

FROM QATAR TO THE WORLD

A report on the state of
FinTech in Qatar



QATAR
FINTECH
HUB

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FOREWORD



HE Sheikh Abdulla Bin
Saud Al-Thani

*Governor of Qatar Central
Bank (QCB)*

We are witnessing exciting and innovative developments in the global FinTech sector, which has seen tremendous growth over the last decade. Innovative banking services offering increased efficiency and lower costs, have propelled the rise of FinTechs as a global industry. They have leveraged emerging technologies effectively to develop customer centric business models, with the growing emphasis on the digital transformation and change in consumer and business behaviors globally. There is also a momentum building in Qatar, with opportunities in digital payments, money management, lending, loyalty and rewards, remittances, and investments and advisory. For all of these FinTech opportunities, we have to measure the impact financially and strategically, as well as how it relates to the customer, to assess whether we should pursue each opportunity.

FinTech is a key tool to achieve long-term development prospects for the financial sector in the country as part of our Second Strategic Plan 2017-2022. Adoption of this technology will require some organizational issues, considering that we have new opportunities in Qatar to implement accurate technologies. There is a need for a proactive approach to be adopted by the QCB,

to face the local and regional economic challenges, making the Qatari financial market ready-made for any scenario, challenge or pressure, and properly qualified to support the private sector. The QCB in its capacity as the regulatory and supervisory authority for the financial sector, is fully aware of the importance of financial technology in the development of the banking and the financial sector in the country. The QCB has put in place a transformational strategy to promote the growth of FinTechs in the local banking sector.

Noting the increasing growth and popularity of FinTech, we have launched Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH) as the means of boosting financial innovation. We are in the process of establishing the FinTech Regulatory Sandbox, which will pave the way for a new era of financial services, in the state of Qatar. Cooperation is the way forward, and QCB is collaborating with internal and external key stakeholders to successfully achieve Qatar's National Vision 2030 (QNV2030). Qatar's nationwide smart transformation initiatives, QNV 2030 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup, will harness and leverage technology in unprecedented ways, as the country builds and scales a knowledge-based economy.

WELCOME NOTE



Mr. Abdulaziz Bin Nasser
Al Khalifa

*CEO of Qatar Development
Bank (QDB), Chairman of
Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH)*

FinTech has the potential to reorient the global economic model to accelerate digitalization and financial innovation. FinTech offers a significant opportunity to drive Qatar's economic diversification, one of the four pillars of Qatar's National Vision 2030. FinTechs also provide a massive opportunity for SMEs in GCC countries, particularly in Qatar, to gain greater access to funding, one of the major challenges they face globally. The FinTech industry has matured over the years, from its emergence as a challenger of conventional financial services to its role today as a change catalyst and enabler.

Qatar has been catching up fast with globally trending technological developments and is shaping up well as a technology-led economy. In Qatar, blockchain and other emerging technologies can play a significant role in overall economic transformation, especially in the digitization of various services, including government to citizen, business to consumer, government to business, and business to business. With the rise of an ecosystem model in the financial sector, partnerships between banks and cross-sector players are required to discover new relationships and build innovative platforms. This will enable participants from within and outside the region to access trade finance, asset exchange, payments, and value-added services.

Qatar Development Bank's role is not limited to financing enterprises. It strives to provide

entrepreneurs and start-ups with advisory support through all phases of their business, inline with its vision to develop and empower entrepreneurs and innovators to contribute to the national economy's diversification. At QDB, we are making headway in creating a world-class FinTech Hub in Qatar, in collaboration with the Qatar Central Bank and the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) and laying the foundation for transforming ourselves into a digital development bank for the future. QFTH programs are designed to cater to both local and global FinTech entrepreneurs with an aim to support Qatar's transition into a diversified and knowledge-based economy.

This report highlights the key facts that every participating FinTech should know, including an overview of the primary stakeholders (QCB, QDB, QFC) and other important partners and contributors to the programs. It provides information relating to financial services, payments ecosystem, and licensing in Qatar, and a detailed overview of the Incubator and Accelerator Programs. We hope this report helps FinTech entrepreneurs and takes us another step forward in our journey towards making Qatar a regional hub for financial technology and a launchpad for global entrepreneurs willing to scale up their projects and reach international markets.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Financial Technology (FinTech) firms across the globe are witnessing a surge in funding, new entrepreneurial talent, and policy makers' attention. The historically hydrocarbon-driven economies in the Gulf region are focusing on FinTech as part of their ongoing economic diversification. Qatar is one of the leading Gulf economies at the forefront of this transition. In line with the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 and the implementation of the Second National Development Strategy (2018-2022), Qatar's goal is to create a diverse knowledge economy that reduces its dependence on hydrocarbons. The nation has introduced several initiatives on the ease of doing business and tax incentives. This has helped Qatar secure high global ranking on several parameters such as safety, business resilience, and economic competitiveness. Incentives and clear policy will facilitate the launch and acceleration of the FinTech industry.

This report offers a detailed look into Qatar as a FinTech-friendly nation with accelerated programs that strengthen talent supply, access to capital and opportunities, and regulatory initiatives that foster a pro-FinTech ecosystem.

With a new strategy and supporting programs, the FinTech industry could be one of the biggest engines of Qatar's economic growth. Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has developed The National FinTech Strategy providing the framework for nurturing the local FinTech sector and creating a favorable ecosystem for international FinTechs to choose Qatar as their launchpad for the global market. As part of that strategy, Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH) was established with the vision of making Qatar a globally recognized hub that connects other like-minded hubs, organizations, and regulators from across the world and is at the forefront of FinTech's



future. This creates a sound ecosystem for incubating domestic FinTechs and provides an enabling environment for foreign FinTechs to invest and grow in the region.

Four main factors promise rapid growth of FinTech in Qatar:

- **Access to opportunities:** E-commerce and online transactions have proved popular in Qatar and the use of digital services and products is expected to further accelerate, thanks to increasing online shopping and the use of digital banking. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought home the importance of online options, and of using technology to serve clients better especially for FinTechs. Opportunities include online remittances, contactless payment solutions, remote processing of insurance claims and payments, and lending to SMEs.
- **Favorable regulations:** Recognizing the importance of a clear and conducive regulatory policy for the growth of FinTechs, authorities have enhanced the regulatory framework to help FinTechs establish themselves and function well. Qatar is actively working to ensure consistency with international standards, bring best practices to the country, and drive a country-specific regulatory focus.
- **Access to talent:** With its large and established financial institutions (FIs), Qatar has a pool of domestic talent and a strong local talent pipeline. To further attract and retain the best talent, the country has taken measures such as encouraging Accelerator and Incubator programs and actively collaborating with local and foreign universities.
- **Access to capital:** Qatar offers diverse sources of funding, including venture capital (VC), regulator-backed Accelerator and Incubator programs, and angel investors. Qatar Development Bank (QDB) facilitates funding through its US\$100.3 million VC fund and there is a lot of potential to source funds from other countries. The current funding structure of QFTH, Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), and Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) can be used to attract funding for FinTechs.

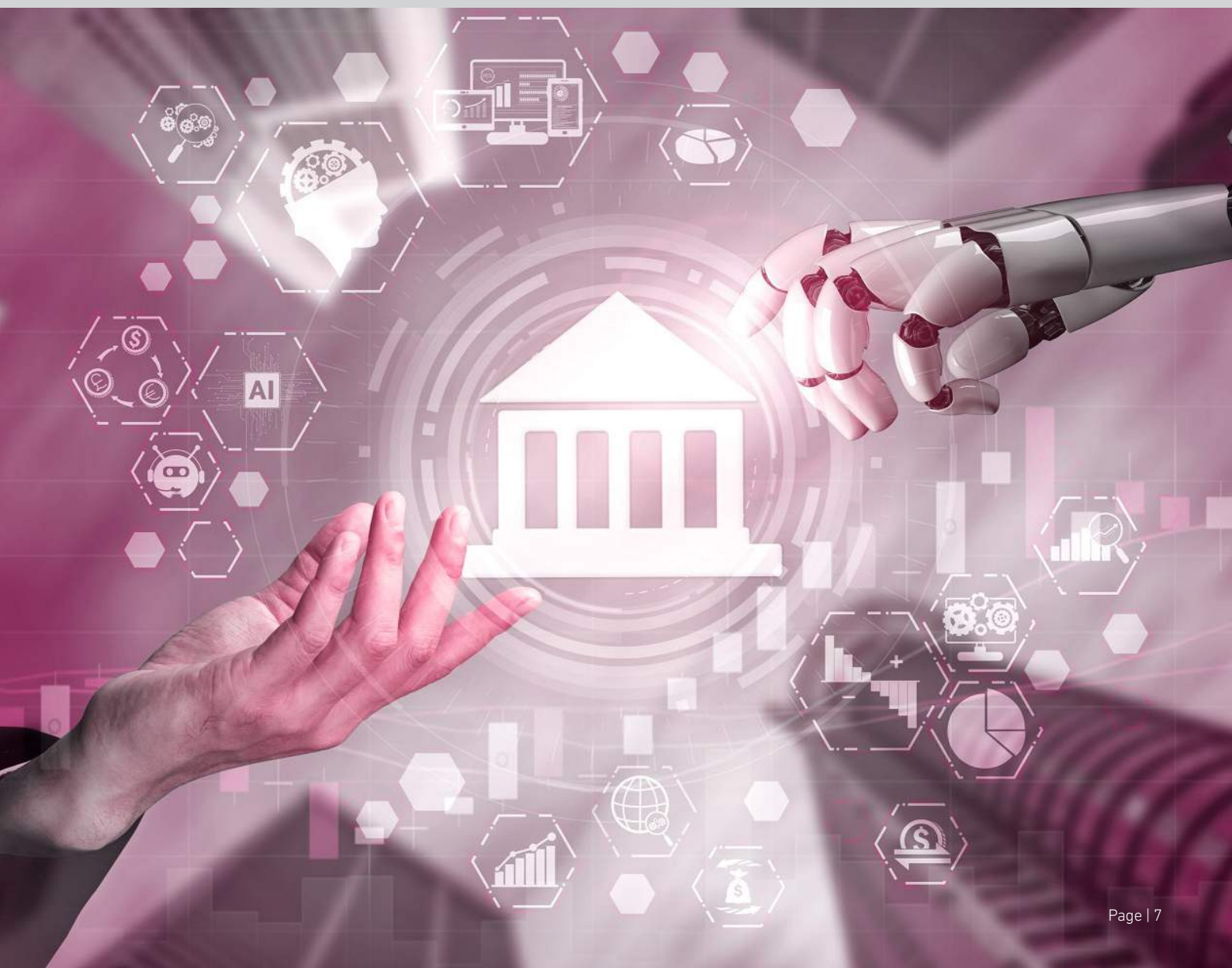
Qatar has identified four areas of focus to promote FinTech growth—Payment technology, RegTech, Islamic Finance, and SMEs. In 2020, QFTH ran its Incubator and Accelerator programs, i.e., the Wave 1. These programs facilitate entrepreneurs with innovative and cutting-edge FinTech ideas to accelerate their journey. They include financial, mentorship, and training support to FinTechs who participate in challenges; an Incubator program for early-stage FinTechs; and an Accelerator program for established players looking to expand. The Wave 2 of the program is focusing on emerging technologies. As part of the program, QFTH has entered partnerships with several global FinTech hubs including Innovate Finance (UK), Findec (Sweden), Singapore FinTech Association, Mumbai FinTech Hub, Istanbul FinTech Hub, Beirut Digital District, the Fintech Association of Nigeria, FinTech Hub Lithuania, and FinTech Association of Malaysia.

For a comprehensive view of Qatar as an emerging FinTech hub, its FinTech capabilities were compared with those of eight other FinTech hubs in the US, the UK, Singapore, Australia, India, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. **This showed that Qatar is well placed in terms of access to capital and focus on innovation compared to these global hubs.** Qatar facilitates access to

capital through several venture capital vehicles and the active participation of QDB in funding companies. When it comes to innovation, Qatar is performing better than its peers but can do even better by launching a FinTech innovation division and an inter-university FinTech body to develop talent, create awareness about FinTech, and further enhance innovation in the country. Regarding talent, the country has an existing pool of technology and business talent, and its globally accredited universities can play an active role in creating a talent pipeline. In addition, Qatari entrepreneurs have access to mentorship programs and Incubators that provide support structures, tools, and funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new opportunities for the FinTech sector. This is an opportunity for Qatari FinTechs to focus on some niche technologies and start developing exciting value propositions to establish Qatar as an innovative hub. Some sectors might face short-term challenges; others could witness a surge in demand. Irrespective of sector, technology adoption and digital transformation will create more demand for FinTech services.

Qatar is on the brink of an exciting FinTech future. The country can look forward to becoming a regional FinTech hub by following up its impressive start with a focused and determined FinTech growth agenda.



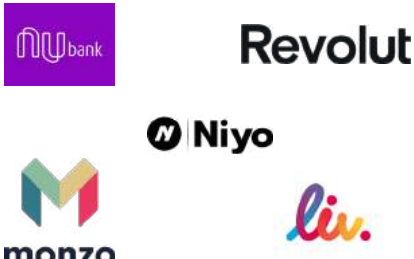


2. INTRODUCTION



FinTech has disrupted financial services in an unprecedented way, using technology to offer a seamless experience to retail, SME, and corporate customers. The possibilities seem boundless, with FinTech using everything from new mobile technology to AI to the Internet of Things to manage and move money seamlessly. This future may not quite be here, but Qatar is preparing to be at its forefront, establishing itself as a global center of financial technology. The establishment of the QFTH is a big step in this direction, creating a vibrant ecosystem for incubating domestic FinTech firms and helping spur foreign FinTech companies to invest and grow in the region.

A host of start-ups, financial institutions (FIs), and other non-traditional players have entered the FinTech industry to meet rising customer demand for digital services. High customer adoption, driven by improved Internet access and smartphone penetration, and government initiatives to drive digital and financial literacy, are further helping FinTechs to quickly penetrate markets. The emergence of infrastructure solution providers is accelerating the rapid growth of FinTech and neo-banking players globally.

Table 1: Emerging Players

Neobanks	Disruptive Players	BigTech
<p>Neobanks are also known as online or internet-only banks, virtual banks, or digital-only banks.</p>	<p>Infrastructure solution providers provide technology solutions to FIs and other FinTech players, enabling them to drive innovation.</p>	<p>Big technology players are building the ecosystem of products and services that include FinTech and B2B technology offerings for FinTech or FI players.</p>
		

The industry no longer consists solely of start-ups and disruptors, as many traditional and incumbent players are looking to expand their services through proprietary FinTech solutions.

In the Middle East, the FinTech ecosystem is relatively nascent but a large unbanked or underbanked young

population, high use of cash, and recent regulatory developments make it an attractive destination for FinTechs.

A closer look at the global activity and regional developments shows that Qatar is well placed to realize its ambitions.



2.1. Key Global FinTech Trends

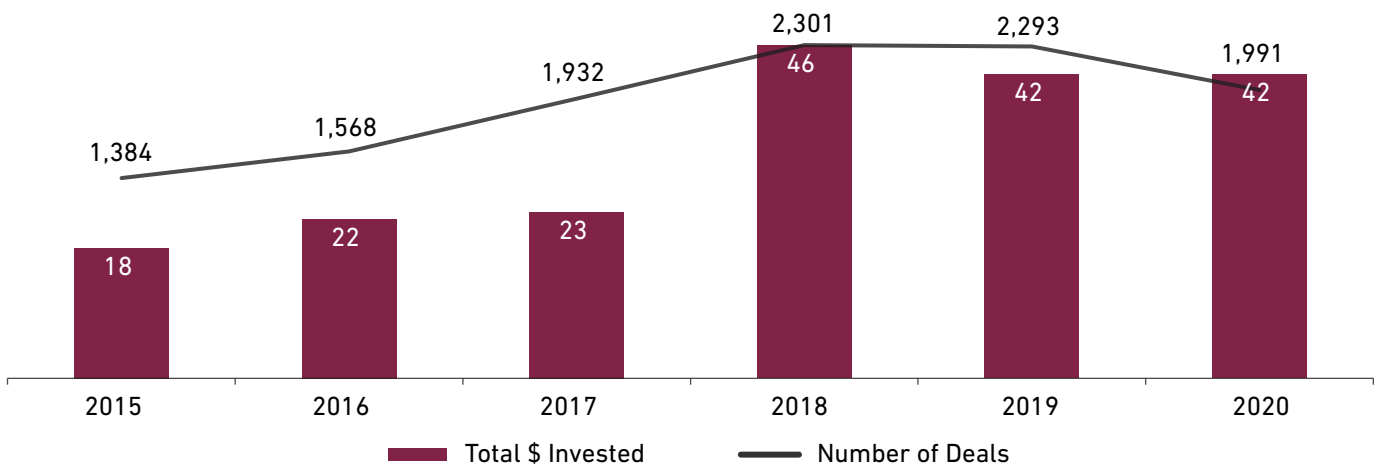
1. Deals and investments are growing rapidly

– Global FinTech investment has more than doubled between 2015 and 2019, rising from US\$18 billion to US\$42 billion. Even in

the challenging year of 2020, global venture capital (VC) funding for FinTechs remained at US\$42 billion across 1,991 deals. This is likely to pick up as incumbents look to broaden

their services by acquiring FinTechs, while FinTechs are also looking to add scale by merging with other providers.

Figure 1: Global VC-backed FinTech Financing Trends, 2015-2020 (Deals and Dollar Volume – US\$, billion)



Source: CB Insights

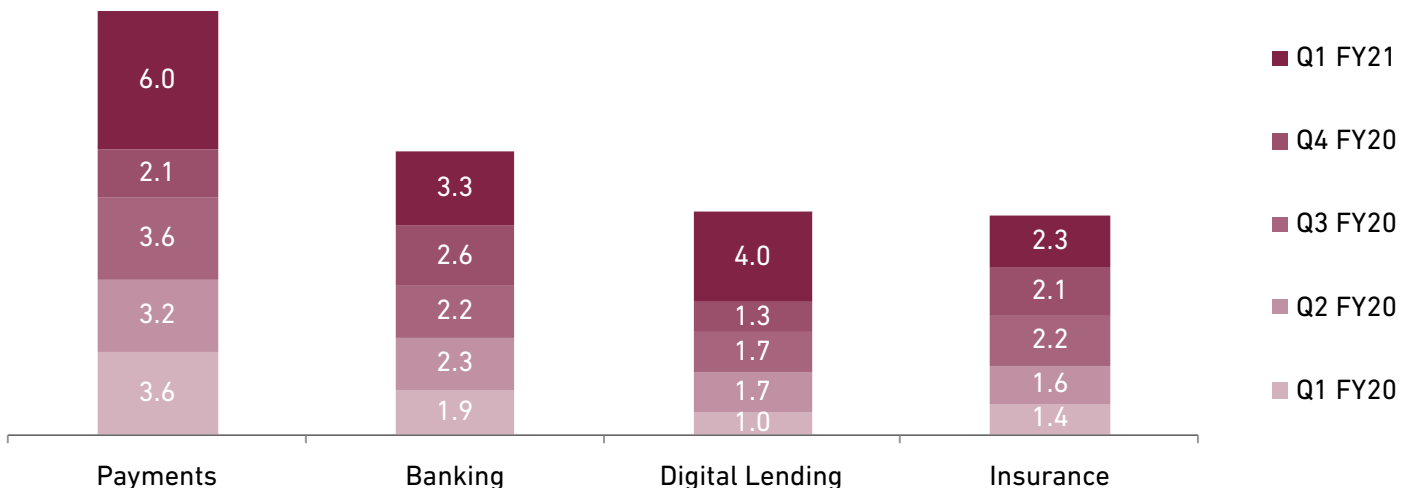
2. Payment investments continue to dominate, followed by banking

– Going by sector, payments followed by banking continues to attract the maximum funding. With

increased digital adoption of financial services due to COVID-19, this trend is expected to continue. While payments will remain the hotbed of FinTech activity, due to limited

regulatory requirements and ease of deployment, new areas within traditional products such as buy-now-pay-later and micro-insurance are increasingly becoming popular.

Figure 2: Leading FinTech Sectors Funding Rounds Q1 20 – Q1 21 (Funding Value – US\$, billion)



Source: CB Insights

3. There is increasing collaboration between financial services players and FinTechs – The initial competition between FinTechs and traditional players has been replaced by partnerships to provide innovative offerings for underserved segments. In addition, many small traditional

financial services players are looking to build scale by partnering with FinTechs to expand in geographies and product areas where they are not present.

4. The regulatory focus has evolved – From an initial limited focus on the sector,

regulators are now taking a more evolved approach towards FinTechs. Globally, regulators are encouraging FinTechs to take on a more active role by providing licenses to operate as banks, setting up separate regulatory environments (such as sandboxes), and providing access to capital and markets.

2.2. FinTech Trends in the Middle East

FinTech is at an early stage of development in the Middle East, but it is an attractive destination for FinTechs due to its large unbanked or underbanked young population, high cash usage, and recent regulatory developments that

encourage growth. FinTechs in the region are focusing on remittances, insurance, and investment advisory, and online trading is gaining traction. Qatar is taking big steps to become a global FinTech hub, notably by establishing the Qatar FinTech Hub.

This creates a sound ecosystem for incubating domestic FinTechs and provides an enabling environment for foreign FinTechs to invest and grow in the region.



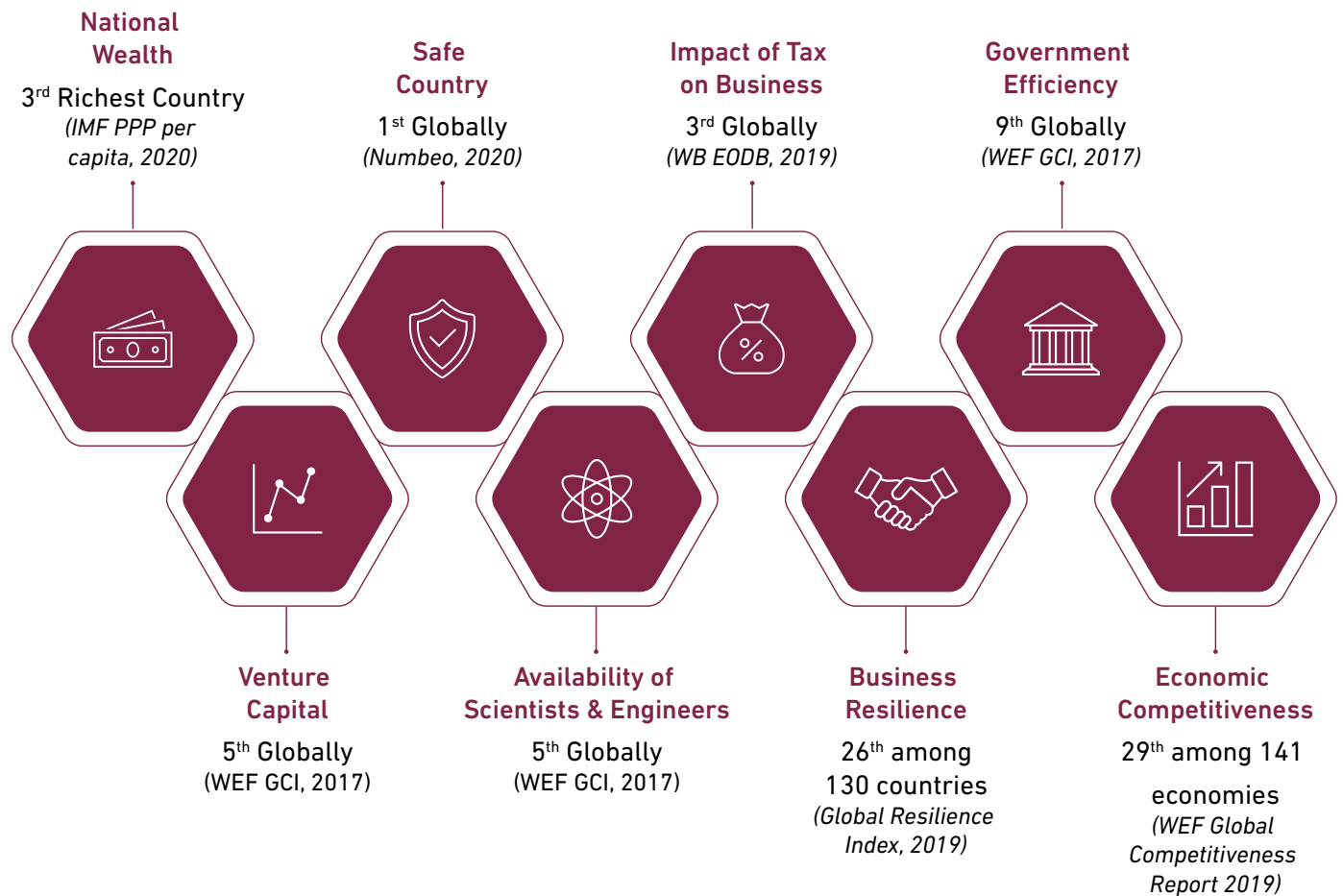
3. QATAR – THE EMERGING GLOBAL FINTECH CENTER



Qatar is a wealthy country with a per capita GDP among the highest in the world. Qatar's current focus is to create a diverse knowledge economy that secures its economy beyond its oil and gas reserves. The country is investing in technology to build a digital ecosystem and foster innovation. Estimates by Global Data suggest that Qatar's information and communications technology (ICT) spending will reach US\$9 billion by 2024, at a compounded annual growth rate of 9.2%. The government's US\$200 billion investment program underlines its commitment to invest in technology and attract foreign investment and international talent.

Globally, Qatar ranks high on parameters such as safety, business resilience, and economic competitiveness.

Figure 3: Key Highlights



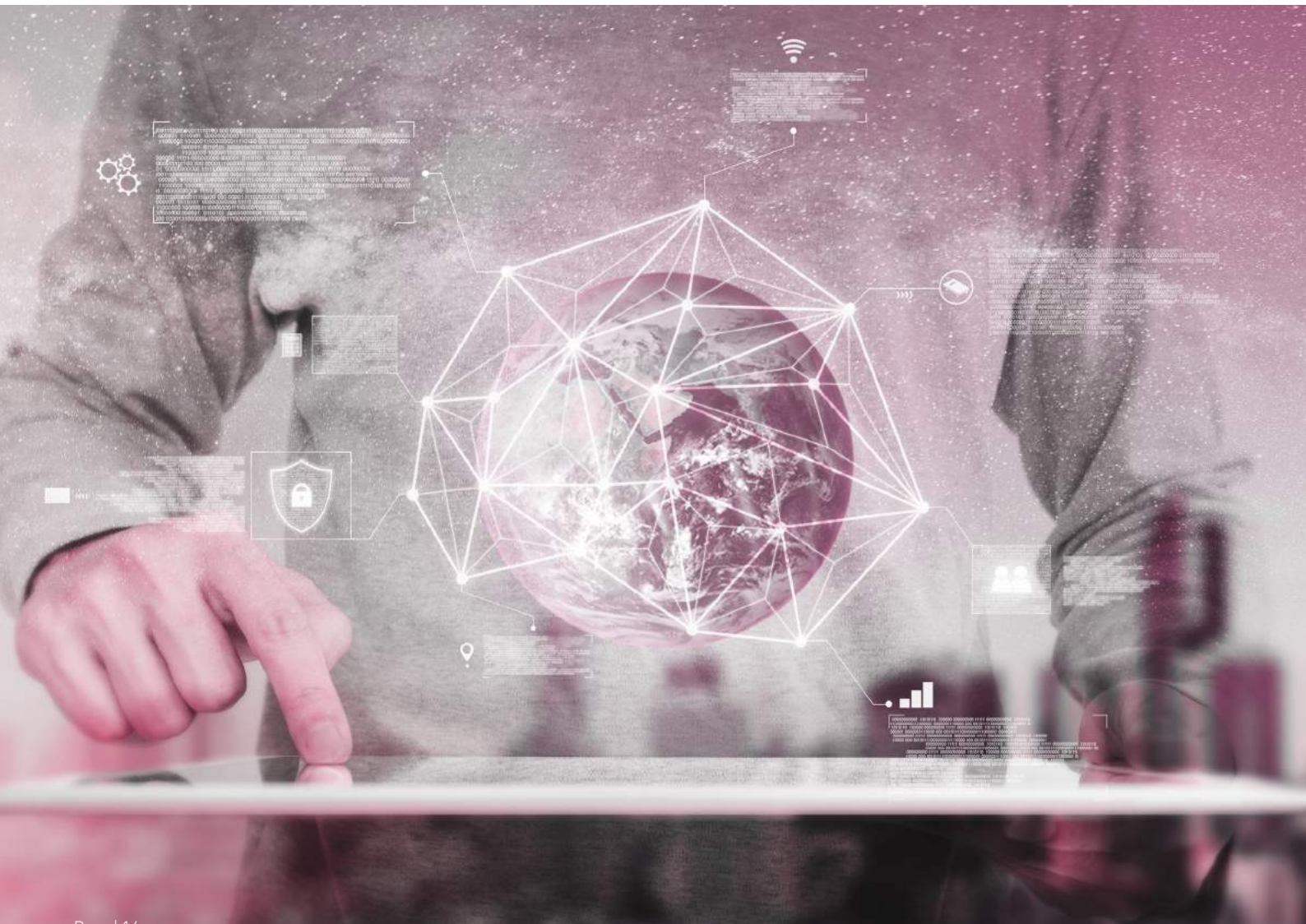
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The Qatari government welcomes local and foreign technology investors. It has also introduced several measures to enhance the ease of doing business, including an attractive investment program, 100% foreign ownership, and tax benefits.

Figure 4: Drivers of Qatar’s Start-up Attractiveness



Source: QFC – Doing Business in Qatar Report





3.1. Qatar's FinTech Sector

Qatar has a mature financial services sector with 17 banks which include 5 conventional banks, 4 Islamic banks, 7 branches of foreign banks, along with a specialized development bank (QDB). Commercial banking in Qatar dates to the mid-20th century. Qatar National Bank (QNB), established in 1965, is the largest bank by assets in the Middle East.

A mature financial services industry, coupled with national initiatives to support digitization across sectors, is expected to spur investments in FinTech, as a few examples show. The Qatar Mobile Payment System creates a robust enabling environment for payment-focused FinTechs. The launch of The Investment Promotion Agency of

Qatar is aimed at attracting foreign investment and encouraging large companies to establish subsidiaries. The agency has also introduced free-zone incentive programs for foreign investors. Finally, the drive to host a cashless FIFA World Cup in 2022 and newly launched smart city programs (TASMU) are likely to push digital adoption across the country.

Qatar's FinTech ambition is to become a global hub by promoting and empowering Qatari entrepreneurs and innovators and becoming the launchpad for their global expansion.

Enabled by conducive regulation and a stimulating environment, Qatar's FinTech sector is growing steadily. The Qatar Financial

Centre (QFC – a one-stopshop for licensing, commercial registration, immigration, and related services) grew by 33% in 2019, with nearly 200 companies registering on its platform. Over 800 FinTech, IT, tax, and investment consulting firms were a part of the organization in 2019. QFC is now planning to register 1,000 companies by 2022.

Collaborations between FIs and FinTech players have a key role to play in developing innovative models and increasing reach to customers.

A survey conducted by Wamda reveals that 88% of FinTech entrepreneurs in the MENA region were either seeking or already benefiting from partnerships.

Figure 5: Key FinTech Collaborations in Qatar

Ahlibank – Visa

Ahlibank formed an alliance with Visa to foster payment innovation. Under this partnership, the companies will jointly launch card-based payment products and create advanced technology solutions to bolster the payment experience for Ahlibank customers

**Qatar's Commercial Bank – Marco Polo Platform**

Qatar Commercial bank completed its trial of blockchain-based open-account trade finance on the Marco Polo platform in January 2020



Such collaborations have started taking place in Qatar, which is a good indication of maturing financial services in the country. Recently, they also collaborated with Qatar Post to launch a fully integrated postal delivery POS that allows customers to make cashless payments when receiving parcels and other items by mail. As these

collaborations increase, the reach of FinTech services is expected to further expand.

Establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework

The growth and development of FinTech require a clear and conducive regulatory policy. Hence, Qatar Central Bank (QCB)

has enhanced the regulatory framework to help FinTechs establish themselves and function well. Qatar started to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for FinTech in 2017 including harmonizing various regulatory jurisdictions and making the environment conducive to investment and growth.



Figure 6: Qatar FinTech Key Entities



Source: Qatar FinTech Strategy

Figure 7: Initiatives Undertaken by Government Agencies to Push FinTech Ecosystem in the Country



QCB launched Qatar Mobile Payment System



Qatari government established Qatar Investment Promotion Agency



QDB launched QFTH in collaboration with EY to support Qatar's FinTech strategy



QFTH launched a FinTech Incubator program (for early-stage start-ups) and Accelerator program (for mature FinTechs)



QCB launched initiatives to encourage FinTech innovation



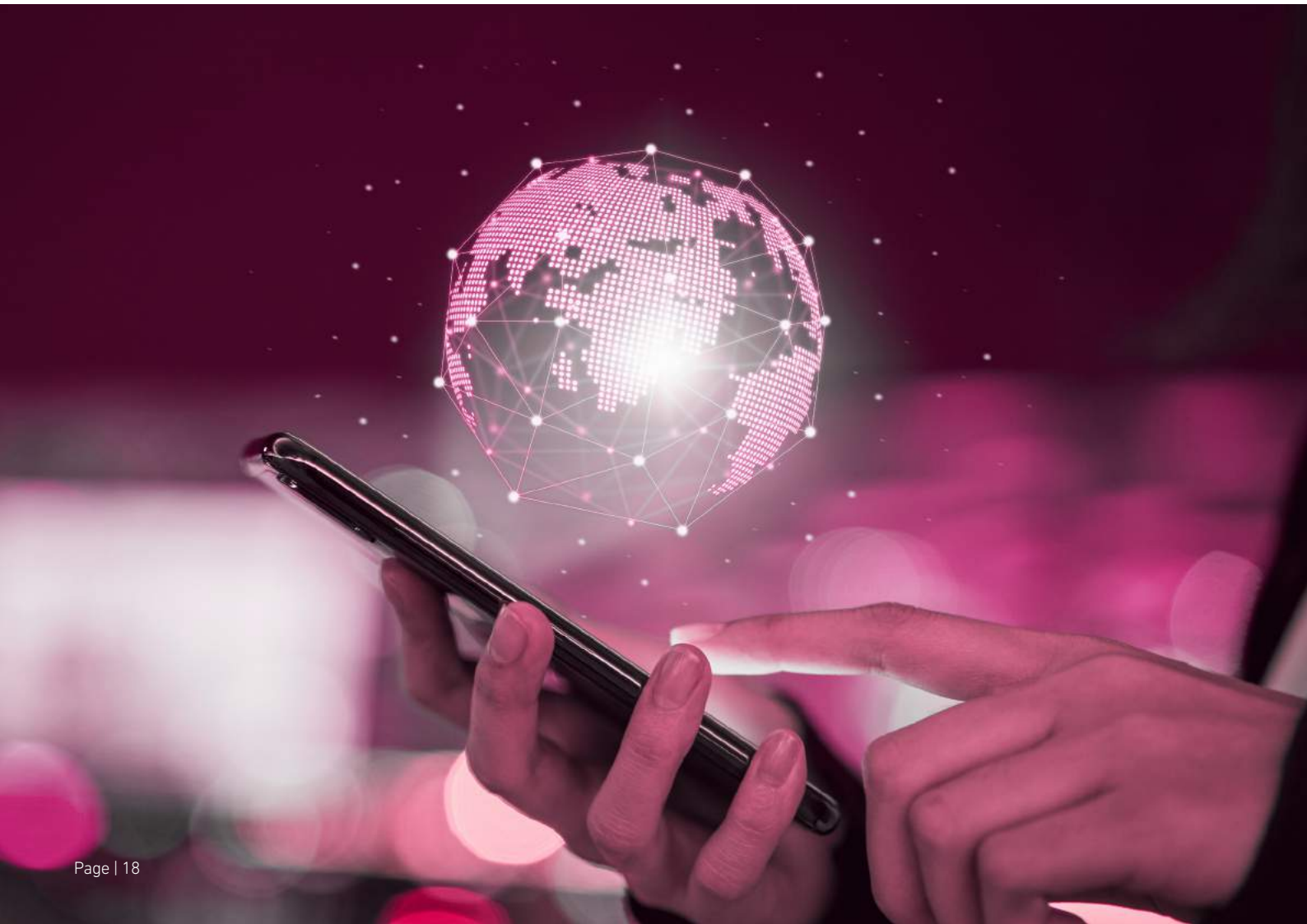
Qatar's sovereign wealth fund has continually increased its investments in tech and FinTech companies



QFC has expanded the number of FinTech related activities that will be awarded licenses



QCB is planning to launch FinTech Sandbox



Developments in Qatar’s FinTech program

As part of Qatar’s FinTech program, the focus has shifted from B2C to B2B offerings, especially in peer-to-peer lending, merchant and e-commerce services, invoice financing, payments, and trade

finance. This has paved the way for domestic FinTechs. Recently launched Incubator and Accelerator programs and the upcoming regulatory sandbox are making Qatar an attractive destination for

international FinTechs as well. Many international firms such as Musaada, MyCash Money, PayFace, Sync, and Oscar have chosen Qatar as their launchpad for the global market.

Figure 8: Qatar’s FinTech Journey



Qatar is actively working with global regulators (such as the Central Bank Digital Currency and centralized KYC

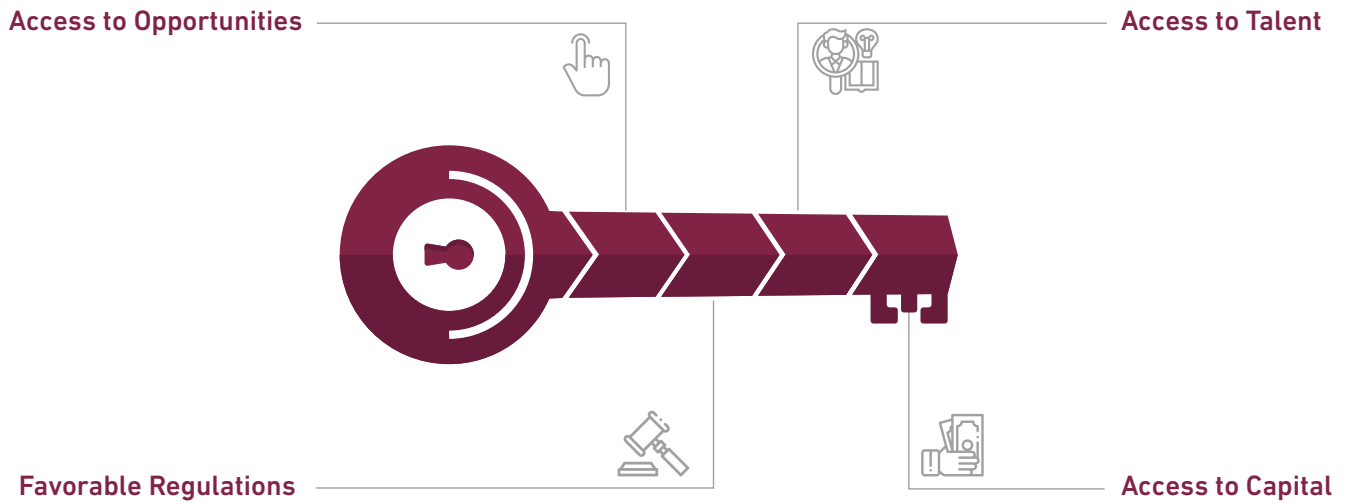
utility) to ensure consistency with international standards, bring best

practices to the country, and drive a country-specific regulatory focus.

3.2. Forces Promoting FinTech in Qatar

Four main factors: access to opportunities, favorable regulation, access to talent, and access to capital, promise rapid growth of FinTech in the country.

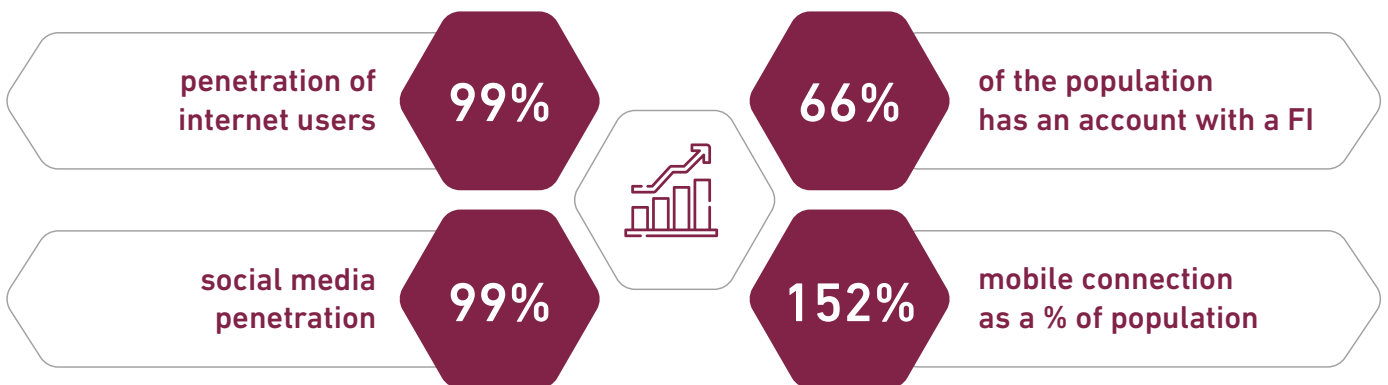
Figure 9: Four Key Attributes



3.2.1. Access to Opportunities

Consumer adoption of e-commerce and online transactions is expected to further accelerate in Qatar, both in banking and e-commerce, thanks to increasing online shopping and the use of digital banking services. Qatar is preparing to tap this immense opportunity by utilizing emerging technologies to improve speed, efficiency, and overall customer experience.

Figure 10: Drivers of FinTech Demand in Qatar



Source: Hootsuite

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need and potential for using technology to serve clients better, especially for

FinTechs. Areas of opportunity include online remittances that eliminate the need to visit an exchange house, contactless

payment solutions, remote processing of insurance claims and payments, and lending to SMEs.

3.2.2. Favorable Regulations

Qatar Central Bank is actively engaged in promoting financial inclusion and literacy in the country. FinTechs have an important role in meeting the needs of underserved communities. The high Internet penetration of the country (99%) and regulatory support offer an excellent opportunity for

FinTechs to assist with some national challenges including extending financial services to the large migrant population. Increased construction related to the FIFA World Cup raised the migrant population to more than 2 million in 2019. Being largely underbanked, they will need help

with remittances to their home countries.

In addition, the QDB remains focused on helping SMEs gain access to funding and the local market, and FinTechs are well-positioned to provide these services.

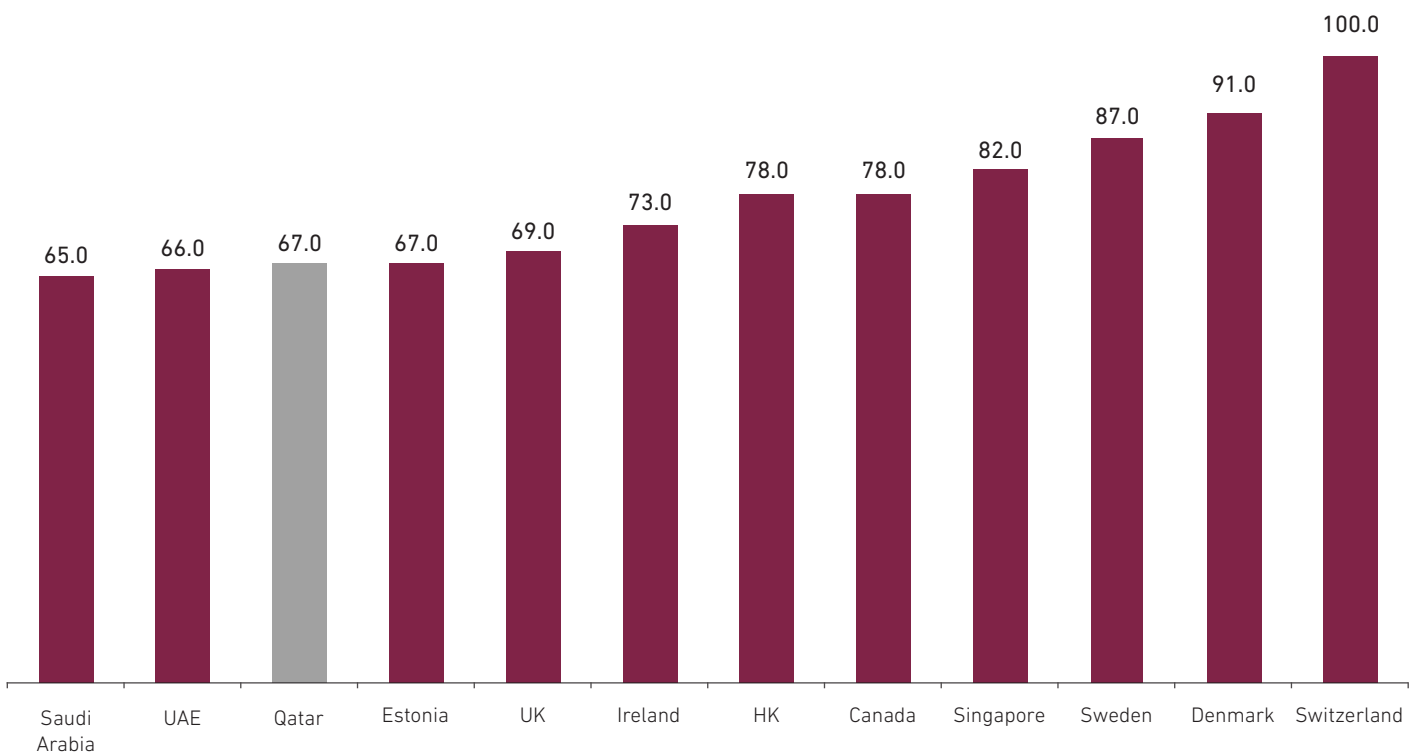
3.2.3. Access to Talent

FinTech talent is scarce, and there is fierce competition to attract and retain it. Qatar ranked highest among the Arab countries in the World Talent Ranking Report

2019 and was ranked 10th among the major global FinTech hubs by the International Institute for Management Development. Even so, the country has taken several

measures to attract the best talent such as encouraging Accelerator and Incubator programs and collaborating with foreign universities.

Figure 11: World Talent Ranking 2019



Source: 2019 International Institute for Management Development

Qatar has a pool of domestic talent due to its large and established financial institutions (FIs) and a strong local talent pipeline. The country has globally accredited universities (e.g., Qatar University, Carnegie Mellon Qatar, Texas A&M)

and most Qatari universities have innovation courses where further emphasis on FinTech industry knowledge can be provided. Examples include a tie-up with the College of Science and Engineering (Hamad Bin Khalifa University) that

is running seven projects, two of which are FinTech-related. Qatar and the UK have signed several bilateral agreements to support FinTech talent development through academic programs.

Table 2: Qatari Universities Graduation Statistics

Universities	Number of Graduates (2020)
Qatar University	3,188
Carnegie Mellon Qatar	86
Texas A&M	94
Hamad Bin Khalifa University	400

Qatar's culture of entrepreneurship is another source of expert talent

In 2020, Qatar's Entrepreneurship ecosystem ranked third globally and the best among Arab countries. Also, in 2019, Qatar ranked 10th among the 13 leading FinTech hubs assessed by the Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute for its entrepreneurship ecosystem.

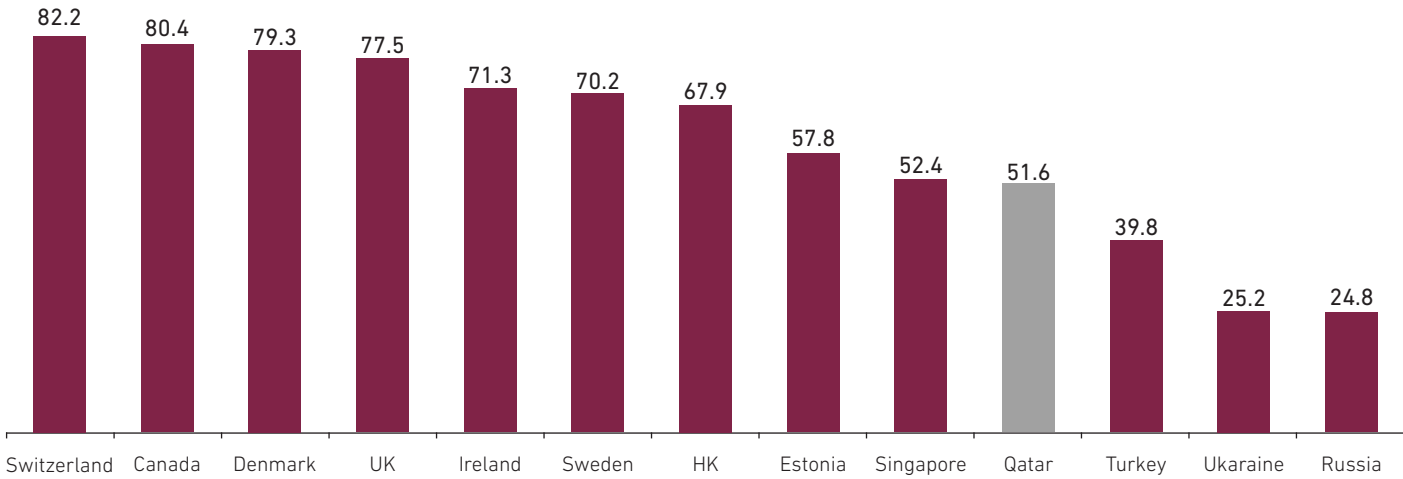
Qatar ranked 10th among the 13 leading FinTech hubs assessed by the Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute for its entrepreneurship ecosystem. Qatar's program is an excellent example of initiatives to promote entrepreneurship. The program promotes FinTech development through various events including hackathons; access to market reports, intelligence, and data; access to user experience; access to FIs for Proof-of-Concept (PoC) and mentorship; licensing assistance through the sandbox and regulatory support; and access to capital and grants through QDB funding.

Furthermore, in September 2019, QDB launched an Entrepreneurship Leave Program (ELP) to attract more start-ups. The program enables paid leave for Qatari government employees to launch start-ups or pursue their business ideas as full-time entrepreneurs. This is expected to be a catalyst in attracting more start-ups and accelerating economic diversification.

Beyond building local talent, the country is also looking to attract foreign professionals from mature FinTech markets. In line with the strategy, Qatar is relaxing the visa facilitation process through various steps including fast-track visas and Qatar ID.



Figure 12: Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEDI)



Source: 2019 Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute; HK: Hong Kong



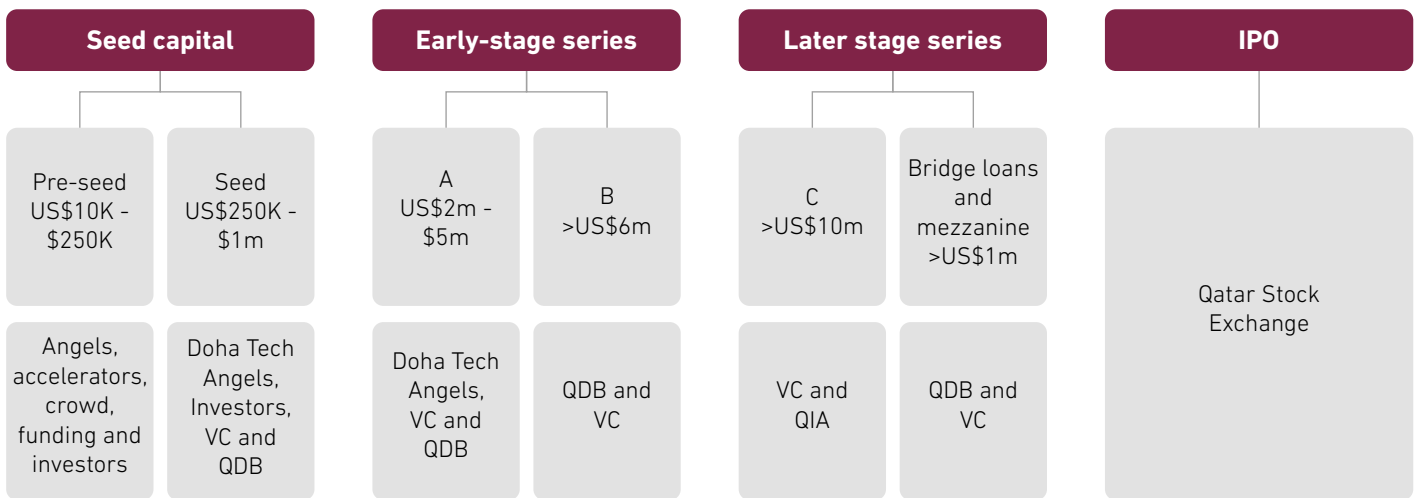
3.2.4. Access to Capital

Qatar has diverse funding sources, including VC-backed capital, regulator-backed Accelerator, and Incubator programs, as described below, and angel investors. There

is also a lot of potential to source funds from other countries. The current funding structure of Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH), Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC),

and Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) can be used to attract funding for FinTechs.

Figure 13: Different Funding Opportunities (Figures in US\$)



Source: QDB



Incubators and Accelerators as orchestrators

Qatar is in the early stages of investment for start-ups. Seed funding in Qatar is secured mainly through Incubators and Accelerators via the QDB, QBIC Entrepreneur Fund, and the QSTP Tech Venture Fund. The QFTH program and private players such as Ooredoo are additional enablers of Incubators and Accelerators.

Table 3: Key Incubators and Accelerators in Qatar

Name	Highlights	Focus Areas
QFTH	QFTH has tied up with several global FinTech hubs, FIs, universities, technology partners, and industry experts to offer the best global opportunities. It also launches innovation programs for FinTechs	Brings together entrepreneurs, industry experts, regulators, and investors to develop disruptive technologies
QBIC	QBIC is a mixed Incubator, supporting start-ups for 1 year and industrial manufacturers for 2 years. QBIC has incubated 203 companies since 2014 and certified 635 graduates of its entrepreneurship program, apart from providing seed and equity financing and free workspace, along with other financing and loans.	Manufacturing and digital solutions
Digital Incubation Center (DIC)	Incubated 159 start-ups, created 418 jobs with a total investment of US\$27 million DIC's programs include Idea camp, Start-up track, Growth track, and co-working space. AstroLabs has been working with DIC and Ministry of Transport and Communications (MOTC) to deliver workshops related to start-up innovation, business best practices, digital marketing, and tech topics	Marketing, B2B, and mobile
Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP)	QSTP has provided a product development fund and tech venture fund, QSTP free zone, subsidized working space up to 1 year, has partnered with 500 start-ups, 1,000+ participants since 2008, and 5,000+ people working at QSTP-based companies since 2008.	Tech start-ups in energy, environment, health sciences, and ICT
Qatar Sports Tech (QST)	Introduced by QDB, this is a leading start-up Accelerator for sports-tech companies. Ten selected sports-tech companies receive hands-on mentorship from over 100 industry experts, office space in Doha, seed funding, and access to a global network of sports entities.	Sportstech industry

Venture capital financing

Qatar Development Bank facilitates funding through its US\$100.3 million Venture Capital fund. Other avenues for capital are public funding bodies like QBIC and QSTP.

Doha Tech Angels, 360 Nautica, Qatar Business Angel Network (QBAN), and Goodforce Labs are individual players that have also partnered with start-ups. There

are supportive investment entities and programs that assist Qatar's companies from seed funding through to Series B, with the capability to fund further stages.

Table 4: Key Venture Capitalists in Qatar

Name	Description
QDB	<p>A seed funding program, Ithmar finances up to 90% of the project (10% financed by the entrepreneur) with a maximum investment of US\$247.2 K</p> <p>Istithmar, an SME equity program, aims to support economic diversification by providing growth capital to Qatari entrepreneurs and deploying investments.</p>
QBIC	<p>Equity financing for start-ups up to US\$27.5 K</p> <p>Loan opportunity for scaleups, via QDB Al Dhameen, up to the value of US\$1.1 million</p>
QSTP	<p>The Technology Venture Fund will invest in growth-stage technology companies.</p> <p>The Product Development Fund is a cost-sharing fund, where QSTP provides up to 50% of the total budget as a grant to encourage local start-ups and SMEs to develop products and services relevant to local market needs.</p> <p>The investment mandates are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to US\$500 K investment in a seed round • Up to US\$1 million investment in a Series A round • Up to US\$3 million investment in a Series B round <p>In Series A or B participation, Tech Venture Fund's average ticket size is US\$0.5 million – 3 million</p>
Doha Tech Angels	<p>Doha Tech Angels, Qatar's first private angel fund, provides seed funding for early-stage, disruptive technology start-ups globally.</p>

Qatar has invested globally in various geographies and industries, investing more than US\$400 billion in over 40 countries, highlighting the country's appetite as well as capacity to support the growth of innovative and promising start-ups.

Qatar Investment Authority actively invests in various sectors such as banking, infrastructure, retail, health care, investment banking, real estate, and others. In Qatari FinTech, investments are mostly made by high-net-worth individuals in promising start-ups and such

deals are not disclosed in the public domain.

Finally, QFTH has brought 40 FinTechs into Qatar and has provided US\$2.17 million as an in-kind investment; it proposes to invest up to US\$1.70 million in cash.

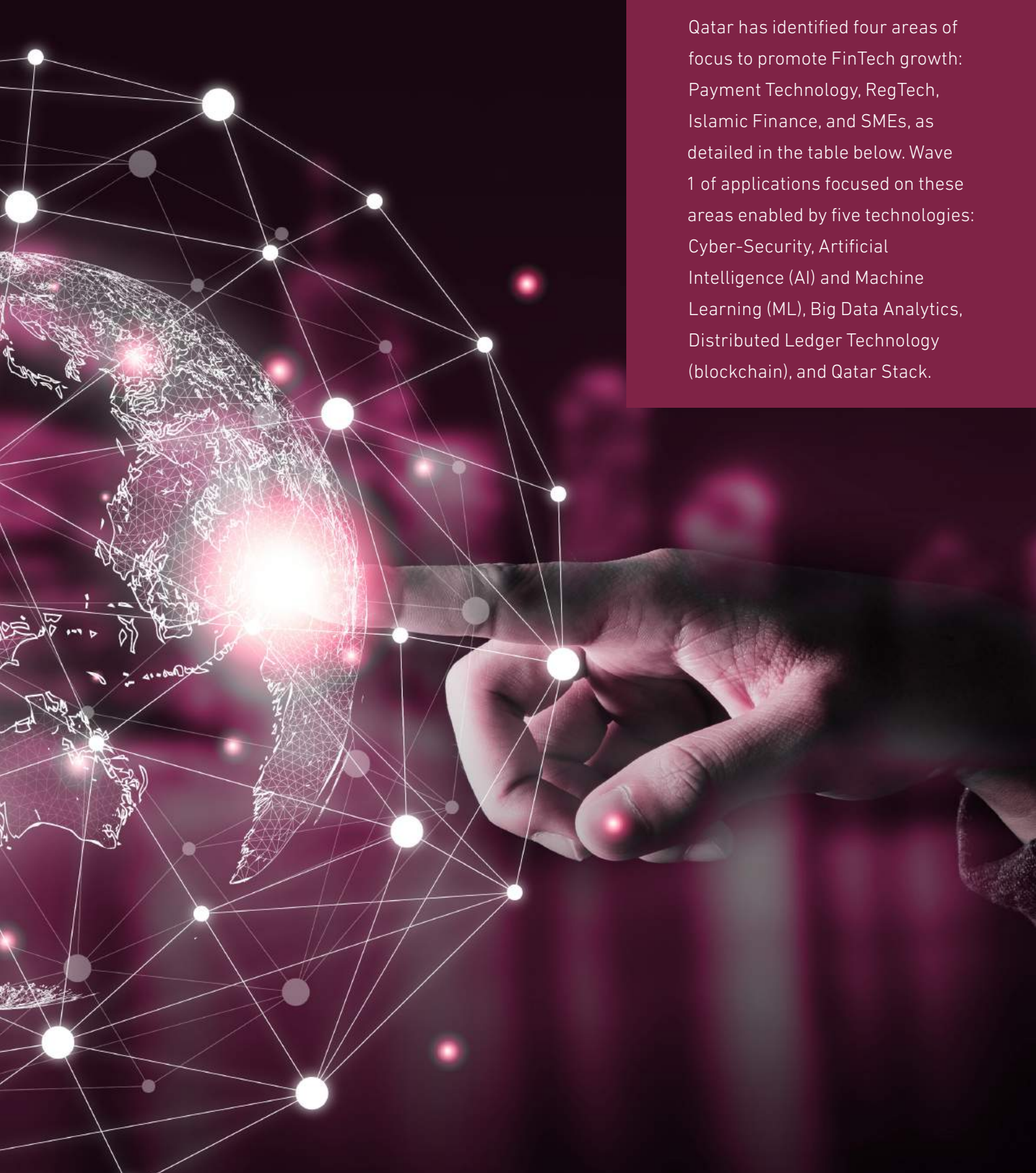
Figure 14: Details of Fintech deals in Qatar

	CWallet	Snoonu	Dibsy	SkipCash	Growmada	Hasalty	Contactless
Deal Class	Pre-Seed	Seed A	Pre-Seed	Seed	Accelerator/ Incubator	Accelerator/ Incubator	Accelerator/ Incubator
Amount (US\$'K)	220	5,000	300	7,000	NA	300	NA
Investors	MBK Holding, 360 Nautica, and Snoonu Holding	QDB	Angel investors	Angel investors	Goodforce Labs	QBIC	QBIC
Description	2021: CWallet is now valued at US\$3.5 million following a successful Pre-Seed investment round.	2021: The company is based in Qatar and offers delivery services and eCommerce application as an e-mall.	2021: The company plans to use the funds to grow its market share in Qatar, expand its payment solutions offering, and invest in talent and business development	2021: The company plans to deploy this fund deployed to expand the company's data infrastructure and services across Qatar	2018: The company joined Goodforce Labs and received an undisclosed amount in funding. The company will use the funding for sale of handicrafts from developing countries	2016: The company graduated from Qatar Business Incubation Center, as a part of its fifth Digital and Beyond Lean Startup Program and received an undisclosed amount in funding	2016: The company joined Qatar Business Incubation Center as a part of Wave 1

Source: Pitchbook, News articles

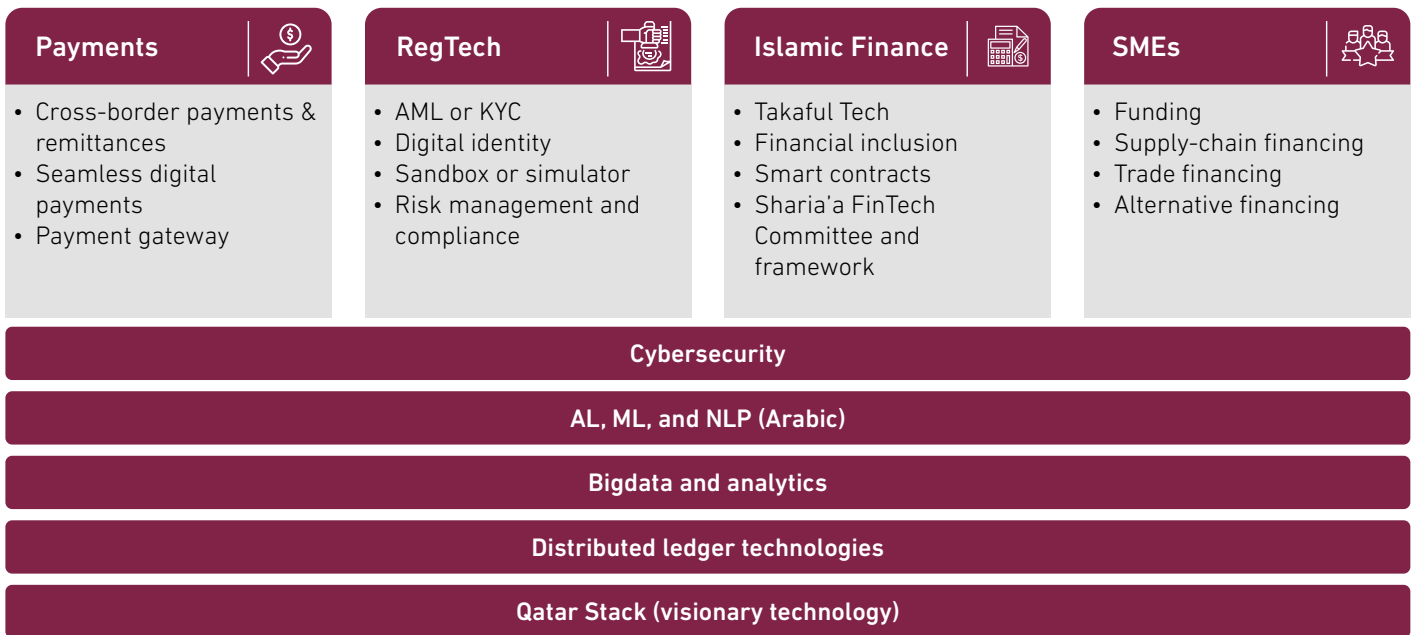


4. FINTECH AREAS OF FOCUS IN QATAR



Qatar has identified four areas of focus to promote FinTech growth: Payment Technology, RegTech, Islamic Finance, and SMEs, as detailed in the table below. Wave 1 of applications focused on these areas enabled by five technologies: Cyber-Security, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), Big Data Analytics, Distributed Ledger Technology (blockchain), and Qatar Stack.

Figure 15: Focus Areas for Qatar FinTech Ecosystem



Source: QFTH

Table 5: Focus Areas to Promote FinTech Growth

Name	Factors for Selecting Focus Area	Initiatives Taken	Market Impact/Overview
Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable Qatari ecosystem and FIs to be part of the global payment transformation • Provide SMEs with cheaper and faster payment services • Focus on key challenges that enable digital payments and a cashless society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating Shariah-compliant blockchain technology into financial and legal infrastructure • QCB specifications for a national Qatar Mobile Payment System based on QR codes • QCB is about to launch Qatar FinTech strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global non-cash transactions volume increased by 14.1% from 2018 to 2019 to reach 708.5 billion • The Middle East and Africa non-cash transaction volume was 17.1 billion in 2019, registering a growth of 18.5% from 2018 to 2019 • In 3Q 2020, FinTechs worldwide raised US\$12.15 billion in investments from 716 deals • E-Wallets, payment networks, mobile, and e-commerce payments are transforming businesses


Name	Factors for Selecting Focus Area	Initiatives Taken	Market Impact/Overview
RegTech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevate local banks to global standards through cost-efficient and effective technology The increasingly complex regulatory landscape will spur further interest from FIs in the automation of compliance and risk monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QCB issued its second strategy document for 2017-2022 Doha FinTech meet was conducted to help Qatar become a global leader in supporting innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global private investment in RegTech was US\$2.5 billion in 2019. RegTech saves a firm's money, and time, and helps protect it from regulatory fines due to non-compliance. It simplifies data-reporting requirements under several regulations such as Basel 3, CCAR, and MiFID II, and others The combination of robotics and AI will reduce the time is spent on collecting and aggregating data for compliance (currently 80% of time spent), and free up time for validation, analysis, and reporting (currently only 20% of time spent)
SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize development of SMEs to promote economic diversification and sustainable development Fill financing gap, as of 2019, the total financing gap for Micro & SMEs (MSMEs) in the Middle East & North Africa is estimated at US\$210 billion to US\$240 billion At 88%, MENA has the highest proportion of the finance gap compared to potential demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QDB helped more than 8,500 SMEs take advantage of local opportunities by providing them access to government contracts, and other facilities Doha Bank plays an essential role in supporting and promoting SMEs through QDB's indirect lending program, Al-Dhameen QCB seeks to adopt blockchain and FinTech solutions to support venture capital funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMEs represent about 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide. Formal SMEs contribute up to 40% of national income (GDP) in emerging economies In Qatar, credit to SMEs increased by 8% in 2019, with outstanding loans of US\$1.8 billion The total number of SME businesses rose by 5% to 951 in 2019

Name	Factors for Selecting Focus Area	Initiatives Taken	Market Impact/Overview
Islamic Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture significant opportunities from FinTech innovations • Solve key challenges such as financial inclusion and Sharia compliance • Enable local banks seeking rapid modernization and global competitiveness to harness FinTech to equip themselves for the digital era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulators in the country are responsible for creating, establishing, and implementing the Sharia FinTech framework and regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sharia-compliant financial system was worth US\$2.4 trillion in 2019 • The total assets of Islamic institutions grew by 6.6% in 2019, underpinned by the strong performance of FIs in the GCC

Source: QFTH



5. ENABLERS OF FINTECH EXPANSION IN QATAR



Qatar has taken an integrated approach to create a sustainable and globally competitive FinTech ecosystem in the country. In December 2019, Qatar announced its National FinTech Strategy, followed by the establishment of Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH) in April 2020, which supports FinTech development efforts led by Qatar Central Bank (QCB) in addition to managing both Incubator and Accelerator programs. To further provide practical support, Qatar established Fintech Circle, a co-working space, and facilitated free commercial registration and licensing for the first year of a start-up's operations.

5.1. Qatar's National FinTech Strategy

Qatar Central Bank's National FinTech Strategy aims to enable local start-ups and create a favorable ecosystem that spurs international FinTechs to choose Qatar as their launchpad for the global market. Qatar Central Bank (QCB) partnered with Qatar

Development Bank (QDB) and Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) to roll out the strategy.

Qatar is on its way to achieving its vision (QNV 2030), it is establishing the FinTech industry as a key component of its knowledge-based economy objective. As an

established financial and sports hub in the region, with access to nearby markets that are worth US\$2.1 trillion, the nation is opening its doors to start-ups with innovative solutions in financial technologies.

5.2. QFTH Programs to Support Start-ups

Qatar FinTech Hub (QFTH) is dedicated to offering Qatar's first-ever specialized Incubator and Accelerator programs, which facilitate entrepreneurs with innovative and cutting-edge FinTech ideas to accelerate their FinTech journey. QFTH's programs include hackathons that offer financial, mentorship, and training support

to FinTechs who participate in challenges, an Incubator program for early-stage FinTechs, and an Accelerator program for established players looking to expand.

Each participating FinTech will receive a cash investment of up to US\$40,000 (for an Incubator) and up to US\$100,000 (for an Accelerator),

in-kind support of up to US\$250,000 and mentoring and training by QFTH and its partner entities. The program ensures a long-term relationship between the QFTH and FinTechs to help them navigate the financial service ecosystem in Qatar and support them in raising future rounds of funding.

QFTH Programs



HACKATHON

QFTH hackathons invite start-ups to contribute solutions to FinTech challenges and offer them a chance to join its Incubator program. The first hackathon took place on July 23, 2020, in Doha and comprised solutions focusing on payments. These included driving digital payments, merchant acceptance, and credit, digitally transforming the B2B payments value chain, and enabling intuitive and frictionless cross-border payments.



INCUBATOR

This is a 12-week program for budding entrepreneurs and early-stage FinTechs with a Minimum Viable Product who are looking to transform their prototype into a sellable product, build traction, and raise funds.



ACCELERATOR

This is a 12-week program for mature FinTechs with a proven product-market fit and who are currently looking for global expansion. The program focuses on cultivating business collaborations between FinTech and QFTH partners including the Qatar FinTech taskforce via a Proof-of-Concept (PoC).

First Hackathon Highlights:

- FinTechs were invited to present their solutions via virtual pitch days to cover mobile payments, SME solutions, KYC solutions, B2B payments, IoT-based payments, and wallets. The virtual pitch days were judged by a panel of representatives from QFTH stakeholders and strategic partners including QDB, QCB, QFC, and EY, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, Visa, Mastercard, Microsoft, Qatar Islamic Bank, Masraf Al Rayan, Dukhan Bank, Qatar International Islamic Bank, Doha Bank, and Qatar National Bank.
- QFTH signed an MoU with Cambridge Spark (as an academia partner) to facilitate its efforts to develop Qatar's FinTech talent. Academia partners will provide workshops, offer in-kind services, and opportunities to collaborate.

Wave 1 of the Incubator and Accelerator Programs

Following COVID-19 constraints, the Incubator and Accelerator programs were conducted virtually. The

Incubator's focused on early-stage start-ups and the Accelerator program focused on mature FinTechs.

Figure 16: QFTH Wave 1 Program Milestones Achieved



750+

Applications



72+

Countries



18

Selected
FinTechs



300+

Business
development sessions



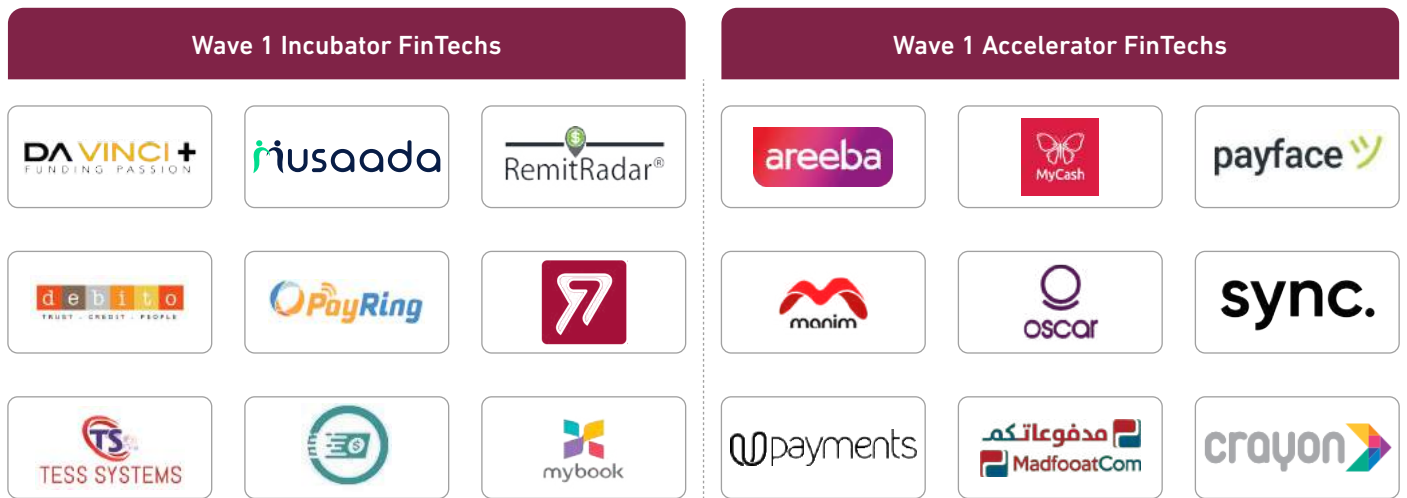
160+

Hours of workshop
and mentor sessions

After completing these programs, qualified or eligible participants were referred to the QCB's sandbox where they would work towards meeting appropriate

regulatory requirements, which included getting a license to do business in Qatar.

Figure 17: QFTH Wave 1 Incubator and Accelerator FinTechs

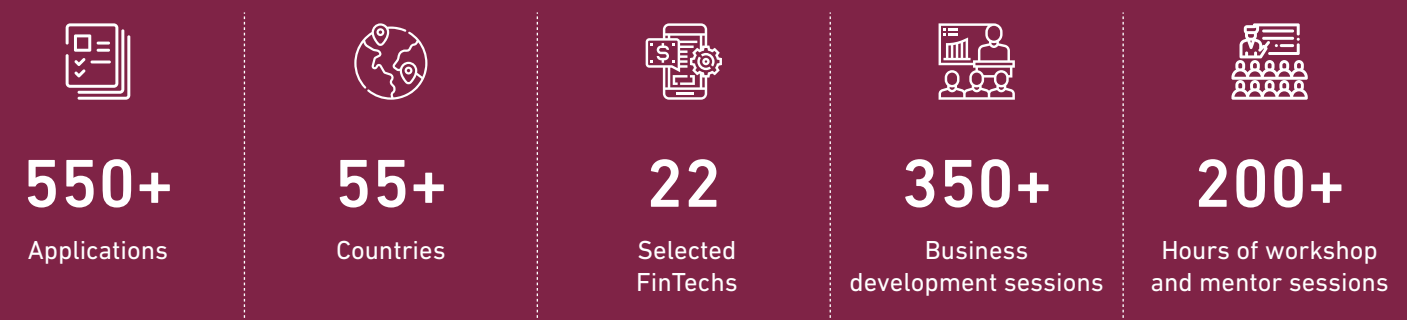


Wave 2 of the Incubator and Accelerator Programs

Wave 2 of the Incubator and Accelerator Programs focuses on emerging technologies for financial services. The event will take place online, due to COVID-19 constraints, and features opportunities for investment in 22 FinTechs.

The second wave will have more segments including Islamic FinTech, SMEs, regulatory technology, and insurance technology.

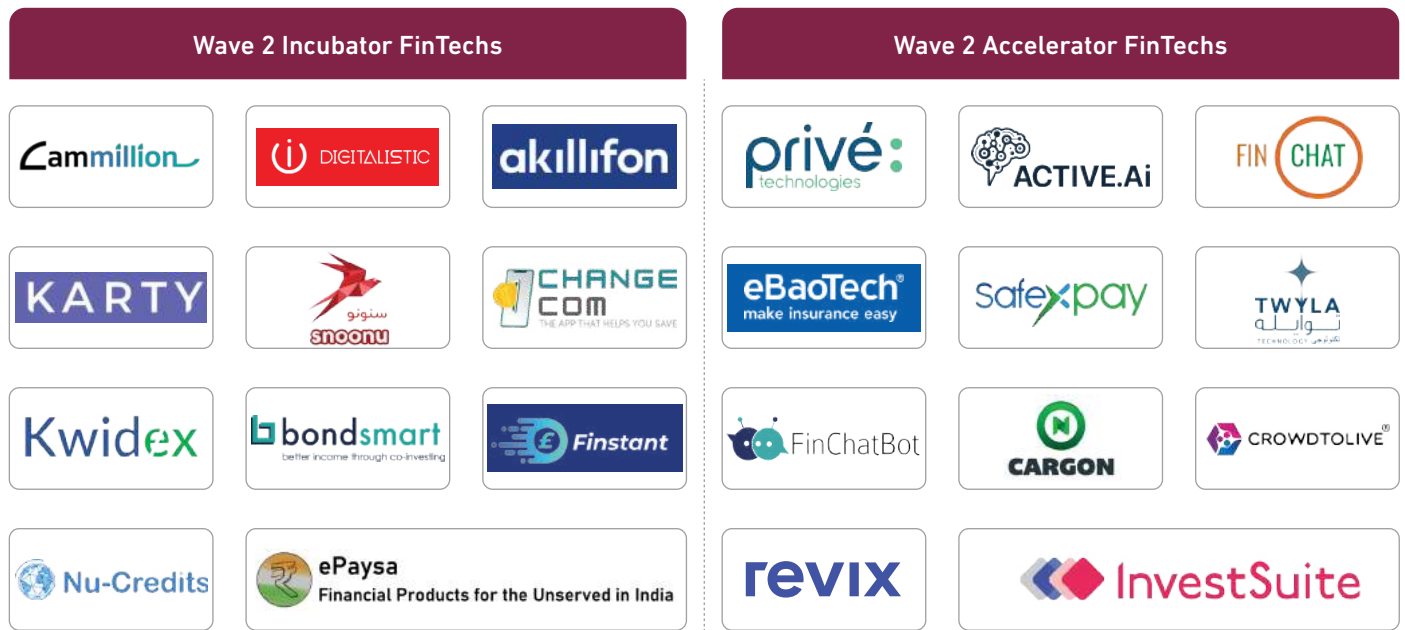
Figure 18: QFTH Wave 2 Program Milestones Achieved



Wave 2 offers contributing FinTechs a unique incubation and acceleration journey with all the essential support required to establish their businesses locally and grow regionally and internationally.

Each participating FinTech will receive personalized mentoring and training services from QFTH. After completing these programs, eligible FinTechs will enjoy fast-tracked company establishment and access to QFC's licensing platform and QCB's regulatory sandbox.

Figure 19: QFTH Wave 2 Incubator and Accelerator FinTechs





5.3. FinTech Circle

Qatar Financial Centre launched FinTech Circle, a co-working space with a registered address on the FinTech floor, free of charge for 12 months for qualifying FinTechs.

FinTechs can work with experienced mentors from over 10 countries and

get a chance to receive financial, regulatory, and registration support. This would provide an edge for upcoming FinTechs facing difficulties in finding working space in countries like the UK, US, and Singapore. FinTechs

can also gain from exposure and networking opportunities with some of the region's leading financial institutions based in QFC and elsewhere in Qatar.

5.4. Regulatory Sandbox

Regulatory sandboxes allow FinTechs and other innovators to conduct live testing of new products or services in a controlled and

isolated regulatory environment. This avoids slowing the growth and pace of innovators while these companies adapt to compliance

with regulatory requirements and customer feedback. For more information, updates, and useful links, please visit qcb.gov.qa.

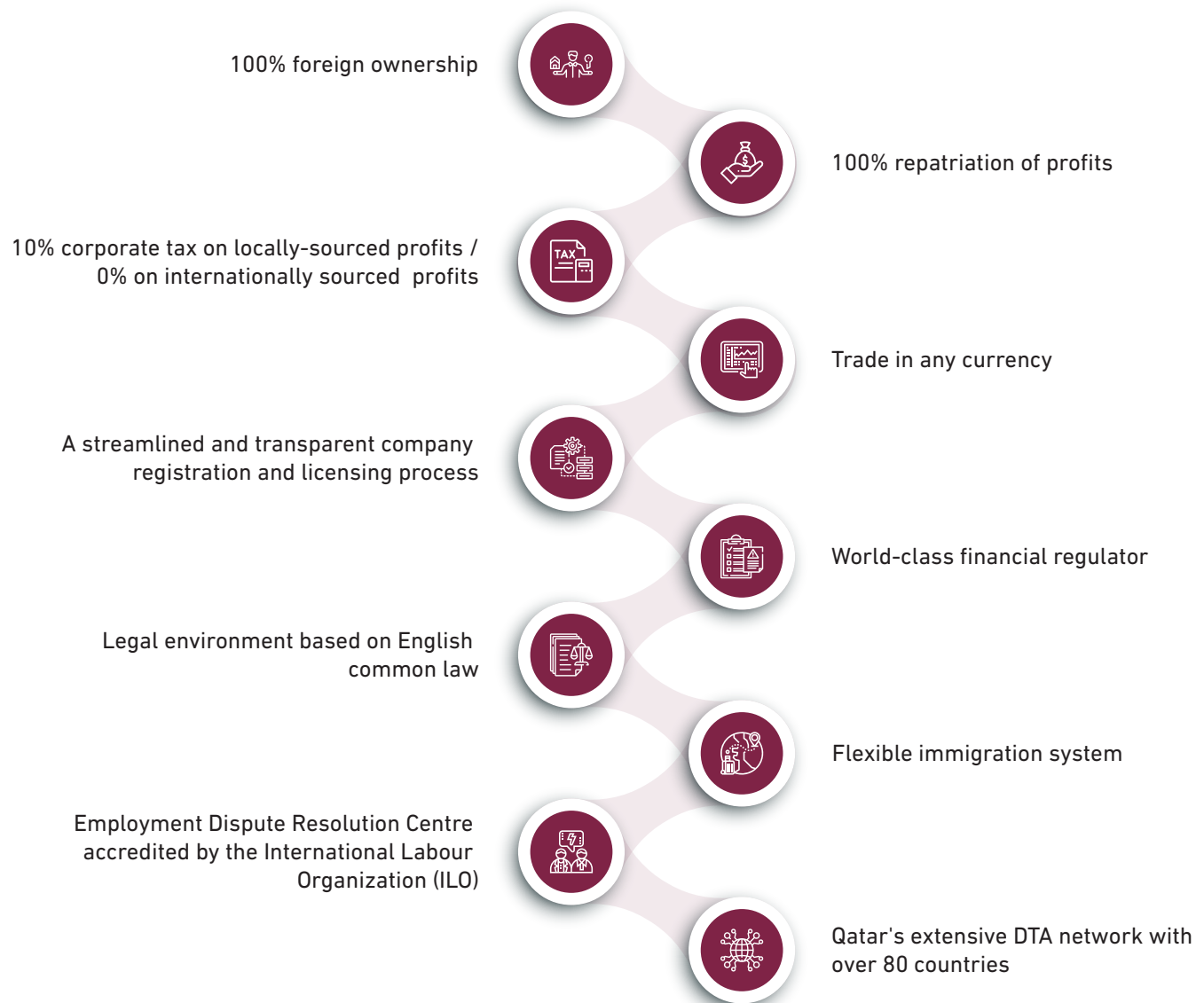
5.5. QFC’s FinTech Licensing Program

Qatar Financial Centre is the ideal licensing and registration platform for Financial Institutions and Fintech

Companies. QFC offers domestic and international institutions and

companies the opportunity to establish and grow in Qatar.

Figure 20: QFC Benefits

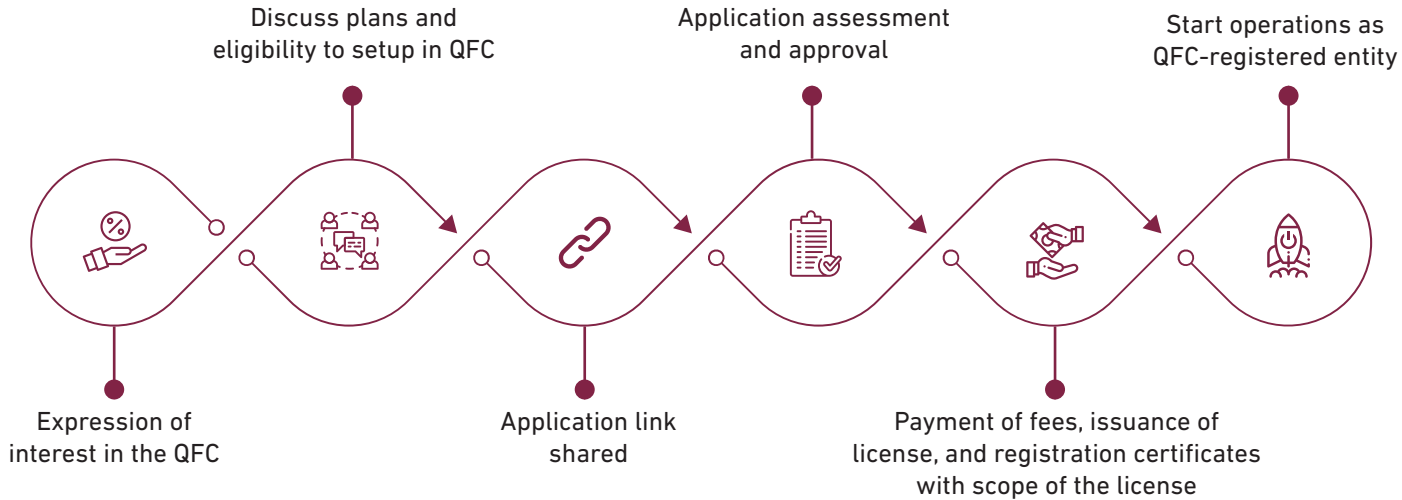


As a designated sector developer, Qatar Financial Centre supports the continuous development of the Fintech ecosystem in the state of Qatar and works closely with the Qatar Fintech Hub and other key stakeholders including regulators

and financial institutions. For qualified FinTechs QFC offers tailored benefits and a seamless end-to-end digitized licensing and registration process. QFC provides a FinTech Services Provider License to firms specializing in cyber-

security solutions, application programming interfaces, cloud computing, blockchain-based technologies, and AI. QFC has issued 39 such licenses since inception and another 20 are in the pipeline.

Figure 21: Journey of FinTech Registration



Source: QFC

To understand a detailed process for registration and license to set up an entity within the QFC, please visit qfc.qa/en/starting and feel free to contact us at fso@qfc.qa



6. GLOBAL BENCHMARKING: QATAR IN CONTEXT

Qatar offers fertile ground for the growth of FinTechs. Its small but affluent population offers opportunities to develop targeted and premium service offerings. In addition, conditions are ripe for fast FinTech acceptance, with smartphone and internet adoption being very high along with the highest social media penetration in the world, at 99%. Qatari banks have rolled out innovative products and services that encourage customers to use digital channels for their banking transactions.



For a holistic picture, Qatar's FinTech prowess was compared with those of the US, the UK, Singapore, Australia, India, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, as described below.

6.1. Qatar vs GCC Countries

Qatar is well placed in terms of access to capital and focus on innovation compared to other GCC countries. But with several GCC countries looking to build and invest in ecosystems, competition for capital, talent, as well as FinTechs is likely to heat up further in the region. For Qatar to stay ahead of its regional peers, the focus should be on building on its strengths, especially in areas of talent attractiveness and innovation, while providing policy support to incentivize investments as well as new entrepreneurs.

- Qatar performs well in terms of the availability of capital since several venture capital (VC) vehicles are available, and

QDB actively participates in the funding of companies.

- In terms of innovation, while Qatar is performing better than its peers, it can do even better by launching a FinTech innovation division and an inter-university FinTech body to develop talent, create awareness about FinTech, and further enhance innovation in the country.
- Qatar is well placed to utilize its technology and business talent. The country has globally accredited universities, which can play an active role in creating a pipeline of cultivated FinTech talent. Qatari entrepreneurs have access to mentorship programs and Incubators that provide

support structures, tools, and funding.

- From the policy perspective, the country can introduce more tax regimes tailored to early-stage and angel investors, entrepreneurs, and founders. Incentives can include relief with low capital gains tax for entrepreneurs, R&D tax credits, an enterprise investment scheme for early investors, and tax relief on new equipment.
- Other GCC members, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, are also growing their FinTech ecosystem, which is translating into an increasing number of start-ups, innovative and inclusive product developments, and healthy funding deals.



6.2. Qatar is Following the Example of Leading Global FinTech Powerhouses

In the global arena, FinTech in Qatar is at a nascent stage. There is scope for VC ecosystem development. Predominantly, QFTH provides access to local financial institutions and local industry players and partners. QDB offers accessibility and funding through VC vehicles. It also provides access to capital

through direct and indirect financial services, investment, and access to local and international markets through export insurance and funding services.

Comparing Qatar’s FinTech landscape to those of mature FinTech hubs in the US and the UK

reveals that Qatar still has much to do to nurture its FinTech capabilities. However, there are demographic differences between Qatar and US or UK markets that present an opportunity for Qatar to create a smaller but highly innovative and effective FinTech footprint on the world stage.

Figure 22: Leading Global FinTech Hubs

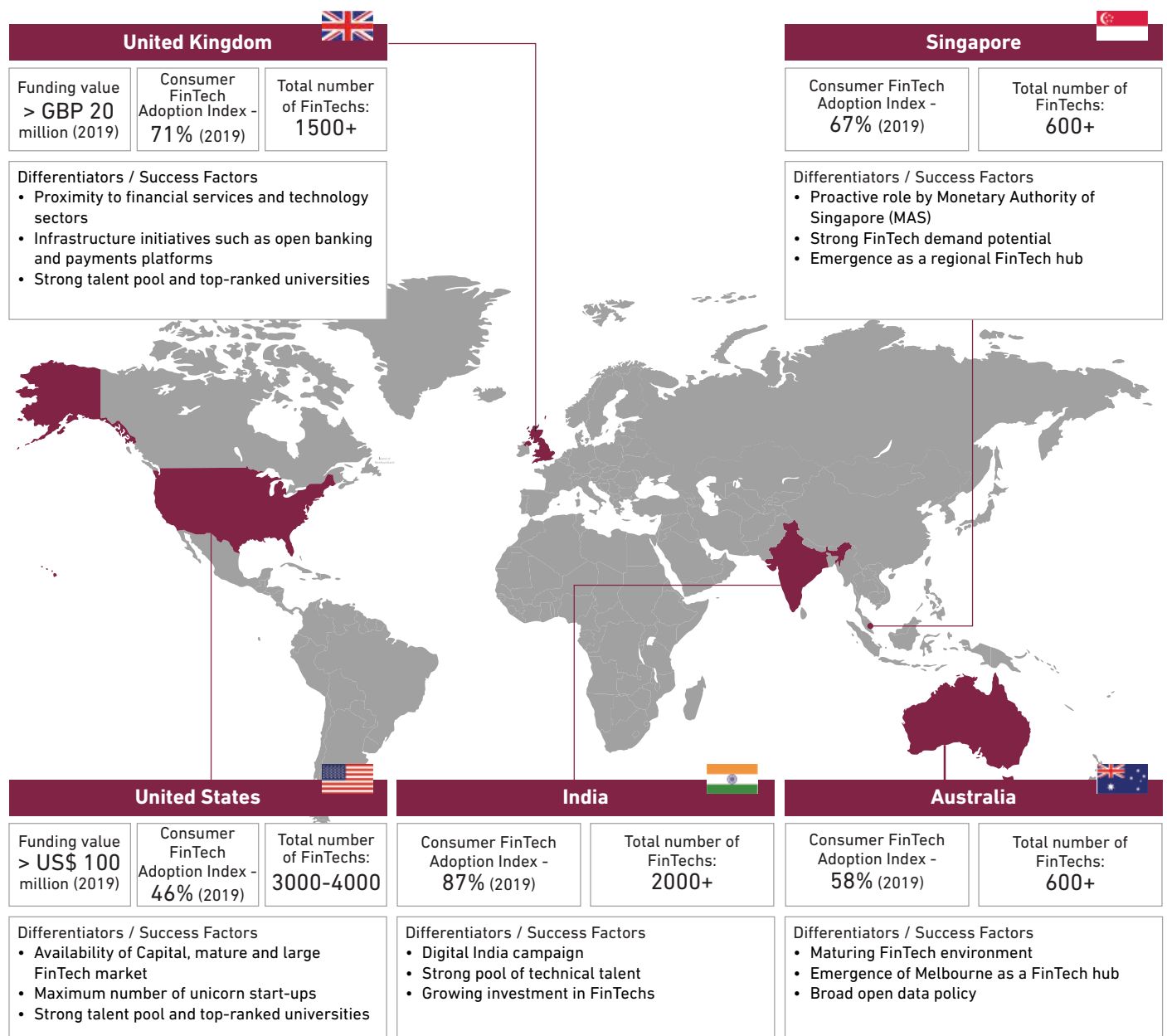
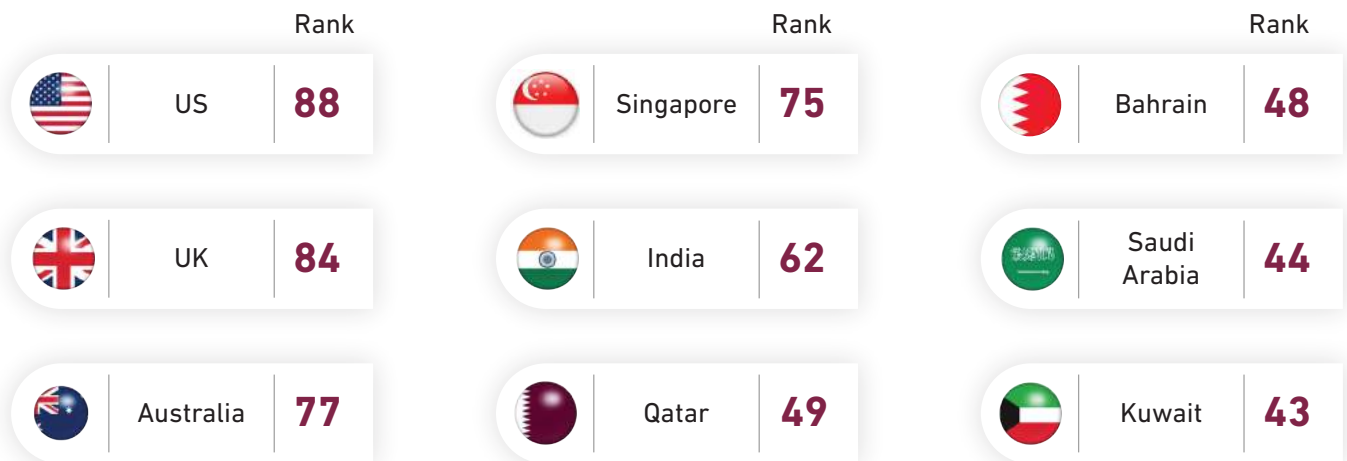


Table 6: Leading Global FinTech Hubs

Country	FinTech Landscape
US 	<p>The US is the leading FinTech geography in the number of start-ups, total funding volume, number of unicorns, and over US\$100 million mega funding rounds (in 2019, there were more than 70). Investment in FinTech nearly tripled during 2016 – 2019, denoting strong capital flows into the sector. Availability of capital and a mature investment landscape are key strengths. Apart from VC firms, traditional financial services players and corporates also provide capital. The ecosystem benefits from a strong pipeline of local and international talent, supported by a culture of entrepreneurship. Universities also play a key role in developing tech and entrepreneurial talent, as well as co-creating innovation. The ecosystem also benefits from experienced talent trained in established FIs and technology.</p>
UK 	<p>Average total investment raised by firms grew from GBP15 million in 2017 to more than GBP20 million in 2019, primarily driven by PE and VC investors. The availability of capital is supported by government-backed securities, CVC, VC, and PE firms. Proximity to financial services and technology sectors drives FinTech investment for early-stage start-ups. Most UK FinTech companies are focused on building their UK talent base; the UK has a high density of top-ranked post-secondary educational institutions, with London being home to several top global universities. The country has 76,500 people working in FinTech. Data analytics and data science skills are second-most in demand (ranked top by 19% of firms) as well as the second-most difficult to find.</p>
Australia 	<p>Capital is provided by institutional funds, which are active investors in VCs, with more than one in four VCs managing assets on behalf of superannuation funds. Australian banking is dominated by the big four banks and the incumbents are playing a pivotal role in driving key infrastructure initiatives and policy and pushing innovation. The Royal Commission was cited as a tailwind for the FinTech sector, particularly supporting demand for FinTech (and, more broadly, alternative solutions).</p>
Singapore 	<p>The number of start-ups and deal activity has increased driven by supportive government policies and strong VC investors' presence. The large sovereign wealth fund adds to the strength of Singapore's capital markets. While consumer FinTech adoption is reasonably high in Singapore, FinTechs note that the size of the local population (6 million) is smaller than that of other major FinTech hubs. Singapore is a good example of a small domestic market emerging as an attractive regional FinTech hub.</p>
India 	<p>The FinTech ecosystem has been witnessing significant deal activity since 2018. With a massive 1.3 billion population to serve, the country is focusing on collaborative FinTech ecosystem development, focusing on start-ups, innovations focused on inclusive finance, strong domestic and foreign direct investment activities, regional FinTech authorities and incubation hubs to nurture local talent, and partnerships with corporate and leading education institutions to develop FinTech talent. India is recognized for its strong technical talent (including IT, coding, engineering, and finance), generated from well-regarded Indian universities and business schools.</p>

Figure 23: FinTech Hub Score



About the Benchmarking Methodology

The assessment of each FinTech hub is based on 20 variables listed in the table below.

FinTech Enabler	Financial Inclusion	Business and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	FinTech Landscape
Number of Internet Users	Estimated number of FIs (banking & insurance co.)	Doing Business Index	Median age of the population
National Cyber Security Index	Insurance penetration %	Global Entrepreneurship Index	Number of account holders (% age 15+)
Consumer FinTech Adoption Index 2019 (EY)	Debit card ownership %	Estimated number of start-ups	GDP Per Capita
Total annual FinTech funding (VC and PE)	Credit card ownership %		Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP)
Number of VCs	Number of Account Holders (% age 15+)		
Number of people who used the internet to pay bills or to buy something online in the past year (% age 15+)	Number of people who borrowed from a FI or used a credit card (% age 15+) in 2017		
GTCI (Global talent competitiveness index)			
% of graduates from STEM programs (tertiary)			

The variables were selected to assess FinTech hubs' attractiveness across various parameters including the concentration of start-ups and funding progress on financial inclusion, Internet penetration, demographics, and potential for wealth management, payments, and insurance-related opportunities. In addition, variables were considered to assess STEM talent, entrepreneurship, and cybersecurity levels.



Moreover, seven additional qualitative parameters, including the availability of regulatory sandboxes, FinTech-focused funds, grants and rebate programs, innovation labs, and co-working spaces, global and regional FinTech events, as well as FinTech-focused technology and business courses, were analyzed to obtain a holistic view of the landscape.

7. IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND THE ROAD AHEAD



7.1. Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved a tailwind for the FinTech industry. Governments, regulators, and consumers are pushing digital development more vocally than ever before. The long-term opportunity remains strong for FinTechs due to the increasing demand for digital and innovative offerings. Some key future trends include the following:

1. Increased demand for digital services is expected to drive FinTech deals:

COVID-19 has accelerated demand for digital services as customers are looking to adopt digital channels. Incumbent FIs previously not heavily invested

in digital transformation are now looking for FinTech partners to enhance their digital capabilities.

2. However, deals could be concentrated only on established FinTechs:

Access to funding is becoming increasingly complex, especially for some early-stage FinTechs, as many investors are focused on established FinTechs with robust business models.

3. Despite challenges, FinTechs will continue to expand services:

Although constrained by tighter funding conditions,

many FinTechs will continue to identify and seize opportunities to expand their services through partnerships or new licenses.

4. FinTechs continue to innovate in emerging technologies:

The Internet of Things (IoT) combined with 5G technology can usher in FinTech 2.0. FinTechs have started emerging in this space and creating value propositions for customers. FIs are leveraging the real-time data they can gather from connected devices. Similarly, IoT payments and embedded payments are also gaining traction.

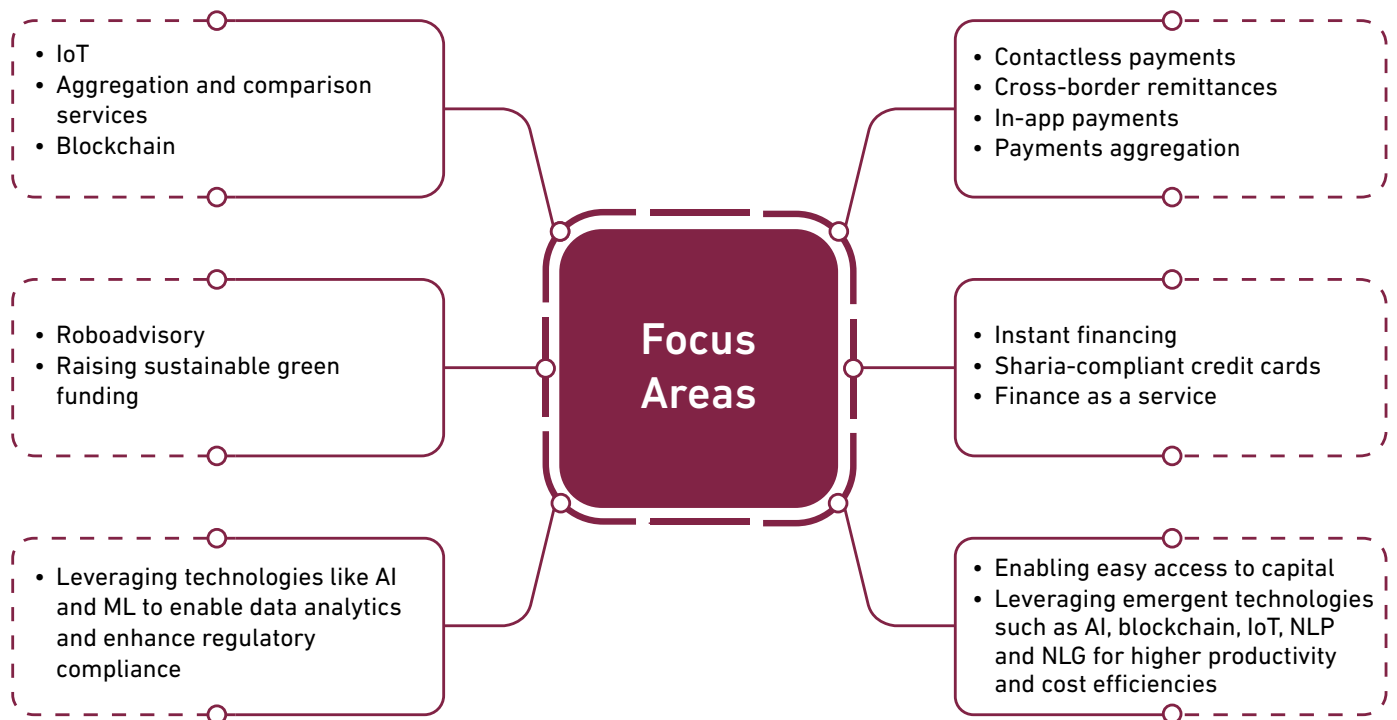
7.2. Outlook and Future Focus Areas

While some sectors might face short-term challenges, others could witness a surge in demand. Increased adoption of e-commerce will benefit payment FinTechs, but lending may remain muted due to low consumer spending. Similarly, high payouts might impact the

insurance sector to some extent, while the wealth management sector might see more traction with increased volatility. Irrespective of the sector, technology adoption and digital transformation is expected to remain high, resulting in more demand for FinTech services. This

is a real opportunity for the Qatar FinTech ecosystem to focus on niche and emerging technologies to develop value propositions in each of these sub-sectors and be ready to scale up when demand increases.

Figure 24: Future Focus Areas of Qatar FinTech



Source: EY Analysis

Qatar FinTech Hub has the potential to develop a vibrant entrepreneurial and FinTech ecosystem. It can support the growth of Qatar's local

FinTechs and provide investment options for local investors and FinTechs seeking funding. However, to make the ecosystem even more

effective, more initiatives are required from stakeholders across the areas depicted in the box below.

Table 7: Initiatives for Future-Ready FinTech Ecosystem


Future Focus Area	Approach
Unlock new sources of capital	<p>Unlock new and varied capital sources, direct capital from local angel investors and other capital providers for Qatar FinTech.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the strengths of Qatar FinTech to capital providers by spotlighting success stories and selectively sponsoring participation at national events. Educate non-FinTech angel investors about opportunities in the FinTech sector.
Increase global visibility to attract investment and foreign players	<p>Attract VCs across the globe by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting events globally to promote QFTH. Increasing promotion of successful FinTechs that have successfully launched and scaled in Qatar.

Future Focus Area	Approach
Accelerate innovation	Make QFTH a catalyst in transforming the financial services industry in Qatar by bringing together a collaborative ecosystem across FIs, government agencies, regulators, start-ups, higher education institutions, incubators, and corporates. This will foster a vibrant entrepreneurial and FinTech ecosystem that will accelerate innovation in Qatar's financial services space.
Enhance collaboration between banks and FinTechs	Establish regular focused meetings between banks and FinTechs where relevant FinTechs can present their offerings and banks can look to collaborate with the most suitable FinTech to further develop and customize the offering for their customers.
Create awareness about the FinTech industry	Establish a FinTech Association that can create awareness among the public and inform them about the trends shaping FinTech. This could help drive thought leadership, innovation, and R&D.
Provide FinTechs with improved talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national talent strategy to increase and diversify domestic talent supply within financial services by better understanding skills gaps (e.g., those related to STEM), and working more closely with policymakers and academia to attract diverse talent to the sector. • Collaborate with leading universities and academia to develop a FinTech-focused curriculum and courses that are technically oriented. This will prepare students for a future in FinTech.
Encourage diversity of talent and thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work towards inter-university collaborations and student exchange programs with foreign universities. Exchange students can be given internship opportunities with FinTechs to promote diversity of thought. • Promote sourcing of talent from outside the financial services sector through cross-sector meet-ups to encourage diversity of thought and experience.
Easy regulations to promote innovation	Review regulatory procedures to allow FinTechs to test the market and create proofs of concept.
Mentorship program	Assign mentors to FinTechs to understand opportunities in Qatar. Establish a forum for FinTechs to meet them and discuss their business ideas and possible solutions or turnarounds.
Create global connections with other FinTech hubs	Establish bilateral cooperation agreements, so-called FinTech 'bridges', with other jurisdictions. These bridges would enable regulators to efficiently share information about financial services innovation in their respective markets, including emerging trends and regulatory issues, aiming to foster innovation in FinTech.
Tax regime tailored to early-stage and angel investors, entrepreneurs, and founders	Possible tax incentives can include relief with low capital gains tax for entrepreneurs, R&D tax credits, an enterprise investment scheme for early investors, and tax relief on new equipment.

 Capital

 Demand

 Talent

 Regulations

7.3. Recommendations for Long-term Development of FinTech in Qatar

Going forward, Qatari regulators should build long-lasting digital infrastructure promoting FinTech development and growth. They could collaborate to develop a technology stack with a set of shared and

open infrastructure platforms that enables governments, businesses, start-ups, and developers to build digital applications and solutions. Eventually, FinTech developments will also help Qatari regulators

to solve some of the key national challenges such as Anti Money Laundering (AML), Know Your Customer (KYC), and compliance, thus benefiting the entire financial services ecosystem.



APPENDIX

1. INSTITUTIONS

Digital Incubation Center (DIC): DIC was created to boost ICT innovation by the Qatari government and is currently managed under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC).

Ooredoo: Ooredoo QSC is Qatari multinational telecommunications company, which provides mobile, wireless, wireline, and content services.

Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC): QBIC helps entrepreneurs and companies who either have an idea to start a business or want to grow an existing business. QBIC is part of QDB.

Qatar Central Bank (QCB): The financial services industry regulator, QCB provides the framework for initiatives that enable the local start-up sector and create a favorable ecosystem for international FinTechs to choose Qatar as their launchpad to the global market – which eventually led to the set-up of the QFTH.

Qatar Development Bank (QDB): QDB has been mandated by the Qatari government to develop and execute a national FinTech strategy in collaboration with other stakeholders. As part of the same initiative, QDB co-founded QFTH and played a key role in launching the FinTech Incubator and Accelerator programs focused on consolidating Qatar's position as a global FinTech leader and creating a vibrant ecosystem that is attractive for international investors.













Qatar Financial Centre (QFC): QFC is the licensing home for FinTechs, where local and foreign companies can register onshore in Qatar, with the option for 100% foreign ownership and special rules for FinTechs.













Qatar Investment Authority (QIA): QIA is the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar and is a major contributor to realizing the QNV 2030.

Qatar Sports Tech (QST): QST facilitates partnerships between the most promising Sportstech startups and leading brands and organizations in Qatar.

Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP): QSTP incubation center focuses on accelerating the establishment and growth of promising tech start-ups.

2. QFTH WAVE 1 FINTECHS

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 areeba.com 	<p>Establishment of branch office in 2019 in Qatar, areeba technology services and solutions is a financial technology company that offers various means of payment for banks, financial institutions, merchants, governments, and individuals.</p> <p>Its fully outsourcing issuing and acquiring services results in lowering the cost of ownership, know-how curve, and CAPEX and OPEX for banks and FIs who want to engage in digital payment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fadel Al Enazi, Chairman Maher Mikati, CEO
 manim.me 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in Turkey, Manim allows enterprises to track instant bank account transactions, virtual PoS transactions on a single platform, integrate them into ERP systems such as SAP, Dynamics Axapta, and run customized financial reports.</p> <p>It offers mobile payment initiation and mobile accounts receivable collection with QR payment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soner Çalimli, Founder and CEO
 payface.com.br 	<p>Founded in 2018 and headquartered in Brazil, Payface provides contactless payment for consumers using facial recognition. It improves the user experience of payments and transfers with enhanced security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eládio Isoppo, Co-Founder and CEO Ricardo Fritsche, Co-Founder, and CTO José Capito, CFO
 sync.money 	<p>Founded in 2019 and headquartered in the UK, sync. operates an open banking platform as a Smart-Bank. It allows users to open a current GBP or EUR account in minutes and provides them the option to open 30 other currency accounts.</p> <p>sync.'s USP is to allow users to synchronize all of their financial accounts (bank, credit, loan, and mortgage accounts) in one app, as one experience, by utilizing open banking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ricky Lee, Founder and CEO Azahara Egea, Co-Founder and COO
 themarketiq.com 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in Canada, Oscar is an end-to-end ERP solutions provider that helps SMEs digitize their businesses.</p> <p>The key components of their solutions include purchasing and inventory management, ledger and invoice management, digital payments, PoS, customer loyalty and feedback, integrated marketing, and NPS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fahad Kamr, Founder
 mycash.my 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Singapore, MyCash Money is a mobile-only remittance service provider that facilitates services in migrant workers' native languages.</p> <p>It offers digital wallet for unbanked migrant workers to purchase financial products, including cross-border remittance, without any bank account or credit and debit card.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mehedi Hasan, Co-Founder Yin Yin Looi, Co-Founder











FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 upayments.com 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Kuwait, UPayments is a payment technology solution provider offering invoicing systems and payment links, e-commerce solutions, payment gateway, property management solution, and online escrow service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasser Al humaidi, Co-Founder and CEO • Ali AlHabshi, Co-Founder and COO
 madfoat.com 	<p>Founded in 2011 and headquartered in Jordan, MadfoatCom won an exclusive tender of the Central Bank of Jordan to build, operate, and administer the electronic bill presentment and payment service.</p> <p>The service is connected to all banks in Jordan, mobile wallets, post offices, PSPs, and more than 290 billers with more than 700 services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasser Saleh, Founder
 crayondata.com 	<p>Founded in 2012 and headquartered in Singapore, Crayon Data is a Singapore-based big data and AI start-up.</p> <p>The company's maya.ai is an AI platform that equips banks and payment service providers with the capability to create highly personalized experiences at scale and speed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suresh Shankar, Founder • Srikant Sastri, Co-Founder and Strategic Advisor
 debito.qa 	<p>Founded in 2019 and headquartered in Qatar, Debito is a credit management system. It is a platform that connects migrant workers and businesses around them (merchants).</p> <p>The platform's two core products act as two channels: Debit - Credit management system, and Passbook - a mobile app for customers to see their transactions with the merchant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hijas Hassan, Co-Founder and CEO • Sriraman G, Co-Founder and CTO
 musaada.com.qa 	<p>Founded in 2019 and headquartered in Qatar, Musaada is an invoice financing platform that connects SMEs with investors.</p> <p>Its business model uses invoice factoring in which a business sells its accounts receivable to a third party at a discount to boost its cashflow, improve its business growth, and increase profitability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khamis Al-Jabr, Founder
 7sab.com 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in Qatar, 7sab provides businesses, merchants, individuals, and other service providers a payment tool that allows customers to overcome the most common payment challenges from swift execution to a quick closure of deals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdulrahman Al-Majed, Co-Founder • Saleh Al-Eida, Co-Founder • Radu Ichim, Co-Founder and CTO

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 remitradar.com 	<p>Founded in 2014 and headquartered in the UK, Remit Radar is a leading aggregator and comparison service for senders and receivers of remittances.</p> <p>It offers gateway technology for real-time control and centralized settlement of remittances, more and cheaper options of remittance routes to users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sergey Markov, CEO • Denis Kochubey, CTO
 davinciplus.com 	<p>Headquartered in Australia, DA VINCI+ offers payment card solution. The company has multiple patents to protect its uniqueness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Charles, MD • Luke Bould, COO
 fatora.io/en/ 	<p>Founded in 2018 and headquartered in Turkey, Fatora.io offers a set of online payment tools that streamline payments between merchants and customers.</p> <p>It facilitates a mini e-commerce store to showcase products, along with POS and cashier tools to get paid inside the store, with a powerful API to integrate e-commerce or website into it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saleh Al Mansouri, CEO and Founder • Waleed Al-Yafei, CTO
 mybookqatar.com 	<p>Founded in 2013 and headquartered in Qatar, My Book is a Qatari provider of digital, app-based incentives for consumers with a network of more than 1,000 merchant locations across every category.</p> <p>The company has partnered with leading organizations in Qatar such as QIB, Vodafone, Mastercard, Masraf Al Rayan, Qatar Airways, Careem, Dukhan Bank, and more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdullah Soomro, CEO • Faraz Waqar, Director of Marketing and Business Development
 pay-ring.com 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Russia, Pay Ring is a manufacturer and distributor of various IoT-enabled wearables used for payments, transportation, security, and in other areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Feldman, Co-Founder
 tess-systems.com 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in Qatar, Tess Systems provides a one stop payment solution for merchants to use multiple payment options to accept payments. The company also provides a payments processing platform which connects with various payment schemes and issuers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Fahad Bin Hamad Al Thani, CEO • Abaan Ahmad, COO • Jawad Paracha, CPO

3. QFTH WAVE 2 FINTECHS

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 privetechnologies.com 	<p>Founded in 2011 and headquartered in Europe and Hong Kong, Privé Technologies offers a turnkey, patented and AI-driven wealth management platform for more than 50 enterprise clients. This platform has been deployed in more than 15 countries across three continents in more than seven different languages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Wong, Chairman • David Lee, President • Julian Schillinger, CEO
 active.ai 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Singapore, Active.ai is a service platform that connects consumers with their banks via micro conversations.</p> <p>The company has built a proprietary conversational AI platform “Triniti” that helps financial institutions redefine their digital strategy and meet changing customer expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravi Shankar, CEO
 finchat.tech 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Singapore, FinChat offers compliance monitoring and archiving tools for messaging in regulated industries such as financial institutions.</p> <p>The company has a web-and mobile phone-based compliance tools, which monitor business chats while keeping private chats private.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Eng, CEO • Arjun Singh, CTO
 ebaotech.com 	<p>Founded in 2000 and headquartered in China, eBaoTech is a technology solution (eBao Cloud, eBao Software) provider for the global insurance industry.</p> <p>eBao Cloud is a family of cloud platforms (both SaaS and PaaS), while eBao Software includes traditional core suites for insurance carriers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woody Mo, CEO
 safexpay.com 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in India, SafexPay is a B2B2B FinTech focused on solving problems for businesses. It specializes in making the platform available to other merchant acquirers such as banks, financial institutions, FinTechs & international clients, making them one of the key players in B2B2B white labelled payments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ravi Gupta, CEO
 twylatech.com 	<p>Headquartered in Doha, Twyla Technology is a 100% Qatari company under the aegis of H.E Sheikh Hamad Bin Suhaim Al Thani.</p> <p>The company provides information systems and audio-visual solutions including payment gateway, e-invoicing, smart POS, and E-commerce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nauman Gul, CEO

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 FinChatBot finchatbot.com 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Gauteng, South Africa, FinChatBot offers conversational AI solutions for the financial services industry.</p> <p>Equipped with Machine Learning, the bot enables financial services providers to increase their onsite conversion rate while gathering more information about their potential customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romain Diaz, Co-Founder • Antoine Paillusseau, Co-Founder, Director and CEO
 CARGON cargon.com 	<p>Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Georgia, Cargon is an on-demand logistics platform, connecting shippers with drivers with its technology and working on embedded finance & BNPL products focused on logistics industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaniko Chaladze, CEO • Shako Jalabadze, Co-Founder
 InvestSuite investsuite.com 	<p>Founded in 2018 and headquartered in Belgium, InvestSuite is an InvesTech company providing wealth management products to financial institutions.</p> <p>The company provides an AI-based product suite that includes a roboadvisor, a portfolio optimizer, a self-execution trading app, and a StoryTeller.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bart Vanhaeren, Co-Founder and CEO • Laurent Sorber, Co-Founder and CTO
 CROWDTOLIVE [®] crowdtolive.com 	<p>Headquartered in the UK, CrowdToLive is an equity-based crowdfunding platform.</p> <p>The platform offers debt-free partnerships between investors and homeowners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anouar Adham, CEO
 revix revix.com 	<p>Headquartered in the UK, Revix is an investment management platform that allows anyone to build a portfolio of the world's top cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>The company provides retail investors with alternative and traditional assets and proprietary automated investment tools on a single platform.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sean Andrew Sanders, CEO • Ruan Smit, CTO • Tiaan Wolmarans, COO

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 cammillion.com 	<p>Headquartered in Singapore, Cammillion is a wealth management SaaS provider that enables financial institutions to deploy customizable and long-term investment solutions in the digital world.</p> <p>The company provides integrated investment solutions with smart analytics that allows institutions to provide trackable and personalized investment services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Kim-Hwa Lim, CEO and Founder • Professor Gishan Dissanaikie, Advisor
 digitalistic.co 	<p>Founded in 2017 and headquartered in Bangladesh, Digitalistic helps SMEs digitalize their operation without behavioral change, help them order directly; by using the financial & order data to enable targeted BTL marketing and analytics and fintech lending.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm Shahriar, Partner and CTO
 akillifon.com 	<p>Founded in 2018 and headquartered in Turkey, Akillifon is a Robo advisory platform based on artificial intelligence and provides portfolio optimization and wealth management services.</p> <p>The company offers API and SDK solutions to portfolio management firms, banks, and financial institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esra Ulasan, CEO and Data Scientist
 karty.qa 	<p>Founded in 2021 and headquartered in Qatar, Karty is a payment card paired with a smart app that provides a tailored financial experience.</p> <p>The company leverages cutting-edge technology and utilizes transaction data to enhance customer experience and spending interaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdulaziz Al-Marri, Co-Founder • Mohammed Suleiman, Co-Founder
 snoonu.com 	<p>Founded in 2019, and headquartered in Qatar, Snoonu is an e-commerce and delivery application that provides solutions for businesses and consumers.</p> <p>The company offers services such as online shopping, food & grocery delivery and many more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamad Mubarak Al-Hajri, Co-Founder and CEO • Saud Al-Attayah, Co-Founder

FinTechs	Description (Location and Key Offerings)	Key People
 <p>change.com.co</p> 	<p>Founded in 2018 and headquartered in Jordan, Change.com is mobile-based online savings and investing platform that increases financial inclusion rates and enables users to stay financially healthy.</p> <p>The company ensures high adaption rates by providing users with an easy-to-use mobile application.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yazan Al-kurdi, CEO
 <p>kwidex.com</p> 	<p>Headquartered in Ghana, Kwidex is a crowd-lending platform for agribusiness that allows people to invest in small-holder farmers in exchange for returns at the end of a specified period.</p> <p>The company collects funds from contributors and distributes them to farmers and other agricultural projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prince Asamoah, Co-Founder
 <p>bondsmart.co.uk</p> 	<p>Headquartered in the UK, bondsmart is a fixed-income investment platform that provides services enabling financial institutions to offer fractional fixed-income investment products to customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawrie Chandler, Director • Adam Starr, Co-Founder
 <p>finstant.co.uk</p> 	<p>Headquartered in the UK, Finstant is a data company that supports SMEs and financial services.</p> <p>The company has created a cashflow forecasting tool that enables users to generate a forecast. The company provides market reporting bots and assesses macroeconomic conditions that allow it to forecast sales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam Patchitt, Founder • Chris, Non-Executive Director • Caroline, CMO
 <p>nu-credits.com</p> 	<p>Founded in 2019 and headquartered in the UK, Nu-Credits is a blockchain trade finance platform that provides financial solutions for exporters and importers.</p> <p>The company offers an alternative method of financing cross-border trade activities and gives banks and financial institutions a new commercial opportunity to participate in funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenneth Guanyao Ma, CEO
 <p>epaysa.co</p> 	<p>Headquartered in India, ePaysa is a multi-lingual android mobile application that provides financial solutions for the unserved.</p> <p>The company uses a credit scoring algorithm SADHAN to determine an applicant's proclivity to repay a loan on time and facilitates onboarding and on-time loan collection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramana Chinthapenta, Founder • Kaushal Khatri, Founder

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronyms	Explanation
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DIC	Digital Incubation Center
FI	Financial Institution
FinTech	Financial Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ML	Machine Learning
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NLG	Natural Language Generation
NLP	Natural Language Processing
PoC	Proof of Concept
PoS	Point of Sale
QBIC	Qatar Business Incubation Center
QCB	Qatar Central Bank
QDB	Qatar Development Bank
QFC	Qatar Financial Centre
QFTH	Qatar FinTech Hub
QIA	Qatar Investment Authority
QNB	Qatar National Bank
QSE	Qatar Stock Exchange
QST	Qatar Sports Tech
QSTP	Qatar Science and Technology Park
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises

FROM QATAR TO THE WORLD

A report on the state of
FinTech in Qatar

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