

# Impact of the 2022 FIFA World Cup on Qatar

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**Abstract**—This paper explores the impact of the Qatar World Cup on Qatar itself, including its motivation for hosting the World Cup, why it is competent, and the benefits Qatar has gained from the World Cup from economic and cultural perspectives, as well as the doubts Qatar faced before and after hosting the World Cup. The Qatar World Cup, as a mega event, has posed a series of impacts on Qatar, including subsequent impacts after the World Cup. Meanwhile, hosting the World Cup by a small country is a historic event which further implies that conducting logical discussions by collecting information and data is meaningful. In summary, our research identifies the advantages and disadvantages of Qatar hosting the World Cup and finds that the Qatar World Cup has a significant impact on Qatar's economy, politics, and ethnic culture.

**Keywords**—World Cup, Qatar, doubts, impact, economics

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mega sporting events are those one-off international-scale sporting events organized by special “institutions” that, due to the importance or scale of the event, generate extremely high media coverage and impact on the host community for example in terms of economy, tourism, infrastructure, etc. Generally, famous events like the Olympic Games and the World Cup could all be regarded as mega sporting events. Nowadays, Mega-sport events have become more and more frequent with the development of technology and economics all over the world. The economic and image effect of mega-sport events is a topic of expanding scholarly interest since many locations and nation-states compete to host these events [1]. Although mega-event planners hope for a good impact on a location's reputation, the results are not fairly satisfactory sometimes, which means it is worthwhile to evaluate the effect of mega-event on the area from several perspectives. The impact of Mega-sport events is controversial among researchers, and some even doubt whether they have any effect at all on how destinations are perceived [2–4]. Particularly for emerging countries, which frequently wish to transform their image by hosting big events, destination image has recently become even more crucial than before when organizing mega-sport events [5–7]. However, hosting large events without careful analysis may lead to adverse impacts to the host such as unexpected economic loss. Consequently, further study is needed to determine whether and how mega-sport events affect destination image [8]. For example, events like the FIFA World Cup or the UEFA European Football Championship will draw tourists who may not otherwise travel to the nation where the event is taking place, which may make the host undertake the risk of losing a large amount of money. In other words, the place has the chance to impress visitors and shape their opinions of it through the event. Hence, Understanding the characteristics that affect travelers' impressions of a location and an event is crucial to evaluating why tourists

attend events and go to particular locations. Going further, carefully researching on how the event affects perceptions of the place is one of the core tasks for event organizers and destination marketers.

Although sports events vary in size and type, most of them are quite popular with both domestic and foreign tourists. As an example, 541,000 international tourists visited Brazil during the 2016 Rio Olympics, an increase of 157,000 over the same period last year. Hosting large sports events frequently appears in destination product development and marketing plans, which the tourism sector views as an approach to boosting both visitor numbers and revenue. Moreover, there are other justifications for government involvement because many feel that sports activities could advance political and social objectives. The Olympic Games were once primarily the domain of developed nations, but other nations and cities are increasingly vying to host pre-religious sports events in recent years, which are then featured in tourism advertisements and used for other policy agendas. Based on this background, this paper presents an empirical case study of the potential advantages and difficulties of Qatar and its choice as the host nation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in 2010. Qatar is a notable host nation due to its goals and past successes. In 2008, to transform Qatar into a sustainable and prosperous knowledge-based economy, the nation launched the ‘2030 National Vision’. Since then, related institutions have been working hard to build the Qatar brand and enhance its international image, including promoting peace through national and cultural development, economic diversification, international mediation, and hosting large-scale sports events. These activities enable Qatar to strengthen its capabilities and establish its reputation as a reliable international participant and partner [9]. However, because of the peculiarities and controversy surrounding the bid process, which has been marred by claims of corruption. There are still many years before the World Cup when the host got the right to hold in 2010, therefore hosting it is a long-term project. There are many months to prepare after the bid is awarded. Therefore, some comments are speculative.

To better understand the growth dynamics and determine whether recent growth has slowed down, the goal of this paper is to examine the long-term growth path of the national gains brought about by the Qatar World Cup. To better achieve our experimental objectives, The World Cup and the evolution of football over the previous 50 years are both covered to explore the impact of the Qatar World Cup on the host comprehensively. Through a customized database and a recently created large-scale event growth index (MEGIX) based on five dimensions of sports which include audience, media, marketing, and cost, growth from the 1960s to the end of 2010, the research could be divided into various aspects.

More importantly, the study of this ground-breaking data collection enables us to chart the historical development of the greatest events, pinpoint the current crises that caused scale stagnation, and in certain cases, the reduction of the Olympic Games and the World Cup.

Our research contributes to the application and literature in this field for four reasons. Firstly, the study contributes to the research on the development of Qatar's future economic strategy as a World Cup host country. Secondly, it contributes to the study of the impact of hosting major events on the situation of international relations. Thirdly, it provides theoretical and applied recommendations for future countries hosting major events. Finally, it fills the gap in research on the hosting of events in a country as exceptional as Qatar.

## II. THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND THE REALITY OF PUBLIC OPPOSITION

Events organized to market destinations such as sports tournaments have grown rapidly over the last few decades, which brings a large number of opportunities to the destinations as well [10, 11]. During this period, sports tourism has also been developing rapidly and has become an important economic factor in the tourism sector [12–14].

Horne and Manzenreiter [15] and Horne [16] give three main reasons for the growth of Mega sports events: firstly, the modern technologies of mass communication make the MSEs possible to reach virtually the entire world population; secondly, the professional sports system is generally transformed by the formation of a sport-media-business alliance in the late 20th century; thirdly, mega events could provide wide promotional benefits to the host cities, regions or even countries. Additionally, Despite the potential local benefits, MSEs have been largely developed in the interest of global motives rather than for the benefit of local communities.

Given various types of MSEs, the FIFA World Cup is one of the most evident examples of MSEs. Matos [17] describes this football tournament together with the Olympic Games as 'the pinnacles of mega sports event'. The truth that the total commercial spending on infrastructure, media and marketing rights, and tourism-related products are counted in billions of USD [18–20] further confirms the importance of the FIFA World Cup. Moreover, the wide audience coverage also implies that the FIFA World Cup is one of the most popular events in the human world. According to Matos [17], the 'holy trinity of mega events benefits' could be described as economic growth, infrastructure legacies, and image promotion, which indicates the wide benefits mega events could bring.

Even though mega-events have proven to bring benefits to the host, the general public has come to oppose mega-events in many places recently. Public scrutiny of mega-event advocates' claims of job growth, image changes for communities, and the construction of substantial new infrastructure has increased. Moreover, the public outrage over ongoing doping cases and the mega-event owners' questionable business practices has intensified the demand for mega-event changes [21], and in certain cases, criminal prosecution [22]. Due in part to this, a global movement of

opposition to mega-events has evolved in recent years [23, 24]. This movement tries to challenge the global network of supporters with an equally global network of outspoken critics who work in concert with local activists [25–27]. For example, politicians at the metropolitan and national levels are hesitant to organize bids for large-scale events due to poor public polling results (such as Boston's bid for the 2024 Olympics or Oslo's bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics), unsuccessful bid referenda (such as those in Innsbruck and Vienna in Austria, Munich and Hamburg in Germany, Calgary in Canada, Cracow in Poland, Davos/St. Moritz and Sion in Switzerland), and a lack of sensitivity to local contexts. Referendums rejecting Olympic bids have been influenced by worries about mass tourism and overtourism.

The event and tourist industries have suffered greatly as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, which began in early 2020. It is challenging to imagine that society and sports can return to the status quo in the next years, even though researchers and practitioners are still trying to comprehend the pandemic's possible long-term effects [28]. Large gatherings of people are known to more easily create potential super-spreaders of infectious illnesses. To be more specific, a stadium filled with tens of thousands of spectators from all over the world would be the perfect venue for a worldwide pandemic. This danger even led to the establishment of a brand-new branch of medicine called "mass gatherings medicine" in 2014 [29].

Additionally, a growing number of individuals and communities are becoming acutely aware of the fact that the social, financial, and environmental costs of mega-events typically outweigh their advantages. With papers that show the negative cost-benefit ratio of mega-events, academics and activists have attracted substantial attention in the policy community [30]. Zimbalist [31] finds that the negative effects of the Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016 were heavily covered by the international media, including human rights abuses, financial excess, and questionable legacies. Moreover, based on experience, promises of both temporary and long-term increases in tourism have frequently proven to be empty words. For an event to help tourism, Chalip [32] contends that "it needs to attract tourists at times when hospitality providers are operating below capacity". This is not always the case, though, as research reveals mixed results, including some severe drops in tourism [33, 34].

From 20 November to 18 December 2022, Qatar's tourism sector was stretched as the host country of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This major sporting event is expected to have a positive economic impact on the country, allowing Qatar's hard-hit tourism sector to flourish in the wake of the pandemic. With an estimated 1.5 million spectators coming to Qatar, the World Cup has also revealed gaps in the country's existing tourism infrastructure. In the lead-up to the World Cup, Qatar invested heavily in the construction of new roads, tunnels, schools, telecommunication projects, hotels, and hospitals. Apart from local government and companies, American companies in the tourism, travel, and hospitality industries can provide solutions to fill the remaining gaps in this sector for Qatar's future major sporting events, which could also enhance cooperation between countries [35].

### III. QATAR'S WORLD CUP JOURNEY: IMPACTS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### A. *Why Is Qatar Hosting the World Cup*

The reason why Qatar is willing to host the World Cup is complicated. According to Ronald [36], Although Qatar is a small country even smaller than Connecticut, it has been claiming to be a global player in recent years, both politically and economically, which implies that Qatar may be able to impact the trend of globalization significantly. For example, as a Gulf state, Qatar is one of the world's largest exporters of liquid natural gas and has played a role in international conflict mediation, working to secure the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in August 2021 and hosting indirect talks between US and Iranian officials in Doha. Moreover, Qatar has also launched a media network, Al Jazeera, which could bring faster and more accurate information. "I don't think Qatar wants to be just an energy-related power I think they are trying to differentiate themselves in terms of the support they can provide to help efforts to resolve international conflicts," Anna Jacobs, senior Gulf analyst at the International Crisis Group (ICG), told CNN. According to the point view of authority Chadwick "They're too small, they're too fragile, they can't stand up to anyone." "So they have to stay visible and present, show constructiveness, trustworthiness, and legitimacy. The World Cup is part of that. One of the reasons they want to host the World Cup is to be seen as legitimate and trustworthy members of the international community."

Looking back, Qatar's bid to host the 2022 World Cup, despite the "election bribery" storm, its winning process did not rely solely on the power of money. The bidding process for the current Qatar World Cup can be traced back to around/even January 2009, when FIFA started the bidding process for the 2018 World Cup and the 2022 World Cup at the same time, among which Qatar, South Korea, Japan, Australia and the United States competed for the 2022 World Cup. Qualifications. Similar to Qatar, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States each face domestic disruptions. Despite the number of venues in Australia being adequate, the arrangement of World Cup events is likely to overlap with other domestic sporting events in Australia. Moreover, Australian Rules Football and Rugby Leagues oppose the Australian Football Federation's bid to host the World Cup, which may lead to Australia's inability to guarantee a venue during the World Cup and this could greatly affect its ability to host the 2022 World Cup. In terms of the United States, the influence of football in the United States is far less than that of rugby, baseball, and basketball. Consequently, many voices in the United States have questioned the necessity of bidding for the 2022 World Cup. Japan and South Korea, both these two countries turned to bid for the 2022 World Cup after their hopes of bidding for the 2018 World Cup were slim, which made the application preparations relatively hasty.

Compared with other competitors, the attitude of Qatar is more positive and the investments are larger. First of all, unlike other bidding countries that designated the head of the football association or sports organization as the leader of the bid, Qatar appointed Prince Mohammad Al Thani as the chairman of the bid committee and promised to use the power

of the whole country to host the World Cup, which greatly expressing Qatar's positive attitude. Secondly, from the very beginning, Qatar had set the 2022 World Cup as its bidding goal, therefore had fully prepared and had an advantage in the bidding plan and other materials. Finally, in the face of doubts about the hot and unsuitable temperature, Qatar proposed a "temperature-controlled stadium" model. By building air-conditioning facilities in the stadium, the temperature of the stadium can be adjusted to ensure the normal operation of the game. In the end, Qatar's sincerity and strong strength impressed the AFC and FIFA, helped Qatar defeat other competitors, and won the right to host the 2022 World Cup.

#### B. *The Strength of Qatar to Host the World Cup*

Consequently, from the perspective of foreign background and domestic background, sport is of great significance to Qatar. To that end, Qatar also formulated a detailed sports strategy, which consists mainly of three parts: Hosting large-scale sports events, promoting the training of sports elites, and investing directly in the sports industry. The sports strategy ensures Qatar could not only successfully host the World Cup, but also earn a great amount of benefit.

Qatar is becoming a center of global sports, hosting more than 80 sports events and world-class competitions every year, which means that Qatar is capable of hosting mega event like the World Cup. In addition to the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar is the first country in the Middle East area to be awarded the right to host the IAAF World Athletics Championships [37] and the FINA World Championships [38]. Riding on these events, Qatar is committed to accelerating the development of its sports industry and accumulating sport-related experience, with a massive investment boom in venue construction and maintenance, communications, event management, sports-related products, tourism, and other industries. Against this background, Qatar's sports business will be more prosperously developed, which will lead to more opportunities for investment, therefore creating a virtuous circle, which might bring a more suitable environment for the World Cup to be held. The successful hosting of major sporting events has greatly enhanced Qatar's international reputation, therefore bringing another fruitful achievement in the country's modernization and internationalization process. As one of the most essential sports events in the world, the 2022 FIFA World Cup is one of the most important parts of Qatar's overall sports development strategy to showcase the country's image and strength.

#### C. *The Impact of World Cup on Qatar*

It has been proven that the preparation and hosting of sports events could comprehensively enhance the capacity of a city or even an entire country, not only significantly improving the hardware environment such as infrastructure construction and more job opportunities, but also optimizing the relevant laws, regulations, and medical service system.

##### 1) *The economic impact of the World Cup*

Hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup has been beneficial for Qatar's economy from several perspectives. One of the most intuitive aspects is that the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown along with the retail and hospitality sectors

therefore bringing a lot of employment and investment opportunities. The GDP of Qatar grew by about 4 percent in 2022, an improvement from 1.5 percent in 2021. However, due to the end of the World Cup, tourism is expected to decline slightly and GDP is expected to grow by only 2.7 percent in 2023. Fortunately, Qatar will host other major sporting events in 2023 such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix, Expo 2023, and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup, which might help the tourism industry avoid further collapse to some extent. The retail sector has also seen growth in the latter months of 2022, with the opening of shops and shopping centers that could accommodate tourists from all over the world. The most recent shopping center to open was Place Vendôme, which had been used as a tourist destination due to its proximity to the Lucerne Stadium, the venue for the World Cup final. The retail shop and shopping center has a monthly rent of around 200 QR per square meter (\$55, £46, €52) and is mainly occupied by new cafes and restaurants, which is expected to bring significant benefits. Apart from the retail industry, the hospitality sector improved significantly during the World Cup as well, with one- and two-star hotels achieving an occupancy rate of 92 percent. On the contrary, during the same period in 2021, the occupancy rate was only 64 percent, which further implies the Promoting Effect of the World Cup on economic growth. Compared with before, five-star hotels also received a boost, with a cumulative increase in revenue per room from December 2021 to December 2022 of 306 percent. Considering the huge investment during the early stage before the World Cup, Qatar is expected to use the fallout from the World Cup to explore business opportunities. For example, most recently, Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, brother of Qatari leader Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, expressed interest in acquiring British team Manchester United. Qatar hopes to increase the number of tourists to 6 million by 2030, despite projected slow growth.

The FIFA World Cup could also provide Qatar with opportunities to achieve economic transition. There are three important areas of operation in a transition economy system, the production loop, the financial loop, and the commodity loop [39]. As a country relies heavily on its resources, Qatar is more likely to achieve economic transition from the production loop instead of the other two loops. The production loop involves rent-creating business activities such as the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, which are important parts of the transition economy as they could generate export revenues for the country. The relatively low cost of oil and gas production in the GCC countries compared to other regions of the world [40] is due to the large concentration of conventional oil and gas wells in the region. Due to the large concentration of conventional oil and gas, the cost of oil and gas production in the GCC countries is relatively low compared to other regions of the world, which is regarded as a significant advantage. The governments of the GCC countries, including Qatar, exercise exclusive control over most of the sectors in the production chain (especially oil and gas production) through laws and decrees [41], which enables them to implement the aforementioned 'domination agreements' [42]. In addition to the oil and gas sector, the GCC governments have gradually expanded the scope of the production loop by investing in energy-intensive

sectors such as aluminum and steel production to take advantage of cheap energy to increase profits [43]. With the purpose of economic transition. The GCC governments first allowed private firms to operate in limited areas of the production loop, such as construction and subcontracting services [41]; they then established service sectors in the production loop, such as telecommunications and aviation, in which the GCC governments were in a dominant position [44]. At the same time, this World Cup paved the way for Qatar's future transformation. While it is true that the World Cup in Qatar has given the country a huge boost in terms of economic growth, most visually in terms of retail and tourism, it is also extremely necessary to develop appropriate follow-up strategies to boost the economy in the aftermath of the World Cup. Based on the great development of the retail and tourism industry brought about by the World Cup, is a valuable opportunity for Qatar to achieve economic transition.

### *2) The impact of the World Cup on the nation of Qatar*

The sports industry has also been used by Qatar as a fundamental national brand, promoting the basic fact that Qatar is its nation-state around the world. Firstly, they investigate fundamental national brands by measuring the impact of sporting success on subjective well-being at a national level, for example about the number of medals won [45]. Research suggests a causal relationship between pride in sports success and subjective well-being. The possibility is that underlying characteristics such as nationalism or overall national pride may also be associated with pride in sports success and well-being [46–48]. Qatar, for example, crashed out in the first round of the tournament, losing all the prestige created by the previously gained Asian Cup pennant and creating a scandal of being eliminated from the tournament at the earliest possible time. This shows that a successful hosting of the Olympics may increase overall national pride, but Qatar's loss in the first round of the tournament may instead decrease national pride.

Certainly, the positives generally outweigh the negatives in Qatar. Therefore, Qatar should not only strive to get the opportunity to go and host a major tournament but also to achieve as good a result as possible in the tournament, to maximize national pride. At the same time, Qatar will be able to promote its culture by hosting large-scale tournaments, so that more people will pay attention to Qatar as a country, and gain a better reputation while promoting the culture of the nation.

### *3) The weakness and strength of Qatar*

Hosting the World Cup has made Qatar become a famous country and people have started to focus on the economic development of this small country, which may expose some weakness of Qatar. Generally, from past experiences, small economies are more susceptible than large ones from the standpoint of economic development. This is due to several factors that are directly connected to the relative "smallness" of small countries: (1) small countries are less able to access international financial markets and preferential financing because of their relatively weak financial credibility such as there is a difficulty in luring foreign investment due to the lower credit ratings of small nations; (2) they have less access to them because of their higher trade openness, which may

cause short-term fluctuations in export revenues and domestic demand; (3) small countries like Qatar have higher transportation costs because they are farther away from the global economy's hub and might receive lower returns from their transportation investments.

However, while the World Cup exposed Qatar's weaknesses, it also demonstrated its strengths [49]. Therefore, when hosting a mega sports event, a desirable destination image is essential for a country to attract tourists and gain a foothold in the tourism industry [50]. Since a tourist's impression of a place may change after traveling, many event planners seek to enhance the impression of a place by organizing major events. Over time, sports event tourism has developed into a specialized market. Major sporting events can attract tourists to a specific location while also enhancing the reputation of the host country abroad as well. Recently, as a marketing tool for events and tourist destinations, the effectiveness/importance of social media has been increasing day by day. Through word-of-mouth, social media enables all users to communicate and promote a favorable perception of the location or event [51, 52]. Under this situation, Qatar has made good use of these tools as its promotional medium therefore improving its international influence.

#### *4) Doubts about the Qatar World Cup*

After winning the right to host the 2022 World Cup, Qatar still faced doubts. The "temperature-controlled stadium" proposed by Qatar is a new concept for the construction of international football stadiums. Some may argue that whether it can be successfully constructed is still uncertain. Moreover, Qatar is sitting on a large amount of oil and natural gas resources, which implies that the domestic people are often pampered and do not engage in heavy physical labor. Even though this problem could be solved by hiring foreign laborers, foreign workers who come to Qatar to make a living face harsh working and living conditions. To be more specific, During the construction of the stadium, Qatar hired a large number of laborers from South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh. They faced strict requirements for the construction period. Under the harsh climate and harsh construction conditions, the injuries and deaths of labor occurred frequently. An accident like this emerged one after another, triggering widespread criticism from the international community, especially Western countries. As a result, this has implications for the Qatari authorities and social stability. Furthermore, in general perception, drinking beer in the World Cup is nothing more than a normal thing, while Qatar is a Muslim country, the law is Islamic, which means alcohol is not allowed in public places. However, to host the World Cup, Qatar "relaxed" its policy to allow drinking. In this regard, Budweiser won the exclusive sales right for US\$75 million, but on November 18, 2022, three days before the first game, beer was still not allowed in eight stadiums, which caused a lot of losses to Budweiser. From one point of view, Budweiser's investment has come to naught. On the other hand, this phenomenon undoubtedly reduces Qatar's national reputation, which may have a great possibility of creating a barrier to future cooperation between countries.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This paper conducts a logical discussion by collecting information and data to study the impact of the Qatar World Cup on Qatar itself. We examine Qatar's motivation for hosting the World Cup, why Qatar is competent, and discuss the benefits Qatar has gained from the World Cup from economic and cultural perspectives, as well as the doubts Qatar faced before and after hosting the World Cup. As a mega event, the Qatar World Cup has posed a series of impacts on Qatar, including subsequent impacts in the future. We find that the impacts of hosting the World Cup are complicated and this effect is more considerable for a small country like Qatar. To systematically analyze the impact of the World Cup on Qatar and related motivation, we consider the basic reason why Qatar was willing to host the World Cup. Moreover, we explore the strength of Qatar to host the FIFA world. Finally, we discuss the impact of the World Cup on Qatar from the perspectives of economy, national culture, public.

This research focuses on the collection of literature materials by combining theory with research, mainly organizing relevant statistical materials and research literature published on government websites and local statistical yearbooks. By collecting information and data, logical discussions are conducted to study the Qatar World Cup and provide relevant conclusions. However, due to limitations in depth of the related literature and paper length, it is not possible to effectively analyze and compare the impact of more World Cups on their countries worldwide. Moreover, the selection of perspectives in this article is relatively limited and only discusses the impact on the economy, public, and culture. Future research might be driven toward a large empirical investigation that applies some mathematical models to explore the impact of the Qatar World Cup. Moreover, it is of interest to consider more aspects when discussing the impact of the Qatar World Cup such as politics, and even the worldwide impact. From the perspective of future development, the Qatar World Cup is undoubtedly a large-scale international event of landmark significance. Firstly, the successful hosting of the Qatar World Cup has not only enhanced Qatar's international image but also demonstrated Qatar's ability to host large-scale international events. Secondly, the preparation and hosting of the Qatar World Cup has boosted Qatar's infrastructure development, including sports venues, transport facilities, and hotels, which will become important assets for Qatar's future development. In addition, the World Cup attracted a large number of international tourists, which undoubtedly brought huge business opportunities to Qatar's tourism industry and helped enhance Qatar's international image as a tourist destination. At the economic level, the Qatar World Cup has a positive significance in boosting Qatar's economic growth, attracting more international investment, and promoting economic diversification. In short, the Qatar World Cup has played an important role in promoting Qatar's future development.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has claimed that no conflict of interest exists.

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