



## **Qatari women and the Internet** **"An analytical study of the nature of use and benefit patterns "**

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Executive summary

### **Introduction:**

Since its debut, the World Wide Web has made a fundamental change in the life style worldwide. Notably, since the web was first emerged and according to many studies conducted in the US and Western Europe on rate of internet use by both sexes, the number of male users far exceeded the number of female users. A noticeable gap between men and women accessing the internet has been revealed by most of these studies.

Although there are no accurate statistics about the rate of internet use by Qatari women, the State however has a noticeable approach to activate the participation of Qatari women in information technology and communications, particularly using the internet. Women participation is one of the major priorities included in projects and plans of the information technology and communications strategy. With a view to ensuring and encouraging women participation and providing them with opportunities to access the field of IT and communications, a number of initiatives have been launched, the most important among them are:

- Woman indicators database
- Man and woman database
- Female public figures database
- Qualifying uneducated women in IT fields
- IT administrative development for woman

### **Study Problem**

Internet use by Arab woman, particularly by Qatari woman, has been analyzed by only few studies. Therefore, no statistic indicators are available for the rate and patterns of internet use by women. To this end, the study seeks to reveal patterns of such use as well as to identify views and trends of Qatari women towards the internet.

### **Study Significance:**

Most probably it is the first study to deal with internet use by Qatari woman, even at the level of Arab world and Gulf Region. However, the significance of the study is demonstrated by the growing interest of the State to foster

Qatari women activities and to encourage their participation in all activities at all political, economic and social levels.

### **Study Objectives:**

The study aims at identifying:

- Ages of Qatari women using the internet
- Social status of Qatari woman and its impact on internet use.
- Educational and financial status of Qatari women using the internet.
- Rate of internet use by Qatari women.
- Internet applications (services) most frequently used by Qatari women (emails- forums- weblogs- browsing)
- Websites most frequently visited by Qatari women (educational websites- professional websites- commercial websites- family websites...etc.).
- Search methods used by Qatari women to access information on the web.
- Internet impact on Qatari women with respect to the different aspects of life; being familial, educational, professional, health, religious, etc.
- Obstacles and difficulties preventing Qatari women from accessing the internet.
- Motives for internet use by Qatari women.
- Views and trends of Qatari women towards the role of the web.

### **Study Scope and Outlines:**

This study covers Qatari women residing in the State of Qatar regardless their different ages, educational qualifications, social statuses, financial status and professional positions.

### **Research Method:**

Being the most appropriate method, the descriptive approach was adopted for the subject matter of this study. This approach includes an analytical survey for the status quo identifiable through field samples taken from the targeted population subject of the study. Qatari women, at post-secondary educational level, of different ages as well as different economic and social statuses were considered as the targeted population subject of the study. Nevertheless, this targeted population further included active (employed) and inactive women (housewives). Seeing that it is very difficult to cover the targeted population, the researcher chose to use a "random stratified" sample to ensure that the sample used represents individuals of the targeted population and its groupings.

Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed by the different techniques of statistic analysis, including descriptive analysis methods, such as frequencies, percentages, averages, standard deviations and relative weights. In addition, methods of the indicator statistics have been utilized, such as the non-parametric tests: Chi-square test and comparison of

proportions test. Parametric tests have been also used, such as T-test for values specified in advance and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

### **Study Results:**

- The study revealed that 69% of the sample individuals use the internet, while 53% of Qatari women did not receive any training courses or workshops qualifying them to use the internet.
- The study also revealed that more than half of Qatari women; specifically 55.7% have started using internet at home, while educational institutions ranked second with 24.3%.
- However, internet use at home ranked first with respect to internet use by Qatari women who constituted 68%.
- As for the most influential factors that increase internet use by Qatari women, the study revealed that the type of the job performed by Qatari women takes precedence over other factors by 51.4%. Friends however represent a very effective factor in attracting women to use the internet and contributed by 38.2%. Ranking at the third place by 33.4%, mass media have also played a vital role.
- The study showed that 79.9% of the sample targeted population uses the internet for personal reasons. While internet use for work purposes ranked second by 51.6%.
- Email use, according to the study, ranked first by 60.6% among the most frequently utilized online applications, while web browsing reached 21% of the entire internet use.
- The study has further indicated that educational and religious websites as well as websites providing information about family and children came in the first three ranks among the list of the most frequently visited websites.
- 68.6% of Qatari women indicated that they do not participate in chatting rooms available online. Additionally, 63.7% of Qatari women spend about two hours online, while 2.2% spend more than 7 hours online.
- The study also established that half of the study targeted population constituting 48.7% use the internet for transactions related to the e-government. Where Inquiring about traffic offences ranked first in the use of the e-government portal by Qatari women.
- 40.4% of women indicated that they are keen to use e-shopping services, and 8.4% affirmed that they do online shopping on a regular basis.
- Online information resources did not receive a noticeable interest by Qatari women, where only 47.4% of women indicated that they use such resources.

- By 22.5%, web designing took the lead among online activities available for Qatari women. Private website designing constituted the greater share of these activities by 12.2%, and in the second place comes private website designing at work institutions by 10%.
- According to the study, more than 41% of women expressed their satisfaction with the current presence of Qatari women online. The majority, however, of Qatari women who constituted 64.8% still think that Qatari women should have a greater role.
- Search engines ranked first by 63% among search tools and methods utilized by Qatari women.
- It was also revealed by the study that internet use by Qatari unmarried women exceeds that of married, widowed and divorced women, where their average use is more than 7 times a week.
- Most extensive female users of emails aged from 20 to 29 at most; especially those having administrative positions.
- As key restraints on Qatari women's utmost benefit from information available online, lack of language skills to deal with foreign websites, the growing workload and the relatively high internet prices were identified by the study.
- The study has revealed that internet use could be considerably motivated by educational institutions. According to Qatari women, lowering internet prices could be an underlying motive for increasing internet use.

In light of the results concluded above, the study recommends the following:

- Educational institutions of different types should have a greater contribution in activating women internet use. This role should not be limited to curricula dealing with IT and the internet in particular, but rather should extend to have the internet as one of the essential components of the learning process through using it in activities of all curricula with no exception.
- It is necessary to develop language skills of Qatari women, especially using English language. Inevitably, lack of such skills affects negatively the Qatari women's benefit from the internet contents. It has been obviously proven that curricula currently applied in educational institutions do neither provide students with the appropriate preparation nor develop their language skills to the aspired extent. In this context, it is proposed that woman institutions in the State, including the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, should shoulder this responsibility through launching the initiative of *"Developing Qatari Women Language Skills"*. This can be accomplished in coordination with other entities, such as Qatar University

and Qatar Foundation, including colleges of the Education City and recognized language centers in the State.

- Providing more information about the internet through the mass media, as it is proven by the study to have a great influence on raising awareness about the importance of the internet. Different categories of the public should however be targeted by the mass media, which should not be addressed to the actual users of the internet only, but rather should encourage and motivate non-users to start using the internet.
- In light of the continuous emergence of inventions and new technologies, training courses should be frequently held by State institutions in both public and private sectors to instruct workers on how to use the new applications related to the internet. However, such courses should include gradual levels to suit the different levels of attendees. In addition to general courses on internet use, more specialized courses could be introduced to cover one or more fields of the internet, such as using search engines, thematic portals, etc. In light of study results, workshops should also be organized for developing skills of webpage and private website designing, which receive a growing interest from Qatari women.
- Decreasing internet prices to increase the number of users. According to the study, the high internet prices constitute a key obstacle to benefiting from online services.