



The 2022 FIFA World Cup: Qatar's Nation Branding to Promote Cultural Understanding in Post COVID-19

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini akan mengkaji upaya nation branding Qatar dalam perhelatan mega event Piala Dunia FIFA 2022. Dengan tujuan tersebut, fokus analisis akan mengarah pada strategi Qatar dalam melakukan nation branding dan diplomasi publik untuk membawa citra dan identitas Islam kepada masyarakat dunia. Organisasi seperti Piala Dunia FIFA merupakan tonggak penting dalam sejarah, oleh karena itu, persaingan untuk menjadi tuan rumah Piala Dunia semakin ketat, dan Qatar mencetak sejarah sebagai negara Arab pertama di Timur Tengah yang mengubah jalannya sejarah Piala Dunia. Secara keseluruhan, Piala Dunia di Qatar tampaknya telah menghilangkan banyak mitos dan menanamkan banyak kebaikan, rasa hormat, dan keramahan ketika mengunjungi negara Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan konsep nation branding dari Simon Anholt. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan teknik deskriptif. Temuan dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa: pertama, implikasi diplomasi publik yang digaungkan oleh Qatar selama Piala Dunia 2022 berhasil meruntuhkan stigma buruk dan stereotip dunia terhadap Islam; kedua, negara Qatar berkontribusi dalam memperlihatkan secara jelas budaya lokal Arab dan Islam serta menonjolkan aspek-aspek peradaban Arab-Islam kepada dunia; dan ketiga, Piala Dunia FIFA 2022 akan menjadi acara yang luar biasa dengan kepentingan yang tidak hanya terbatas pada kompetisi sepak bola, tetapi lebih merupakan manifestasi dari tujuan yang telah ditetapkan Qatar dalam Visi Nasional Qatar 2030, yang meliputi diversifikasi ekonomi, dukungan untuk inisiatif lingkungan, pembangunan manusia, dan kemajuan sosial.

Kata kunci: Qatar, Piala Dunia FIFA, Nation Branding, Diplomasi Publik, Islam

Abstract

This paper will examine Qatar's nation branding efforts during the 2022 FIFA World Cup mega event. With this aim, the focus of the analysis will lead to Qatar's strategy in carrying out nation branding and public diplomacy to bring the image and identity of Islam to the world community. Organizations like the FIFA World Cup are important milestones in history; therefore, the competition to host the World Cup is getting tougher, and Qatar makes history as the first Arab country in the Middle East to change the course of World Cup history. Overall, the World Cup in Qatar seems to have dispelled many myths and instilled a lot of kindness, respect, and hospitality when visiting a Muslim country. This paper uses the concept of nation branding from Simon Anholt. This research uses qualitative research methods with descriptive techniques. The findings of this paper are that: first, the implications of public diplomacy echoed by Qatar during the 2022 World Cup succeeded in breaking down the bad stigma and world stereotypes towards Islam; secondly, the state of Qatar contributes to clearly showing local Arab and Islamic culture and highlighting aspects of Arab-Islamic civilization to the world; and thirdly, The 2022 FIFA World Cup will be an extraordinary event with interests that are not only limited to football competitions but rather a manifestation



of the goals that Qatar has set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030, which include economic diversification, support for environmental initiatives, human development, and social progress.

Key words: Qatar, FIFA World Cup, Nation Branding, Public Diplomacy, Islam

INTRODUCTION

The FIFA World Cup is the world's largest international sporting competition in the field of football. The tournament has been held since 1930 with the first host held by Uruguay with a 4-year procurement period. Football itself is more than just a sport but a tool of diplomacy for countries in the world with various forms, both economic, political, social and cultural and so forth. The 2022 FIFA World Cup which has just been held has received enormous attention from lovers of this sport and the international community is no exception. The reason is, the host in this tournament is held by Qatar which in fact is the second and first Asian country in the Middle East region which is the main driver in organizing this World Cup, in addition to organizing this prestigious event after the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since the last 2 years. COVID-19 not only brings many changes in the economy, politics and Health to make a lot of new regulations but also has an impact on socio-cultural life and so on that can affect human views on various things. Qatar is not a country with a football culture if taken into account, even so the richest country in the region and the world with the third largest gas and oil mines in the world deserves to host the 2022 World Cup beating its competitors America, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

FIFA World Cup 2022 is held offline in 8 stadiums spread across different regions of Qatar for 28 days (FIFA World Cup 2022, 2022). This is a great opportunity for the host country for Post-COVID-19 recovery by doing nation branding. Although the development of tourism during the FIFA World Cup is important in improving the economy, it can also blend with the conservative traditions and culture of the region. Qatar is an Arab country in the Middle East that is predominantly Wahhabi, although not as strict as Saudi Arabia and unlike Dubai which is relatively liberal. Since Qatar won the 2022 FIFA World Cup on December 2, 2010, many concerns have been raised both internally and externally about how to deal with football fans, especially fanatic supporters who are likely to drink and party on the streets of Qatar. Undoubtedly, certain social rules and taboos must be observed by all visitors as well as residents. Voices from outside the region have debated issues related to alcohol consumption, dress codes, the human rights situation and about the overall unease over the experience in a conservative environment. The Islamic State looks bad in the eyes of the West because of its conservative handling of sensitive social taboos.

This research comes up with the question, "What are the strategies and steps of Qatar with all its unique culture and identity in promoting Cultural Understanding to the world at large?". This is very interesting to study by looking at and reflecting on previous research and the euphoria of the FIFA World Cup phenomenon that shortly occurred. This research is racing on the theory and concept of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding to analyze these problems with the aim that this research can be a form of contribution in the world of research and science, especially Islam and can be a reference for further research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative research methods that are descriptive analysis. Qualitative research is an approach to explore and interpret the information obtained related to Qatar as the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Data and information are obtained through secondary data obtained through literature including books, reports and various articles, websites and articles related to the research topic. For data collection itself, the method used is the study of literature. If the entire data has been collected, it will be processed to find answers to research problems.

DISCUSSION

Promote Cultural Understanding of Qatar to the Worldwide



The 2022 Qatar World Cup Mega Event offers something different from previous events. This all-time famous football tournament is used by Qatar to promote cultural diversity and promote tolerance and connectivity between cultures and people. Moreover, this football tournament was held in a Muslim Arab country and showed that the small and medium-sized state of Qatar was able to host a global event in order to uniting global efforts to meet common challenges.

As the preeminent and most popular tournament in the world, Qatar expects to host one million visitors during the match. This is a remarkable phenomenon for exchanges between locals and people from all over the world that can certainly enhance cultural understanding as well as showcase what is on offer while in Qatar. Various approaches are carried out by Qatar itself to expand the existing values in the state of Qatar. One of them with the realization of the opening ceremony held at the Al-Bayt Stadium. In the opening, calling the verses of the Qur'an which is interpreted acceptance of differences and diversity among mankind.

Many have praised Qatar's success in hosting A Different World Cup than before. The 2022 World Cup offers a unique and extraordinary experience where the main objective is to unite the world in peace and friendship and create a good rapprochement between the peoples of the world. The message of tolerance in the World Cup is presented in Qatar's regional and international efforts that want the principle of tolerance and spread a culture that can coexist in order to create a healthy and decent environment for society. The FIFA president also said that this football tournament has united the world for the first time in the history of the Modern World Cup (Antara News.com, 2022).

In addition, promoting Qatar's own culture can be seen from the official mascot of the 2022 World Cup 'La'eeb 'which means'skilled player'. The mascot is inspired by the popular ghutra cap which is a strong and historically rooted symbol (Middleeasteye.net, 2022). In addition to the mascot 'La'eeb' which confirms Qatar's Arab identity, the design and name of the stadium used for the tournament are firmly rooted in Arab and Islamic architecture and heritage.

At first, there were various concerns by non-National People in the country, many assumptions also emerged along with the anxiety of foreign cultures coming to conservative lands. However, this was addressed by the Qatari government by launching a statement ' Qatar is a relatively conservative country-but very friendly. Hospitality is the cornerstone of local culture and everyone is welcomed'. Qatar provided a list of visitors ' do's and don'ts with regard to clothing, public displays of affection, alcohol consumption and photography. This action was taken by Qatar in order to concern for the culture and heritage of Qatar which has become public discourse over the past few years (Kabar. Kyrgyz National News Agency, 2022).

Qatar itself is successfully implementing several projects in order to position itself as a regional and attractive Cultural Center for visitors. Included in Qatar's efforts to open museums and cultural sites focusing on Islamic and Arab art and traditions Qatar also supports organizations and initiatives that encourage exchanges between cultures and relax visa requirements for many countries wishing to visit Qatar. Of course, this is under Qatar's Second National Development Strategy 2018-2022. Qatar aims to further enhance and implement mechanisms to protect and develop Qatar's cultural heritage, enact and activate cultural programs that promote Qatar's national pride and values and support cultural dialogue. Along with this strategy, the preparation and realization of Qatar to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup has been a key motivating factor in implementing various initiatives and projects of understanding and promotion of Qatari culture (FIFA, 2022).

Features of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar

The organization of the FIFA World Cup certainly did not escape the attention of many parties, especially many countries who want to offer themselves to host the prestigious event in this sport. Not surprisingly, the competition to host often several times. For 2022, Qatar managed to show its existence to be the first Arab country in the Middle East to be mandated as the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Of course, this will be an important phenomenon in history, geography, culture and many things where this opportunity is also used to increase the soft power

and geopolitical influence of Qatar as an independent Arab and Islamic country (Aktaş, 2022).

Undoubtedly, Qatar's most important goal to host the tournament is to enhance intercultural understanding, inclusivity and sustainability in the Middle East, Asia and the world at large. For its long-term benefits, the 2022 World Cup is expected to leave a positive legacy in the fields of sustainable, technological innovation, and Qatar's international standing. In various aspects, the Qatar World Cup is also highlighted as the most unique event than ever. Given Qatar leverages its nation branding and identity protection through Islamic values. Thus, the 2022 Qatar World Cup has been named one of the most different hosts of all time (Islam Online, 2022) .

If studied further, Qatar as a Muslim country is able to demonstrate its ability to organize Mega events that are famous for important and sophisticated. Amid the sophistication and infrastructure built, the local Arab and Islamic culture is also closely linked and can be seen from all Qatar stadiums that have their own meaning. This certainly invites curiosity and fascination. In addition to this, a series of unique facts make this quadrennial tournament feel different from before. It is noted that the entire series of matches held in Qatar lasted 29 days and became the shortest World Cup in history (CNN Indonesia, 2022).

This is due to the conditions under which tournaments are moved to winter. If the ball tournament is held in the summer months of June and July, it will be very hot and it is feared that it will interfere with the performance of players and potential health risks for players and spectators because daytime temperatures can reach 40° C/120° F. Qatar itself will facilitate all stadiums, training grounds and open fan zones with air conditioning.

Of course, this does not escape the costs incurred by Qatar. Qatar's overall budget is \$20 billion (Federation Internationale de Football Association, 2010). This huge budget was recorded not only used for the construction of the stadium, but further projects with the construction of toll roads connecting all venues and stadiums. Furthermore, access to shuttle buses that will operate and a cheaper and more environmentally friendly walking and rail system.

Another unique fact is still around the stadium which is quite close. The longest distance between the two stadiums is Al-Bayt Stadium and Al Janoub Stadium which are 64.36 km apart. For a road trip it will take 50 minutes. Seven of Qatar's eight newly built football stadiums will be single-use. Only Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan will be retained for football activities after the 2022 World Cup is over.

With all the preparations made by Qatar, it is possible that several issues hit Qatar which became the first host in the Middle East region. Many concerns were voiced from inside and outside the region about how to deal with football fans. It is undeniable that the football event is inseparable from the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Of course, these habits become taboo in the conservative Qatari environment and are still thick with Islam and Arab (Scharfenort, 2012).

However, Qatar is wise in this regard, alcohol rules are not prohibited in this country, but there are strict rules for consuming it. In addition, other rules that are no less controversial are the ban on the sale, trade and possession of illegal drugs and the dress code while in Qatar. To avoid various unpleasant events, Qatar has a cultural understanding program to avoid misunderstandings for visitors who want to enter Qatar territory (CNBC Indonesia, 2022).

Qatar Strategy Nation Branding Through FIFA World Cup 2022

The World Cup is a prestigious sporting event that is eagerly awaited by the entire world community. Because of the existence of the World Cup event, encourage people of foreign countries to visit the country that hosts the World Cup. With the number of foreign visits, it will indirectly have the potential to increase economic and tourism facilities in a country. Thus, hosting the World Cup is a common thing contested by many countries.

Qatar's position as the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, has been in the spotlight of the international community because of its success in beating the positions of the United States, South Korea, Japan and Australia. Some of the main reasons include, first, Qatar managed to win the most votes in the voting of the 22 executive members of FIFA, second, Qatar is considered to have met FIFA criteria to host. With these considerations, Qatar has been chosen as a country that deserves to host the 2022 World Cup.



As the first muslim country to have the opportunity to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup mega event, Qatar is taking advantage of this historic momentum as a container for its country's to spread the uniqueness and identity of its culture to the global community. Quoted from Simon Anholt, an independent policy advisor (member of the government's Public Diplomacy Council), nation branding is an effort made by the government to promote the potential of its country, both in terms of tourism, culture, history, and technology to the international community (Dinnie, 2008).

To create the image of the state of Qatar on the international arena, Qatar formed a local culture recognition strategy that was introduced since the opening of the 2022 World Cup mega event, until when the sports match took place. In fact, when a country's image is built, it will form a positive perception in the international community and will ultimately create benefits for the country (Rookwood, 2019). In essence, the nation branding strategy used by Qatar in the FIFA World Cup 2020 event is not only based on achieving profits, but to emphasize the status of the Qatari state as a Muslim country that adheres to its Islamic identity.

In its effort, Qatar began the opening of the 2022 World Cup mega event by featuring a chanting of the Holy Qur'an Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13 which was read by Ghanim Al-Muftah as the official ambassador of the Qatar World Cup. Where in the verse, it means that Islam is a religion that teaches the importance of tolerance among fellow human beings. With mutual tolerance, it will create good relations between mankind that last in the long term. The reason is that a good relationship cannot be separated from an attitude of mutual respect and mutual help without any racial or religious differences.

In addition, to attract the enthusiasm of foreign people who visit Qatar to watch the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar has created various projects that spend around 200 billion US dollars to support the continuity of the World Cup event. The reason is, Qatar's main motivation in spending that much money is to maintain Qatar's self-esteem in the international arena. When a country's self-esteem is formed, other countries will recognize and respect the mega-event organizing country that successfully pulled off the 2022 FIFA World Cup event. In reality, Qatar received numerous positive responses from the international community for the splendor of the event, which lasted from its inception to its conclusion.

Some evidence of the project, including the renovation of the stadium symbolizing Qatari culture and the spread of murals containing the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad along the road. (Mohammed, 2022). Basically, the meaning in the Hadith contained in the mural, teaches about the values of goodness in Islam. Behind Qatar's intention to introduce the beauty of murals along the way, Qatar hopes that foreign people can understand the meaning of the Hadith murals. Thus, the negative perception of society stating that Islam is terrorism is a misperception.

Qatar's ambition to maintain its soft power in the form of local cultural values in the 2022 World Cup mega event has become a pride for muslim communities around the world. (Giulianotti, 2014) this is proof that in addition to the 2022 World Cup event which is the attraction of the international community, Qatar has succeeded in forming its country's nation branding through its soft power strategy in introducing Islamic culture. The uniqueness of Qatar's nation-branding strategy in introducing Islamic culture has created an international community's interest in the beauty of Islamic culture. The fact is that many of the visitors take an additional tour to get to know the Islamic culture more deeply. There are also some people who want to convert to Islam.

CONCLUSION

FIFA World Cup 2022, is a sporting event that is different from previous years because the country that won the World Cup host position this time comes from a muslim country, namely Qatar. The position of Qatar to host the World Cup certainly opens up wide opportunities for the country to form a positive image in the foreign community. Qatar took advantage of this opportunity through the dissemination of its country's culture during the World Cup. Qatar's main goal as a World Cup host is to promote intercultural understanding, inclusivity and sustainability in the Middle East, Asia and the world at large. In creating the country's image, Qatar formed a



strategy of introducing local culture in order to strengthen its soft power to attract the enthusiasm of foreign people who visit Qatar.

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