



## THE INFLUENCE OF THE 2022 WORLD CUP ON QATAR'S TOURISM INDUSTRY: REVIEW ARTICLE

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Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Received:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> August 2025 <b>Accepted:</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	The 2022 FIFA World Cup was held in Qatar, making it the first Arab country with a Muslim majority to host the event. This event provided Qatar with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to showcase its customs, culture, and attractions internationally. With an emphasis on visitor happiness, this study investigated how Qatar's tourism industry might be affected by the 2022 FIFA World Cup. 226 people who responded to the survey said they knew a lot about the incident. With a notable rise in inbound tourists, the World Cup greatly increased short-term tourism. Due to their great experiences, several people who came especially for the event said they would like to come again. Long-term goals for Qatar include becoming a top sports tourism destination and drawing interest from global sports organizations for upcoming important events. This goal is highlighted by the impending AFC Asian Cup in early 2024. Even while Qatar's tourist industry is still lagging behind the UAE and other GCC nations with faster rates of growth, its consistent expansion suggests that it has considerable future potential. Despite obvious signs of Qatar's advantages and disadvantages as a travel destination, the results show a wide range of opinions about the country following the World Cup. The ramifications for Qatar's future tourism promotion are also covered in the report.

**Keywords:** 2022 FIFA World Cup, Tourist Satisfaction , Travel Industry, Sports Travel

### INTRODUCTION:

Approximately 2.8 million people call the small Gulf state of Qatar home as of 2024. Only over 313,000 people in this population are natives of Qatar; most of them are immigrants from other developing nations. As the third-largest oil producer in the world, Qatar has emerged as a key peace broker for numerous Middle Eastern organizations and players. (Griggs et al., 2017). Qatar, one of the most sophisticated and rapidly expanding economies in the world, has made significant investments to raise the standard of living for its citizens and upgrade its infrastructure, solidifying its place as a worldwide leader. Qatar was granted the right to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 in 2010. Despite the contentious decision, the nation rejoiced with great fervor, with citizens staging protests in the streets. The Qatari government, armed with substantial resources, has started organizing and constructing the tournament's infrastructure. With millions of tourists and supporters expected to visit the nation during the event, Qatar hopes to host the most memorable World Cup in modern history and give them an experience they won't soon forget.

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

Tourism, a global and dynamic industry, makes a significant contribution to economies, governments and the private sector. It is resilient, with a steady increase in demand for tourism. In 2018, the World Tourism Organization reported that the tourism sector generated a staggering \$1.7 trillion in revenue and projected that tourist arrivals would increase by 2030, to 1.488 billion (UNWTO, 2019). Although this expansion was momentarily halted by the COVID-19 epidemic, the sector has since showed indications of revival. Travelling outside of one's normal surroundings for a number of reasons is a cultural, social, and economic phenomenon known as tourism. The industry covers a broad spectrum of spending habits and activities. Sport and tourism are intimately related globally, which offers prospects for the growth of both well-known and up-and-coming travel destinations. Adventure, agricultural, sports, cultural, and catastrophe tourism are among the most popular forms of travel.

### **The State of Qatar's tourism industry:**

Without a question, one of the most significant sectors in the world is tourism. Because of the rising need for travel, this industry is expanding steadily. Qatar is undoubtedly one of the most competitive and fascinating travel destinations in the Middle East, while not being the most well-known travel destination worldwide. Qatar's competitiveness as a worldwide travel destination was demonstrated in 2019 when its tourism industry placed 51st out of 140 countries in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. Furthermore, the industry accounted for 11.8% of all jobs in 2019 and contributed 9.1% to Qatar's GDP (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2019). Qatar provides a wide range of travel experiences, the most well-liked of which is cultural tourism. The nation is home to numerous stunning cultural landmarks, including the \$434 million National Museum of Qatar, the mediaeval Souq Waqif, and Al Zubarah. Additionally, it provides adventure tourism activities, such as the Middle East's well-liked desert safaris (Yap et al., 2022).

The expansion and prosperity of Qatar's tourism industry have been hindered by recent events, especially the COVID-19 epidemic and the lockdown of Qatar from June 2017 to January 2021. By strategically reducing visa requirements and boosting investment during this challenging period, Qatar became one of the Middle East's visa-friendly economies (Saleh et al., 2021). There is a dearth of research on the reasons why tourists visit Qatar, and more study is required to improve our understanding. Increasing the number of visitors from European, African, and Asian nations is the goal of the Qatar National Tourism Corporation (QNTC). The majority of visitors to Qatar tend to be middle-income earners looking for a variety of travel experiences, including luxury shopping, wellness, and entertainment. Nonetheless, Qatar still has a long way to go in luring more of these travellers, particularly from developing nations in Asia, Africa, and Europe, where they are frequently linked to pricey travel that is out of reach for many (Giambicoli and Matabori, 2015). Qatar must work to establish itself as an inexpensive tourism destination that appeals to both wealthy and low-budget tourists in order to meet the objectives of the Qatar National Tourism Council.

### **2022 FIFA World Cup in the State of Qatar:**

Recreational (non-commercial) travel is referred to as sports tourism. purposes, i.e., to watch or take part in sporting events away from one's typical home. The quick expansion and lack of planning in the tourism industry in the last decades of the 20th century has led to several destinations facing consequences, challenges, or ongoing problems in their success (Serafin et al., 2019). Twelve years ago, Qatar started making plans to guarantee the successful execution of its sports tourism initiatives in order to prevent these issues. Tourism and sports are inseparable; Fans travel to see games, while sports teams frequently travel to compete. All members of the sports community are included in the sports business, which not only organises events but also houses visitors, creating a lasting impact and establishing a reputation in the sports tourism industry (Ehsani et al., 2017). The sports tourism sector in Qatar is anticipated to grow significantly due to the nation's substantial investments, huge workforce, and extensive infrastructure (Torrance, 2022).

However, in addition to infrastructure, a deep love and enthusiasm for the sport are necessary for organising a significant athletic event. The national squad of Qatar is regarded as one of the best in Asia, and the people of Qatar are huge football enthusiasts. Because of this love and devotion, Qatar will greet the 2022 World Cup with enormous fervour, giving the millions of spectators an experience they won't soon forget of tourists traveling to Qatar to watch the games (Ahmed, 2020). There are famous sporting events in the world, such as Wimbledon, the Paralympic Games, and the Olympics, but the most famous and prestigious is the World Cup (Ahsani et al., 2017). Numerous nations vied to host the World Cup, and according to a decision by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) in 2010, the right to host the 2022 World Cup went to Qatar, a small country in the Persian Gulf. An inquiry into FIFA's alleged bribery of the Qatari government resulted from the contentious decision, which also drew harsh criticism from the football community. Sepp Blatter, the former president of FIFA, once said that awarding the World Cup to Qatar was a grave error (Gibson, original). Qatar, meanwhile, views it as a chance to highlight the accomplishments of Arab nations in the contemporary world, with the aim of gaining international respect and shattering stereotypes (Ahmed, 2020). Qatar's investment in the World Cup is estimated at more than \$200 billion, a small portion of past tournaments, including the World Cup in Russia in 2018, which only cost \$14.2 billion. This investment goes beyond just the World Cup event; it also covers infrastructure development and repair that will boost Qatar's post-World Cup tourism sector (Torrance, 2022).

(1) The Qatari government spent \$36 billion to build the Doha Metro Rail, one of the most advanced subterranean rail systems in the world, which opened to the public in 2019. (2) It cost \$16 billion to revitalise Hamad International Airport. (3) Modern stadiums and spectator amenities were constructed at a cost of \$6.5 billion. (4) The construction of the new city of Lusail involved a substantial investment. This information makes it abundantly evident that Qatar is developing its infrastructure for the long-term prospects of the nation's tourism industry as well as for the World Cup. One may argue that Qatar made a calculated decision to host the World Cup in order to wow the world with its achievements and demonstrate its potential (Vierhaus, 2018).

Especially when hosting events like the Olympics or World Cup finals, national governments frequently incorporate cultural forms like sports into their soft power initiatives. By hosting the FIFA World Cup, the government of Qatar hopes to establish the nation as a major force in sports tourism and highlight its potential in this area (Ahmed, 2020). It's interesting to note that the FIFA World Cup 2022 conclusion could have a significant impact on Qatar's tourism industry's long-term performance. With plans to host numerous other sporting events, the World Cup experiences of the millions of visitors will determine Qatar's future standing as a sports tourism destination. If these tourists have a positive experience, Qatar may grow in popularity as a travel destination in the future (Yap et al., 2022).

One of the key elements propelling the tourist sector forward is customer happiness. A destination's popularity increases with the level of client satisfaction. On the other hand, the popularity of the destination drops if patrons are not happy. Thus, in the tourism sector, putting the needs of the customer first is crucial (Huh, 2017). The sense of happiness or dissatisfaction that arises from comparing the actual performance of a product or service with the anticipated performance is sometimes referred to as customer satisfaction. Customers are unhappy if the experience does not live up to their expectations. Customers are happy or even thrilled, nevertheless, if the experience lives up to or above their expectations (Hannan et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction is an often studied topic in tourism studies due to its important role in determining the viability and profitability of tourism enterprises. To guarantee that clients obtain the satisfaction they are entitled to, high standards of service are essential, which calls for ongoing enhancements in the calibre of tourism. The result of a process that meets user expectations, provides value for money, and satisfies legitimate requirements for goods and services is seen to be the quality of tourism (Atabeb, 2019).

### THE METHOD:

This study employed a quantitative research methodology to investigate how people view Qatar as a travel destination, gathering information from participants using an online survey. The tool was modified from two surveys that had already been released (Kaplanidou et al., 2016; Nadeau, 2008). There were 28 items in all, and the survey was administered in English.

The dependent variable's data were used to investigate opinions on Qatar in three areas: as a place to visit, as a country in general, and as a World Cup host. Demographics, participation in the World Cup, and awareness of the event were all examined by independent variables.

Six sections comprised the survey questionnaire: demographics (4 items), perception of Qatar as a World Cup host (2 items), perception of Qatar as a travel destination (9 items), perception of country characteristics (5 items), level of engagement with the World Cup (5 items), and level of awareness of the World Cup event (2 items). There were five multiple-choice questions, two open-ended remarks, and twenty questions with a 7-point Likert scale:

1. When you consider Qatar as a travel location, what features or pictures spring to mind?
2. Kindly share any World Cup-related factors that have shaped your opinions on Qatar, whether favourably or unfavourably.

An independent variable, the first portion included two Likert-scale items on "Level of Awareness of the FIFA World Cup." The dependent variable in the second portion asked nine Likert-scale questions about positive statements about Qatar's facilities and attractions, encompassing historical and cultural sites, lodging, shopping, cleanliness, personal safety, technology, infrastructure, food, value for money, and an optional comment. Five variables pertaining to national characteristics were included in the third part, which was the dependent variable. These categories comprised affluence, political power, environmental awareness, human rights and personal freedom, and general quality of life. Five questions concerning participants' participation in the FIFA World Cup were posed in the fourth section, which was an independent variable, including going to the event in person, viewing match broadcasts, and reading or watching event-related news and commentary. Likert-scale agreement with the statement, "The 2022 FIFA World Cup showed Qatar to the world in a positive way," was measured in the fifth part, which was a dependent variable. It also asked for an open-ended response. Lastly, four demographic questions including gender, age, country of residence, and frequency of travel were asked in the sixth part.

Online sampling was employed, and participants were gathered via university emails, travel agency groups, and social media sites like LinkedIn. 226 people, ages 18 to over 65, participated in the survey (42% male, 57% female, and 1% non-binary). Informed consent was acquired, and participation was entirely voluntary. Measures were implemented to guarantee the privacy of each participant's answers. SPSS was used to analyse the data.

### FINDINGS:

According to the first independent variable section's results, most participants said they were well-informed ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) and extremely aware ( $M = 6.56$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) about the FIFA World Cup event.

### Features of Tourism:

Aspects of Qatar's tourism offering were generally viewed favourably by respondents, with the notable exception of value for money. According to data study, the most people agree with the feature of excellent technological infrastructure, which is followed by shopping opportunities, comfortable lodging, and cleanliness. Value for money was the only aspect of a tourist site that attracted a high degree of dispute.

Notably, one of the survey's main statements—"In general, I consider Qatar an attractive travel destination"—was a crucial reflection of how respondents viewed the country as a tourist destination. Responses, however, were largely indifferent. The comparatively high standard deviation indicates that, despite the fact that some participants had positive ideas on tourism features, opinions on this statement were varied, with some expressing very positive sentiments and others quite negative ones.

The participants' assessments of "Overall, I consider Qatar an attractive travel destination" and particular tourism qualities showed some significant relationships, according to additional analysis. Historical and cultural attractions ( $r=0.629^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), personal safety ( $r=0.506^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), value for money ( $r=0.558^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and local cuisine ( $r=0.551^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) showed the most favourable associations. According to these findings, participants were more inclined to think of Qatar as an appealing tourist destination if they thought it had historical and cultural attractions, reasonable and safe costs, and tasty local cuisine.

### Features of the Country:

Wealth was the most strongly held opinion of Qatar as a nation, followed by general quality of life. While environmental consciousness, human rights, and individual freedom were perceived poorly, opinions regarding Qatar's place in world politics were neutral.

Despite being a top survey point, the statement "The 2022 FIFA World Cup showed Qatar to the world in a positive light" once again obtained a score of 4.09, which is completely neutral. This is significant because it shows whether the event was effective in presenting Qatar in a favourable light to the rest of the globe.

Furthermore, noteworthy associations were discovered between the participants' evaluations of Qatar's attributes and their opinions of the nation as a travel destination. Participants' opinions of "In general, I see Qatar as an attractive tourist destination" were significantly positively correlated with their overall quality of life ( $r = 0.548^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Human rights and participants' opinions of "In general, I see Qatar as an attractive tourist destination" were shown to be strongly positively correlated ( $r=0.552^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Additionally, participants' opinions on human rights and their impressions of the statement "The FIFA World Cup showed Qatar in a positive light" were statistically significantly positively correlated ( $r=0.563^{**}$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Participants who agreed more strongly on human rights were more inclined to think of Qatar as a desirable travel destination and the World Cup as a good way to promote the country.

Participants' assessments of environmental awareness and their opinions of "In general, I see Qatar as an attractive tourist destination" were significantly positively correlated ( $r = 0.540^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, participants' opinions on the statement "The FIFA World Cup showed Qatar in a positive light" were significantly positively correlated with their level of environmental awareness ( $r = 0.503^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Lastly, the study revealed a substantial positive association ( $r = 0.581^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between participants' views of the World Cup as a positive event and their views of Qatar as an alluring tourist destination.

### The impact of gender:

The statistical study showed that age had no discernible impact on the outcomes. Nonetheless, it was discovered that respondents' opinions of the next two items from both dependent variable sections were influenced by their gender. The statement "Qatar offers interesting historical and cultural attractions" was more likely to be agreed with by women (mean = 4.64) than by males (mean = 4.02). Furthermore, men were more likely than women to identify Qatar with wealth (mean = 6.09) (mean = 5.53).

### Attendance at the World Cup:

Additionally, the study found a statistically significant correlation between World Cup attendance and opinions about hygiene, cleanliness, and personal safety. Personal safety was perceived more favourably by those who had visited Qatar or whose friends and relatives had visited the country to watch the World Cup (mean = 4.96) than by those who had not (mean = 4.25). Similarly, the mean for those who had visited or interacted with visitors (male = 5.22) was higher than the mean for those who had not (male = 4.78) when it came to characteristics of the nation's cleanliness.

### DISCUSSION:

This survey set out to investigate opinions of Qatar after it hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Although participants generally reported high levels of awareness of Qatar's host status, this study did not produce clear results, in contrast to Kaplanidou et al. (2016), whose study found that increased awareness of Qatar's status as a World Cup host led to more positive perceptions of the country as a tourist destination. Even though awareness was high, it did not always result in a definite like or unfavourable opinion of Qatar. The results were inconclusive, with a considerable proportion of neutral responses and high SD values. According to these results, opinions of the nation as a whole as a travel destination were impacted by the World Cup in a variety of ways, both positively and negatively. Responses from

participants differed greatly and might have been impacted by additional variables not included in this study's measurement. Even though this event offered a rare chance to introduce Qatar's people, culture, customs, and attractions to a worldwide audience, it could not have been entirely successful, as some hidden problems and worries were also made public.

Going forward, Qatar needs to solve and enhance a few political and social issues as it pursues the growth of tourism. Perceptions of lack of value for money and human rights breaches are especially concerning. These issues were clear from the open-ended comments as well as the degree of agreement with some topics. It's interesting to note that respondents' opinions on Qatar's image varied, with some emphasising its advantages in terms of hotels, event planning, beaches, climate, and security. Others, however, emphasised drawbacks including stringent rules, restricted liberties, alcohol bans, LGBTQ+ rights, female oppression, and excessive prices. As a result, the majority of the qualities under study had both positive and negative connections. Perceptions seem to be quite personal.

Those who travelled to Qatar for this event reported that it was safer, healthier, and cleaner than they had anticipated—possibly even better. This is one of Qatar's secret advantages, which it may use to draw more tourists. These impressions are not created by word-of-mouth or media marketing, but only by travel and firsthand involvement with the nation. In order to raise awareness and present a realistic and trustworthy picture of what the nation has to offer, Qatar should do more to advertise its degree of safety and cleanliness and to invite tourists to share their positive experiences online, on social media, or by word-of-mouth.

Additionally, Qatar might more aggressively target female tourists by publicising its historical and cultural attractions, as women have a more favourable opinion of them than do males. Additionally, Qatar should think of creative ways to draw in male tourists. Both sexes will become more aware of Qatar and be encouraged to discover its rich cultural legacy by employing creative marketing techniques that showcase its historical and cultural landmarks.

The results of the study show that Qatar has certain advantages as a vacation destination that ought to be improved. But it's also critical to identify and correct any negative presumptions that may already exist. Other elements that have harmed the destination's reputation and public views should be improved by the Qatari government and people. One of the most urgent problems in the nation is how workers are treated, which has worried numerous human rights organisations. The government and people of Qatar must take the required actions to guarantee the implementation of just labour laws and the protection of the rights and welfare of all workers.

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