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The Efficiency of Adopting E-Government Initiatives in Qatar: The Case of e-Government Portal (HUKOOMI)

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to explain the efficiency of adopting e-Government initiatives in Qatar, the case of the e-government portal (HUKOOMI). A representative group of 1,340 Qatari citizens (604) and white-collar expatriates (736) who were 18 years of age or older was questioned using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Despite the high levels of knowledge about the existence and usability of Qatar's e-Government website (64% of Qataris and 67% of expatriates, respectively) (Hukoomi). Only 36% of Qataris and 41% of expatriates hardly use the website to interact with the government. As only one-third of people are actively using the website, despite the fact that the majority of people are aware of it, this clearly shows a discrepancy between high awareness levels and actual utilization rates. The main factor preventing more than half of the respondents from using the Hukoomi website was their misunderstanding of its existence (53% Qataris and 49% Expats). This underlines once more the importance of launching awareness efforts as soon as the website is launched to increase its visibility among the general public. The fact that 44% of Qataris who said they aren't using the website also said that nothing will make them use it at all needs to be made abundantly clear. Given that Qataris appear to be more reluctant to use the Hukoomi website, with a high overall refusal rate (compared to 13% of Expats), it unquestionably calls for additional caution. The majority of foreigners (at a rate of 51%) and Qataris (at a rate of 55%) concur that website users need practical training. Comparable percentages of respondents claim they don't know enough about the website and need to learn more about its benefits. 66% of expats and 71% of Qataris agree that the website's lack of content makes it difficult to use.

Keywords: *E-Government; HUKOOMI; e-Government Development Index (EGDI); Qatar*



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1. Introduction

The State of Qatar is geographically located in the Arab peninsula and is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Oil and natural gas resources enabled the nation to experience rapid space development in a number of areas. Early in the previous decade, Qatar began implementing e-Government initiatives as part of a broader initiative to modernize other industries like health and education (AlShafi and Weerakkody, 2007). Despite the fact that Qatar, like the other GCC nations, is classified as a developing country, significant efforts have been made—and continue to be made—to move the country forward and elevate it to the ranks of the best nations. Instead of many developing nations, where the adoption of new technologies is lagging, Qatar has been a pioneer in a number of efforts to take advantage of cutting-edge innovations (Talib et al., 2015). To establish a solid foundation for implementing public e-Services such as e-Government, e-Health, and e-Learning, financial expenditures and administrative reforms were made. However, estimates suggest that these e-Services are still underutilized and that the usage rate can be increased (Al-Shafi and Weerakkody, 2008).

Public services all over the world have recognized how important it is to make their services more efficient and accessible since the concept of e-government first emerged (Affisco and Soliman, 2006; Irani et al., 2007; Sarikas and Weerakkody, 2007). Citizens now expect government organizations to uphold the same high standards as the private sector as



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they become more online savvy and experience quality electronic services. E-government aims to imitate the private sector by providing citizens and businesses with more effective, transparent, and accessible governmental services (Irani et al., 2007; Al-Shafi, 2008). Various studies have found various factors that have an effect on implementation and diffusion when analyzing the existing literature on e-government (Weerakkody et al., 2007; Irani et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2006; Gichoya, 2005). It is claimed that dealing with corruption, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and policy alienation through the use of e-government can help increase public confidence (Moon, 2002).

A frequent claim made in the literature is that e-government has a lot of advantages and may present chances for developing nations (Irani et al., 2007). Although the advantages of using electronic services are well known, both established and developing nations have had difficulty implementing e-government. Researchers frequently cite the complexity of the changes brought about in the public sector, which are mainly driven by the internet and its variety of associated information and communication technologies, as the cause of such challenges (ICTs; Beynon-Davies and Williams, 2004). Given this context, the literature generally agrees that e-government is much more complex than any prior attempts at IT-induced change encountered in the public sector (Irani et al., 2009; Weerakkody et al., 2007). In this regard, more research is required to examine e-government, especially in nations where significant resources and funds have been allocated in this direction. This is



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especially true in the Middle East region, where research indicates that despite substantial financial resources being made available by governments to convert traditional public services into an electronic mode, most of these countries have encountered a number of obstacles that have slowed the implementation of their national e-government initiatives (Al-Shafi and Weerakkody, 2008). One such instance is the State of Qatar, where e-government adoption and diffusion have lagged behind those of its neighbors in the area over the past ten years (United Nations, 2010).

1.1 Research Problem

This study is the first to examine how the general public views the effectiveness of Qatari government organizations' online operations, particularly in the three key areas of the website, smartphone application, and social media tool usage. This study sheds light on the potential for public adoption of e-government as well as the obstacles to that growth in the future. This research aims to evaluate how well the public has embraced e-government through the three major channels of communication mentioned above.

Governments can use the Internet to deliver services more effectively and efficiently than was previously feasible, reduce national expenditures, and disseminate information to the general public. As a result, e-Government has spread throughout the world. Governments everywhere—in established and developing nations—are investing heavily in order to



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become more effective, transparent, and interactive. In many areas of the world, however, the general public's acceptance of e-Government has lagged behind expectations. By further opening up their systems and transactions in the direction of a more transparent and participatory government, governments all over the world are now embracing social media tools to increase the adoption of their e-Government systems.

In Qatar, the e-Government plan first got off the ground in 2000 with a mediocre adoption rate. The Qatari e-Government portal adopted new tools of communication using the most recent social media platforms to engage and reach out to the public in order to achieve a more transparent, efficient, and accountable government. On the one hand, the portal started opening up some of its information and making them available for public use. The Ministry of Interior recently took part in this initiative by releasing its own data to the public and making the data accessible on its website for the use of the public. This action was made possible by the Ministry of Transport and Communication adopting the Open Data policy and incorporating it into its vision for an Open Government or a National Electronic.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to explain the efficiency of adopting E-Government initiatives in Qatar, the case of the e-Government portal (HUKOOMI).



1. Explain the efficiency of adopting the e-Government portal (HUKOOMI) in Qatar.
2. Explain the adoption of E-government in Qatar.

1.3 Research Questions

The main question of the study is "What is the efficiency of adopting E-Government initiatives in Qatar, the case of the e-Government portal (HUKOOMI)?".

The sub questions of the study is

1. What is the efficiency of adopting the e-Government portal (HUKOOMI) in Qatar?
2. How has Qatar adopted the E-government?

2. Literature Review

2.1 E-Government

e-Government is typically understood as the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by governments along with an organizational change to enhance governmental structures and functions (Field et al., 2003). Additionally, the adoption of e-government is anticipated to improve government service delivery and alter interactions with the public, private sector, and other governmental entities (Grönlund & Horan, 2005; Guida & Crow, 2009).



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Significant possibilities exist to use public administration as a tool for sustainable development thanks to e-government (E-Gov) (Peña-López, 2014). E-Gov is defined as the use of communication technology by the government to interact with the public, private, and non-profit sectors, provide services, and have interactive contact with all parties (Rorissa et al., 2011). The E-Gov should offer top-notch services that are obviously designed to generate important and required public value through appropriate IT tools. Presenting, assimilating, reforming, morphing, and e-governance are the main phases of the E-Gov evolution, and two overarching themes—citizen/service and operation/technology—appear (Lee, 2010). Every E-Gov level has its own unique difficulties, and as you advance to more sophisticated stages, more obstacles will show up. While developed nations vie to offer more sophisticated services, developing nations are still unable to take advantage of E-fundamental Gov's advantages (Peña-López, 2014; Rorissa et al., 2011 ;Obi, 2015).

2.2 Difficulties of E-Government

Today, there are many difficulties for e-government in the Least Developed Countries, in opposition to developed nations where it is well-established (LDCs). These difficulties include but are not limited to, a wide digital divide, poor e-infrastructure, and a dearth of abilities and knowledge for the creation, implementation, use, and administration of e-government systems (Nabafu & Maiga, 2012; Nkohkwo & Islam, 2013; Twizeyimana, 2017). There is a high incidence of e-government failure in



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LDCs, with estimates stating that 35% of projects fail completely, 50% fail partially, and only 15% succeed (Heeks, 2003). E-government failure entails a lot of distress, including lost time and money, damage to the reputations of those involved, and last but not least, a rise in future costs (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

For instance, when e-government projects fail, there is more opposition to subsequent e-government projects as a result of the diminished credibility and faith in e-ability governments to modernize the public sector (Heeks, 2003). Despite the high failure rates, interest in the subject has grown significantly in recent years, particularly in Africa (Hornnes, & Langeland, 2010; Nkohkwo & Islam, 2013).

According to Flak et al. (2009), a structured approach to comprehending public sector values will make it simpler to create e-government initiatives and also help to align various public sector actors. According to Scott et al.,(2016), how people view the benefits of using e-government systems will determine whether those systems are successful. Similar to this, Rose et al., (2015) contend that understanding the values ingrained in how e-government projects are perceived is a way to comprehend their overarching goals and that integrating stakeholders' core values into the implementation of e-government projects may be a key to success.

2.3 Adoption of E-Government in Qatar



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governments must be ready to deal with a number of difficulties linked to the complexity of e-government implementation and diffusion, regardless of strong financial support and resources, and for the success of e-government, there needs to be greater coordination between national ICT strategies and different local-level e-government projects, as well as clear legislation, implementation guidelines, and standards (Weerakkody et al., 2011). El-Kassem et al (2020) added that the adoption of mobile applications for e-government is influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use.

Al-Kubaisi (2018) sought to examine the state of e-government in Qatar. It also sought to determine the primary drivers behind the Qatari government's decision to start Open Government Data initiatives by analyzing the state of Open Government Data (OGD) in Qatar. The study came to the conclusion that Qatar still needs to take a lot of steps and initiatives to advance government by relying on open government data, despite its efforts to develop e-government systems for a variety of citizen transactions and to keep up with developed nations in the development of open data. The Qatari government's reliance on open data would boost citizen adoption of e-government, facilitate citizens' access to necessary information, and promote participation in decision-making. The study came to the additional conclusion that Open Government Data (OGD) signifies a new stage in kicking off the implementation of Qatar's e-government because it aids in achieving the fundamental goals of the latter. Due to a number of issues, including a lack of laws and regulations



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that regulate and control the nature of such initiatives, poor coordination among various government agencies, poor quality of published data, and others, the implementation of OGD initiatives may be difficult for developing countries. The study suggested coming up with an open government data plan. The Qatari government will use this plan as a road map to start implementing OGD projects. The study recommended creating an OGD framework, creating a legal framework for OGD initiatives to manage these initiatives and increase their success rate, and maximizing the use of Web 2.0 due to its major advantages, as this web enables users to modify data and access it when necessary.

3. Methodology

In March 2020, the poll was carried out using a mobile phone. Adults residing in Qatar at the time of the survey's reference period who are at least 18 years old make up the target population. SESRI collaborates with nearby cell phone providers to create a cell phone sample using the dialing method mentioned in order to reach this group. A sample taken from this type of frame should have great coverage and representation of the target population since approximately 98 percent of adult Qataris own a cell phone. To guarantee that the full call protocols are followed for all of the sample's phone numbers, the numbers are released for interviewing in batches. By distributing phone numbers evenly across respondent traits, the use of batches enhances the survey's representativeness.



There are at least seven tries to finish the interview for each phone number in the sample. To increase the likelihood of reaching respondents, phone calls are placed at various hours throughout the day and on various days of the week. Devoted interviewers would make contact with and attempt to finish interviews for phone numbers with break-off and soft refusal. The outcomes of every phone number that was called during this survey are displayed in the accompanying table.

Table 1: Calling dispositions

	Disposition	Frequency
4.	Completed	1340
	Not completed	5770
	Eligible	2069
	Ineligible	3426
	Unknown eligibility	275
	Raw response rate (RR1)	36.4%
	Adjusted response rate	37.8%

Awareness and Usage of E-government Website (Hukoomi)

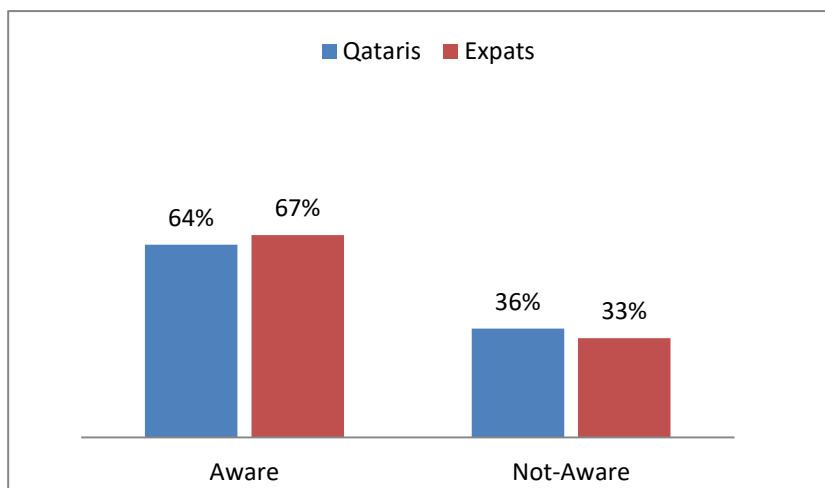
The aim of Qatar's e-Government initiative (Hukoomi) is to create a fully integrated, paperless government. It was launched in July 2000. The goal of the Qatari e-government project was to provide online services for government transactions, information, and knowledge at any time and from any location. The results of the awareness and use of the Hukoomi website are presented in this part of the report.

Overall, the findings indicate that (64% and 67%, respectively) Qataris and expatriates have the same degree of knowledge about Qatar's e-



government website (Hukoomi) (see Figure 1). Only 36% of Qataris and 41% of expatriates, however, use the Hukoomi website to communicate with the government (Figure 2).

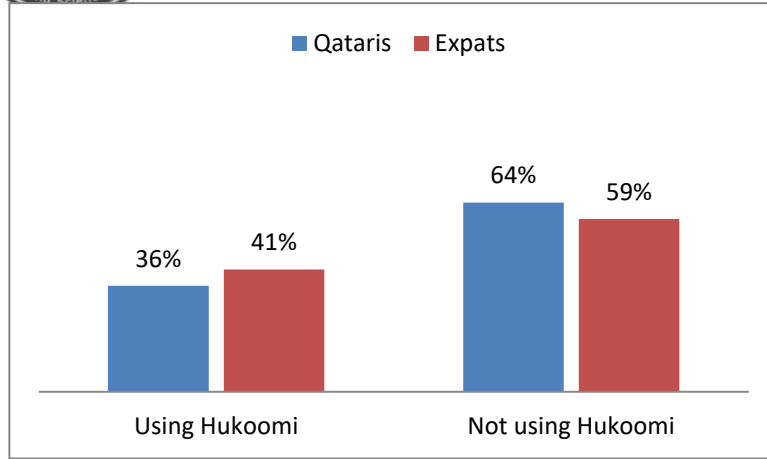
Figure 1: Overall awareness of Qatar's E-government website (Hukoomi)



**Figure 2:
The usage
of
Qatar's**

**2:
actual
levels
e-**

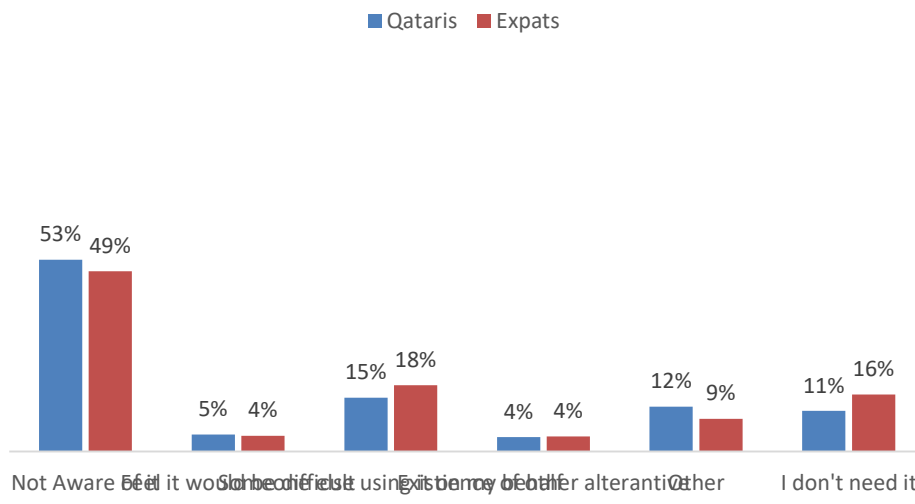
Government Website (Hukoomi) to interact with the Government



Non-users were given a follow-up question to determine the primary reason they did not use the Hukoomi website to communicate with the government in order to better understand the barriers to using the platform. A little over half of Qataris (53%) and a little under half of expatriates (49%) of these non-users claimed not to be familiar with the website Hukoomi. Additionally, 15% of Qataris and 18% of expats claimed that another person is using the Hukoomi website on their account. The remaining respondents gave various justifications for not using the Hukoomi website, including that they didn't need it, that there were other options, and other reasons (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Reasons for Not



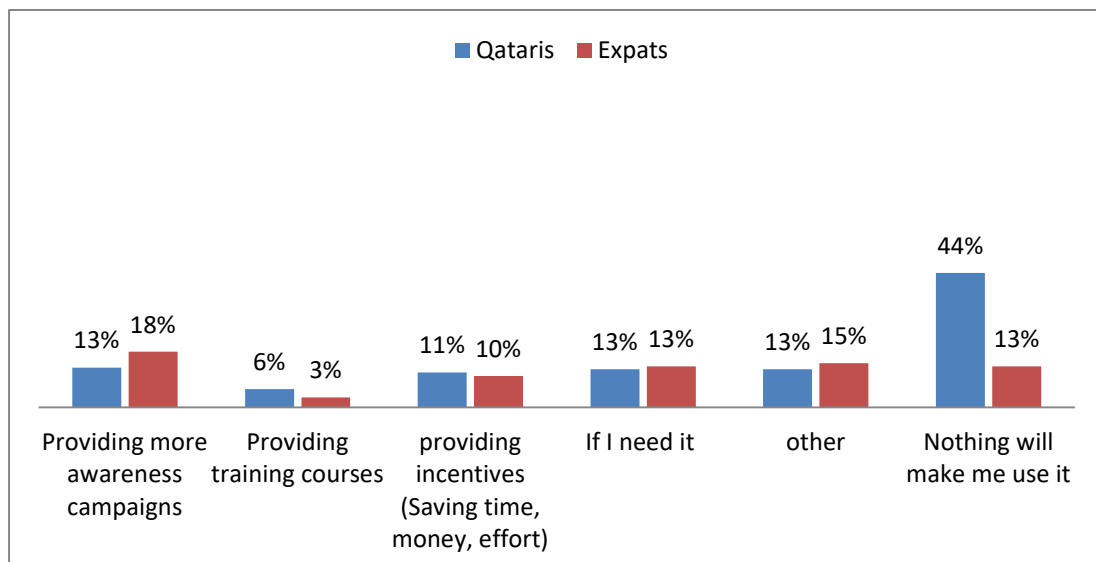
Using Hukoomi Website



Using the Hukoomi website, including: they do not need it, there are alternatives available, and other various factors (Figure 11).

Another follow-up query was also posed to non-users to ascertain what might tempt them to use the Hukoomi website to communicate with the government. Comparatively to Expats (13%) who said that nothing would make them use it, nearly half of Qataris (44%) said the same. A similar percentage (13%) of Qataris and expats said they would use the Hukoomi website if they needed it, and about 18% of expats and 13% of Qataris said that more awareness efforts will encourage them to use the website (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Factors that could Encourage Respondents to Use (Hukoomi) Website

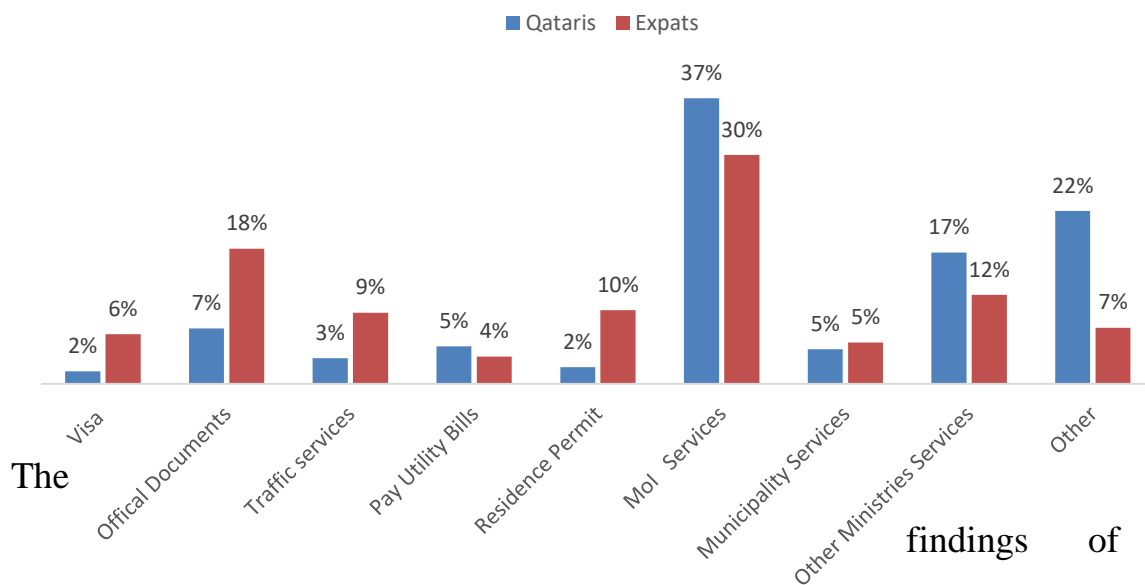




5. Main Government Services

When respondents said they used the Hukoomi website for e-government services, we asked them to list the top five services they used most frequently. There have been a variety of services mentioned, and some respondents chose to identify the ministry rather than the service. The Ministry of Interior Services has the greatest percentage of both Qataris and expats (37% Qataris and 30% expats), as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Main government online services from Hukoomi website (First Choice)



The

findings of the other four options for the primary online government services that respondents use from the Hukoomi website are displayed in Table (2) below. Even among those four options, both Qataris and expatriates named the Ministry of Interior Services as the primary government online



service, with Traffic Services (viewing and paying traffic tickets and fines) coming in as the second choice for Qataris (15%) and the third choice for foreigners (14%). For Qataris and expats, additional services have been listed with varying percentages, such as paying utility fees, municipal services, and others.

Table 2: Main government online services from Hukoomi (Four Other Choices)

		Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice	Fifth Choice
Visa Application and Renewal	Qataris	2%	1%	-	-
	Expats	4%	5%	-	-
Official Documents Renewals (ID, Health cards, Passports, etc.)	Qataris	4%	1%	10%	-
	Expats	9%	13%	4%	-
Traffic services (View and Pay traffic tickets and fines)	Qataris	15%	4%	5%	4%
	Expats	7%	14%	16%	16%
Pay utility bills (Kahramaa, Ooreedoo, etc)	Qataris	8%	4%	7%	17%
	Expats	7%	7%	18%	9%
Residence Permit	Qataris	4%	-	-	-
	Expats	8%	-	-	-
Ministry of Interior Services	Qataris	14%	15%	10%	24%
	Expats	23%	18%	15%	8%
Municipality Services	Qataris	13%	14%	12%	-
	Expats	5%	13%	7%	-



Education Services	Qataris	10%	-	17%	-
	Expats	3%	-	5%	-
Ministry of Commerce and Industry Services	Qataris	-	-	7%	12%
	Expats	-	-	8%	16%
Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs (ADLSA) Services	Qataris	-	-	7%	-
	Expats	-	-	8%	-
Ministry of Public Health Services	Qataris	-	-	-	11%
	Expats	-	-	-	16%
Browse other Ministries Services	Qataris	19%	29%	-	-
	Expats	13%	10%	-	-
Other	Qataris	25%	32%	26%	33%
	Expats	21%	20%	20%	35%

6. Frequency Usage of Hukoomi Website

In addition, respondents were questioned how frequently they visit Qatar's e-government website (Hukoomi). Results indicate that the majority of respondents said they occasionally use the Hukoomi website (48% of Qataris and 55% of expats), and nearly the same percentage of both Qataris and expats said they always use it (29% of Qataris and 28% of expats) (Figure 6). The majority of respondents, 96% of Qataris and 97% of expats, reported being extremely happy or somewhat satisfied with Qatar's e-government website (Hukoomi) (Figure 7).



Figure 6: Usage of Hukoomi website

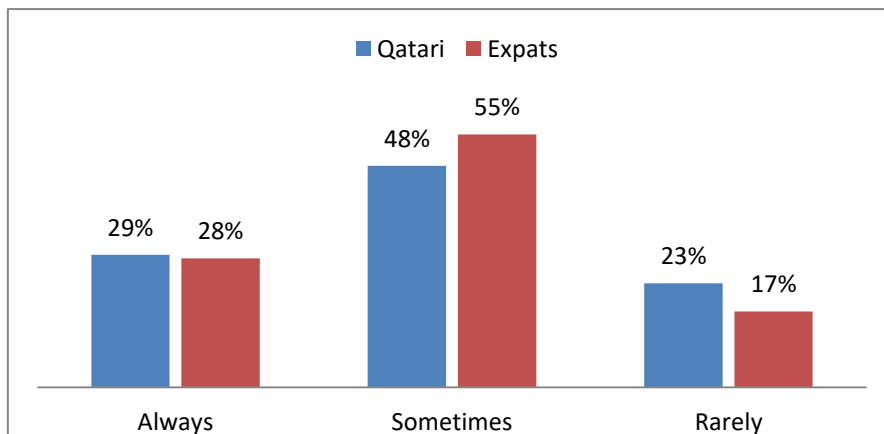
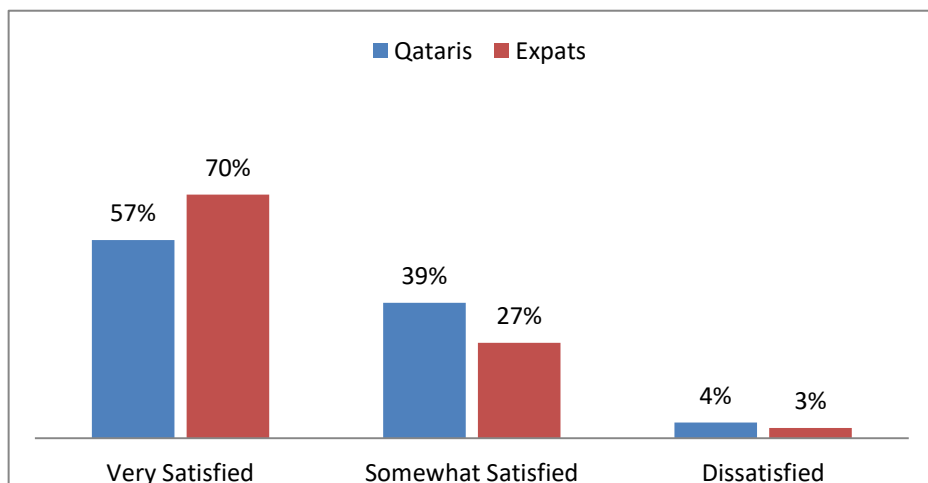


Figure 7: Satisfaction with Hukoomi website





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In order to gauge which services respondents have been using, questions about various services were also put to respondents who have previously used Qatar's e-government website. Results indicate that almost equally many of the services inquired about were used by respondents who were Qataris. paying traffic fines and tickets (68%), applying for visas (67%), renewing cards (64%), and paying utility expenses (64%). (Figure 8). On the other hand, card renewals (79%) are the service that expatriates use the most, followed by visa applications (68%) and paying traffic fines and tickets (67%) (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Types of actual usage of Hukoomi Services (Qataris)

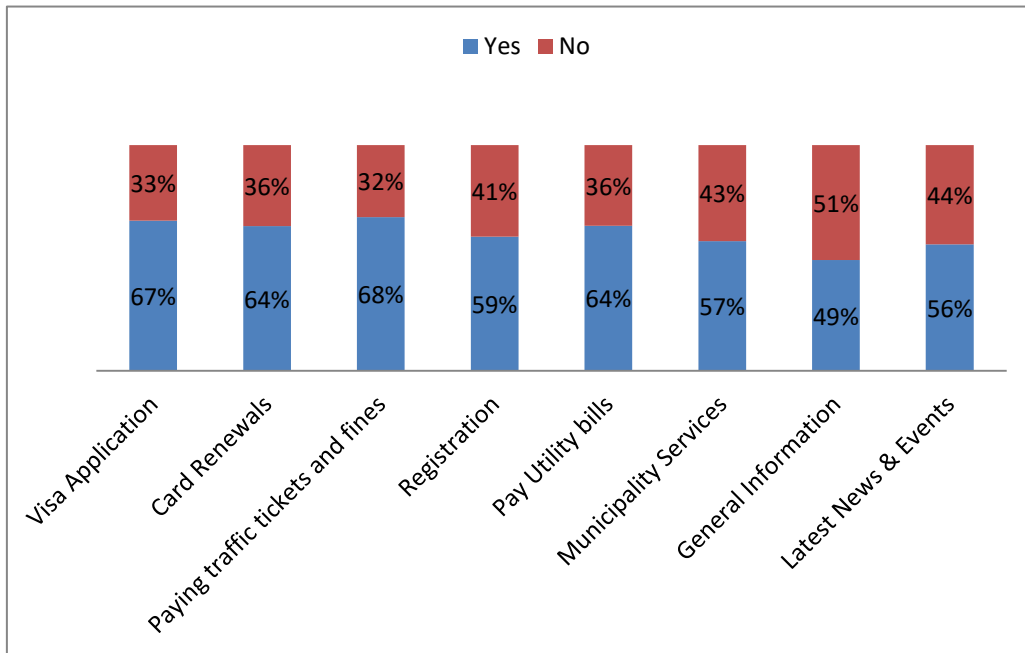
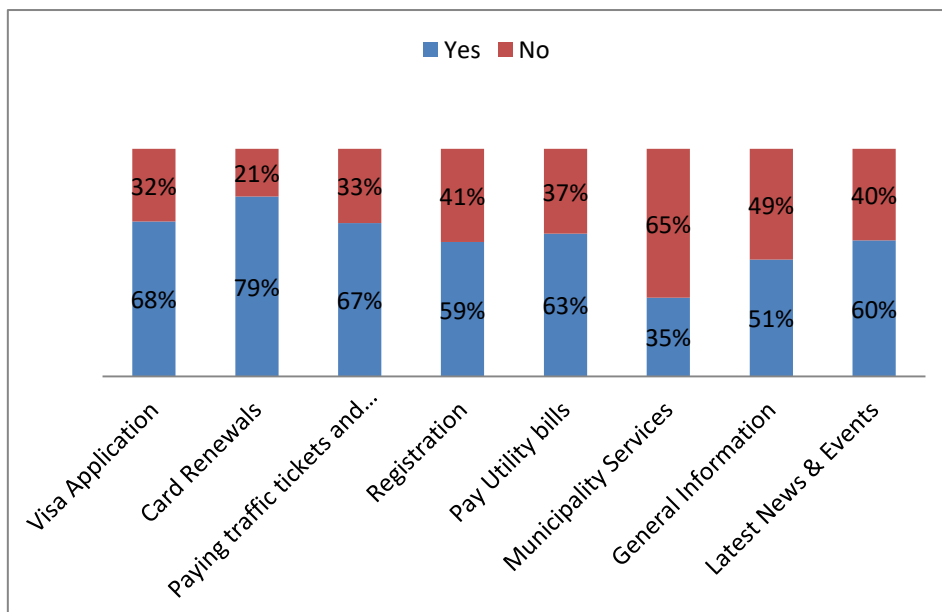


Figure 9: Types of actual usage of Hukoomi Services (Expats)

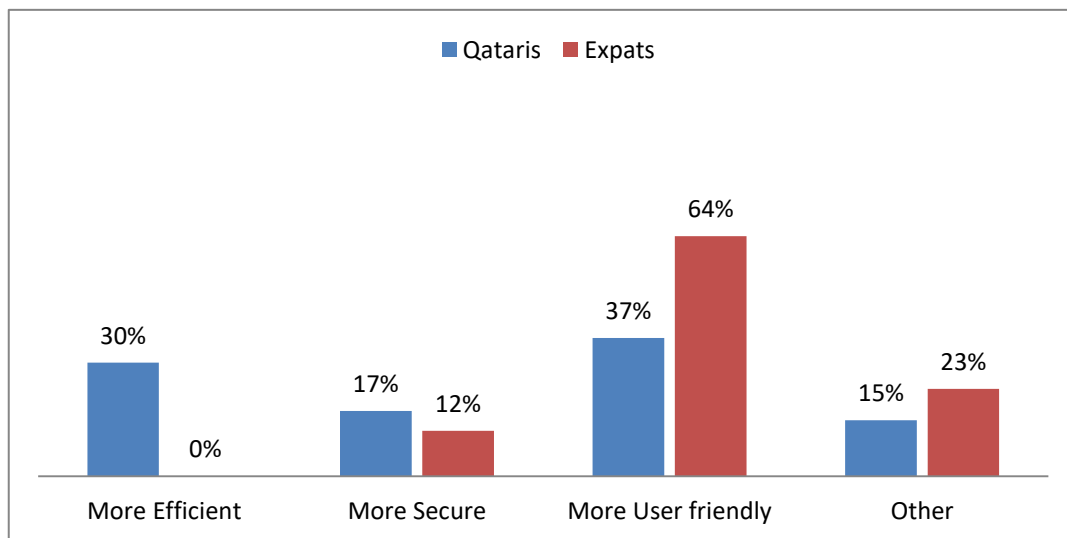




7. Main Reason to Use The Website

People were questioned about their primary motivations for using the website. Results indicate that 37% of Qataris and 64% of expats believe the website to be more user-friendly than mobile apps. Additionally, 30% of Qataris believe that the website is more effective than a smartphone application; however, none of the expats agree, despite the fact that they still use it for other purposes (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Main reason to use the website instead of the mobile application

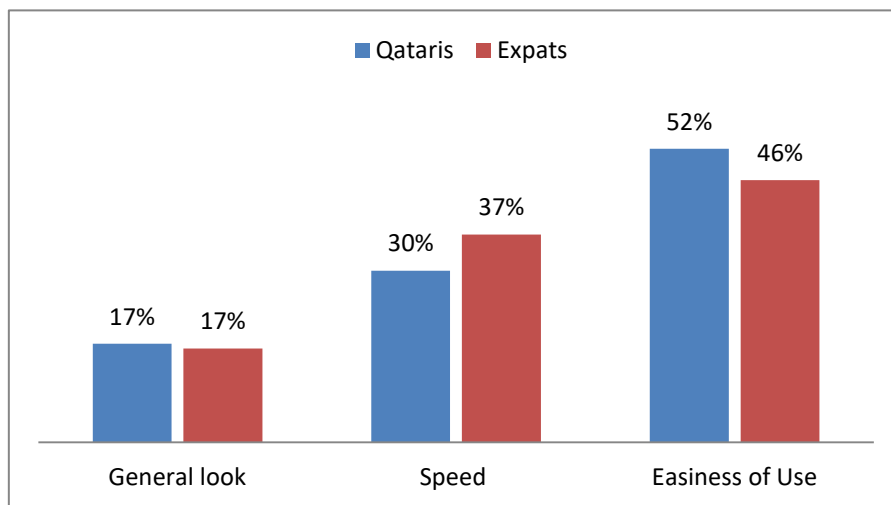


According to the findings, roughly half of Qataris and expatriates enjoy the "ease of use" of the website (52% Qataris, 46% expatriates). The website's speed is next to what users like best, and lastly, both Qataris and



expats (17%) gave the website's overall appearance an equal rating (Figure 11).

Figure 11: What respondents like the most about the website



Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each statement that related to the Hukoomi website in a question that contained a number of distinct statements. 71% of Qataris and 70% of expat respondents indicated that they were aware of the Hukoomi website. However, only half of both Qataris and expats agree that they receive enough information about the e-government website, where the other half of the



respondents disagree, and almost the same result for understanding the benefits of using the website. According to surveys, 55% of Qataris and 51% of expats believe that instruction is necessary in order to use the Hukoomi website. The website is challenging for both Qataris and expats (71% and 66%) due to a lack of information and awareness efforts (see Table 3, Figure 12, and Figure 13).

Table 3 General Statements related to Hukoomi website

		Agree	Disagree
		%	%
I am aware of the government (Hukoomi) website in Qatar	Qataris	71	29
	Expats	70	30
I receive enough information about the e-government's (Hukoomi) website	Qataris	49	51
	Expats	50	50
I know the benefits of using the e-government (Hukoomi) website	Qataris	46	54
	Expats	53	47
I need training in order to use the (Hukoomi) website	Qataris	55	45
	Expats	51	49
Lack of information and awareness campaigns make it difficult to use the	Qataris	73	27



(Hukoomi) website	Expats	66	34
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Figure 12: General Statements related to Hukoomi website (Qataris)

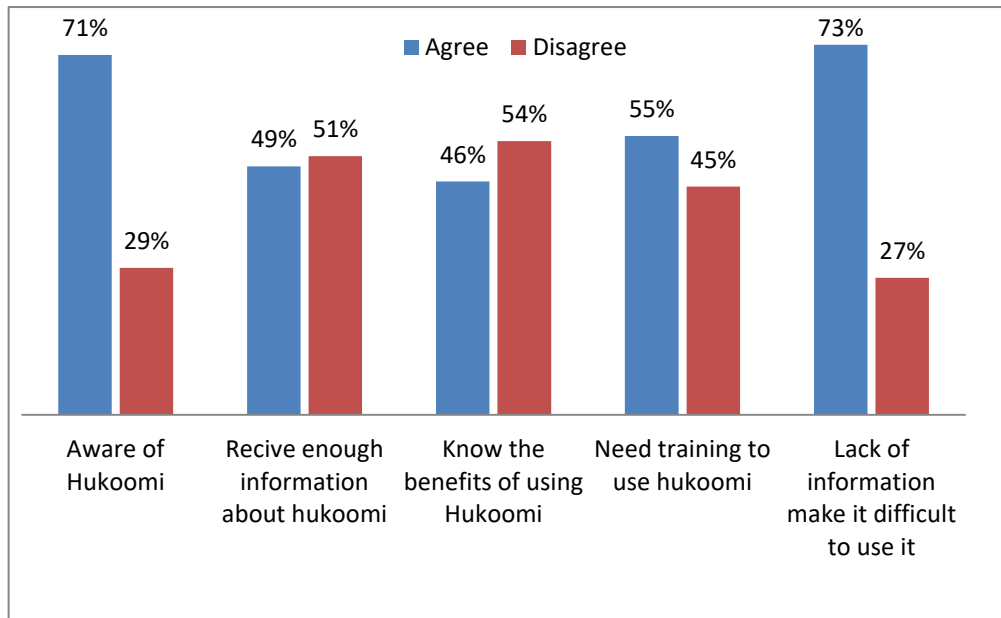
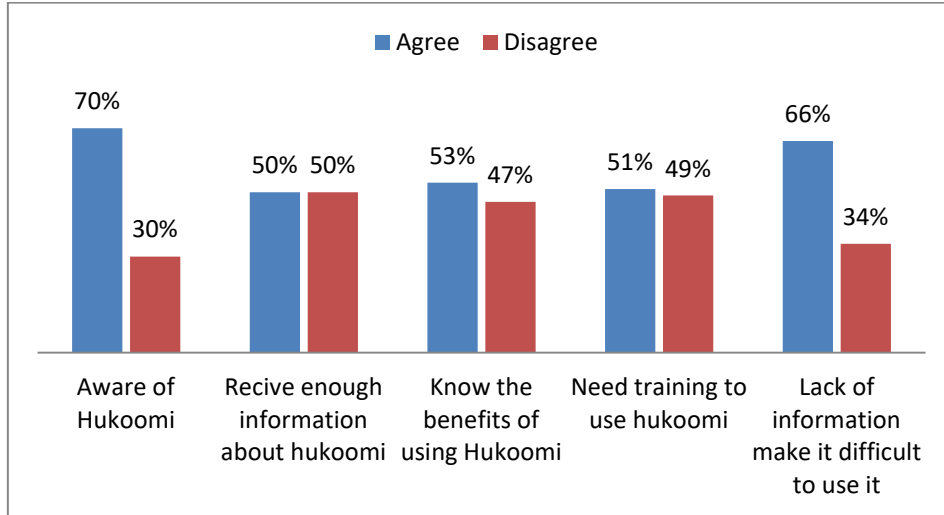


Figure 13: General Statements related to Hukoomi website (Expats)



The majority of respondents, 93% of Qataris and 91% of expats, firmly agree or somewhat agree that using the e-government website Hukoomi in Qatar could help them interact with the government more. Additionally, the majority of respondents concur that they would suggest that their family and acquaintances use the Hukoomi website. Additionally, 91% of expatriates and 92% of Qataris concur that they will use the Hukoomi website to communicate with the government in the future.

Figure 14: Hukoomi website could assist in engaging more with the government

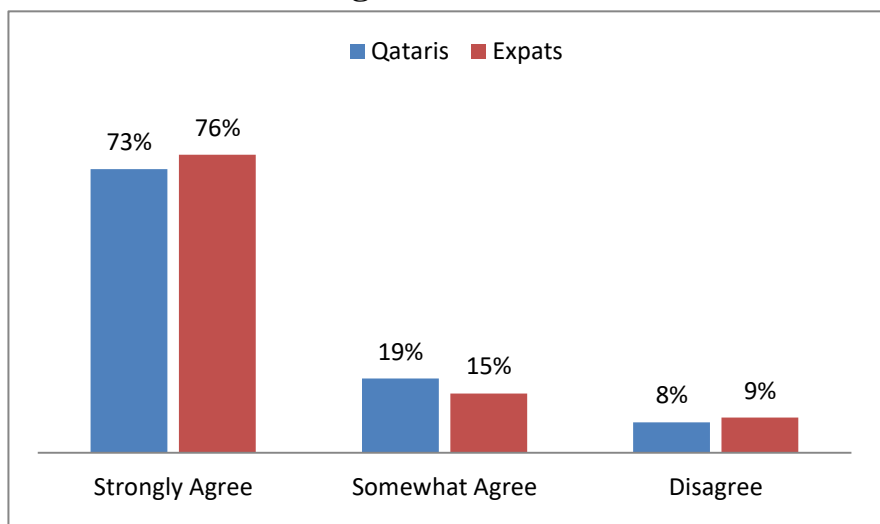




Figure 15: Recommending Hukoomi to family and friends

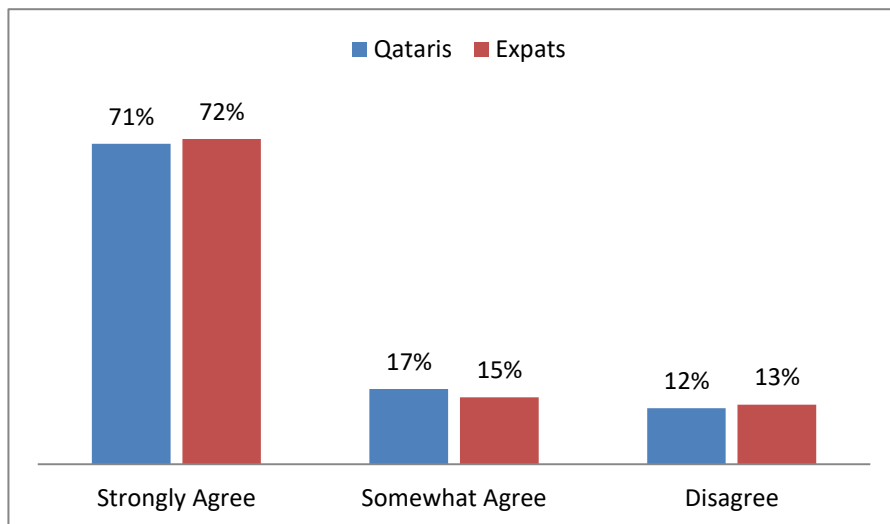
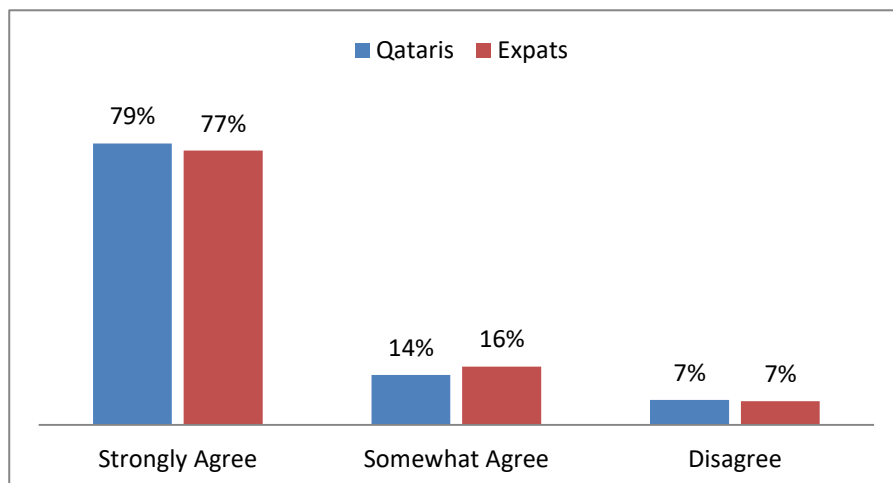


Figure 16: Intention to use Hukoomi website in the future





Furthermore, users of the website (Hukoomi) were questioned about three additional statements about it in order to gauge their level of agreement or disagreement with general claims made about the website's security and accuracy of the information.

(92% of Qataris and 98% of expats) concur that they feel secure disclosing confidential information while using the Hukoomi website. Similarly, 85% of Qataris and 91% of expatriates believe that the information they receive from the website is comprehensive, and 93% of both Qataris and expats believe that Hukoomi offers enough government services (See Table 4, Figure 17, and Figure 18).

Table 4: Statements related to using Hukoomi website

		Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %
I feel safe exposing personal information using the e-government (Hukoomi) website	Qataris	80	12	8
	Expats	82	16	2
There are enough government services on the (Hukoomi) website	Qataris	63	28	10
	Expats	67	26	7
The information I get from the (Hukoomi) website is complete	Qataris	55	30	15
	Expats	59	32	8



Figure 17: Statements related to using Hukoomi website (Qataris)

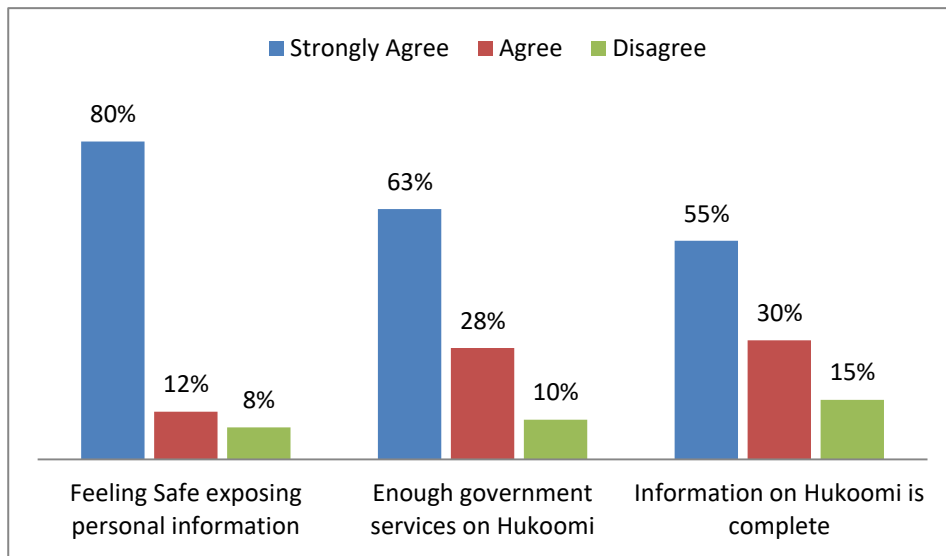
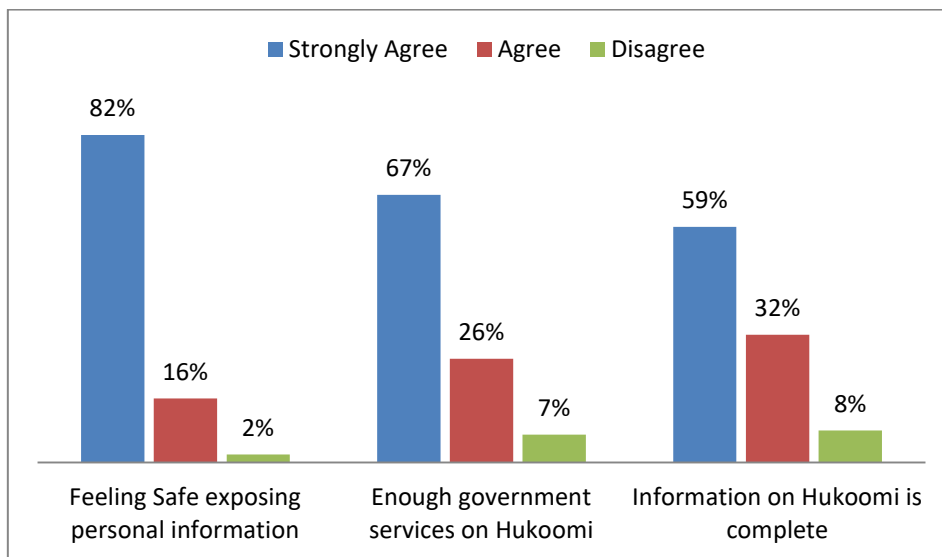


Figure 18: Statements related to using Hukoomi website (Expats)



8. Conclusion and Recommendation



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As was stated earlier at the beginning of this report, this research is the first to examine how the general public views the effectiveness of Qatari government institutions online, particularly in three key areas that have lately become common in online activity around the world. Since its inception in 2000, Qatar's e-Government program has seen a mediocre level of adoption. The Qatari e-Government portal began opening up some of its information and making it available for public use as a result of ongoing efforts to create a more interactive and effective e-Government system. On the other hand, the portal embraced new tools of communication using cutting-edge mobile applications and social media tools & platforms to further engage and reach out to the public.

This study sheds light on the potential for general adoption of e-government as well as the difficulties and advancements that lie ahead. In order to better understand the current situation, this research sought to determine the level of e-Government adoption and the usability of online services among Qatari citizens. The goal of this research was to examine how the Hukoomi website's user base adopted e-government.

To capture the opinions of the State of Qatar's general populace, a representative sample of 1,340 adults aged 18 to 77 from Qatar was chosen and interviewed using the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing system (CATI) (Qataris and Expats). As we come to the close of the report and the conclusion and recommendations section, the study will make an effort to derive some key recommendations based on



the findings and findings of the study in accordance with each section of the report.

The study has produced the following findings regarding the present usage status and suggestions for further use of the e-Government website (Hukoomi):

1. Despite the high levels of awareness—64% among Qataris and 67% among expats—about the presence and accessibility of Qatar's e-Government website (Hukoomi). To engage with the government online, only 36% of Qataris and 41% of expats hardly use the website. This clearly demonstrates a discrepancy between high awareness levels and actual usage rates, as only one-third of people are actively using the website, despite the fact that most people are aware of it. In order to encourage the general public to move beyond simply knowing that the services exist to actually using them effectively and embracing them as a means of contact with the government, more targeted awareness campaigns are required in addition to incentives.
2. Nearly half of the respondents cited (53% Qataris and 49% Expats) cited their ignorance of the service's presence as the primary deterrent to using the Hukoomi website. This once more demonstrates the significance of starting awareness campaigns to spread the presence of the website from its inception to the general public.



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3. One thing that needs to be made very obvious is that 44% of Qataris who said they aren't using the website also said that nothing will make them use it at all. It certainly requires extra care because Qataris appear to be more reluctant when it comes to accessing the Hukoomi website, with a high refusal rate overall (compared to 13% of Expats).
4. More than half of expats (at a rate of 51%) and Qataris (at a rate of 55%) agree that users of the website need hands-on instruction. Similar numbers of respondents say they need to learn more about the advantages of using the website because they don't know enough about it already. According to 71% of Qataris and 66% of expats, the website itself is challenging to use due to a lack of information. To increase the website's usefulness, it is therefore crucial to disseminate enough information about it and its advantages.



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