

What's a Qatar? FIFA World Cup 2022

Professor Marshall Ottenfeld¹, Erica K. Poremba², MBA, Ed.D (ABD) & Dr. Ralph Haug³

Abstract

The objective of the reported study was to be an initial effort in educating the Qatar sports authorities as to soccer fans who would travel to the Emirate expectations relative to the host country. Specifically, within the frame of reference of group members' involvement with soccer and their knowledge about the sport on the professional level: Ascertain perceptions of professional soccer, World Cup soccer particularly its most recent history and near term future the competition, sites of competition, as well as the ambiance of the host nations and cities. Obtain knowledge about and attitudes toward World Cup 2022 Qatar, and the factors that will make the event a success or could be undermining aspects ... geographic and cultural considerations, the quality of competition, matters of personal comfort and the ambiance and infrastructure of the host nation. Presented is an assessment and exploration of the subjective world of individual soccer fans as s/he describes it, directly or indirectly. Develop a series of hypotheses relative to those expectations ... hypotheses that can be studied quantitatively, thereby projected to the population of United States football fans who would travel to the event.

1. Introduction

Every four years, FIFA, the international federation of football (sic. soccer*) playing nations holds the World Cup. The event is the premier tournament of the sport, attracting the most elite teams from around the world. During the summer of 2014 the event was held in Brazil. In 2018, Russia will be the host nation. Four years later, the games will be held in Qatar, an emirate on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Hosting the games is a major commitment for any nation. Required is the construction and/or refurbishing of infrastructure: stadia of a size and technology that meets state-of-the-art standards for each of the many games, media studios for the capture and transmission across the world of the events and the attendant ancillary activities in real time, extensive practice facilities, transportation hubs including international air terminals, ground transportation and support facilities, accommodations for the athletes, officials, sponsors, media personnel, support workers, hospitality and wait staffs and very importantly, the myriad of football fans that will attend the occasion. Additionally, there will be a need for the construct and staffing of venues for entertaining and recreating the visitors, and all manner of dining and imbibing locales. A shopping mall is also a requirement.

Further, infrastructure is not the only requirement for a successful event. There is a need to accommodate the variety of cultures represented by the attendees. The majority of the participants, media personnel and fans expected are members of societies more permissive than that of a traditional Arab emirate. The probability of cultural conflict must be recognized and possible flashpoints recognized. Given proper planning, accommodations can be arrived at. Emirate officials must be educated as to these potential encounters so they may engage the proper proactive steps (FIFA).

* Throughout this report, football is referred to as the U.S. respondents describe it – “soccer”.

¹ marshallottenfeld@att.net

² Executive Director for Community Colleges & Academic Relations, eporemba01@roosevelt.edu

³ Heller College of Business Management and Marketing Department, Roosevelt University, 1400 North Roosevelt Boulevard, Schaumburg, Illinois 60173, rhaug@roosevelt.edu

2. Study Objective

The objective of the reported study was to be an initial effort in educating the Qatar sports authorities as to soccer fans who would travel to the Emirate expectations relative to the host country.

3. Research Procedure

The recommended study is qualitative in design. Through it, the subjective world of the target market consumers, as they describe it directly or indirectly will be assessed and explored. Presented will be impressionistic and interpretive information indicating participants understanding of why their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors have come to be what they are and how they are impacted by their reaction to the 2022 World Cup being held in Qatar (Goldman and McDonald, pp. 1 - 21).

4. Population and Sample

The study population consisted of United States soccer enthusiasts from the Chicago area. They were screened into the study using a questionnaire that ensured their being avid fans, knowledgeable about professional U.S. and international teams, World Cup competition and the sites where the quadrennial event has and is planned to occur. Each was self-identified as a potential attendee of the 2022 games (Ibid, pp. 22 – 41). There was 8 to 10 participants attending per session. For each group, 10 individuals were recruited for six respondents to show. A decision was made to seat all individuals showing for each group. This was the reason there were more than six participants per group. The groups were: (Ibid)

Table 1 Study Sample

	Early Evening	Late Evening
Females	16-24	21-34
	8	9
Males	25-34	35-50
	7	10

5. Data Collection Method

Four two-hour focus group discussions were facilitated by a trained moderator. The moderator employed a guide jointly developed with the client. Each session was captured on video and the video and associated audio was streamed to the client and their marketing and promotion advisors. In addition, the audio tapes were transcribed and those transcriptions and source videos served as source documents for analysis (Ibid, 58 – 141).

6. Analysis

The following report consists of the moderator/analyst's impressions of the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the members of the groups as appropriate participant quotations are used to highlight findings (Clandinin and Connelly).

7. Findings

- The younger women were high school and college students playing varsity soccer and following the game on the professional level.
- The older women were former soccer players at the high school and/or college level as well as soccer moms whose families were engaged fans of professional soccer. They were all college educated.
- The younger men were college educated individuals in the early stages of their business careers and had grown up in homes where soccer was a preferred engagement, as well as a spectator sport. As with the women, they followed professional soccer – MLS and/or European or Latin American teams.
- The older men, like the younger ones, were college educated businessmen. They too were followers of U.S. professional soccer teams, as well as notable English, Continental and Latin American teams.

Indicative comments were:

- "I've liked soccer ever since middle school. I watch a lot of professional soccer." Female 25 to 34 Chicago
- My interest in soccer started when I was very young. Went to the World Cup in '94" Male 25 to 34 Chicago
- I've played since I was 6 so it's a big part of my life, I play on varsity now Female 16 to 24 Chicago

All of the participants in each group were very engaged across spectra of sports with the major sports; baseball, football, and basketball, having prominent roles and in most cases commanding significant shares of their leisure time. For most, soccer was first among their team sports interests. The younger men were more committed to soccer than the members of the other groups. As noted, soccer was an important activity for group members ... whether as players, former players, coaches of youth teams or as spectators at games at the youth league, high school, college or professional level. When asked about the sport at the professional level, almost all of those participating indicated they were MLS fans, most particularly, followers of the Chicago Fire and/or the Los Angeles Galaxy. Many had attended Fire games and all had watched the team and other MLS teams on TV and followed their fortunes in the media. It must be recognized that for no participant was soccer the only professional sport with which they were engaged. Additionally most of the men and some of the women followed the English Premier League, Spain La Liga, Italy Serie A, Brazil Serie A and Mexican teams. Of note, across the groups, there was agreement that Latino and Spanish teams were most engaging because of the quality of play AND the accompanying electricity of the announcers and enthusiasm of the spectators. Recognizing that the group members represented a range of ethnicities, their viewing reflected the presence of East European, Irish, Latino, East Indian and German Americans as session members.

8. Involvement with Football - FIFA World Cup

For most members of each group, the occasion of the World Cup was exciting. Such excitement begins to build as team one follows, or at least recognizes, enter the qualifying rounds of play. Everyone considers the U.S. team chances to be negligible. Whether the fan is optimistic and believes the U.S. will win a berth or is pessimistic and assumes the American team will quickly lose out to Mexico or another Western Hemisphere entrant the games are watched. Likewise, these fans follow the fortunes of their favorite teams. As example, the enthusiasm builds with Manchester United's every win and plummets with their occasional lose. Mexican Americans cheer on the Mexican entrant. Younger ones become excited when the U.S. and Mexico compete. They feel a need to cheer for Mexico, but considering their Americanized drives, have feelings of disloyalty. Enthusiasm crests when the World Cup games themselves get underway. The field being determined, these fans watch the games in real time or in replay, cheering on winners and analyzing the faults of losers. They are particularly engaged when teams they support advance. If the team is from an ancestral country ethnic pride is evident. If not, the focus is on the caliber of individual player and team play.

- As a rule U.S. soccer fans, if represented fairly by our groups, consider the elite international teams as superior to the best American competitors. Indeed, it was observed that the MLS was where international stars went to end their careers.

As one could anticipate, the most memorable of the World Cups was the one held in South Africa in 2012. This was not only as a result of its recency, but also because of the media intensification due to the explosion of internet vehicles. Also involved in memorability were the on-site fans use of South African tribal horns to cheer on the competing teams. For some, it was an exciting aspect and for others it was simply annoying.

- From the perspective of the games themselves, the most memorable event agreed to was the win by Spain. As observed, it was Spain's first win. Also of note was that they won over the Netherlands in a well contested match. "... it was a little different for me, because we went with people that played and people that grew up with soccer. So, for us, it wasn't necessarily going to tailgate. It's like hey, the World Cup is here. Let's go. ... my dad is a diehard soccer fan. We went with other diehard soccer fans, so it was a very cool experience, because you were with someone who actually loved it and appreciated the sport versus being there just to be there." Female, 25 to 35, Chicago "... growing up as well my family would always have get together when the World Cup would happen and being a Latino background it was always a big deal so there was always that association between family and – it's treated like a tradition where you would gather together and whatever the Latin team was that was doing well or excelling we would cheer for them, generally speaking, so it would usually be Brazil or Argentina or Mexico or whatever it was. "Male, 25 to 34", Chicago
- Observed via television, the stadia and general ambiance in South Africa were considered to be of the first order ... "rocking." What the groups' members described were the size of the venues and the crowds that were present for the games seen. These crowds, we were told, were very vocal and using the horns: making the events exciting and awesome.

It was felt that the excitement was not only for the individual contests, but also for the idea that Africa was hosting a premier international event. It was further noted that strength of this excitement was the fact that Africans are active in international class sports across the world and this was a nod to their professional competence.

- Those who remembered the pageantry of the opening and closing ceremonies, activities not viewed by all, spoke about the dancing and the colorful costumes and the general excitement of the spectators. It is to be noted, however, that for some the ceremonies were intrusions; activities that had little or no meaning. Indeed, there were a few who indicated “I’m here (watching TV) for the games.” As one person said:

“I’m kind of ambivalent toward all that stuff because ... It’s impressive, but it’s kind of like the Olympics openings and closings. I don’t really give a rat’s (ass) I’m there to watch sports. I mean, it’s cool. It’s fun to see, and it’s fun to see them excited. But I’ll generally go get a beer.”

Male 35-50 Chicago

- Other recalls of the South Africa Games include a lot of controversial calls and the subsequent decision by FIFA to use instant replay for future games. An example offered was a team losing because a goal spun in, crossing the line, then hit the goal post and the backspin threw it out, without the referee seeing the action. The result was no goal.
- Also commented on was the extremely high level of competition. Observed were the many regional powers, like France and Brazil being ousted, while teams like Ghana that had never been competitive on the world stage, doing well in the early stages.
- Discussed was the value of TV coverage in the U.S. resulting in the World Cup becoming a more prominent sporting event. Members of each group spoke of the increased frequency of international soccer competition being available on the cable channels and how this increased interest in the games and the whole World Cup action. Group members spoke about the programs broadening the audience from die-hard fans to sports enthusiasts generally. It was the general consensus that while Soccer will never replace traditional American sports – MLB, NFL, NHL and NBA, it will become much more important and in no small measure this visibility will be due to TV coverage, starting with the World Cup matches in South Africa. It was predicted that with each succeeding World Cup and the increased professionalism in MSL soccer, American fans would become increasingly enthusiastic. This will only mean, we were told, the growth of fan participation.
- Consonant with the above observations is the belief that American teams will continue to increase in strength and will eventually develop into World Cup finalists ... and champions. This improvement will result in an increased fan base and an increased involvement level.
- Given improved play and the TV coverage on ESPN and Fox, these fans look toward the day when they want to watch the U.S. compete.

“... I just like watching – it’s a different type of playing when you’re playing for your country and when you’re playing for your team. And I like to see the different players. You have more drive, you can tell that their celebrations are different, their attack is different you can kind of tell who gets along with who.” Female, 16 to 24, Chicago

“Well, they were big because that area of the world had never hosted. Female, 26 to 35, Chicago “... There are so many people and they get so excited about it, the fans are always really spirited so it makes it like a bigger deal that every one’s all excited about it.” Female, 16 to 24, Chicago

“...I think the stadium where the final games were held were awesome.... It’s one of the biggest stadiums out there ... like 84,000. It was just amazing architecture. It’s almost like the Olympics, where they build a lot. Male 25 to 34, Chicago

The members of each group who could recall earlier World Cup games segued to the matches held in Germany in 2008. They noted that time had dulled their remembrances about those games; however the single event that was burned into the collective memories of those with recall was the exciting win of Italy over France in the championship match. As played back in each of the four groups, the final match was particularly competitive. At the end of the match, a French player butted an Italian player with his head and a foul was called. The Italian player then kicked a goal winning penalty shot.

One individual in the older men's group recalled another World Cup ... World Cup 1990. He recalled that year's games, not because of any particular excitement, but rather because West Germany won in a game that was particularly boring.

"It was a game based on position of the ball, which means they were very conservative in the way they brought the ball up field. A lot of defensive passing back and forth and I believe that was prior to the rule of playing the ball back to the goalie. And as such, he could use his hands. You know the rule I'm talking about. I believe that was prior to that, so they would pass back to the goalie quite a bit, and he would just pick the ball up and pass it off somewhere else. And, it was very boring." Male 35-50 Chicago

By way of contrast, an older man indicated: "I remember during World Cup things piqued my interest. There is a different caliber of soccer when you watch it on the international level.. And you can see how the different styles pit themselves against others, and that becomes very entertaining to watch." Male 35-50 Chicago

Asked why the World Cup was so big in the world of sport, the response across groups was that, like the Olympics, the games occur once every four years and they are international in scope. As a result, the tension grows during the intervening years and there is an enthusiasm built on national pride. Also noted was the fact that a nation hosted the games and they were held in venues in cities across that nation. That fact is important because each of those cities has its own history, its own mystique, and is truly unique. We were also told that even sitting at home viewing the games on TV, that element is important because it is a travelogue allowing the Soccer fan to absorb the culture of those cities and nations.

"... so many different people representing so many different countries and you heard different languages. And, everybody, just a buzz, getting along. It was really a cool bonding experience." Male, 25 to 34, Chicago

The conversation morphed into a discussion of fan participation in the World Cup. Very few of the participants in any of the groups had attended the games in another country; however, there was recollection of participation of the 1994 games in the U.S. Some matches had been held in Chicago. Members of the older groups had attended matches there and also in Atlanta. Those who had been to those games spoke about the diversity of the attendees and how that was exciting. One individual described the experience as: "People are chanting, that's always awesome. If you could get with a good group of friends everyone is doing the same thing as in you know what they are rooting for and – so that is always makes it a little bit special, specifically. It's kind of like a cult following, I feel. People that are into it are really into it." Male 25-34 Chicago

Discussion of MSL games focused on the local Chicago Fire team. Mentioned was the stadium (Soldier's Field or Toyota Park) being only half full. Unlike World Cup games, those of the MSL are less loud and not as exciting from a crowd participation perspective. This dampens down the whole experience we were told because a major factor in the excitement of international soccer, as mentioned earlier was the involvement of fanatical fans.

- Issues of accessibility or the venue are secondary to the quality of play and the enthusiasm of the fans.

9. Involvement with Football – Upcoming FIFA World Cups

10. Rio

It was known by members of each group that Rio de Janeiro would be the site for the next World Cup. Most individuals had very positive feelings about the city, Brazil and the hosting of the games there. When asked what came to mind, they spoke of the beauty of the city, the Carnival, beautiful people enjoying themselves. They described the site in terms suggestive of a favored place. Initial reactions were that Rio would be a fine place for an international event.

- Spoken about was a city decked out with flags and banners, welcoming the world as they do at Carnival. Also described were people dressed in soccer jerseys from around the world, especially Brazilian and other Latin American teams like Argentina. Also described is the presence of vendors everywhere, hawking World Cup merchandise.
- Vendors, fans, ordinary people, everyone physically present all over the city being excited and involved, Speaking of the games themselves, they envisioned thousands of excited fans in state-of-the-art stadia, screaming for their favorite teams "People going nuts." "Making havoc!"

They spoke about Rio deserving the World Cup because Brazil and Argentina are perennial powers and should be recognized for their prominence. And, they spoke about Brazil and Argentina being finalists with their chances of winning because of all being hyped the Cup being played in Rio. Relative to the United States, the Rio Cup is going to be a bigger event than South Africa. This, we are told is because the events will be taking place in a Western Hemisphere time zone and therefore more accessible during waking hours than any event in Europe or elsewhere in the Eastern Hemisphere. Further, but equally important, it will be promoted to a greater extent. There will be significant amounts of advertising and public relations support starting early on in the run up to the event.

- Promoted would be the World Cup games, the quality of the venues, the recreation and accommodation facilities and offerings, safety and Brazil's fun loving culture and friendly people. Also promoted would be the city itself with its beaches and especially, all of the beautiful women.
- There was also discussion about the feasibility (for Americans) to participate in tour groups where travel, accommodations and the games were a part the package. When speaking about this, they talked in terms of a perceived quality experience that was affordable.
- Of concern to some is the apparent difficulty the Brazilians are having getting stadia rebuilt. While the concern is acknowledged by others, in the end it was the consensus in the groups that the works would be completed on time and neither the competitors.
- Nor the fans would be inconvenienced. The optimists/ rationales were that national pride and the wealth of the nation would ensure completion of the venues on time.
- Another concern is that of security ... the safety of the fans, tourists in general and the participants. Perhaps because it is an American nation, the members of the groups felt confident that the Brazilians would rise to the occasion and do what is required to keep the games (as well as the Olympics) secure from terrorist attack.

11. Russia

Some people in each group knew that four years after Rio, the games would be held in Russia. When they spoke of the Russian games they indicated that an authoritarian country like Russia would expend the funds necessary to build the venues and host the games properly, if not with style. Note that in each of these observations, there are perceptions tied to the nation of origin (U.S.) and World Cup host nation.

• Positives about the Russian games include the size of the country and its diversity. Participants wondered what cities the games would occur in and how each would be a unique place to visit. Further the sites are perceived to be relatively safe. The games themselves are assumed to be quality. Few were aware of the 2022 World Cup being held in Qatar. The games were just too far in the future to be on the radar of most people. An individual who was aware labeled the games "the air conditioned World Cup. When the few in each group who had knowledge spoke, they echoed that label. It was offered that they are expecting the Qatar games to be those held in a desert; a place that was too hot. There was also some initial awareness that the games might be pushed to the winter months for temperature reasons.

- At this juncture, there was some talk about the cost of building game infrastructure being very high and that the cost would include air conditioned open air stadia. Other individuals in some groups, having inklings of Qatar's location, indicated that money would not be a problem as the country was oil rich.
- When queried about the Cup being awarded to a Middle Eastern country, the responses were initially positive. It was indicated that the occurrence was good for the World Cup as an event, world class soccer and the people of the region. The rationale offered was that they are enthusiastic and very supportive fans of the game (at all levels of competence) and would support the event occurring in their region.
- The games would also be an opportunity to understand the culture and socio-politics of an area of the world unfamiliar to soccer fans from America and other nations of the West.
- Concerns cannot be downplayed. Chicago soccer enthusiasts voiced concern as to their safety if they were to travel to that part of the world Qatar.

"The whole Middle East gets bagged into one. It (Qatar) probably is one of the more safe ones. It's going to be interesting how they protect the games and the tens of thousands of visitors. Male 35 – 50 Chicago "My husband just came back from there, and it's very very rich, right next to very, very poor. There's no middle class" Female/ 25 – 34 Chicago". I would be afraid to walk around there by myself. I would have to know I could go to cool restaurants by myself. Female 26 – 24 Chicago

13. The State of Qatar

While there was an abiding curiosity as to World Cup games being held in Qatar, there was some concern about siting the event there. Underlying the reticence was that such venue would impose a limitation on the usual revelry associated with games. When probed deeper, the groups' members talked about Qatar being a Muslim country and that there would be a clash of cultures between the West and the East. "They wouldn't appreciate a girl wearing shorts and tank tops whereas in the summer girls like to do that so they would be treated a little different. I'm not saying badly, but they'd stare at you and then, obviously, you can't have public affection so you can't hug each other or kiss each other or do any of that stuff, but that is just the typical thing in America that you do. I'm not saying you're all on each other, you just don't see people holding hands in the Middle East". Female 16-24 Chicago

- Commented on were prohibitions of alcoholic beverages and dietary restrictions that would limit the kinds of foods available.
- Also commented on was a reluctance/lack of interest in going anywhere in the Middle East. When probed, there was discussion of the concerns about terrorism and an endemic dislike by Arabs for things western and/or Christian. Brought up were the events of 9-11 in the United States and the terror attacks against the Israeli Olympics team in 1972
- Though some participants likened or even confused Qatar with the Emirate of Dubai, Dubai seems to enjoy a more positive image than the rest of the region due to its perceived adherence to Western socio-economic values. Indicated was a need for Qatar to educate the world of soccer fans as to what will and won't be permissible. Given such education and an all-out effort to control against terrorism, there was a curiosity expressed about the country and a stated willingness of non-Middle Eastern fans to travel to Qatar to attend the games.

Due to the distance in time and geography, no personal business opportunities were mentioned. McDonalds and Coca Cola were commercial interests perceived to gain from games being held in Qatar. Equally indicated was a need for the country to install state-of-the-art surveillance equipment and security procedures to ensure the safety of all involved ... as they travelled to and from Qatar and while they were there ... at the games, in their hotels and while engaged in related recreational and social activities. This would include monitored cameras everywhere and a sophisticated police presence to employ the equipment and react to any threat with dispatch. There were some who observed that Qatar was part of the United Arab Emirates and those countries were more liberal than other Muslim countries because they wanted to attract international investment and recognized allowances had to be made if those investments were to become a reality. This position was elaborated by observations, particularly among older male fans, that the World Games in Qatar was all about building positive imagery and building business development. The World Cup itself was a multi-billion dollar enterprise that could have an immediate return of paying for itself and a longer term reality of developing international business infrastructure. The challenge, we were told, was whether the gamble will pay out with positive imagery and a return on investment, or a negative imagery and the loss of the investment.

14. Understanding Amazing

A positioning of the Qatar games is that they will be "amazing". Participants were queried as to how "amazing" can be descriptive of the Qatar World Cup. For the members of our groups, amazing is connecting with something or someone bigger than one's self. It could be being exposed to a natural phenomenon that you do not quite understand how or why it came into being. Or, it could be a technological wonder that with a jar to your senses exposes you to a science or engineering feat that is awe inspiring. Equally it could be time spent in a place you've never been before with people you particularly like. Or, it is being happy, at peace, free and enjoying the moment.

15. The Amazing 2022 FIFA World Cup – Qatar

Amazing translated to an experience in Qatar would be experiencing a totally different culture, not having those things expected when vacationing, yet enjoying the experience to the fullest extent. Minimally it would be exposure to native activities like camel races or even riding a camel. But to be truly amazing there have to be activities like a challenging golf course. A litany of **amazing** in Qatar would include:

- Being up at night, looking at the heavens seeing the stars from a different part of the world.
- Visiting a native market and exploring the goods that are sold.
- Learning all about the things you only are exposed to in National Geographic.

- Enjoying an adventure with family or friends.
- Seeing and sitting in the all new, heat defiant futuristic stadia.
- Experiencing how a country as small as Qatar is going to meet the needs of multiple games occurring concurrently.
- Riding transportation that is 22nd century – monorails, bullet trains, limousines.
- As a member of the audience, individuals expect a Disney World-like experience. Local cuisine would be supplemented restaurants representing the World Cup world. Also expected would be shops with merchandise from the same places.
- The country being inviting to the degree that there are venues aplenty in a zone with the stadia and hotels where one can relax, drink, eat, enjoy opposite sex scenery and show affection, if desired.
- Casino gambling in a Vegas style venue.
- Swimming pools like those found in the Caribbean and in Hawaii.
- Regional teams making a better showing in the competition, e.g., Saudi Arabia and Iran are typically weak .
- Activities reflective of soccer at the games themselves ... ball kicking contests, as example.
- Crowd management that is superlative. This would include entering and leaving the stadia as well as using restrooms without an interminable wait.
- Food courts in each stadium, catering to the food and drink preferences of the attendees.
- Everything being top of the line – opulent – out of the Arabian Nights. Included would be expensive building materials, e.g., marble floors and walls.
- Opening and closing ceremonies featuring native dancing ... veiled women belly dancing, camel troops, and a parade of athletes following their national flags and closing with an invitation to the next World Cup.

Given this is what is seen as amazing for a World Cup in Qatar, then group members recommend that the country begin promoting this event as soon as possible. Promotion would, we are told, should include lots of images of smiling people. This, they say might offset the perception that people in Qatar are fundamentalist Muslims whose women are kept in the world of the Middle Ages.

- People (men and women) enjoying themselves at sporting events, around a swimming pool, in a lounge or casino.
- Young people dressed in western style clothes and listening to the latest popular music.
- Internet connectivity ... Wi-Fi hotspots everywhere and uncensored access.
- High end accommodations with beautiful amenities.
- Lots of water and air conditioning in the desert.
- Visions of the transportation system ... from the airport's soaring terminal to limos, taxis and mass transportation to and from the venues.
- Futuristic architecture.
- Easy travel access including fast visa service.
- World class entertainment – music, comedy and revues.
- Spectacular fireworks displays.
- Subliminal expressions of Qatar being a secure place.
- Access to alcoholic beverages as desired.
- An ongoing feeling of high energy.

Members of the various groups told us that to be successful in attracting the exposure of, and interest in Qatar, the 2022 World Cup games must seek high visibility among potential attendees and soccer fans generally. Efforts to do so should include frequent impressions in various mass media (e.g., ESPN major sports programming) and social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. These efforts must be supplemented by a variety of other media exposures including those in cinema, public relations campaigns and merchandising. These promotional support activities should be continuous with higher visibility during soccer championships and very heavy investments during the Rio and Russia World Cup games. As the period following the 2018 games (the run-up to Qatar 2022) all attempts must be made to increase visibility even further.

As was indicated: “Social media is such a big part of our life right now – it’s a way to connect with the people that you wouldn’t usually be able to connect with.” Female 16 – 24 Chicago “I honestly think you’d put forth a concerted effort to promote your country and to show what activities you got to go on and stuff like that. You could pique interest, particularly you could do it during the ride the momentum of the existing World Cups that have –” Male, 35-50 Chicago

16. Reaction to Video

Members of each session were exposed to a video presentation about Qatar and what can be expected of games held there. Reactions to the video were generally positive.

- Some said the message of the video was that Qatar of the 2022 World Cup games would be a place of state-of-the-art construction and technology. It was noted that all of the buildings and transportation systems shown were just that. “World Class.” Mentioned were the visualization and verbal presentation of carbon-free technologies, creature comfort transportation systems, and airports with innovative conveniences. Also played back were visuals of sky scraping commercial and accommodation buildings and stadia complete with air conditioning systems serving the playing fields as well as the audience seats.
- Some said the video’s message was creature comfort. These group members spoke of the message being “We will have all of the modern conveniences. Visitors will come to a modern city, with an innovative transportation and a lot of options so everywhere you go – we will have a big airport, and we’re going to be convenient for you to get to all the games, to all of the stadiums as well. And it will be comfortable in the stadiums too.”
- All of the members of each group noted that the promise of the video must be fulfilled. Fulfillment would maximize the probability of World Cup 2022 – Qatar being successful. There were also some negatives expressed. Observed was the highlighting of infrastructure, but not the norms of the country as to visitor behavior, and there was no presentation about the people. Understanding that all of the respondents in each of the groups are inculcated with the values and lifestyles of America, there is a genuine concern as to how welcome Western civilization ideas of the “place” of women in public activities will be. Will the social recreational attitudes and behaviors of the West be accepted, or will people have to adhere to a “foreign” set of norms. A place, we were informed, is just not buildings and technology and wonderful transportation systems. Rather, it was also people, how they live, what they expect of themselves and what they expect of their guests.

17. Conclusions

A series of four qualitative sessions were held to obtain a first understanding of the challenges faced by the Qatar 2022 World Cup organizing committee. All group members were avid soccer fans from the Chicago metropolitan area – two male and two female groups. It was found that:

- Few were aware of the 2022 World Cup being held in Qatar. Those games were just too far in the future to be on the radar of most people
- Few knew where Qatar is.
- When the few in each group who had knowledge spoke, they described them as the air conditioned games in the future... games to be those held in a desert; a place that was too hot. There was some initial awareness that the games might be pushed to the winter months for temperature reasons.
- The Cup being awarded to a Middle East country, elicited positive responses. It was indicated that the locale was good for the World Cup as an event, world class soccer, and the people of the region. Rationalized were strong fans of the game at all levels of competence that would support the event occurring in their region.
- There was some talk about the investment in building games infrastructure being very high and that the cost would include air conditioned open air stadia. Other individuals in some groups, having an inkling where Qatar is, indicated that money would not be a problem as the country was oil rich.
- There was some concern about the siting of the event in Qatar. Underlying the reticence was that such venue would impose a limitation on the usual revelry associated with games. When probed deeper, the groups’ members talked about Qatar being a Muslim country and that there would be a clash of cultures between the West and the East.
- Commented on were prohibitions of alcoholic beverages and dietary restrictions that would limit the kinds of foods available.

- Also commented on was a reluctance/lack of interest in going anywhere in the Middle East. When probed, there was discussion of the concerns about terrorism gender bias and an endemic dislike there for things western and/or Christian. Brought up were terror attacks against the Israeli Olympics team in 1972. This concern was verbalized as: “How can Jewish athletes be expected to compete?”
- Indicated was a need for Qatar to educate the world of soccer fans as to what will and won’t be permissible. Such education and an all-out effort to control against terrorism, is perceived to equate to increased interest and a curiosity as to the willingness of non-Middle Eastern fans to travel to Qatar to attend the games, experience the culture and enjoy the billions of dollars of newly built infrastructure.
- Equally indicated was a need for state-of-the-art surveillance equipment and security procedures to ensure the safety of all involved. This would include monitored cameras everywhere and a sophisticated police presence to employ the equipment and react to any threat with dispatch.
- Some observed that Qatar was part of the United Arab Emirates and those countries were more liberal than other Muslim countries because they wanted to attract international investment and recognized allowances had to be made if those investments were to become a reality.
- This position was elaborated by observations, particularly among older male fans, that the World Games in Qatar was all about developing positive imagery and building business relationships. The World Cup itself was a multi-billion dollar enterprise that could have an immediate return of paying for itself and a longer term reality of developing international business infrastructure.
- The challenge, we were told, was whether the gamble will pay out with positive imagery and a return on investment, or a negative imagery and the loss of the investment.
- The evaluated promotional positioning, was Amazing, and translated to an experience in Qatar would be exposure to and enjoyment of a totally different culture, not having those things expected when vacationing, yet enjoying the experience to the fullest extent. Minimally it would be exposed to native activities like camel races or even riding a camel. But to be truly amazing there have to be activities like a challenging golf course. A litany of amazing in Qatar would include:
 - “Being up at night, looking at the heavens seeing the stars from a different part of the world”
 - “Visiting a native market and exploring the goods that are sold”
- Potential attendees expectations include:
 - Experiencing how a country as small as Qatar is going meet the needs of multiple games occurring concurrently
 - Riding transportation that is 22nd century – monorails, bullet trains, limousines.
 - As a member of the audience, individuals expect a Disney World-like experience. Local cuisine would be supplemented restaurants representing the World Cup world. Also expected would be shops with merchandise from the same places.
 - The country being inviting to the degree that there are venues aplenty in a zone with the stadia and hotels where one can relax, drink, eat, enjoy opposite sex scenery and show affection, if desired. **Casino gambling in a Vegas style venue**
 - Swimming pools like those found in the Caribbean and in Hawaii.
 - Regional teams making a better showing in the competition, e.g., Saudi Arabia and Iran are typically weak.
 - Activities reflective of soccer at the games themselves ... ball kicking contests, as example.
 - Crowd management that is superlative. This would include entering and leaving the stadia as well as using restrooms without an interminable wait.
 - Food courts in each stadium, catering to the food and drink preferences of the attendees.
 - Everything being top of the line – opulent – out of the Arabian Nights. Included would be expensive building materials, e.g., marble floors and walls.
 - Opening and closing ceremonies featuring native dancing ... veiled women belly dancing, camel troops, and a parade of athletes, following their national flags and closing with an invitation to the next World Cup.
- Given this is what is seen as amazing for a World Cup in Qatar, then group members recommend that the country begin promoting this event as soon as possible. Promotion should include lots of images of smiling people.

This, they say might offset the perception that people in Qatar are fundamentalist Muslims, lacking a wide world, world view and whose women are kept in the secluded and servile world of the Middle Ages. Specifically the communications should be:

- People (men and women) enjoying themselves at sporting events, around a swimming pool, and in a lounge or casino. This message would include young people dressed in western style clothes and listening to the latest popular music.
- Internet connectivity ... uncensored access to Wi-Fi hotspots everywhere.
- High end accommodations with beautiful amenities, yet a range of tourist price points
- Lots of water and air conditioning in the desert
- Visions of the transportation system ... from the airport's soaring terminal to limos, taxis and mass transportation to and from the venues
- Futuristic architecture
- Awesome soccer matches
- Easy travel access including fast visa service and no hassle customs
- World class entertainment – music, comedy and revues, and spectacular fireworks displays
- Subliminal expressions of Qatar being a secure place
- Access to alcoholic beverages as desired
- An ongoing feeling of high energy

In the final analysis the question is can Qatar pull it off! Will the facilities be ready on time and be world class in nature? Will FIFA overcome all of the recent scandals in its top management ranks? Will western and Asian potential guests feel safe and comfortable to travel to the Middle East? Only time will provide the answers to these questions.

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