

The Importance of Sports Tourism in Achieving Sustainable Development - The Qatar 2022 World Cup as a Model-

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Abstract:

Countries no longer seek to achieve economic growth alone; rather, they now focus on achieving sustainable economic development that ensures inclusivity and continuity by balancing economic growth, environmental stability, and social well-being. The tourism sector has become one of the most important strategic alternatives for achieving economic development due to its ability to stimulate other sectors such as trade and services, as well as its connection to spatial and social variables. Sports tourism, in particular, is experiencing rapid growth, benefiting from the dynamic nature of sports, with numerous disciplines and highly diverse events.

Qatar, through its ambitious strategy (Vision 2030), has chosen tourism as a driving force for sustainable development and a pathway to move away from a rent-based economy. The country has made every effort to establish its competitive edge in sports tourism, becoming a hub for regional and continental sports competitions. Since 2005, Qatar has hosted nearly 500 international sporting events covering various types of sports. The 2022 FIFA World Cup was the most prominent event, with Qatar spending \$242.8 billion and hosting one million visitors from diverse nationalities.

The manifestations of sustainability success were diverse, including stadium construction and recycling, reducing water consumption by 40%, preserving the Arab and Islamic identity of the community, and effectively promoting it globally.

Keywords: Sports tourism, sustainable development, Qatar, World Cup, sports events.

Introduction:

Sports tourism is considered one of the most prominent types of tourism that continues to flourish in many countries around the world. It serves as a significant contributor to the local economy and fosters cultural exchange, benefiting from the diverse experiences of people and communities globally. The importance of sports tourism lies in its ability to increase national income and significantly enhance the economy. It also provides access to foreign currency and raises employment opportunities across various sectors within the country.

In recent years, the Qatar General Tourism Authority has successfully strengthened the country's position as a destination for sports tourism, attracting sports enthusiasts from federations, clubs, athletes, and fans alike. Sports tourism holds a central place in Qatar's Vision 2030, highlighting the power of sports to unify people and create shared interests among individuals of different nationalities. Additionally, sports tourism showcases Qatar's exceptional capabilities and facilities in the region. It is also considered one of the key elements in Qatar's strategy to enhance and diversify its tourism sector by broadening the range of source markets.

Sports tourism has witnessed remarkable growth and development in terms of events, partnerships, and outcomes. Following Qatar's hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which attracted millions from around the world and delivered an exceptional, world-class sports tourism experience, the vital role of sports tourism in revitalizing the economy became evident. The event became a global point of discussion, highlighting Qatar's economic, sports, and tourism intelligence, along with the outstanding services, resorts, hotels, enhanced beaches, and commercial complexes that were developed according to international standards.

Qatar managed to significantly increase its revenues from sports tourism after spending approximately \$220 billion on the World Cup. This figure is remarkable compared to the average expenditure on major global sporting events.

The massive expenditure on sports and tourism infrastructure raises questions about whether such investments can achieve long-term economic goals. Based on this, this research aims to examine the outcomes achieved from Qatar's 2022 World Cup in the sports tourism sector and analyze its impact on sustainable economic growth. This will be explored through the following central question:

To what extent has Qatar succeeded in leveraging the 2022 World Cup to achieve its sustainable development goals?

- Hypotheses:

- As a rich country, Sponsoring the world cup will barely affect Qatar's economy.
- Hosting a global event in such small peninsula is likely to destroy Qatar's environmental balance.
- The Qatari conservative society might struggle to embrace the cultural diversity of incoming tourists.

- Research Methodology:

The research relies on a combination of methodologies, each suitable for the specific aspects of the study. These methodologies include descriptive, analytical, and case study approaches. The descriptive method was used to define and describe the main variables of the study. The analytical method was applied to examine the nature of the relationships and interactions between these variables, as well as to analyze data relevant to the research. Lastly, the case study method was employed to assess Qatar as a model, diagnosing the current state of sports tourism in the country, with a focus on the impacts of 2022 world cup festival on Qatar's sustainable development.

The study is organized into the following sections:

- A conceptual introduction to sports tourism
- Fundamentals of sustainable development
- A case study of Qatar's experience in the 2022 World Cup

Section One: Conceptual Introduction to Sports Tourism

The concept of sports tourism is a composite term combining two main elements: "tourism," generally referring to an individual's travel from their place of residence to a specific destination for leisure purposes, and "sports," which typically denotes physical activities performed individually or collectively for recreation or exercise. Below, we aim to define sports tourism by analyzing the connections between its conceptual components and the contexts to which it belongs.

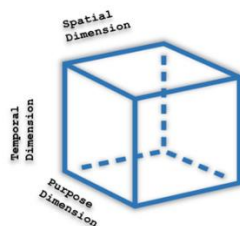
Subsection One: Tourism Its Definition and Dimensions

Definitions of tourism can be categorized into three primary classifications:

1. **General Definitions:** These define tourism based on the common usage of the term among individuals (e.g., WH Smith/Collins, 1988).
2. **Functional Statistical Definitions:** These focus on specialized statistical use of the term, emphasizing its ability to facilitate statistical studies and their application in analysis and forecasting (e.g., WTO, 1981).
3. **Field-Specific Definitions:** These target specific areas and domains, such as sports tourism, ecological tourism, etc.

Despite the differences among these classifications, they share common dimensions, which are as follows:

Figure (1): The Conceptual Dimensions of Tourism



Source: authors

a. **The Spatial Dimension of Tourism:**

Tourism involves "travel activities of non-resident individuals" (Murphy, 1985). For an individual to qualify as a "tourist," they must leave their place of residence and return to it. Although departure and return to a place of residence do not automatically make one a tourist, these criteria are essential for describing someone as a tourist in this context. Several qualifiers and criteria have been proposed within this dimension to classify travel activities as tourism, such as minimum distances required for a journey to qualify as tourism. However, the fundamental principle of travel is so clear that overanalyzing it can make straightforward and familiar concepts appear confusing and ambiguous.

b. **The Temporal Dimension of Tourism:**

This dimension emphasizes the time period an individual spends away from their place of residence, which determines their status as a "tourist." Leiper (1981) proposed boundaries for this time period, stating that tourism is "an individual's temporary stay outside their original residence for a period of no less than one night." This dimension becomes critical when developing definitions for statistical purposes. Statistical definitions distinguish between an "excursion," which refers to visits lasting less than 24 hours, and "tourists," who are individuals spending 24 hours or more at a destination (WTO, 1981). Statistics often use the term "visitors" to encompass both categories.

c. **The Purpose Dimension of Tourism:**

This dimension relates to the objective or purpose of the tourism activity, focusing on the nature of activities undertaken by the individual. It defines the scope of tourism fields and forms the essence of the concept (e.g., desert tourism, ecological tourism, etc.). This dimension offers broader definitional areas compared to the previous two. For instance, from a statistical perspective, individuals' commercial purposes may also fall under the concept of tourism (Murphy, 1985).

Subsection Two: The Concept of Sports

Attempting to define the term "sports" presents a challenge, similar to defining "tourism." However, the shared dimensions across definitions, particularly in terms of the aspects to which each definition belongs, significantly contribute to clarifying and encapsulating the multifaceted concept of sports. According to the most commonly cited definitions in encyclopedias and dictionaries, sports are personal or group activities practiced for exercise or enjoyment, often taking on a competitive nature (WH Smith/Collins, 1988).

In contrast, definitions derived from the sociology of sports provide conceptual foundations that enable the analysis of sports tourism and the understanding of connections between the two concepts. One of the most notable definitions is that of Loy et al. (1978), known as the "Game Occurrence" approach. From this conceptual perspective, sports stem from the idea of games, with their behavioral roots in the human tendency to play.

Sports can also be described as "institutionalized games" requiring physical skill. McPherson et al. (1989) define sports as structured physical efforts that are goal-oriented, competitive, evaluative, and recreational. The primary characteristics of sports are that they are: structured, goal-oriented, competitive, evaluative, and recreational.

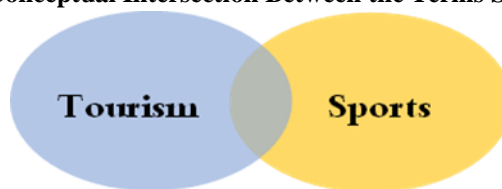
Subsection Three: The Concept of Sports Tourism

The accuracy of defining sports tourism depends on determining the extent of overlap between the two concepts and the mutual influence each has on the other. It can initially be stated that the main link between sports and tourism lies in their shared human behavioral roots, which fundamentally reflect the individual's psychological state. Below is an attempt to understand these connections and to formulate a definition of sports tourism that contributes to addressing the economic impact raised in the research problem.

a. **The Intersection of Tourism and Sports Concepts:**

The aforementioned definitions of both concepts highlight numerous points of convergence between tourism and sports. Sports, in its various classifications—whether aimed at exercise or leisure—is one of the essential activities of interest in the tourism sector. Similarly, travel and tourism are significantly associated with sports activities, as sports often serve as a primary purpose for tourism.

Figure (2): The Conceptual Intersection Between the Terms Sports and Tourism



Source: authors

Attempting to analyze the concept of sports tourism leads to a wide array of potential definitions for this term. This diversity stems from the terminological composition of two elements that interact and converge in their essence and through the contexts and knowledge fields to which each definition separately belongs. Definitions of sports tourism are characterized by a certain parallelism, attributable to the influence of the three aforementioned dimensions of tourism spatial, temporal, and teleological—related to the nature of activities that form its core (Gibson, 1998a).

Sports activities and events often take precedence when it comes to travel and trips. Consequently, most definitions include spectators and audiences in addition to athletes. Furthermore, the concepts associated with sports tourism are not limited to elite sports activities but also encompass recreational sports (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). All definitions of sports tourism clearly agree on and highlight the necessity of spatial, temporal, and teleological dimensions, emphasizing the requirement to temporarily travel away from and return to one's place of residence.

b. Definition of Sports Tourism:

Sports tourism can be defined as travel centered around a specific sports activity, conducted away from an individual's permanent residence for a set period, where the sports activity targeted by the trip is competitive and governed by clear rules and regulations (Hinch & Higham, 2001).

It can also be described as non-commercial travel aimed at participating in or watching a sports activity away from one's place of residence (Hall, 1992). Another definition refers to it as a behavioral pattern of individuals during certain periods of leisure time, performed either in natural settings or specialized artificial sports or recreational facilities (Ruskin, 1987).

Weed and Bull (1997) define sports tourism as holidays that include either observing or participating in sports activities. According to Gibson (1998), sports tourism is temporary travel outside one's residence and community aimed at participating in physical activities, watching them, or venerating elements related to the targeted physical activity.

Standeven and De Knop (1999) provide a broader definition, describing sports tourism as all forms of active and passive participation in a sports activity, whether spontaneous, informal, or organized, for commercial or non-commercial reasons, requiring travel away from one's residence and workplace.

From these definitions, it becomes evident how sports influence individuals during their travels. Whether sports are a primary or secondary goal of the trip, it can be said that the decision-making process regarding travel is closely tied to the presence of sports activities in the trip, which serves as a significant reference point in evaluating the visitor's tourism experience.

Section Two: Fundamentals of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has garnered widespread and growing attention from researchers and decision-makers across various fields, particularly in environmental, political, and economic domains. It is also one of the contemporary research areas that incite intense debates and discussions regarding its conceptual nature and the effective means of implementation.

Subsection One: The Concept of Sustainable Development

To understand the concept of "sustainable development," it is necessary to grasp the meanings of both "development" and "sustainability."

Development (Development): Linguistically, as defined by (Al-Shammari & Jiyad, 2020), "development" is derived from the verb "to develop," meaning to transition from one state to a better one. It is synonymous with "improvement," signifying

adding something new to enhance what already exists. Conceptually, development refers to inducing fundamental changes in the life of a society, transforming it from one state to a better one to improve the quality of life for all individuals. This entails enabling a society to self-develop its reality through restructuring its social, economic, and environmental systems. According to (Todaro & Smith, 2006), development is a multidimensional process involving significant changes in social structures, attitudes, and institutions, along with economic growth, reduced inequality, and the eradication of extreme poverty.

Sustainability (Sustainability): Linguistically, as defined by (Abdel Fattah Qushty, 2022), sustainability is derived from the verb "to sustain," meaning continuity, persistence, and preservation. Conceptually, the term's roots trace back to ecology, initially referring to the necessity of preserving ecological systems, which are inherently dynamic and susceptible to structural changes. Over time, "sustainability" evolved to express the relationship between ecology and economics—both originating from the Greek root "eco" (household), with ecology studying its components and economy managing them. Thus, sustainability involves analyzing and managing environmental components to optimize resource use. (Ben-Eli, 2015) adds that sustainability represents the dynamic balance in human-environment interactions, enabling people to meet their needs without causing irreversible harm to the ecosystems they rely on.

Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development): After defining both development and sustainability, we now attempt to define sustainable development (Sustainable Development). Despite the diversity of definitions in previous studies, this variety primarily stems from the differing academic backgrounds and practical goals of those addressing the concept. Additionally, it reflects evolving visions, concepts, policies, and tools over time.

As noted in (Paul, 2008), the concept of sustainable development was shaped and refined through the contributions of many researchers and a continuous series of regional and international scientific and political conferences and seminars. Tracing these events from 1972 to 2002, a clear evolution in the discourse on sustainable development becomes evident. It began with debates on environmental issues during the 1972 Stockholm Conference, progressed to a shared focus on environmental, social, and economic development at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, and later concentrated on combating poverty and achieving social welfare during the 2000 Millennium Summit in Johannesburg and the 2002 World Summit.

The greatest challenge for sustainable development remains fostering global awareness, from households to decision-making centers, about the importance of addressing the unlimited exploitation of human and environmental resources.

At first glance, sustainable development might be defined as combining the meanings of development and sustainability: "a process of societal transformation to a better state while preserving the environment and its dynamic balance." However, (Schaefer & Crane, 2005) argue that most literature aligns with the definition in the 1987 Brundtland Report, which states: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In the same vein, (Evers, 2018) defines it as "an approach incorporating principles to achieve human development goals while maintaining the ability of natural systems to provide the resources and ecosystem services on which the economy and society depend."

The most comprehensive definition, however, is that of (Stoddart, et al., 2011), who describe sustainable development as: "The effort to ensure balance between economic growth, environmental integrity, and social welfare, while guaranteeing intergenerational equity by considering the short- and long-term impacts of developmental projects." The concept of sustainable development can be summarized in the figure below.

Figure (3): Sustainable Development in Its Broad Sense



Source: authors

Subsection Two: Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Based on the previously outlined concept of sustainable development and the figure above, it can be stated that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, often referred to in some studies as the "pillars of sustainable development." The fundamental idea of each dimension can be summarized as follows:

a. Environmental Dimension (Environmental Sustainability):

According to (Hidayati, et al., 2023), environmental sustainability refers to maintaining the environment in a state that remains productive and capable of supporting human life. This recognizes that the Earth's ecosystem is finite and fragile, and its survival depends on maintaining balance. In other words, natural resources should be used within their regenerative capacity, and waste should not damage or pollute the environment.

The importance of this dimension is highlighted in the research by (Chichilnisky, 1997), which noted that, for the first time in history, human activity has reached levels that can alter the planet's climate and biological composition. Biologists argue that the loss of biodiversity over the past 50 years is one of the most significant indicators of environmental destruction caused by the excessive use of resources, primarily in industrialized countries. This has also led to an increasing gap in resource consumption and well-being between industrialized and developing nations.

b. Economic Dimension (Economic Sustainability):

According to (Lobo, Pietriga, & Appert, 2015), economic sustainability entails having a production system that meets current consumption levels without compromising future needs. With a continuously growing population comes an ever-increasing demand for resources. However, satisfying these demands depletes finite natural resources and threatens future generations' ability to meet their needs.

Achieving consistently high economic growth rates is not always the optimal choice, especially when considering the costs of pollution. Additionally, (Mitlin, 1992) argues that sustainable development requires rethinking economic policies and gaining a deeper understanding of the limits of economic growth. Contemporary wealth often has a false value, largely derived from consuming environmental capital. Sustainable development discussions have encouraged recognizing the current and future value of natural resources and ecosystems in economic decision-making.

c. Social Dimension (Social Sustainability):

According to (Daly, 1992), social sustainability encompasses concepts of equality, empowerment, accessibility, participation, cultural identity, and institutional stability. In other words, it aims to preserve human society and cultural identity by respecting cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, maintaining social values, norms, and customs, achieving equality, and protecting human rights.

Since human survival depends on the environment and a dignified life is linked to economic growth, the essence of social sustainability, as noted by (Farazmand, 2016), lies in balancing improved economic conditions without harming the environment. Both economic stagnation and excessive economic growth have severe consequences for human society. For instance, stagnation leads to poverty and infrastructure deterioration, while excessive growth results in over-consumption and environmental pollution.

Section Three: Case Study of Qatar's Experience in the 2022 World Cup

Qatar's experience in sports tourism serves as a model for transformation in the MENA region due to its cultural and economic similarities with neighboring countries. The following analysis examines Qatar's overall tourism landscape and highlights the key outcomes of its ambitious sports tourism project—hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, a groundbreaking initiative for the region.

Subsection One: The State of Tourism in Qatar

Qatar's interest in developing its tourism sector is evident in its strategic national plan outlined in Qatar's Vision 2030. This focus stems from the state's efforts to diversify its economy and reduce dependence on rentier income. The tourism

development initiative in Qatar conveys a clear mission: "To lead sustainable development in Qatar and achieve top global rankings in tourism while preserving the country's deep cultural roots."

This vision has been translated into a range of developmental tourism projects that integrate cultural, educational, and environmental aspects, aiming to balance economic growth with the preservation of Qatar's cultural heritage and identity.

However, some argue that Qatar's current tourism reality does not reflect its ambitions. In 2019, Qatar ranked 83rd globally in the "tourist arrivals per resident" index, as shown in Table (1). The data on global tourism indicates Qatar's weak ranking compared to neighboring countries with similar cultural, environmental, and societal structures. The United Arab Emirates is Qatar's most significant competitor in this field, followed by Saudi Arabia, which benefits from its competitive advantage in religious tourism (Hajj and Umrah) (Morakabati et al., 2014).

Several factors can explain Qatar's limited appeal as a tourist destination, including:

- The absence of Qatar's image as an attractive tourism destination
- Civil liberties influenced by conservative values and the state's political stance
- Weak promotion of cultural and religious heritage

Researchers Exell and Rico (2013) noted that despite efforts to rapidly construct a national identity and revive its heritage such as building the National Museum of Qatar Qatari heritage has not gained sufficient recognition among visitors or non-Qatari residents.

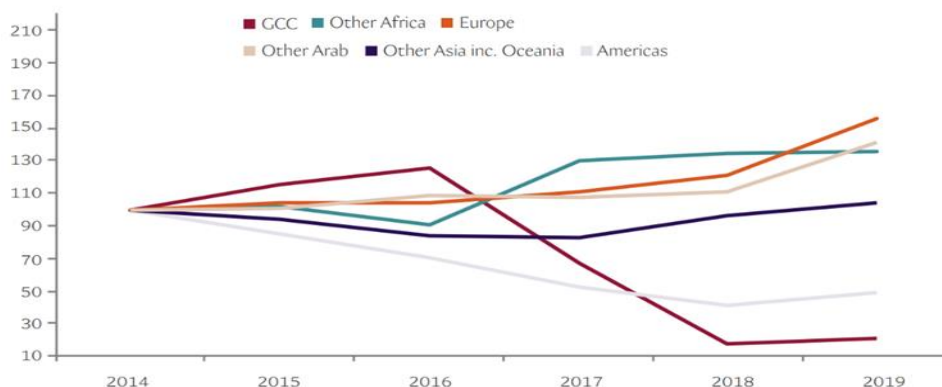
Table (1): Ranking of Tourism Destinations

Country	Classification	
	By Number of Visitors Globally (Tourist Arrivals - Absolute)	By Number of Visitors Per Resident (Tourist Arrivals - Per Resident)
Turkey	6	92
United Arab Emirates	24	49
Saudi Arabia	25	96
Egypt	36	142
Bahrain	37	4
Kuwait	45	119
Oman	77	85
Qatar	97	83

Source: (worlddata, 2023)

In addition to the previously mentioned tourism projects and plans, the sector faced a significant downturn following the Gulf diplomatic crisis in 2017.

Figure (4): Number of Visitors to Qatar by Region



Source: (Annual Tourism Performance Report, 2019)

Before the diplomatic blockade on Qatar, the tourism sector in the country was generating significant revenue from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market, which was the primary source of tourists for Qatar. In 2016, tourists from GCC countries accounted for 48% of the total visitors to Qatar, reflecting an 8.5% growth compared to 2015. However, following the widespread news of the diplomatic crisis and the blockade imposed on the state in 2017, the number of tourists from GCC countries dropped by 46.4%.

Additionally, the number of visitors from other Arab countries decreased from 918,194 in 2017 to 388,354 in 2019.

Subsection Two: Components of Sports Tourism in Qatar

Tourism infrastructure indicators in Qatar have shown tremendous growth due to the high inflow of expenditures aimed at covering costs related to tourism investment expansion.

a. Hotels:

The hotel sector, which supports Qatar's sports tourism, experienced growth between 2017 and 2020, with an increase of 6.9% in the number of hotels and 3.7% growth in the total number of hotel rooms from 22,461 rooms to 23,297 rooms during the same period. This growth is attributed to a 24.4% increase in the number of five-star hotels, followed by an 11.5% increase in four-star hotels. Conversely, there was a decline in the number of three-star hotels and two-star hotels by 17.9% and 14.3%, respectively (Qatar Chamber, 2019).

Table (2): Number of Available Rooms in Qatar for 2023

Hotel Classification	Available Rooms (Keys)
Five-Star Hotels	18732
Four-Star Hotels	7327
Three-Star Hotels	2234
Two-Star or One-Star Hotels	586
Luxury Apartments	9134
Standard Apartments	1134
Total	39147

Source: (Qatar Tourism, 2023)

The indicators for 2023 show clear growth compared to previous periods, reflecting the impact of the FIFA World Cup on investment trends and spending in this sector. The number of rooms in five-star hotels reached **18,732**, while the number of rooms in four-star hotels increased to **7,327**. Additionally, two-star and one-star hotels saw a slight increase, with **586**

rooms, indicating relatively modest growth compared to the higher classifications. The total increase in rooms is estimated at **39,147**, ready to accommodate tourists.

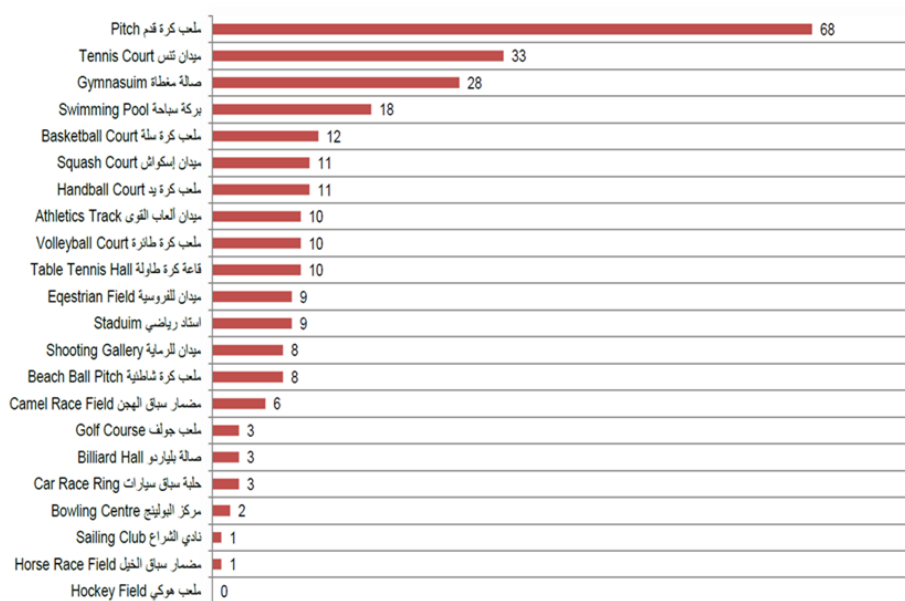
Some of the notable hotels recently inaugurated in Qatar include **Katara Towers**, home to **Fairmont Doha** and **Raffles Hotel Doha**, **The Ned Doha**, **Rixos Gulf Doha Resort**, **Waldorf Astoria Lusail Doha**, among others. By the end of this year, Qatar aims to reach **40,000 hotel rooms** and **330,000 housing units**.

These hotels and apartments are geographically distributed unevenly, with **40%** of the total hotel rooms located in **Lusail** and the **West Bay** areas.

b. Sports Facilities in Qatar:

Since 2005, Qatar has hosted approximately 500 international sports events, covering various types of sports and age categories. These include major tournaments such as the 2006 Asian Games, the 2015 IHF Men’s Handball World Championship, the 2015 AIBA World Boxing Championships, the 48th Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, the IHF Super Globe Handball Club World Championship, the 2019 ANOC World Beach Games, the 2019 and 2020 FIFA Club World Cups, and the 2020 Masters Tournament. Annual international tournaments held in Qatar include the Qatar ExxonMobil Open (tennis), the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters (golf), and the World Superbike Championship (motorcycle racing). These events, supported by substantial local investments in sports facilities, have allowed Qatar to foster a dynamic sports tourism sector and expand the infrastructure required for hosting international sports events. (Government Communication Office, 2023)

Figure (5): Sports Facilities in Qatar by Type, 2022



Source: (Annual Bulletin of Youth and Sports Statistics, 2022)

Data from the Annual Bulletin of Sports Statistics issued by the Planning and Statistics Authority reveal that sports facilities in Qatar have witnessed significant expansion, aligning with the growing interest in sports activities. By the end of 2022, the number of FIFA-standard football stadiums reached 10, while football pitches totaled 68. Additionally, there were 28 indoor halls, 18 swimming pools, and 11 handball courts.

Subsection Three: Impacts of Hosting the 2022 World Cup on Sustainable Development in Qatar

The FIFA Men’s World Cup, commonly referred to as the World Cup, is the largest and most significant sports event globally. It requires extensive infrastructure and coordination among multiple parties for its preparation and organization. The event itself attracts millions of fans from around the world, in addition to billions of viewers through television and digital platforms. Many countries compete to host this prestigious event, held every four years.

In 2010, Qatar won the honor of hosting the 2022 World Cup, which sparked doubts about the ability of this small country to successfully deliver the event, especially given the region's hot climate. According to the official FIFA website (FIFA, 2023), this edition was unique and broke numerous records. The following highlights summarize its most notable features:

- For the first time in history, an Arab country hosted this global event, and it was also the first time it was held in the Middle East. Given the country's small size, matches were played in closely located stadiums, unlike in previous editions.
- Morocco's national team reached the semi-finals for the first time in its history and as the first Arab and African team to do so in 88 years of competition.
- A record 172 goals were scored during the tournament, the highest ever.
- A total of 420,000 volunteers applied, with 20,000 selected from 150 countries.
- 3.4 million spectators attended matches in the stadiums, alongside 1.8 million fans outside them.
- Qatar welcomed over 1 million visitors to watch the matches, with most visitors coming from Saudi Arabia, India, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Mexico, respectively.
- The Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks recorded 9.19 million journeys, averaging 707,032 passengers daily.
- Social media witnessed extraordinary engagement, with 93.6 million posts, 5.95 billion interactions, and 262 billion cumulative reach.

On the other hand, according to statistics from (Statista, 2023), Qatar spent a total of \$242.8 billion on hosting the World Cup 15 times the amount spent by Russia on the previous edition and the highest expenditure ever recorded for the event. Qatar's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averages \$180 billion, with annual spending on the World Cup accounting for 10% of GDP between 2010 and 2022. These expenses were primarily directed toward building stadiums and infrastructure.

Given these substantial expenditures and considering Qatar's specific characteristics as outlined by (Wikipedia, 2023) a small area of 160 km², predominantly desert, with an arid climate averaging 33°C annually and reaching 39°-42°C between May and September, and a population of 2.6 million, of which only **12% are Qatari nationals while 88% are foreign migrants the following central question arises:

What is the impact of hosting the World Cup (a form of sports tourism) on sustainable development in Qatar?

Key sub-questions include:

- What is the economic return relative to the incurred costs?
- What is the fate of the vast land occupied by the large stadiums, numerous hotels, villages, and tourist parks prepared for spectators?
- How does interaction with visitors from all over the world affect the Qatari culture and identity?

It is evident that Qatar was aware of these challenges and questions from the moment it submitted its bid to host this global sporting event. This awareness is reflected in measures such as those highlighted by (Qatar World Cup, 2023), which states that Qatar adopted ambitious sustainability goals, leading to a historic decision to develop a joint sustainability strategy for the World Cup, implemented collaboratively by FIFA and the host nation for the first time. A high-level council was formed to design and execute the strategy, resulting in a detailed report on Qatar 2022's sustainability strategy. This report serves as a contribution to sharing knowledge and developing sustainability strategies for future major sporting events.

To study and address the aforementioned main issue and its sub-questions, we have chosen to adopt the Three Dimensions Model of Sustainable Development. The analysis of the case will proceed as follows:

1. Economic Sustainability

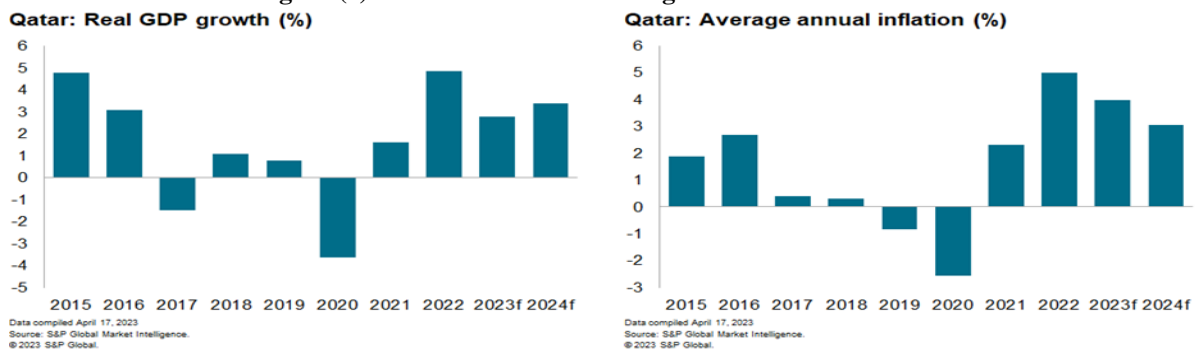
According to (Ahmed, 2023), hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup had significant economic benefits for Qatar. The retail and hospitality sectors experienced growth, with hotel occupancy rates reaching 92% in one- and two-star hotels, while

five-star hotels saw a 306% increase in revenue per room. This contributed to a 4% increase in GDP, a marked improvement compared to the 1.5% growth in 2021.

Although GDP growth is expected to decline to 2.7% in 2023 after the tournament, major sporting events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and the AFC Asian Cup will be hosted in Qatar in 2023, helping the travel and tourism sector avoid further contraction. Qatar is also betting on the tournament to boost tourism in the long term, with the government targeting 6 million visitors annually by 2030, aligning with its goal of economic diversification and reducing dependency on rentier income.

Moreover, Qatar leveraged the World Cup to develop its infrastructure, including the construction of Hamad International Airport and the Doha Metro, further supporting its economic sustainability goals.

Figure (6): GDP Growth and Average Annual Inflation Trends

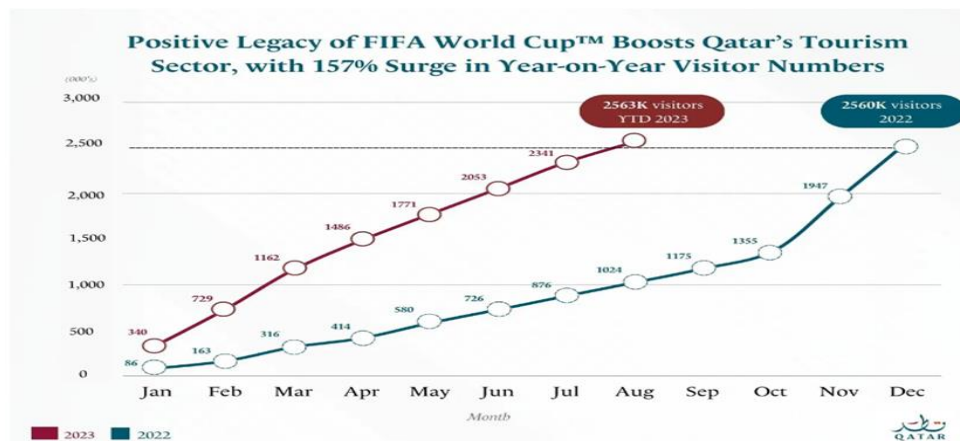


Source: (Naayem, 2023)

According to (FocusEconomics, 2023), the positive impact of the World Cup extended to neighboring Gulf countries. For example, the United Arab Emirates saw an increase in tourist numbers as some fans chose to stay there instead of Qatar. Similarly, Kuwait and Jordan also received more tourists, while Saudi Arabia experienced a significant rise in pilgrims and tourists.

One of the main criticisms of the economic sustainability of Qatar's World Cup is that official estimates place the direct revenues at only \$17 billion, compared to expenditures of approximately \$243 billion. However, this can be explained by three factors: most of the costs were allocated to infrastructure, which will yield long-term benefits; some of the expenses were recovered by repurposing sports facilities for other uses; and Qatar views these expenditures as an investment in promoting itself as a global tourism destination. This strategy is already yielding results, as (Qatar tourism, 2023) reports that as of August 25, 2023, Qatar received over 2.56 million visitors, surpassing the total number of arrivals for 2022 and marking a 157% increase compared to the same period last year.

Figure (7): Graphical Trend of Tourist Numbers in Qatar



Source: (Qatar tourism, 2023)

2. Environmental Sustainability

Based on reports from official bodies and statistical research such as Lundberg (2023), The Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (2023), (Statista, 2023), and (Luerdi, 2022), the key aspects of environmental sustainability can be summarized as follows:

1. Sustainable Buildings:

Qatar implemented sustainable practices from architectural design, raw material supply chains, to construction and operation. Oversight was provided by the Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC), established in 2009 alongside Qatar's World Cup bid and as part of Qatar Vision 2030. The council developed a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), ensuring that all construction activities adhered to licensing processes governed by Environmental Law No. 30 of 2002.

All stadium construction projects adhered to GSAS (Global Sustainability Assessment System) certification. Thousands of workers and professionals were trained in sustainability, resulting in the construction of eight stadiums and related facilities that met sustainability standards. Examples include appointing sustainability experts in construction companies, using energy-efficient equipment, and ensuring the chemical safety of materials. These efforts reduced water and energy consumption by 40% and recycled 80% of construction waste. A key innovation was the modular design of stadiums, allowing them to be dismantled post-tournament and repurposed into educational, medical, and other facilities. However, the numerous hotels built for the tournament created excess capacity once fans left.

2. Air Quality and Eco-Friendly Emissions:

Qatar organized the first carbon-neutral World Cup, achieving 30% energy efficiency compared to international standards. The strategy involved five main components: raising awareness among stakeholders, creating a detailed greenhouse gas inventory, reducing and mitigating carbon emissions, investing in green projects to offset residual emissions, and ensuring a lasting climate-positive legacy.

Key measures included introducing 741 new electric buses, representing 25% of the total fleet, and minimizing transportation emissions by concentrating stadiums and hotels in close proximity, eliminating the need for air travel. Hotels contributed significantly, such as one in Msheireb-Doha, which uses 29 thermal solar panels and 49 photovoltaic panels, providing 80% of its hot water and generating 16,560 kWh of electricity annually. Another hotel built an artificial lake for central air conditioning, saving an estimated 600,000 kWh of electricity and 100,000 m³ of water annually while eliminating the need for chemical water treatment in cooling towers.

3. Water Conservation:

Qatar achieved record-breaking water efficiency, reducing consumption by 40% compared to other global events. Policies included creating 850,000 m² of green spaces with over 16,000 drought-resistant trees and plants, reusing wastewater and air conditioning water for irrigation and construction, and implementing smart dual irrigation systems in hotels to reduce evaporation.

4. Waste Reduction:

Qatar adopted the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" strategy. Manual waste sorting at sites improved recycling efficiency, with 70% of event waste at Al Bayt Stadium being recycled. Composting facilities processed organic waste for agricultural use, while 80% of construction waste was recycled. Modular stadium designs facilitated their dismantling, with 170,000 seats donated to other countries. Hotels adopted 100% plastic-free policies and partnered with organizations to track and reduce food waste, achieving an average reduction of 73%, equivalent to 63,756 meals annually, with food waste converted into compost for on-site gardens.

3. Social Sustainability:

According to (Luerdi, 2022), Qatar's innovative stadiums featured improved lighting, better air quality, and green spaces, which positively impacted the health and psychological well-being of fans. Based on (Talavera, 2019) research and observations during the event, several key points can be highlighted:

Qatar's policy of banning alcoholic beverages in stadiums and public spaces reduced incidents of violence, making it the first family-friendly World Cup. Additionally, Qatar took a bold stance against homosexuality, which conflicts with the religious and cultural values of Qatar and the Gulf region, despite facing a fierce media backlash from Western countries aiming to tarnish its reputation. These countries, some argue, continue to impose their ideological agendas on others in a neo-colonial manner.

In its efforts to combat Islamophobia, Qatar established centers to promote understanding of Islam, including the participation of renowned scholar Zakir Naik. The country also successfully showcased Arab and Islamic identity to global audiences, from the opening ceremony to the closing event. This included cultural elements such as traditional attire, cuisine, hospitality, and songs, embodying the principle of "cultural openness through sports," a key goal for both Qatar and FIFA. This effort aligned with one of the primary objectives of social sustainability: achieving peace and security.

However, some investigations have accused Qatar of human rights violations, particularly concerning the rights of workers and migrants involved in construction projects under harsh conditions. It is estimated that 4,000 deaths occurred, with 1,200 confirmed cases. Qatar, however, emphasized that it had established legal frameworks to prevent such violations by companies across various sectors.

Conclusion

Countries reliant on oil and gas are increasingly compelled to diversify their economies in response to the global shift toward renewable and clean energy sources. The tourism sector, with its various branches, has emerged as a strategic choice due to its ability to build a robust investment base, attract qualified human capital, and benefit from global experiences by fostering relationships between the state and the international community.

Sports tourism is one of the most prominent fields within the tourism industry, as it is the fastest-growing segment compared to other tourism sectors. Global travelers are increasingly drawn to sports activities during their trips, whether sports are the primary purpose of their journey or a secondary interest. Sports events and activities, regardless of their type or scale, attract vast numbers of visitors either as participants or spectators seeking enjoyment and relaxation. Hosting countries strive to infuse a unique cultural identity into sports events, offering visitors an authentic and distinctive tourism experience.

Major sports events, in particular, play a significant role in developing the tourism sector and achieving sustainable economic growth. They serve as key attractions, elevate the host country's global image, and act as catalysts for infrastructure projects such as transportation, accommodation, and telecommunications.

Qatar's pioneering experience in sports tourism has established itself as a unique economic model for countries - especially within MENA region - aiming to diversify their economies beyond oil. With its exceptional success in organizing the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar demonstrated a strong commitment to adhering to environmental sustainability standards across all facilities and structures protecting its natural balance. It also preserved the cultural and religious heritage of its society in all sports and entertainment activities. This approach signaled Qatar's intention to pursue economic growth and investment expansion in sports without compromising its cultural roots and the identity of the Qatari state and people.

Recommendations

- Algeria has a great potential to walk on Qatar's pathway, but developing sports tourism necessitates a focus on developing tourism infrastructure in general and sports facilities in particular.
- Concerned authorities (Ministries of Sports, Tourism, Culture, Public constructions, etc.) must collaborate and coordinate their efforts to build a successful strategy for advancing sports tourism, simultaneously adhering to the principles and objectives of sustainable development.

- Leverage the widespread popularity of sports to promote the country as a tourist destination by transforming sports fans into a loyal customer base for tourism, thus maximizing the ROI.
- Introducing sports to the Algerian society can contribute directly and effectively in the social welfare. Simply by encourage initiatives aimed at increasing physical activity among citizens to enhance quality of life, combat diseases (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, etc.), and address social issues in the community.
- Utilize sports audiences and tourism activities to raise environmental awareness and promote a culture of peace, openness and respect for others.

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