

RESEARCH ARTICLE

DOI: 10.47703/ejeb.v69i2.486



Integration of Islamic Values and Sustainable Tourism: The Case of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

Deniz Can Ekren^{1*}

¹ College of Islamic Studies,
Hamad Bin Khalifa University,
Doha, Qatar

Corresponding author:

*Deniz Can Ekren – M. (Sc.),
College of Islamic Studies,
Hamad Bin Khalifa University,
Doha, Qatar.
Email: denizcanekren@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Erken, D.C. (2025). Integration of Islamic Values and Sustainable Tourism: The Case of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. *Eurasian Journal of Economic and Business Studies*, 69(2), 65-78.

Conflict of interest:

author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ABSTRACT

Hosting international mega-sporting events is increasingly seen as a tool of soft power and a way to promote sustainable development, national values, and tourism culture. The article aims to analyze how Islamic values have been integrated into the strategy of sustainable development and tourism legacy implemented during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Methodologically, the work is based on a qualitative approach combining a case study (based on the example of the 2022 World Cup) and autoethnography, which made it possible to combine the institutional and personal levels of analysis. The empirical base includes structured diary entries by the author, accumulated over eight years of professional participation in the preparation and implementation of sustainability and legacy programs, as well as secondary sources – scientific publications, official FIFA documents and government reports. The results of the study show that in a number of key areas (environmental sustainability, cultural exchange, social responsibility) there is a similarity between the goals of FIFA and Islamic values, which confirms the conscious localization of global standards. Islamic values were not just a background but were actively used in decision-making, programming, and communication with an international audience. In conclusion, it is recommended that religious and cultural values be integrated more deeply into the practice of sustainable development, especially in non-Western contexts, to ensure greater cultural relevance and acceptance in society.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Sports Tourism, Tourism Economy, Islamic Values, Sustainable Development, Social Responsibility

SCSTI: 06.39.01

JEL Code: L83, M54, Z12

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: The study was not sponsored.

EJEBS

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, holding international sports mega-events has become strategically important for states seeking to position themselves and achieve a wide range of socio-economic and cultural objectives. Events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup are seen as powerful instruments of “soft power”, influencing the development of tourism, investment appeal, modernisation of infrastructure, and strengthening national identity. However, as Brannagan and Giulianotti (2018) argued, this projection of soft power can be double-edged, as it may also expose host nations to “soft disempowerment”, a form of reputational risk that arises from intensified global scrutiny of domestic policies and sociocultural norms, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Qatar. In this context, special attention is paid to the tourism sector, which has become one of the major beneficiaries of mega-events. The increase in international tourist arrivals, the development of cultural, religious, and event tourism, and the creation of a positive image for the host country all contribute to tourism's growth as a sustainable development driver.

Hamil and Chadwick (2010) supported this view, describing sports as a deeply embedded sociocultural phenomenon. Today, sports have evolved into a global industry with profound economic, political, social, and technological impacts. Governments increasingly use sports events to attract visitors, boost economies, and garner media attention (Bowdin et al., 2011).

Qatar, the first Muslim Arab country to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, provides unique empirical material for rethinking the relationship between global sustainability standards (including the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and Islamic ethical principles. With Qatar hosting the latest edition of the FWC, which is widely considered one of the most significant global events, attracting billions of viewers worldwide, this research adopts a unique perspective to examine Qatar's role as a host nation. This research uses Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup™ (FWC) as a case study to examine its alignment with

Islamic values - Adl (justice), Mizan (balance), Amanah (responsibility), and Maslahah (public good). These principles, rooted in the Quran and Sunnah, promote inclusivity, harmony with nature, and community well-being, aiming for a lasting legacy beyond the event.

The study employs an autoethnographic approach, drawing on over eight years of the author's direct experience, including roles such as Legacy Analyst, CSR Specialist, and Sustainability Manager. This perspective offers nuanced insights into Qatar's legacy and sustainability programming, complemented by secondary research on mega-events and Islamic values.

The research addresses key questions on the legacies of mega-events, the role of Islamic values in Qatar's sustainability agenda, and lessons for future legacy strategies. Doing so contributes to the literature on mega-events and Islamic ethics and proposes a framework to guide event organizers in leveraging Islamic principles for sustainable development. This study uses the FWC 2022 case study to explore mega-event legacies' positive societal, environmental, and economic impacts. It advocates for a return to Islamic values and ethics to deepen understanding of sustainable development, aligning with Senturk's (2022) concept of “rooted revival”.

The study follows a structured pattern: Section 2 examines the literature on the legacy of mega-events, sustainable development, and Islamic values; Section 3 describes the methodology; Section 4 presents the results of a case study of the 2022 FIFA World Cup; Section 5 contains discussion; Section 6 concludes with a conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of legacy, its definition, and its impacts have been widely debated by scholars like Chappelet and Junod (2006). They emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach addressing financial, economic, social, and environmental aspects while defining legacy as planned or unplanned,

positive and negative - tangible or intangible structures - that outlast the event.

Scholars like Sherwood et al. (2004, 2005) proposed using the “triple bottom line” model to evaluate event legacies. This framework examines the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts of events, aligning with the Brundtland Report's vision for sustainable development, meeting current needs without compromising the future (Brundtland, 1987). Elkington (1998) asserted that organizations in the 21st century should be evaluated based on three core components of the triple bottom line: economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality.

Fredline et al. (2005) identified key performance indicators within these domains to balance positive and negative impacts and potential trade-offs. Economic indicators include net income-to-expenditure ratio, visitor spending, local economic benefits, and macro-level contributions like GDP growth, employment rates, and industry changes, supported by studies like Li and McCabe (2013).

Deery and Jago (2010) outlined the positive and negative social impacts of events on host communities in their work. Positive effects include improved living standards, community pride, cultural preservation, new infrastructure, and enhanced skills. Negative impacts may involve higher living costs, traffic congestion, crime, pollution, and damage to natural or historical sites (Fredline et al., 2003). While mega-events are often framed as catalysts for development, Shin and Li (2013) challenge this narrative, revealing the underlying social costs and contradictions of large-scale urban regeneration projects.

For environmental impacts, indicators include carbon emissions, energy and water usage, waste management, and recycling efforts (Bowdin et al., 2011). Beesley and Chaplin (2011) highlighted the need for strategic planning to assess economic, social, and environmental impacts, mitigate risks, and capitalize on opportunities for long-term benefits. However, a historical review of mega events hosted since 2000, including the

Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, revealed mixed legacies, with some countries faring better than others in achieving wider legacy objectives. Figure 4 is also a testament to the globalization of sports, namely the FIFA World Cup and Olympic games, highlighting how sports extend beyond national boundaries, reaching the continents of Australia, Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America. This further reinforces the scholarly perspective on the globalization of sports, particularly football, as discussed by Dolles and Söderman (2005), Horton (2011), Lee and Kim (2016), and Elamin et al. (2023), among others.

The link between sustainable development and religion has been explored extensively. The fundamental difference between the United Nations-led development agenda in the form of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Islamic value-driven approach lies in the comprehensive worldview and guidance offered by Islam encompasses all facets of life, including the relationship between humanity and the environment, as referenced in Ahmed (1998). According to Sarkawi et al. (2016) argued that modern sustainability concepts overlook Muslims' religious duty to maintain balance in resource management and respect natural order as acts of worship to seek God's mercy and achieve Jannah (Heaven), the ultimate goal. Al-Jayyousi et al. (2023) examined how Islamic principles can inform climate policy and enhance institutional practices.

The Holy Quran emphasizes Islamic values - Adl (justice), Mizan (balance), Amanah (responsibility), and Maslahah (public good), highlighting humanity's stewardship (Khalifah) and the importance of balancing resource use with environmental protection. Bsoul et al. (2022) argued that we can only encourage responsible resource management, environmental protection, and sustainable development through improved ethical and moral relationships toward nature. However, this responsibility extends beyond the individual to wider public policy implications. The concept of maslahah (public good) underscores the importance of policy and

actions benefitting society. These values, forming the foundation of this research, are

structured in the Bayt Al Maslahah model illustrated in Figure 1 below.

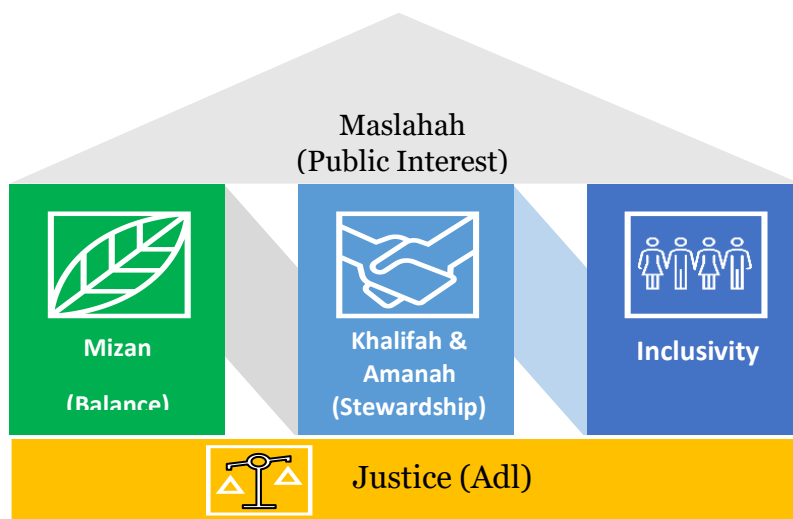


FIGURE 1. Bayt Al Maslahah - Five core Islamic Principles that drive sustainability and legacy thinking

The presented diagram visualizes a conceptual model that reflects the integration of Islamic values into an approach to sustainable development and the design of socially significant initiatives. It is made as a symbolic house, with each structural part reflecting an ethical principle rooted in Islamic faith. Equity (Adl) is the model's foundation, interpreted as the basis for all social, environmental, and economic sustainability. All components aim to achieve the highest goal represented at the top - the public good, which serves as a synthesis of efforts to ensure sustainable development with moral imperatives. Therefore, the model provides a theoretical construct and a practical framework for creating sustainable policies and programs focusing on long-term public benefits and cultural relevance. It is particularly important, in the context of international mega-events, to develop Islamic and cultural tourism and to position Muslim countries as responsible actors in global sustainable development. The principles reflected in this model can be applied to designing tourism initiatives that combine ethical expediency, respect for cultural legacy, and the promotion of socially-oriented values.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study follows a qualitative research strategy that combines case study and autoethnographic methods to examine the social, environmental, and economic legacies of the FWC 2022 in Qatar. Simultaneously, the research explored how Islamic values and ethics can inform and enrich understandings of sustainable development through the lens of Recep Şentürk's (2022) concept of rooted revival, which emphasizes the adaptation of global frameworks to local moral and epistemological foundations.

The study adopts a case study strategy with the FWC 2022 in Qatar serving as the contemporary phenomenon under investigation using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). As a mega-event situated in a non-Western context, organized for the first time by an Arab Muslim country, the World Cup offers a fertile ground for examining legacy impacts beyond typical Western paradigms. This is complemented by ethnographic methods to uncover lived experiences, cultural narratives, and social dynamics surrounding the event's implementation and aftermath (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To overcome the limitation of

providing a surface level or detached analyses in legacy studies, this research integrates autoethnography as a key component.

Through reflective engagement, this approach allows the researcher, situated within the Qatari context, to offer insider insights into the socio-cultural meanings of sustainability, Islamic ethics, and legacy formation. The decision to incorporate autoethnographic approach stemmed from its ability to provide such nuanced understanding of personal experiences, complementing conventional research methods gaps outlined by Amos (2022).

Data collection sources included journal entries, reflective practices and secondary literature on mega-event legacies and Islamic values. The author kept a structured journal over eight years, documenting personal observations, lessons learned, and professional encounters related to FWC 2022. Reflective practices were undertaken to assess how these experiences align or contrast with Islamic ethical values, legacy discourse, and local public sentiment. These personal accounts were supplemented with secondary research from literature on mega-events and Islamic values.

Within the framework of the study, a consistent set of steps was implemented to identify the relationship between Islamic values and sustainable development. Specifically, the steps below are:

(1) goals and research questions were formulated, focusing on the social, environmental and economic aspects of the legacy of mega-events in the Islamic context;

(2) a methodological approach based on a combination of case study and autoethnography was chosen, which made it possible to combine the analysis of empirical data with the author's personal experience and professional observations;

(3) systematic accumulation of data, including the maintenance of a structured diary for eight years, reflexive practices and the collection of secondary information from scientific publications, official documents and the media;

(4) based on the collected material, a qualitative analysis was conducted with elements of a thematic approach aimed at identifying key motivations and correlations between sustainability practices and Islamic ethical principles such as fairness, balance, responsibility, and the public good;

(5) the interpretation of the data obtained from the perspective of research reflection, comparison with the theoretical model of Bayt Al Maslahah, as well as the formulation of conclusions and recommendations on integrating Islamic values into organizing international events. This step-by-step approach provided a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study and allowed us to develop relevant proposals for future research and practice.

The study does not violate privacy standards and is based on personal observations and publicly available information. All personal data involved in the reflection has been depersonalized. The research was conducted from a position combining elements of insider and outsider approaches. Thus, during the analysis, there was access to internal processes, value-based solutions and social dynamics in the organization. Cultural and religious affiliation with the Islamic tradition has provided a deeper understanding of implementing and communicating Islamic ethical principles. Like any autoethnographic approach, this study is subject to the risk of subjectivity. However, the author's conscious reflexivity and critical review of the data obtained minimizes this risk.

This paper recognizes the possibility of focusing on positive interpretations consistent with promoted Islamic values while not adequately highlighting organizational shortcomings, especially in those aspects that relate directly to legacy programs. There is also a risk of perceiving the perspective presented as universal, when other groups, including local Qatari citizens, non-Muslim observers, and critics may view the event and its legacy differently.

4. RESULTS

In recent decades, hosting mega sporting events has become a strategic instrument for countries aiming to improve their international visibility and pursue diverse development objectives. Mega sporting events significantly impact sociological, political, cultural, and economic spheres, fostering connections to global society (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006). However, the developmental trajectories resulting from such events vary considerably across host nations.

Among recent FIFA World Cup host countries, Qatar stands out as the smallest yet wealthiest country per capita to host the FIFA World Cup. In terms of its per capita wealth and its ability to invest in global events without economic strain, Qatar presents a unique case of leveraging resource wealth for global engagement.

Figure 2 illustrates the stark contrast in GDP per capita among the last four FIFA World Cup host countries, emphasizing Qatar's exceptional economic position.

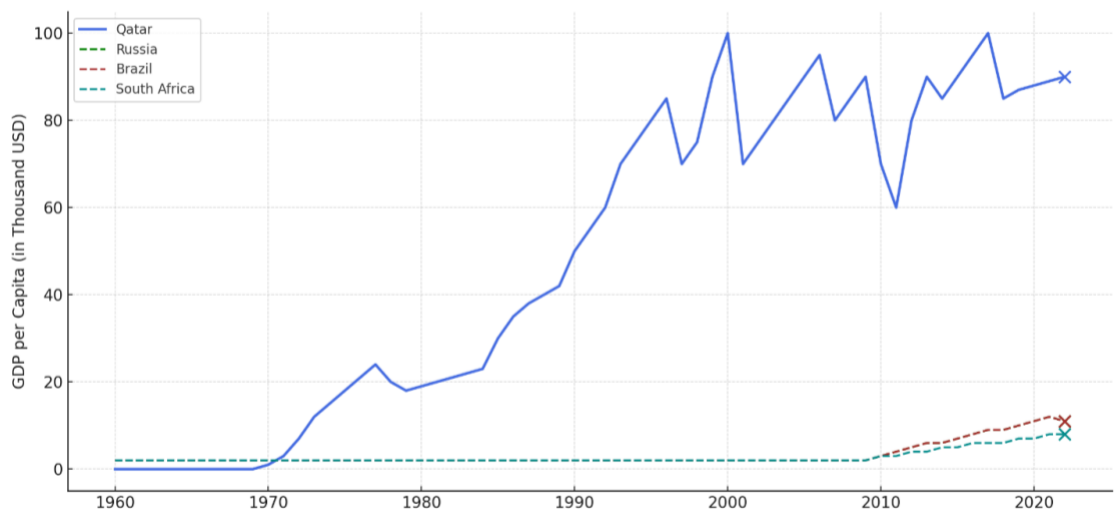


FIGURE 2. Comparison between the last four countries to host the FIFA World Cup in terms of GDP per capita in USD, 1960-2022

Note: compiled based on the source World Bank (2022)

Qatar stands out as the smallest yet wealthiest nation per capita to host the FIFA World Cup, with a GDP per capita of \$87,661 in 2022, surpassing South Africa (\$6,766) by more than 13 times and Russia (\$15,270) by over 6 times. Cornelissen et al. (2011) discussed the necessity of conducting sustained legacy evaluations over several decades to ensure long-term positive impacts. Li and McCabe (2013) outlined the stages of legacy—short, medium, and long-term. Early signs of positive transformation from the FIFA World Cup 2022 include advancements in infrastructure, such as the development of sporting facilities, urban expansion, and improved transport networks. Brannagan and

Giulianotti (2018) marked those nations leveraging soft power, such as Qatar, risk "soft disempowerment," which attracts global scrutiny over issues like human rights, environmental impact, financial costs, and the post-event use of facilities. Addressing these concerns requires comprehensive research to evaluate criticisms and the Qatari government's strategies for mitigation over short, medium, and long-term periods.

The rapid acceleration in key sectors such as highways, bridges, tunnels, intersections, sewerage networks, and cycling tracks reflects a significant transformation in Qatar's infrastructure, demonstrating the country's commitment to building world-class facilities

while aligning with sustainable development goals. Figure 3 illustrates the rapid acceleration

of infrastructure development in Qatar between the periods of 1950-2013 and 2013-2022.

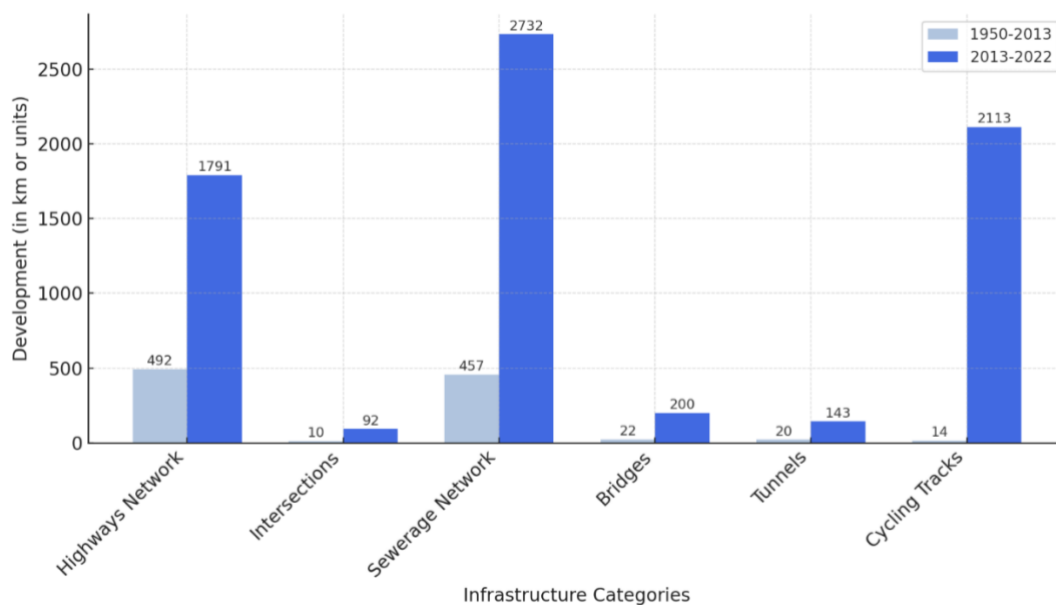


FIGURE 3. Comparison between infrastructure development in Qatar between 1950-2013 to 2023-2022

Note: compiled based on source Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (2022)

Qatar's hydrocarbon wealth allowed it to host the mega-event without sacrificing investment in essential public services like healthcare and education or incurring significant debt, unlike the Athens 2004 Olympics and Brazil's 2014 and 2016 events (Becatoros, 2012; Smith, 2012). While questions remain about the utilization of Qatar's FIFA World Cup 2022 infrastructure, most stadiums have seen use during the AFC Asian Cup 2023 and Qatar Stars League matches. EuroNews (2023) reports that Ahmad Bin Ali and Al Janoub stadiums will have their capacities halved, with 40,000 seats donated to sub-Saharan African nations to develop football infrastructure yet to materialize. However, conversion and maintenance costs for these facilities could pose long-term challenges if underutilized over their 30-50-year lifecycle.

Despite criticism, Qatar's country brand index improved significantly, rising from 70 in 2010 to 18 in 2020, showcasing its progress in achieving hard and soft legacy goals even before hosting the FIFA World Cup. These include physical transformation, increased global recognition, and positioning Qatar as a hub for business and tourism with lasting benefits.

Tourism has also surged post-event, nearly doubling from 2.1 million visitors in 2019 to over 4 million in 2023 (see Figure 4 for details).

Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup aligned with its Sustainability Strategy. There was a prioritized cultural exchange, Islamic culture, customs, and values, dispelling stereotypes and promoting broader acceptance of Islam. Despite facing criticism, particularly from Western media, regarding issues like

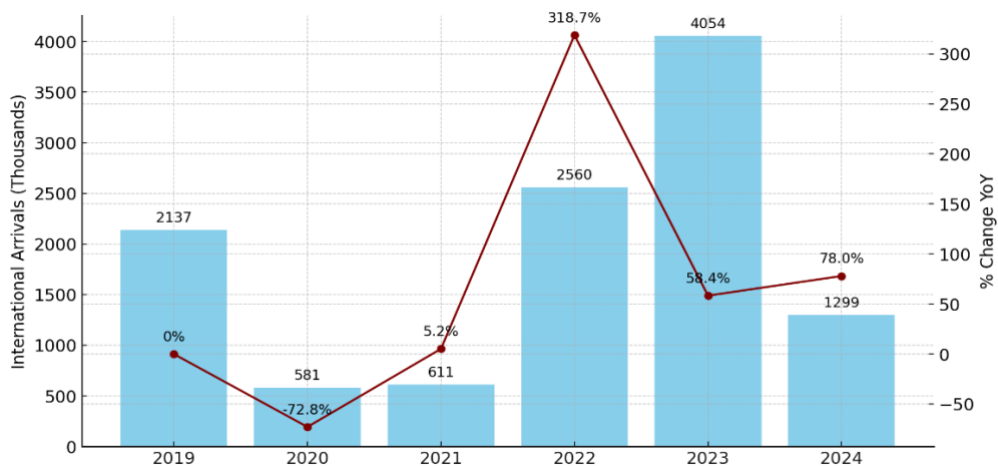


FIGURE 4. International arrivals to Qatar by year, 2019-2024

Note: compiled based on source Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (2022)

Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup aligned with its Sustainability Strategy. There was a prioritized cultural exchange, Islamic culture, customs, and values, dispelling stereotypes and promoting broader acceptance of Islam. Despite facing criticism, particularly from Western media, regarding issues like workers' welfare and LGBTQ+ rights, Qatar's efforts to foster understanding and address cultural divides were significant. Green (2021) and Elamin (2023) documented how criticisms of Qatar often transformed into Islamophobic narratives, reinforcing a divisive 'East vs. West' discourse. Nevertheless, in 2024, figures

showed promising growth (already 1.3 million visitors recorded in January-February) in international arrivals to Qatar. However, maintaining these numbers over the long term may be influenced by various factors, which makes it challenging to attribute future tourism impacts solely to the FIFA World Cup. The World Cup served as a significant platform for cultural exchange. Despite criticism, Qatar proved that a Muslim Arab nation could host an exceptional World Cup, praised by FIFA's president as the best. Fans echoed this sentiment, with 78% in a BBC poll (Figure 5) naming it the 'best of the century'.

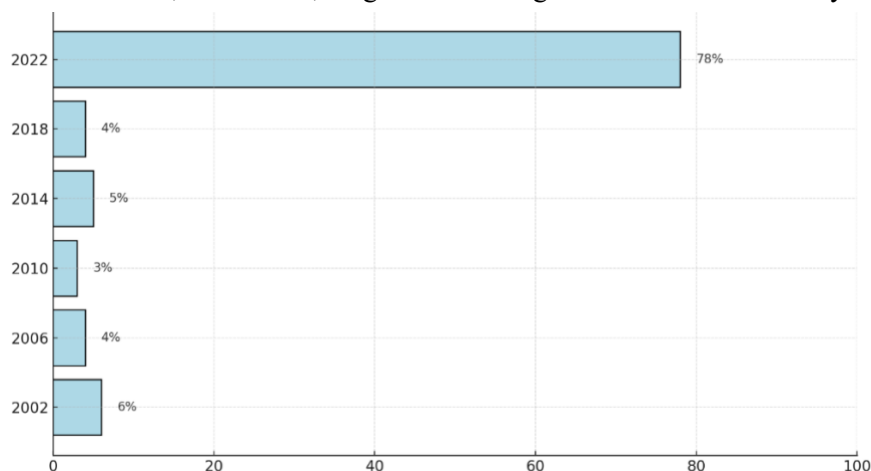


FIGURE 5. BBC poll on best World Cup of the century

Note: compiled on source BBC Sport (2022)

In his foreword to Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani emphasized the importance of economic and social justice, harmony with nature, and strong Islamic and family values. While Qatar did not explicitly aim to promote these values during the FIFA World Cup 2022, they were still influential, reflecting Qatar's Arab and Muslim identity. Islamic principles

emerged through cultural exchange and efforts to showcase the region's identity on the global stage.

This research identifies seven areas where Qatar's leadership integrated Islamic values with FIFA's sustainability guidelines. These areas demonstrate alignment in sustainability and CSR strategies but divergence in alcohol policies and LGBTQ+ promotion. The following Table 1 illustrates these areas of convergence and divergence.

TABLE 1. Convergence and divergence of values between FIFA's Sustainability Agenda and Islamic Principles during FIFA World Cup 2022

No.	FIFA Driven Sustainability Agenda	Islamic Value Driven Decision Making	Convergence or Divergence of Values
1	Cultural Exchange	Promoting mutual understanding and tolerance	Convergence / Shared values
2	Sustainability at the heart of the FWC 2022	Emphasis on long-term sustainability	Convergence / Shared values
3	Corporate Social Responsibility Programs and Establishment of Waqf (Generation Amazing Foundation)	Encouraging social responsibility and charitable actions	Convergence / Shared values
4	Dawa efforts to promote Islamic principles	Promoting Islamic values through cultural exchange	Convergence / Shared values
5	Welcoming the world but opposing the acceptance of LGBTQ+ movement	Upholding traditional Islamic values and beliefs	Divergence
6	Banning alcohol in wider public parks and stadiums	Aligning with Islamic principles on alcohol consumption	Divergence
7	Donation of assets after the tournament to earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria	Charity and helping those in need (Waqf concept)	Neutral position

Note: author's elaboration

Cultural Exchange

The FIFA World Cup 2022 served as a platform for cultural exchange, with the strongest focus on the rich history, culture, and hospitality. Thus, cultural understanding aligned with FIFA's sustainability strategy has become a fine foundation for promoting inclusivity and diversity in line with Islamic principles, and through investments such as the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar deliberately delivered a diverse collection of Islamic artifacts, thus making itself a cultural hub (Salim, 2013).

In 2019, Qatar further solidified its cultural influence with the opening of the National

Museum, which focuses on three chapters of Qatari history. Located near Souq Waqif and the Museum of Islamic Art, it contributes to the cultural district in Doha's historic center. Moreover, visa regulations were relaxed, which attracted international visitors and promoted Qatar's cultural richness, supporting the country's position as a cultural hub (Davis, 2022).

Sustainability at the Heart of the FWC 2022

The FIFA World Cup 2022 was also a key area where FIFA's sustainability agenda converged with Islamic values, particularly those outlined in Qatar National Vision (QNV)

2030. Organizers committed to five key areas of the Sustainability Strategy: human capital development and worker rights, inclusive tournament experience, driving economic growth, implementing innovative environmental solutions, and advocating for good governance and ethical business standards. The set efforts resulted in earning the ISO 20121 certification for event sustainability (ISO, 2024).

The FWC 2022 organizers implemented a Sustainable Procurement Policy that addressed the preparation, delivery, and post-event activities to safeguard human rights, enhance worker well-being, promote economic growth, and foster environmental responsibility across the supply chain. A governance structure was established between FIFA, The FWC Qatar 2022 LLC, and the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. This structure included a Sustainability Steering Group for strategic oversight and a Sustainability Working Group responsible for implementation and reporting progress. Progress reports were published to ensure transparency, detailing goals and outcomes during and after the tournament.

Key sustainability achievements highlighted in the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy's post-event report include:

- stadiums designed to be 30% more energy-efficient and use 42% less water than global benchmarks;
- recycling or composting 77% of stadium waste, producing 8 million bottles from recycled plastic;
- planting 1 million trees to support climate action and offsetting half of the event emissions through solar energy investments and carbon credits;
- low-carbon transport initiatives, including metro, light rail, 750 electric buses, and over 500 charging stations, reduce the tournament's 119,000 daily car journeys;
- sustainable procurement practices that promoted local contractors, minimized resource use, and protected human rights, covering 90% of high-risk contracts.

These efforts reflect Islamic stewardship and sound public principles, ensuring an enduring environmental legacy for Qatar.

Corporate Social Responsibility Programs and Establishment of Waqf (Generation Amazing Foundation)

In 2010, Qatar's FWC 2022 bid committee launched the Generation Amazing (GA) program, using football to create social change among vulnerable youth worldwide (Ekren & Anagnostopoulos, 2023). This voluntary initiative is not a FIFA requirement, and it continues post-tournament. GA established community clubs, football pitches, and football-for-development programs to develop life skills such as leadership, communication, and organization. As a legacy of the World Cup, GA impacted over one million people across 75 countries. The GA foundation acts by the Islamic Waqf concept, emphasizing justice, fairness, responsibility, and public good, ensuring lasting benefits globally.

Dawa Efforts to Promote Islamic Principles

Qatar used the FIFA World Cup 2022 to introduce Islam to visitors and address misconceptions. Supported by scholars like Dr. Zakir Naik and Nouman Ali Khan, Qatar promoted Islamic teachings through murals, free booklets, and guided tours at key locations, such as Souq Waqif and the Sheikh Abdulla bin Zaid Islamic Cultural Center. Volunteers in Doha's Katara cultural district also offered coffee, dates, and Islamic literature. The state policy aligned with *maslahah* (public good) promotion and Qatar's commitment to spreading Islamic values. Syrian volunteer Ziad Fateh reported that FWC 2022 is "an opportunity to introduce millions of people to Islam" and change "misconceptions" about a religion that is linked mainly in the West to radicalization (VOA News, 2022). Even though the event's organizers did not directly organize the Dawa activities, they were managed by local actors.

Welcoming the world while opposing the imposition of LGBTQ+ acceptance

FIFA President Gianni Infantino openly supported the LGBTQI+ community during the FIFA World Cup 2022 (CNBC, 2022). However, Qatar faced criticism for its laws criminalizing same-sex activity, which align with the country's constitution and Islamic Sharia law. These laws prohibit same-sex sexual activity under the Penal Code (Law No. 11, 2004).

Nasser Al Khater, CEO of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 LLC, emphasized Qatar's welcoming approach despite its conservative stance: "We are open, welcoming, and hospitable. We understand cultural differences and expect people to respect our culture".

Despite criticism from Western media and politicians, Qatar maintained its Islamic values, refusing to adopt Western laws on LGBTQ+ rights. As stated by Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al Kaabi, Qatar would not change its laws or values to meet Western expectations (Doha News, 2022). Moreover, these statements highlighted the consistency of Qatar's leadership on this issue and demonstrated a divergence from FIFA's inclusivity agenda, in line with the principles of *maslahah* (public good).

Banning alcohol in more expansive public parks and stadiums

Two days before the first match, Qatar decided to ban alcohol for general spectators in stadiums, despite FIFA's long-standing partnership with Budweiser. Alcohol was restricted to VIP and hospitality zones. Interestingly, the ban increased the sales of Budweiser's non-alcoholic beer, 'Bud Zero,' at the event (The Guardian, 2022).

The regulations were based on the principles of *maslahah* and thus consistent with Islamic values, reflected in Qatar's Penal Code (Law No. 11, 2004, Article 270), which prohibits drinking alcohol in public places. The media reported that this measure helped create a safer and more family-friendly environment for female fans (Reuters, 2022).

Donation of assets after the tournament to earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria

The devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria on February 6, 2023, left cities and town centers in ruins and claimed the lives of more than 53,000 people in Türkiye and 5,900 in Syria (Al Jazeera, 2023; Reuters, 2023). Qatar promptly aided Türkiye and Syria by dispatching portable homes used by fans during the FWC 2022 to earthquake-affected areas (Al Jazeera, 2024). This was a decision taken by the Qatari local authorities and local organizing committee; however, FIFA did not oppose this move. This act reflects Islamic principles of charitable giving, which Awang (2017) identifies as vital for individual and societal welfare. Qatar's 10,000 mobile housing units donation ensures the FWC 2022 legacy supports earthquake-affected regions. Donating assets and infrastructure embodies Islamic values of justice, fairness, responsibility, and public good, aligning with the *ummatic* concept and the tournament's strategy of aiding needy countries.

Recommendations

This research offers valuable insights from Qatar for Muslim event organizers, NGOs, and governments, guiding them in operationalizing Islamic principles to contemporary events and projects for an enduring legacy.

While organizations may face challenges such as resistance to change, financial constraints, and lack of resources, design thinking can help address these issues by:

(1) Integration of Islamic values: workshops, governance frameworks, and training programs can embed values like *Adl*, *Mizan*, *Khalifah*, *Amanah*, and *Maslahah* into organizational policies, procedures, and business models.

(2) Resistance to change: lack of management commitment and a culture supporting sustainability can hinder progress. Design thinking fosters problem-solving and supports adopting sustainable practices by building a culture of commitment.

(3) Financial costs: emphasizing long-term benefits, such as cost savings and regulatory compliance, can offset initial expenses.

(4) Measuring sustainability: combining an Islamic value-based framework with recognized ESG metrics can help monitor and report on environmental and social capital performance.

(5) Environmental and Social Audits: Regular audits and collaboration with suppliers can improve sustainability across the supply chain.

(6) While design thinking offers solutions, it may be time-consuming and costly without focusing on root causes. The study advocates reconnecting with Islamic values to make sustainability culturally relevant and easier to adopt in Muslim-majority nations.

Further research is needed to assess the FIFA World Cup's post-event legacy in Qatar, focusing on human, social, environmental, and economic impacts over the mid (3–5 years) and long-term (5–10 years) periods and their role in Qatar's development. Studies should also evaluate events hosted by other Muslim nations, examining their experiences, sustainability adoption, and integration of Islamic values to identify gaps in this field.

Current literature lacks insights into the opinions and attitudes of non-Muslim fans toward Qatar during the mega-event, compared with Western media narratives. Analyzing shifts in perceptions among fans who visited Qatar and those who watched the event remotely would be valuable.

A limitation of the study is its reliance on Islamic values, which may restrict broader acceptance. A parallel model based on Abrahamic prophetic values, incorporating Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, is recommended to address this. This approach would involve interfaith dialogue partnerships with religious leaders, organizations, and institutions to foster broader understanding and collaboration.

5. CONCLUSION

The study developed a new framework for assessing the legacy of mega-events through the lens of Islamic ethics, using the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar as a case study. The analysis focused on how Islamic principles—*Adl* (justice), *Mizan* (balance), *Maslahah* (public good), *Khalifah* (stewardship), and *Amanah* (responsibility)—were reflected in the tournament's planning and execution and how they aligned with FIFA's sustainability agenda. The findings showed that Islamic values were not externally imposed but inherent to Qatari leadership's decision-making culture. These principles shaped choices related to infrastructure, social programs, environmental planning, and cultural positioning, reinforcing Qatar's identity as a conservative Muslim nation.

The research recommends moving beyond leadership-centric applications of Islamic ethics toward institutionalizing Islamic values within event governance systems, particularly when events involve international teams with diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, Islamic values are not exceptional but part of a coherent ethical system applicable to modern global events.

The study outlines a conceptual framework based on shared Abrahamic values as a complementary proposition. While not applied in the context of Qatar's FIFA World Cup 2022, this model may facilitate interfaith cooperation across Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and broaden the ethical applicability of sustainability efforts in diverse religious contexts. This approach may enhance inclusivity in sustainability discourse while preserving ethical consistency rooted in religious traditions.

For future application, the study calls on Muslim-majority countries, policymakers, event organizers, and civil society actors to actively incorporate Islamic ethical teachings in sustainability agendas. This requires contextual adaptation of core principles to reflect local conditions while advancing the broader objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) through culturally resonant strategies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Writing – original draft: Deniz Can Ekren.
Conceptualization: Deniz Can Ekren.
Formal analysis and investigation: Deniz Can Ekren.
Funding acquisition and research administration: Deniz Can Ekren.
Development of research methodology: Deniz Can Ekren.
Resources: Deniz Can Ekren.
Software and supervisions: Deniz Can Ekren.
Data collection, analysis and interpretation: Deniz Can Ekren.
Visualization: Deniz Can Ekren.
Writing review and editing research: Deniz Can Ekren.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A., (1998). *Discovering Islam* (1st edition). Routledge.
- Al Jazeera. (2023). Qatar ships World Cup portable homes to quake-affected Turkey. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/5/qatar-ships-world-cup-portable-homes-to-quake-affected-turkey>
- Al Jazeera. (2024, February 6). Anger as Turkey marks anniversary of devastating earthquake. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/6/anger-as-turkey-marks-anniversary-of-devastating-earthquake>
- Al-Jayyousi, O., Hasan, W.N.W., Mohamed Saniff, S., Sever, S.D., & Tok, E. (2023) A critical discourse analysis on climate change in a globalized world: The nexus of Islam and sustainable development. *Sustainability*, 15(19), 14515. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151914515>
- Amos, D. (2022). Conducting research by mixed methods: An autoethnography account of a PhD research in facilities management from a developing country. *Facilities*, 40 (13/14), 828-844. <https://doi.org/10.1108/F-12-2021-0124>
- BBC Sport. (2022). Which was the best World Cup this century? [Poll results]. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/64075135>
- Beesley, L.G., & Chalip, L. (2011). Seeking (and not seeking) to leverage mega-sport events in non-host destinations: The case of Shanghai and the Beijing Olympics. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 16(4), 323-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2011.635016>
- Brannagan, P. & Giulianotti, R. (2018). The soft power-soft disempowerment nexus: The case of Qatar. *International Affairs*, 94(5), 1139-1157. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy125>
- Bowdin, G., Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R. & McDonnell, I. (2011). *Events management*. (3rd Edition). Routledge.
- Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>
- CNBC. (2022). *Qatar World Cup 2022: Teams ax pro-LGBTQ armbands after FIFA threats*. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/21/qatar-world-cup-2022-teams-drop-lgbtq-armbands-after-fifa-threats.html>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Deery, M. & Jago, L. (2010). Social impacts of events and the role of anti-social behaviour. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 1(1), 8-28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17852951011029289>
- Doha News. (2022). *LGBTQ welcome to visit Qatar, but West should not 'dictate' our beliefs, says energy minister*. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://dohaneews.co/lgbtq-welcome-to-visit-qatar-but-west-should-not-dictate-our-beliefs-says-energy-minister/>

- Dolles, H. & Söderman, S. (2005). *Globalization of sports - The case of professional football and its international management challenges*. Working paper no. 05/1, German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo.
- Elamin, M.O.I., (2023). Countering Islamophobia through Sports: Qatar's Initiatives during the 2022 FIFA World Cup. *International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology*, 10(1), 1568-1578. <https://doi.org/10.15379/ijmst.v10i1.2997>
- Elkington, J.B. (1998). Partnerships from cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st-century business. *Environmental Quality Management*, 8, 37-51. <https://doi.org/10.1002/TQEM.3310080106>
- Fredline, L., Jago, L. and Deery, M. (2003). The Development of a Generic Scale to Measure the Social Impacts of Events. *Event Management*, 8, 23-37. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599503108751676>
- FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 (2024). Retrieved April 6, 2025, from https://cdnlegacy.azureedge.net/files-en/Qatar_2022_Amazing_Delivered.pdf
- FIFA (2024). World Cup Qatar 2022 Sustainability Policy. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/2797014fe0b78979/original/FIFA-World-Cup-Qatar-2022-Sustainability-Policy.pdf>
- International Organization for Standardization. (2024). *ISO 20121: Event sustainability management systems – Requirements with guidance for use*. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.iso.org/standard/54552.html>
- Lee, B. and Kim, T. (2016). A study on the birth and globalization of sports originated from each continent. *Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation*, 12(1), 2-9. <https://doi.org/10.12965/jer.150248>
- Reuters. (2022, December 6). Female fans feel safe at Qatar World Cup thanks to reduced alcohol consumption. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/female-fans-feel-safe-qatar-world-cup-thanks-reduced-alcohol-consumption-2022-12-06/>
- Reuters. (2023). Qatar ships World Cup fan accommodation to Turkey, Syria earthquake zones. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/qatar-ships-world-cup-fan-accommodation-turkey-syria-earthquake-zones-2023-02-13/>
- Sarkawi, A., Abdullah, A., & Dali, N.M. (2016). The Concept of Sustainability From The Islamic Perspective. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 9(5), 112–116.
- Senturk, R. (2022). *Decolonizing Social Sciences: From Uniplexity to Multiplexity* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAmX8vYcZeo>
- Sherwood, P., Jago, L. & Deery, M. (2004). Sustainability reporting: An application for the evaluation of special events. In C. Cooper et al. (Eds), *paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education*. Brisbane: University of Queensland.
- Sherwood, P., Jago, L. & Deery, M. (2005). *Unlocking the triple bottom line of special event evaluations: What are the key impacts?* Third International Event Management Research Conference. Sydney: University of Technology.
- Shin, H. & Li, B. (2013). Whose games? The costs of being “Olympic citizens” in Beijing. *Environment and Urbanization*, 25(2), 681-696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813501139>
- Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy. (2022). Qatar 2022: Amazing delivered. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://azureedge.net>
- The Guardian. (2022). *Budweiser to give beer it cannot sell at World Cup to winners*. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/22/budweiser-to-give-beer-it-cannot-sell-at-world-cup-to-winners>
- VOA News. (2022, December 4). *World Cup host Qatar seeks to change minds on Islam*. Retrieved April 6, 2025, from <https://www.voanews.com/a/world-cup-host-qatar-seeks-to-change-minds-on-islam/6862327.html>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

***Deniz Can Erken** – M. (Sc.), College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar. Email: denizcanekren@gmail.com. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2697-317X>