Despite 2016 being a globally tumultuous year on many fronts: economic, political and security, tourism has continued to grow internationally, both in size and importance. Nations that have historically been tourism hotspots continue to fight to maintain their positioning, while others who are new to the tourism scene are carving out their place on the map of must-visit destinations.

On a state-level, investing in tourism is the economically viable thing to do. While many traditional sources of revenue fluctuate, the urge to travel and to discover hidden gems remains strong, often trumping security or economic fears. In the end, travelling brings people together and opens up their eyes to a new perspective, and new perspectives are as much needed now as they ever have been.

That is also true in Qatar, which has proudly taken steps to harness its potential and place itself prominently on the tourism map.

In times of economic contraction, it is important to be strategic, taking steps that require fewer resources but are exponential in their impact. Our commitment to making Qatar more accessible, to facilitate the entry of our visitors whether they are coming on board cruise ships or through the transit terminal, will leave a lasting mark on the tourism industry and the broader economy in the coming years. The emergence of the cruise industry brings a new promise of opportunity for many sub-sectors to grow and to thrive. Our laying the groundwork for the introduction of new festivals and events has already borne fruit in early 2017, with the advent of the inaugural Shop Qatar – the nation’s first shopping festival targeted to tourists.

None of these bold developments would have been possible without the backing and the patronage of our partners in the Qatari government, nor can they reach their full potential without the collaboration and hard work of our partners in both the public and the private sector.

With that, it is my pleasure to share with all of our stakeholders this report, which outlines our achievements and our challenges, along with the promise that in 2017, together, we will continue to leverage the full potential of these developments for the benefit of Qatar and its people.

On behalf of the QTA Chairman,

Hassan Al Ibrahim
Chief Tourism Development Officer
QTA Overview

Our Vision and Mission

Vision
To lead the sustainable development of Qatar into a world-class hub with deep cultural roots.

Mission
To plan, regulate, develop and promote sustainable tourism in Qatar with the aim of driving economic growth and social development.

Values

Our Guiding Strategy

In February 2014, QTA launched the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy (QNTSS), which charts a clear path of development for the sector through 2030 by identifying four key focus areas: Urban and Family Entertainment, MICE and Business Events, Culture and Heritage Tourism, and Sports and Recreation Tourism.

Our Priority Areas
• Boosting Qatar’s tourism industry through comprehensive plans, policies, regulations, and stakeholder coordination mechanisms.
• Developing Qatar’s tourism product & service portfolio with a focus on Urban and Family Entertainment, MICE and Business Events, Culture and Heritage Tourism, and Sports and Recreation Tourism.
• Promoting Qatar as a leading tourism destination for business facilitation, authentic experiences, & family-focused recreation.
• Enhance the skill and service levels within tourism human capital.
• Position QTA as a leading, world-class tourism planning & promotion entity.

Our Mandate

QTA is committed to further bolstering Qatar’s economy through building a diverse and sustainable tourism sector, through our efforts to:
• Plan for and Develop the right tourism products and drawing in the investments to realise them;
• Regulate the sector to ensure it reflects Qatar’s culture while operating at the highest standards; and
• Promote Qatar as a destination of choice to business and leisure travellers around the world.

This report tells the story of QTA’s 2016 highlights according to the pillars laid out in the above mandate.
**2016 in Numbers**

**Hospitality Sector Performance**
- **22,921** Total hotel rooms in stock
- **62%** Average occupancy across hotel establishments
- **10** New hotel establishments opened
- **1st** Qatar’s ranking in Oley’s Guest Experience in the GCC

**QTA Governance**
- **52%** Qatariisation rate achieved
- **31** MoUs/partnerships signed
- **1 tonne** of paper recycled
- **1/3 tonne** of plastic recycled

**Private Sector Engagement**
- **102** Exhibitions licensed
- **27** Organisations partnered with to bid for international events
- **7** Tourism start-ups incubated by QBIC Tourism

**Festivals and Tourism Events**
- **QAR 641 Million** Estimated economic impact of Qatar Summer Festival 2016
- **4** Festivals/tourism events organised by QTA

**Promoting Qatar as a Destination**
- **4041** International independent travel agents registered in Tawash training programme
- **343** International tour operators selling Qatar travel packages
- **227** Familiarisation visits to Qatar
- **76** International workshops and tradeshows held
- **64** Tour operator campaigns
- **38** International media campaigns
**Visitor Arrivals**

**Arrivals by Nationality, Grouped by Region**

**Arrivals by Nationality, Top 10**

**Visitor Arrivals Growth, 2012-16**

- **CAGR** 2012-16 = 6.0%

**Visitor Mode of Entry**

- **Air**: 1,095,453
- **Sea**: 29,444
- **Land**: 1,813,199

* CAGR = Compound Annual Growth Rate
Hospitality Sector

The hospitality sector has seen significant expansion in anticipation of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Between 2015 and 2016, room supply across Qatar increased by nearly 9%. A total of 117 establishments are currently operational, providing close to 23,000 rooms.

Existing Supply of Hotel & Hotel Apartment Establishments

Hotel Development Pipeline

Total number of rooms in the pipeline, at various stages of development = 20,580
Planning and Developing

Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha
Planning and development are core functions of QTA as it lays the foundation for a tourism sector that captures the essence of Qatar, and brings in revenue to support our nation's future.

Our policy and planning, tourism development and product development teams support the growth of all the ingredients needed for an authentic touristic experience reflective of Qatar’s culture.

In 2016 we made enormous strides in the areas of policy development, and saw great progress on the path to building key sub-sectors, particularly cruise tourism, business events and festivals.

Policy Developments

Easing access to Qatar through visa facilitation is one of the crucial elements in achieving growth in the tourism industry, making a positive impact on our economy and enriching our society. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recently completed a study on Visa Facilitation in Qatar, and in the fourth quarter of 2016, QTA announced three key related developments that will greatly facilitate entry to Qatar, raising its attractiveness as a tourist destination:

• Partnership with VFS Global for Efficient Tourist Visa Application System

  In August 2016, QTA and Qatar Airways entered into a partnership with VFS Global – the leading provider of visa processing services – with the support of Qatar’s Ministry of Interior (MOI). The agreement paves the way for a new tourist visa application system that will be:

  Digital – applications will be online and will produce E-visas;
  More accessible – visitors can apply at Qatar Airways offices around the world;
  Faster – applicants can expect a response within 48 hours;
  More transparent – visitors will be able to track the status of their application online.

• Introduction of New Transit Visa

  In September 2016, QTA, Qatar Airways and the Ministry of Interior announced a revised transit visa scheme available to passengers transiting through Doha in a move to promote Qatar as a world-class stopover destination.

  The new transit visa structure now allows passengers with a minimum transit time of five hours in Hamad International Airport, to stay in Qatar for up to 96 hours (four days). This is a significant increase from the previous transit visa scheme, which allowed travellers with a minimum layover of eight hours to spend a maximum of 48 hours (two days) in Qatar.
The new transit visa is set to raise Qatar’s attractiveness as a stopover destination, particularly as it is free of charge and available to passengers of all nationalities, provided they have a confirmed onward journey and apply through Qatar Airways at least seven days in advance of their trip. All visas are approved and issued at the sole discretion of the Ministry of Interior.

“Promoting visa facilitation is a priority for tourism development worldwide and a key element in the competitiveness of tourism destinations. We are very pleased to see that the work conducted by UNWTO with Qatar on visa facilitation is yielding results and trust that these will certainly result in an increase of visitors to Qatar.”

- Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

Facilitating Disembarkation for Cruise Passengers

As cruise passengers currently spend less than 24 hours in Qatar, it was important to ensure that they could maximize on their time in Qatar with a swift and smooth disembarkation process. Thanks to enhanced technology and close collaboration between cruise operators, security officials, and our partners at Ministry of Interior and Mwani – Qatar Ports Authority, QTA provided cruise liners in 2016 with a new procedure that allows cruise passengers to disembark within minutes and begin enjoying their on-shore excursions.

As part of the new operating procedure, a passenger manifest containing passport details of passengers and crew is shared with immigration officials 48 hours in advance of the ship’s arrival in Qatar. This allows immigration officials to process all relevant information and clear passengers for entry before the ship berths. Cruise passengers then leave the ship and return to it with their ship IDs.

The announcement was made in late September 2016, just before the first cruise ship of the season docked in Doha. In addition, the Ministry of Interior confirmed that cruise passengers, due to the short duration of the stay, are eligible for transit visas, which further eased their entry into the country.

Cruise tourism is one of our stand-out success stories of 2016. The new disembarkation and visa facilitation measures were introduced in time to support the exponential growth experienced during the 2016/2017 season. With projections showing a three-fold increase in the number of port calls over the next three years, cruise tourism is set to bring approximately 300,000 visitors to Qatar by the 2019/2020 season.

In collaboration with our partners at Mwani – Qatar Ports Authority, QTA has ensured preparations are underway to meet this growth with a QAR2 billion project to upgrade Doha Port, which is set to begin in April 2017. Once complete, the Port will be a world-class cruise ship hub and a tourism destination in the heart of Doha, helping to position the country as a turnaround port by the 2018/19 cruise season.

Becoming a turnaround port means that in the near future, international cruise passengers could fly to Qatar, enter using a transit visa, and begin and end their cruise in Doha. This will increase the length of stay in Qatar of a growing segment of visitors, and allow them to further explore our country’s tourism offerings, while increasing the economic impact of cruise tourism.

In addition to creating infrastructural and policy frameworks to support cruise tourism, QTA worked with industry partners as they prepared to cater to cruise passengers, who have specific requirements due to their large numbers and short stays. In a series of training courses organised by QTA, tour guides sharpened their communication and commentary skills, their knowledge of Qatar’s tourist sites, and practiced how to build relationships with their tour groups to ensure a wholesome and unique experience.

QTA and Mwani adapted the Doha Port in advance of the MSC Fantasia call on 6 December 2016, which marked the first ever arrival of a mega cruise ship in Qatar. The ship brought over 3,000 passengers and over 1,300 crew members on its maiden call to Qatar, the first of six calls to Doha throughout the 2016/17 cruise season.
Developing Tourism Products and Investment Opportunities

QTA sees the involvement of the private sector as critical to the development of a tourism industry that celebrates Qatar’s culture and benefits its people. In 2016 we completed the concept plans and feasibility studies of several major nature reserve and historical areas, in preparation for presenting them as investment opportunities. Each of these projects comprises development plans that include visitor centres, outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, camping, camel caravans, kayaking and more. In addition, investors have been invited to transform the Doha Exhibition Centre into a Family Entertainment Centre, and QTA is in the process of reviewing proposals in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Commerce.

Tourism Products Under Development

- **Khor Al Adaid**
  Developing Khor Al Adaid (Inland Sea) into a hub for organised desert activities

- **Al Thakhira and Bin Ghannam Island**
  Developing Al Thakhira and Bin Ghannam Island into sports and leisure destination

- **Doha Exhibition Centre**
  Converting DEC into Family Entertainment Centre. 15 investors have submitted proposals
• **Mas'habiyya**  
  Developing Mas'habiyya stone quarry into desert-themed luxury resort

• **The Northern Villages**  
  Developing plans for the Northern Villages development with Qatar Museums

• **Al Zubarah Fort**  
  Developing Al Zubarah Fort into culture and heritage destination in collaboration with Qatar Museums
Growing Entrepreneur Participation in the Sector’s Development

QTA’s efforts to engage the private sector in the development of the tourism industry are not limited to established investors. Work continued throughout 2016 to attract Qatari entrepreneurs to QBIC Tourism, a specialised business incubator within Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), established through a partnership between QBIC, Qatar Development Bank and QTA. At the end of 2016, two innovative business ideas including the first spear fishing academy in Qatar and an app for personalised limousine services were accepted as incubatees in QBIC Tourism, bringing the total number of incubatees to 7.

In further support of local business talent, QTA involved 60 entrepreneurs as well as the Bedaya Centre for Entrepreneurship and Career Development in the plans for Qatar’s inaugural shopping festival – Shop Qatar. Festival plans incorporated pop-up shops throughout participating malls to showcase locally made products and designs, in addition to being involved in outdoor festival activities.

Developing Qatar’s First Shopping Festival

The addition of Shop Qatar to Qatar’s calendar of festivals and events marked a “Brand New Tradition.” The festival forms part of our strategy to grow and diversify Qatar’s tourism offering, particularly in the area of family and urban entertainment.

Plans for the new festival were drawn up with a focus on Qatar’s burgeoning retail sector, which has proven to be an important part of tourism spending in Qatar. According to figures from Qatar’s draft Tourism Satellite Account – a system approved by the United Nations for establishing the impact of tourism on a country’s economy - shopping represented a bigger portion of tourism spending in 2014 than hotel bookings or food and beverage, contributing QAR 6 billion to the country’s economy.

The festival also aims to capitalise on the country’s wonderful winter weather and is timed to coincide with school holidays in neighbouring countries, from 7 January to 7 February.
Developing the Business Events Sub-Sector

In addition to cruise tourism and tourism festivals, the business events sub-sector saw important developments in 2016.

**Partnership with QFC to facilitate establishment of event organising companies**

In order to expand the range of events management services in the country, QTA signed a partnership with Qatar Financial Centre to facilitate the establishment of business events companies. Through the agreement, QFC added business events companies to the list of entities which can be licensed and incorporated into QFC’s regulatory framework. This makes it significantly easier for international exhibition and event organising companies to establish a presence in Qatar, in turn helping to contribute to the growth of business events, a priority sub-sector of Qatar’s tourism industry.

**Launch of ‘Medyaf’ Ambassador Programme**

QTA also intensified efforts to involve local organisations in the efforts to attract global events to Qatar. By the end of 2016, QTA had partnered with 27 entities in Qatar to bid for international conferences, meetings and exhibitions across various sectors. 2016 also saw the launch of the Medyaf Programme, an initiative that empowers professionals in Qatar to act as ambassadors for the country as a business events destination.

**Offering the ‘Complete Qatar’ Experience**

QTA hosted numerous familiarisation trips throughout the year to allow event planners to experience Qatar’s offering first-hand. In November 2016, QTA hosted the four-day Complete Qatar familiarisation and educational trip. The trip presented the group with a rich opportunity to sample Qatar’s business tourism highlights before meeting with local suppliers one-on-one. Activities included a tour of the Qatar National Convention Centre’s facilities and the Museum of Islamic Art, a desert safari and a visit to Souq Waqif.
Enhancing Monitoring Resources for Better Planning

To ensure that development projects are built on a solid foundation, QTA sets strategies and policies based on sector performance data and its impact on the economy. Improving our ability to see trends and set projections helps us build more well-informed development plans and marketing strategies, and ensure that they are updated to take into account changes in the economy and the world around us.

In 2016 several key steps were taken to ensure that means of monitoring the tourism sector were upgraded and refined, providing us with the most accurate data possible in several key areas of importance.

**Modeling Hotel Demand and Supply**

QTA closely monitors tourism accommodation stock and pipeline projects to make sure that the private sector is meeting projected market needs without over-developing. Recognising, along with our partners at Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SCD&L), that the number of visitors will peak during 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, we joined hands to develop tools to help ensure that Qatar is delivering everything needed for a successful World Cup while, at the same time, safeguarding local and foreign investments.

QTA and SCD&L collaborated with Tourism Economics to develop a dynamic accommodation model to forecast several key hotel performance indicators under different supply and demand scenarios. The model allows teams from both organisations to examine the impacts of different supply-demand scenarios to support informed development within the sector in the lead up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and beyond. The model also supports QTA efforts to advise investors and stakeholders to build only what can be sustained over time.

**100% STR Registration**

QTA partnered with STR in 2015 to provide timely data and in-depth analysis on the performance of hotel establishments across Qatar: STR tracks supply and demand data for the hotel industry worldwide and provides valuable market share analysis for international and regional hotel chains and independent hotels.

In 2016, Qatar became the only market in the world with 100% registration from hotel establishments in the STR system, ensuring that STR is able to gather and supply accurate data on key performance indicators for the entire hospitality market, including occupancy, revenue per available room (RevPAR) and average room rate (ARR), as well as food and beverage (F&B) revenue, other revenue, and average length of stay (ALOS).

In addition to monitoring the performance of the hospitality sector, this boosts our collective ability to draw insights and make informed decisions on planning and promotion activities.

**Domestic Tourism Survey**

In collaboration with Tourism Economics and Qatar University’s Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI), QTA completed a four-wave Domestic Tourism Survey, aimed at understanding and analysing tourism activities undertaken in Qatar by the country’s citizens and residents.

The Domestic Tourism Survey contains the results of 3,200 phone interviews, conducted with 1,600 Qataris and an equal number of expatriates.

The survey results will feed into Qatar’s Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), a system approved by the UN Statistical Commission for establishing the economic impact of tourism on a country’s economy. It will also support QTA’s partners in the private sector in their efforts to understand resident activity patterns and levels of customer satisfaction and to develop their products and services accordingly.

**Overnight Domestic Tourism Trip Spending and Behaviour in 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage or Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overnight domestic trips taken</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of overnight domestic spend on accommodation</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay among Qataris</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of domestic tourism accommodation in desert camps</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human Capital Development

QTA is continuously working to implement the Tourism Human Capital Development Strategy, which it developed jointly with the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. The strategy focuses on streamlining the sourcing and recruitment of qualified talent, while enabling and improving the skills of the current tourism workforce.

QTA has begun with itself, prioritising the recruitment of local talent to ensure that visitor experiences are embedded in and reflective of Qatar’s culture and heritage. To that end, QTA has achieved a 52% Qatarisation rate in 2016. In addition, QTA has created Individual Development Plans for 34 Qatari fresh graduates who have joined our ranks as staff members during the year to ensure that their work at QTA contributes to their growth as professionals.

52% Qatarisation rate in 2016

2016 also witnessed an extension of the collaboration with UNWTO, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and other industry pioneers, to deliver workshops covering various topics to members of the industry. In May 2016, QTA collaborated with Georgetown University Qatar (GU-Q) to support local tourism and hospitality professionals in bringing their brands to life through a three-day Executive Seminar. The course, entitled “Creating Authentic Brand Experiences in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector,” was delivered by Georgetown University Hospitality Management faculty, in partnership with QTA and key members of the industry in Qatar. Through hands-on training and interactive discussions, participants explored how tourism and hospitality professionals can shape a traveller’s journey through Qatar by creating memorable and authentic experiences.

Developing the Sector through International Cooperation

QTA continued to build partnerships with global tourism bodies in 2016, activating agreements with neighbouring countries to exchange knowledge and expertise on developing the tourism sector.

An MoU with the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority to facilitate the exchange of information in the field of exhibitions was ratified during the year. In addition, QTA signed an MoU with the Georgian Department of Economic Development. The MoU opens channels for cooperation in the areas of planning, development, investment, marketing, promotion and education for the respective country’s tourism industries.

QTA is a member of several associations and alliances internationally, which provides us and our partners in the private sector with access to key tools such as experience, consultations, up-to-date figures, and networking in various fields. QTA represents Qatar at regular meetings with these bodies, which include:
Regulating
QTA ensures tourism establishments, including hotels, tour operators, and providers of tourism products and services, operate at the highest standards and are reflective of Qatar’s culture. We do this through setting rules and regulations that help establishments follow industry best practices. In 2017, QTA introduced new systems for regulating the sector, as well as measures to streamline licensing and lessen the bureaucratic burden for those wishing to invest in the sector.

New Hotel Grading and Classification System

In January 2016, QTA introduced a grading and classification system for hospitality establishments which holds developers, owners, management and operators equally accountable for the property’s classification. The new system aims to strengthen and maintain Qatar’s well-deserved reputation for excellence in hospitality through closer grading and inspection. Hotel grading now for the first time includes evaluation of a hotel’s reflection of the local Qatari culture in its service – strengthening our unique positioning and cultural offering as a destination. Hotels are also graded on their sustainability measures, accessibility, and overall guest experience. Inspection of all 4- and 5-star hotels was completed in 2016 and hotels are working towards making the changes needed in order to maintain or boost their grading. In 2017, QTA will focus on inspecting 3-, 2- and 1-star hotels.

Best Guest Experience in the GCC

Qatar’s hospitality sector was ranked at the top of Gulf Cooperation Council destinations in the 2016 Guest Experience in the Middle East report, released by hospitality and travel data providers Olery. The report monitored and analysed more than 2 million online guest reviews over the past 12 months (1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016) from popular sites such as Booking.com and TripAdvisor. The results showed that Qatar’s overall ranking in the Middle East has climbed from 7th to 6th since the 2015 report, with an increase of 2% in its Guest Experience Index.

Laying the Groundwork for Tour Guide Licensing

As part of our efforts to ensure providers of tourism products and services operate at the highest standards and are reflective of Qatar’s culture, QTA introduced in 2016 a new code of standards for tour guides across the country, based on international best practices and in consultation with the UNWTO. Moving forward, tour guides must be able to demonstrate their ability to meet these standards in order to receive a new Tour Guide License, which will be issued by QTA. The license will act as a critical seal of approval on tour guides as Qatar welcomes a growing number of tourists, especially given the crucial role tour guides play in shaping a tourist’s experience of a destination.

The Tour Guide License will officially come into effect in October 2017, and guides who do not hold a license will not be able to operate in Qatar.

To ensure tour guides are equipped with the tools to receive the license, QTA entered into a new partnership with Stenden University Qatar to provide guides with the training needed to achieve the standards required for licensing. Various courses have been tailored to suit different levels of expertise, and will launch in 2017.

Empowering QTA Inspectors to Enforce Regulations

A number of QTA employees successfully completed training on the principles of audit for tourism establishments and events, allowing them to become judicial commissioners authorized by Qatar’s Public Prosecution to implement the executive regulations for Tourism Law No. 17 and Exhibition Law No. 6. This is the second group to have jurisdiction conferred to them, and together with a group that completed the training in 2015, are responsible for acting as inspectors and upholding the task of monitoring, auditing and regulating Qatar’s tourism establishments and events in accordance with Qatari law.

Regulating Solo Consumer Exhibitions

QTA and Qatar Chamber (QC), in coordination with Ministry of Economy and Commerce, launched a new initiative to govern and regulate solo consumer (entrepreneurial) exhibitions, in accordance with the needs of the Qatari market. The initiative allows licensed small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs), home business owners and roaming salespeople to showcase their products and services through exhibitions that are regulated to protect the rights of Qatari business owners and consumers.

And, in a move to prevent saturation of the local exhibitions market, QTA and QC also implemented new controls to prevent overlap of exhibitions in the same field. Should more than one application be made to hold exhibitions in similar fields at the same time and in the same municipality, a draw will be held at Qatar Chamber to select the exhibition that will be licensed to go ahead, and the results of the draw will be made public.
Streamlining Licensing Procedures

QTA had completed in 2015 the procedures for licensing all hotel establishments (hotel and hotel apartments), tourism establishments and exhibition organising companies according to Tourism Law No. 6 of 2012 and Exhibition Regulation Law No. 17 of 2013, and in line with best practices in this field.

This helped to pave the way for the development of a new e-licensing system which meets the needs of tourism establishments and relieves them of bureaucratic burdens.

QTA and QC also held a series of meetings with stakeholders in the tourism industry to identify the best licensing solutions that would encourage investment in tourism. The feedback from stakeholders was used by QTA to streamline licensing procedures, and in 2016 the time needed to issue a commercial registration for a tourism company was greatly reduced by allowing the registration to be issued directly from the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, without the need for further approvals from QTA.
Promoting Museum of Islamic Art Cafe, Doha
QTA’s strategy for showcasing and promoting Qatar’s known and hidden gems is intensive and far-reaching. Through an increasing number of international offices, QTA is expanding Qatar’s presence globally, and enhancing the tourism sector’s ability to reach out directly to target audiences. QTA also ensures trade and consumers in priority source markets are aware of the country and its offerings through destination branding, advertising campaigns, and established relationships with a growing network of trade media.

The innovative “Tawash” programme trains hundreds of independent travel agents online on how to become ambassadors for the destination. QTA also frequently hosts familiarisation trips to give trade and media a first-hand experience of Qatar’s offerings.

A growing calendar of festivals and tourism events helps to promote Qatar’s landmarks and drives footfall to the country’s tourism hotspots and event venues.

**Promotional Activity in 2016**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshops and Roadshows</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,317,971,715 Media Audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tawash Registered</strong></td>
<td><strong>4041</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tawash Qualified</strong></td>
<td><strong>2075</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Tour Operators</strong></td>
<td><strong>QAR 174,600,933 Media Value</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21.6% increase in 2016
Expanding QTA’s Network of Representative Offices

In a move to expand its international presence and focus efforts on growing markets, QTA opened three new representative offices during 2016, in Italy, Turkey and the United States of America.

The offices are located in Milan, Istanbul and New York, with the aim of raising strong destination awareness in these markets, and strengthening QTA’s outreach efforts to prominent travel trade partners as well as media and consumers.

The opening of the Turkey office was also timed to build on collaboration between the two nations in the field of tourism, capitalising specifically on a recent agreement which allows Turkish visitors to enter Qatar without a visa.

The new offices join existing international offices in France, UK, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore.
International Representation at Trade Shows

QTA has led more than 50 partners from the private sector to specialised tourism and travel trade shows to showcase Qatar’s offering as a destination for leisure, business and cruise tourism. In addition, QTA targets potential investors at hospitality and tourism investment forums.
**Capitalising on Major Sports Events**

In a bid to tap into Qatar’s sports tourism potential, QTA sponsored two major events in the 2016 football calendar, the Italian Super Cup final – for which 3,000 tickets were sold to international fans - and the first Match of Champions between FC Barcelona and Al-Ahli SC. The latter is estimated to have brought over 5,000 international visitors to Qatar, particularly from the neighbouring Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to have generated an estimated QAR 9.6 million for the local economy. Supporters of Saudi Arabia’s Professional League champions, Al Ahli SC and Spanish giants, FC Barcelona, were able to benefit from enticing travel packages including air travel, accommodation and match tickets created by the match host, Qatar Airways, and QTA.

**Corporate Brand Launch**

Following on the reveal of the Qatar destination brand in November 2015, QTA launched an aligned corporate brand and domain name, in a step that serves to unify the organisation’s voice and online presence under the single domain name of VisitQatar.qa.

The new corporate brand and domain name is now reflected in QTA’s email addresses and all websites managed by the organisation, thereby placing the ultimate call to action at the forefront of all of our online interactions.

2016 also saw the launch of a new corporate website, to give the public and media enhanced access to up-to-date information about the tourism sector and QTA’s efforts to develop it.

VisitQatar.qa pages promoting Qatar as a destination have also been made available in multiple languages including French, Italian, German and Turkish.

To protect Qatar’s new destination brand, its sub-brands and visual assets, QTA registered 32 trademarks, 76 signature photos, and 33 promotional videos. QTA also successfully won a legal claim for the acquisition of the visitqatar.qa domain name through the Qatar Communication Regulatory Authority.

**Promoting Qatar Through Award-Winning Film**

‘Essence of Qatar’ the signature promotional film released alongside Qatar’s new destination brand, won the highly-coveted Gold Medal at the New York Festivals event, which recognises the world’s best work in TV and film. The short film was commissioned by QTA to offer an immersive, cinematic experience showcasing Qatar’s inspiring cultural heritage, unique tourist attractions and universal human aspirations.

**World Tourism Day**

QTA invited residents to join in 2016’s World Tourism Day celebrations by discovering the country through the eyes of a tourist. Through a combination of special rates from tour operators, discounted packages from hotels, as well as a QTA-organised social media competition, people all over Qatar were given the opportunity to celebrate the global event, which was held under the theme Tourism For All – Promoting Universal Accessibility.

As part of the social media competition, life-size photo frames were installed at eight tourism landmarks around Qatar, through which participants could take a photo to upload on social media for a chance to win prizes.

The competition ran from Tuesday 27 September, the day set aside in the UN calendar to celebrate World Tourism Day, until Saturday 1 October. Throughout this time, special packages at discounted prices were made available at local tourist establishments, courtesy of partnering hotels and tour operators.

World Tourism Day (WTD) was established by the UNWTO to celebrate tourism’s social, economic and cultural value, and to raise awareness about the various ways it enriches the lives of people across the world. WTD 2016 was particularly significant for QTA as we are gearing up to host the official UN celebrations for WTD 2017, which will be fittingly held under the theme Sustainable Tourism – A Tool for Development.
Leveraging Festivals and Events to Generate a Sustainable Flow of Visitors

QTA organises a number of festivals as part of its strategy to grow and diversify Qatar’s tourism offering, particularly in the area of family and urban entertainment. These festivals serve to boost hotel occupancy and drive footfall to venues across Qatar, while building interest in the country’s diverse and authentic tourism offerings.

Visitor arrival figures have shown that festivals attract visitors from neighbouring countries, particularly when these events are designed for tourists looking for family-friendly entertainment in a familiar cultural setting.

Qatar International Food Festival

The 2016 edition of QIFF drew a record-breaking 200,000 visitors, in addition to world-renowned chefs including Martha Stewart, George Calombaris of Master Chef Australia, and Salma Soliman of Fatafeat TV.

QIFF 2016 was marked with new locations at The Pearl-Qatar and Katara Cultural Village, connected with the main Festival grounds at the Museum of Islamic Art Park with water taxi connections that proved highly popular. The Qatar-China 2016 Year of Culture was celebrated with a dedicated court, along with signature activities such as Dinner in the Sky by Qatar Airways, the QIFF Live Cooking Theatre, High Tea by the Bay, InstaMarket, Health Court, Dinner on a Dhow and BBQ on the Bay.

In line with its theme “a different side of food”, the Festival placed a great emphasis on healthy-eating, especially as a means of preventing chronic illnesses and life-threatening heart conditions. Kulluna, an initiative of Hamad Medical Corporation and Conoco Phillips, which aims to raise awareness of issues that cause heart disease, provided free screenings to approximately 3,500 people, helping many of them with early detection of high cholesterol and hypertension.

QIFF also had a clear impact on visitor arrival figures. By the end of March 2016, the month in which QIFF was held, Qatar had received 306,793 visitors - the largest number of visitors to be welcomed into Qatar in one calendar month.

Qatar Summer Festival

In its third edition the Qatar Summer Festival featured a month of live performances, shopping promotions, hotel offers and colourful entertainment. The annual celebration brought together visitors from around the region to benefit from Qatar’s offerings as a family-friendly destination.

A particularly powerful draw to visitors was Entertainment City, which attracted over 120,000 visitors. Extending over 29,000 square metres, the City boasted a wide range of gaming and entertainment options for children and adults alike, and hosted several popular stage performances.

QTA partnered with 56 members of the hospitality sector to provide special packages to visitors for the duration of the festival, helping to attract visitors in a typically off-peak period. The month of August, during which the festival was held, recorded a 3% increase in visitor arrivals compared to August 2015. In addition, the direct impact from inbound tourism for August 2016, was estimated to be QAR 641 million.

Eid Celebrations in Qatar

QTA and its partners in the public and private sector organised week-long festivities during Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha under the theme “Capture Joy”. The celebrations offered a variety of daily family entertainment shows throughout Qatar’s malls, in addition to special events at Katara Cultural Village, Aqua Park, and the Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum.

QTA also worked with its partners at Hamad International Airport and the Abu Samra border to spread the joy of Eid among visitors arriving to Qatar through Eidiyas (Eid gifts) and information pamphlets.
Working Hand-in-Hand with the Community

At QTA, we understand that achieving our goals is made possible when we partner with the local community to promote our country’s development from within. As such, we entered into several partnerships with key organisations in Qatar to support community initiatives that benefit Qataris and residents.

Dari Qatar
QTA partnered with Doha Film Institute to produce Dari Qatar, a film which allowed every member of the community to tell stories about themselves and what makes Qatar dear to them. The film premiered in November 2016, bringing to life on the screen fascinating vignettes of the country’s rich cultural heritage and traditions, touristic attractions, and modern architectural marvels.

National Reading Campaign
QTA partnered with Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development to support the organisation’s National Reading Campaign, an initiative which aims to spread the love of reading among the nation’s youth. Through the partnership QTA helped bolster the campaign’s reach and strengthen its overall impact by providing it with prime space at QTA-organised festivals and events.

National Sport Day
QTA collaborated with 47 members of the hospitality industry to offer health packages to Qatar’s residents and visitors as the country celebrated National Sport Day 2016.

The initiative came as a result of discussions between QTA and all of the country’s four- and five-star hotels, and involved providing residents with free access to gym, offers on gym membership (up to 50% off), healthy brunch buffets, free gym classes, and special room packages including bed and healthy breakfast.

QTA also celebrated National Sport Day 2016 with the community through the #QatarInMotion social media campaign. Residents were asked to capture their view of Qatar while they in motion through videos posted on Twitter or Instagram with the campaign’s hashtag.

Earth Hour
QTA led a large group of its partners in the public and private sectors, including hotels and tourism establishments, in marking Earth Hour 2016 by switching off or dimming lights for one hour. Hotel guests also participated by dimming their lights in their rooms or hotel apartments.
2017 Focus Areas

The main theme for 2017 will be to increase the involvement of the private sector in the development of the tourism sector, and to engage both public and private sector stakeholders in an exercise to revise the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030, and develop a clear roadmap towards 2022. In tandem, QTA will continue to implement projects that serve the tourism industry’s growth, particularly in the following focus areas:

Planning

- Launch a strategy revision process that aims to build on the successes achieved by the industry and the country in charting a path for development that will be spearheaded by the private sector and guided by QTA. By the end of 2017, QTA hopes to launch a focused articulation of what the industry needs to deliver in order to achieve the sector’s targets for 2030 and enhance the overall experience of Qatar’s visitors.
- Continue the implementation of existing strategies, while using performance monitoring tools and input gathered from partners to guide the implementation process.
- Continue to enhance tourism festivals and introduce innovative additions to Qatar’s calendar of events, in order to reinforce the country’s positioning as preferred destination for family-friendly entertainment, and to maximise their economic impact.
- Proceed with the development of a new tourist visa application process in partnership with VFS Global, Qatar Airways and the Ministry of Interior.
- Continue enhancing our monitoring capabilities with a focus on data collection and data integrity to support decision making.

Policy

- Launch an e-licensing system and transition all licensing procedures to the system;
- Support the one-stop-shop initiative launched by His Excellency the Prime Minister, with a focus on creating synergies with other government entities through enhancing customer experience for investors looking to establish and license tourism businesses.
- Complete the classification of 3- 2- and 1- star hotels and enhance the recently introduced grading and classification system based on feedback from hotel owners.
- Finalise and approve the executive regulations for Tourism Law No. 6 for 2012 and Exhibitions Law No. 17 for 2013.

Products

- Continue to enhance visitor experiences at the various ports of entry (air, sea and land) to Qatar in collaboration with our partners.
- Identify tourism areas based on the definition of a tourism area outlined in Tourism Law No. 6 for 2012.
- Secure an investor for the redevelopment of the Doha Exhibition Centre into a family entertainment complex.
- Continue to work with the Technical Committee to Stimulate Private Sector Participation to launch new initiatives that pave the way for private sector involvement in diversifying the tourism product offering.
- Continue to plan for feasible and value-added opportunities to include the private sector in the implementation of the Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy.
- Enhance our Business Events offering and related tourism services by attracting international companies to establish a presence in Qatar.
- Continue to support Qatari start-ups and SMEs by providing them with platforms to participate in promotional roadshows, trade shows, events, information centers, as well as festivals and exhibitions.

Promotion

- Grow in existing markets and establish new markets to ensure diversification of our source markets.
- Continue to diversify our target segments by focusing on promoting Qatar as a stopover destination in collaboration with Qatar Airways, and increasing our partnerships with our trade partners.
- Continue to strengthen the positioning of Qatar’s festivals and tourism events in key markets.
- Elevate the standard of exhibitions in Qatar, with a focus on attracting regional visitors and exhibitors.
Strategic Partners

QTA relies heavily on the support of its partners. We are appreciative of their ongoing commitment to us and acknowledge their valuable input to developing Qatar’s tourism sector.
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