Hospitality has a total of 6499 employees in which only 48 employees are Qataris and are only in leading positions. This means that the Qatarization process in the largest hospitality organization in Qatar is not effectively implementing it in all divisions and fields. Appointing Qataris in administrative jobs only is not a proper Qatarization. More Qataris need to be enrolled starting with all types of jobs scaling up to management.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The hospitality sector in Qatar is performing exceptionally and rapidly emerging in the global market. According to the statistics of Statista (2019), Qatar had opened 17 five stars hotels during 2018 and 23 hotels in 2019. The large number of hotels needs large number of employees. The total number of Qataris working in the industry is extremely low. There are very few studies examining the reasons behind this low representation of Qataris in the industry. This research identifies the most critical barriers preventing the Qataris from joining the industry and also motivators that would encourage them to join it. The findings show that there are large numbers of barriers that are preventing Qataris from joining the industry. Some barriers were highly considered compared to other barriers such as financial income and managerial positions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the research findings and research objectives. Motivating Qataris to join the hospitality industry needs a wide range of activities and initiatives form the government to succeed. The recommendations present the most important actions that can be taken to increase this number. The recommendations are applicable and realistic and can be tailored to suit the case of each government organization or private hospitality organizations such as hotels.

- *Assign Responsibility:* The low number of Qataris in the hospitality industry is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labours. It is not the sole responsibility of the ministry; other organizations might have shares in this subject such as the National Tourism Council, Qatar University, Stenden University, and Qatar Vision 2030. Accordingly, it is important to formulate a committee that will be responsible on highlighting the issues affiliated with this subject, its causes, and its possible solutions. This committee will be responsible on executing and providing the upcoming recommendations and solutions.

- *Culture and Society*: It is noticeable that there is a level of misconception about working in the hospitality organizations such as hotels among many Qataris. For some reasons, many would not be proud for

working in hotels and will not get the community approval for such field. This cannot be changed overtime. It should be done with new generations. Therefore, the hospitality industry can be included in some curriculums such as high schools to show its true nature to students and help them form a better picture about it.

- *Awareness*: The community must know more about the hotels and the hospitality industry. This can be done through awareness campaigns about the industry and how important it is to the national economy. Possibilities and personal prosper in this industry should also be highlighted by these campaigns. These campaigns would help in changing the general public look about the industry.

- *Government Support Fairs*: The government can organize recruitment fairs for hotels and hospitality organizations in Qatar in which it encourage hotels to recruit Qataris and also encourage Qataris to join the industry. Open fairs are a good example of getting the two parties together.

- *Government Support Program*: The government can assign a certain amount of incentive in the form of monthly salary to Qataris who join the industry. This incentive can be calculated by measuring the difference between government salary-scale and hospitality industry salary-scale. If the difference is paid to Qataris by the government, it would not affect the hotel and it will be satisfactory to Qataris. This is more convenient for the government than comprehensive recruitment in government organizations.

- *Education*: There is only one university in Qatar that supplies the country with qualified hospitality staff which is Stenden University. Other universities can be part of that such as Qatar University. Qatar University receives thousands of employees every year. Opening a hospitality and tourism college will be a good idea.

- *Students' Scholarships*: More Qataris must be sponsored to study this industry on bachelor and masters levels. This can be done locally, in Stenden University, or internationally in overseas universities. This will increase the number of qualified Qataris.

- *Working Conditions*: Initially, the focus on merging Qataris in the industry can focus on enrolling them in departments that do not need long working hours such as human resources, finance, and marketing. This will reduce the working conditions impact.

- *Positions*: After running the regular and standard training programs, Qataris must be ensured managerial or senior jobs in the hotels and other hospitality organizations. Managerial positions will encourage them to join the industry.

- *Career Growth*: Qatar employees should have a special career growth program that will ensure their development in the workplace. Having a secure work with future would encourage people to join.

- *Special Conditions*: Some Qataris, especially women, would not agree to wear certain uniforms that are revealing. Therefore, the national Qatari dress must be considered as formal dress in the hospitality organizations unless the job nature is not convenient for such dress code. For example, an engineer working in the hotel cannot wear the Thob because it will not be practical.

- *Religious Principles*: The hospitality organizations must respect the religious principles of the Qatari employees. If an employee does not accept working in a bar or pouring alcohol, then their request should not stand in their recruitment. There are a large number of jobs that has nothing to do with alcohol, bars, and nightclubs.

These recommendations are all applicable and realistic. In addition, these recommendations can be altered or amended to suit the different nature of organizations and also people. Implementing those recommendations should be the job of the committee assigned as mentioned above.

Limitations

This research successfully met its aims and objectives. However, it faced serious limitations and barriers that have slightly limited its output. The most critical challenge was the corona covid-19 outbreak in Qatar and the world. The study was aiming at visiting universities such as Stenden University and Qatar University and meet students in face-to-face interaction. This would have ensured larger number of responses. In addition, the researcher would have the chance to explain the questionnaire to the people in more direct way than the survey monkey distribution. The survey monkey distribution is accurate and professional; but it lacks the personal touch and possible learning opportunities from meeting with people.

The corona outbreak also limited the ability to meet officials in hotels, universities, labor department, and National Tourism Council. Meeting executives from those organizations would have enriched the outcome of the study and presented a comprehensive view of the situation. In addition, there is a very few number of studies that discusses the same topic in Qatar and the GCC and that limited the number of scholarly references that shares the same regional circumstances such as culture and religion.

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