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The role of social media marketing in revenue enhancement: a case of FIFA World Cup, 2022 in Qatar

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Abstract: This research aims to highlight the use of social media for enhancing the marketing effectiveness and revenues for the FIFA World Cup, 2022. This research and deep-dive analysis allowed developing two frameworks of recommendations and a list of key findings. The first is to develop a structured objective-based marketing strategy that employs traditional and social media channels in marketing for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This includes adopting various marketing approaches, per attendees segments, through multiple media channels to obtain the advantages of both and minimise the disadvantages of each. The second is to apply an integrated set of recommendations to maximise the economic return for FIFA 2022, aiming to increase income for generating positive net revenue. The research could provide viable information and practical approaches for: 1) Social media marketers for Qatar, focusing on sports tourism; 2) The 2022 event committee in enhancing marketing and increasing the net economic benefits; 3) The middle-eastern marketers for major events illustrating the difference between traditional and social media marketing recommending the integration of both.

Keywords: FIFA 2020; social media; traditional media; revenue; sports.

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Biographical notes: Haya Abdul Aziz Al-Saad Al-Kuwari is prolific researcher in the area of marketing. She did her Master's in Global Marketing from the University of Liverpool. Therefore, her research is popular in domain of digital marketing. She has taken more than 15 certifications and training workshops focusing on research, digital marketing and business strategy building. Beside a long research experience, she remained part of industry for 12 years and still working in triple two marketing agency as a digital marketing advisor to the board. Due to her practical expertise in digital marketing, her research grip on this domain is excellent. Her research on social media marketing from perspective of Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup provided many implications for marketing and digital media managers. She is currently working on her PhD proposal about using artificial intelligence in marketing.

1 Introduction

This era of technology is rapidly expanding the research on social media and digital marketing communication within sports industry (Vale and Fernandes, 2018). The studies on this domain have focused on consumer responses to sport-related social media (Hölzen and Meier, 2019), promotion of sports events (Wakefield and Bennett, 2018), sports content on social media (Newman et al., 2017), methods used by sports organisations for engagement of fans (Vale and Fernandes, 2018), social media usage of consumers (Nisar et al., 2018), presentation of athletes on social media sites like Twitter (Prado-Gascó et al., 2017), Instagram or Facebook and social media policies specially made for athletes (Wymer, 2019). The academic researchers and practitioners are paying too much attention towards social media since last decade. The major reason behind this concern is cultural impact and pervasiveness of social media. During the consumption process, consumer interacts with this media at multiple stages including, information search, decision-making, word of mouth and disposal of product (Prasad et al., 2017). The popularity of this media is increasing rapidly among internet users, according of statistics of Qatar statistical bureau, the age of majority of social media users ranges from 18 to 30 years (Fromherz, 2017). It is observed that in the USA, majority (i.e., 73%) of internet users are linked with different social media platforms (Pew Research Center, 2013). Similarly, in every country, the average of social media users is increasing. Therefore, in order to increase engagement and strength the customer relationships online, sports brands are investing a lot of resources and time on social media. Many recognised event such as Cricket World Cup, Olympics and FIFA World Cup and brands including Lionel Messia and Converse are turning their traditional media strategy to social media (Mossop, 2012).

Qatar is a peninsula with a 563-km coastline jutting along the western coast of the Arabian Gulf. The country shares an 87 km land border with Saudi Arabia to the south. Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran are nearby. The country size is 11,500 sq. km, and the capital city is Doha (Qatar Tourism, 2016) with a total population of 2.172 million and GDP per capita of \$210.1 billion (World Bank, 2014). The official language is Arabic, but almost everyone speaks English fluently. The country is famous for its beaches and dunes with its sunny weather nearly all year with its temperate winter. Qatar confirms the ideal destination for European tourism despite its hot summer. The country celebrates its Islamic culture by combining modern architecture with Islamic design. Qatar is a peaceful country that has not witnessed any violent political incidents while having the lowest crime rates in the world (Qatar Tourism, 2016). Due to the people's peaceful and kind nature, the love and respect people hold for the Emir Sheikh Tamim al Thani and his family is increasing. He contributed to the country's development and built universities such as Weill Cornell, Georgetown University, Texas A&M University, Carnegie Mellon University, Virginia Commonwealth University, North-Western University, HEC, and UCL and had granted women rights. The world's eyes were directed towards TV screens waiting for the results of the FIFA 2022 bid on 2010 (Al-Suwaidi, 2015). Qatar aimed to host the World Cup to introduce the world to the Middle East, where most people in the world still think that people live in tents and use horses and camels for transportation. Qatar was able to prove to the whole world that it is up to the task by making vital infrastructural improvements (Al-Suwaidi, 2015).

The world's main concern toward FIFA was "the small size of the country, the hot weather, and possible human rights violations in the labour rights" (Al-Suwaidi, 2015).

This is another reason to employ social media to elaborate on the country's image. According to Tracy (2014), marketing is an evolving field due to the advancement in information, technology, and globalisation, which increased economic, cultural, and political ties bringing new trends and opportunities while Moore and Pareek (2006) argued that hyper-competition be the key driver of the innovation in marketing strategies, skills, and activities. The internet can be a platform for distributing the tickets and souvenir products of the event, making them available to everyone everywhere, eliminating intermediary or black market selling. It forms a powerful tool for marketers because it allows direct marketing and has no barriers, and can be accessed from any place in the world. Despite the opportunities offered by the internet, e-marketers need to be trained to develop sensitivity and awareness of different cultures because when communicating globally, marketers need to consider the various characteristics of other nations and to adopt the different language, colours, mirroring local values of various countries, laws, religious and ethical considerations to establish common grounds with consumers (Moore and Pareek, 2006). This is important because communication broadcasts information, creates awareness, and encourages consumers to participate in the FIFA World Cup event. Another important step, as explained by Dibb et al. (2006) is to choose the appropriate 'medium of transmission' such as radio, TV, mobile, and the internet that is vital because, unlike face-to-face communication, the marketer would not be able to notice non-verbal expressions of the consumer. Although the web enables the marketer to adjust the marketing message when receiving the consumer's verbal expressions, the marketer must choose the right tools to anticipate and quickly address the consumer's negative perceptions. To influence the consumer's desired behaviour, Dibb et al. (2006) suggested that the essential factors in selecting the medium are to assess the channel's capacity, the volume of information, and type of information transmitted, cost, and availability of consumer and ease of access. To make Qatar's dream a reality, and engage the world in this upcoming event, their needs to be an excellent strategy to engage Qatari society, media of all forms, and international relations to make the event a success and market it to as many segments of people as possible. The head of the Qatar 2022 organising committee, Hassan Al-Thawadi, stated: "Qatar is committed to leaving a lasting social legacy after the tournament" (AlThwadi, 2016).

Many studies have focused on social media marketing (e.g., Beqiri, 2015; Evans, 2008) but very limited research conducted within Qatar. This study contributes to the existing body of research on social marketing of mass global events. It offers concrete, actionable recommendations of value to Qatar and international partners as they prepare for this important event due to take place in a few years. Thus, this research's first and primary objective is to present the importance of employing social media channels plus traditional ones to market the massive event. Those can be used to address the concerns of potential consumers of the country's reputation as this was the focus of previous negative campaigns about hosting 2022 World Cup. It will consider the experience of the previous FIFA World Cup events and host countries, where there is rich material that needs to be analysed and reviewed to extract lessons for Qatar. For example, while there may be substantial monetary profits, there will also be equal or even more financial burdens on the host country to meet the FIFA and the world expectations and conditions to develop its infrastructure. These financial burdens need to be compensated with the event revenues, and this can only happen on one condition if the event was marketed appropriately. The previous point is the biggest concern for the organisers viewing the history of host countries that failed to do so and will be scrutinised and discussed through

this piece of research. The second point of the research is segmenting sport event consumers to design appropriate marketing messages that appeal to their specific needs and motivate them. The number of social media channels is increasing continually, with more apps launching to the market every few days, and it is not possible or economically rewarding to try to employ them both in a marketing campaign for many reasons. Choosing the right social media tools is usually measured by its popularity among users, this information can be acknowledged through published statistic websites or the social media developer statistics while target segments will be identified through an online survey (Prayag and Grivel, 2014). The selection of right media and more specifically analysing the various factors behind attending FIFA 2022 is explained in this research. This study has many objectives including:

- 1 to know the motivation behind attending FIFA 2022 Qatar
- 2 to analyse that people of which areas are interested in attending FIFA 2022 Qatar
- 3 to investigate the main concern of people for attending FIFA 2022 Qatar
- 4 to highlight the factors which remove the concern of attending FIFA 2022 Qatar
- 5 to analyse the users' media selection for marketing of FIFA 2022 Qatar.

2 Literature

The social media has changed the business dealing of business or brands by introducing a rapid online system for any marketing campaign. This media is considered as different and effective than traditional media or marketing communications tools (Colbran, 2018). The biggest efficacy of this system is providing cost efficient medium that: "embraces interactivity, collaboration and co-creation above one-to-many communication; integrates communication and distribution channels; provides opportunities for customisation; and delivers superior speed to the delivery of information communication and feedback." Besides changing communication strategies for business, social media has also changed the marketing strategies for sports events (Shilbury et al., 2020). The content of sports media has been viewed consistently as lacking a critical edge which scholars contends to conflict between sports journalists and organisations (Fetchko et al., 2018).

In comparison to traditional media, social media is really younger one. Similarly, the research on sports management, sports event's digital marketing and sports sponsorship is very limited. Currently, only few sports management studies have focused on examining the role of social media in marketing of sports organisations or events (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2017). Van Den Berg and Braun (2017) examined the 12 professional sports team websites in American/Europe by using a methodological approach of content analysis to get better understanding of some online services offered by teams. Dos-Santos et al. (2017) focused on marketing content posted on sports organisations' websites. In order to understand brand management of sports organisations, Phonthanukitithaworn and Sellitto (2017) used content analysis for analysing Facebook pages. The analysis highlighted that many organisation use Facebook as a perfect tool for creating and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholder or fans and the posted content focus on 'experiencing the brand through real-time online interaction'. Many other studies also revealed the importance of relationship building by using social media, the comprehensive interviews

with executives from three professional of Australian sport clubs, highlighted online media as valuable communication tool but explained social media as challenges because of issues associated with current technology (Deans et al., 2017).

Almost everyone in the world is fond of one or more of different kinds of sport activates, sports events are usually marketed in this way, while football is a popular sport that is widespread around the globe, no matter what language they speak, the education they have or the age, football appeals to them all. The sponsors of World Cup events will get to use 2022 FIFA World Cup official marks, allowing them to display in and around the stadium, allows them direct advertising, promotional opportunities, and privileged access to broadcast advertising according to The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (2016). The Sponsorship of the World Cup enables commercial firms to create a strong brand association with the event, allowing them to engage with their target audience, covering the significant geographical region. According to FIFA Director Marketing Division, Thierry Weil (2014), the World Cup performs as one of the most efficacious global marketing platforms; providing the sponsors with opportunities to connect with consumers (The Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2016). While for Qatar, sponsors may offer financial support to the event.

The host country for the World Cup needs to be creative in developing World Cup logos, posters, and mascot that represents the host country's identity, culture, and favourable association with the brand (Weszka, 2011). This point is essential to consider for Qatar that is the importance of marketing the event to reduce the amount invested in hosting the event especially with the huge drop in oil prices which affected the country's economy and budget for developing the infrastructure. Despite these factors, the country continued its plan to develop the infrastructure to meet the bidding committee's requirements.

2.1 Marketing and marketing practices in Qatar

Marketing is defined by Dibb et al. (2006) as a series of transactions to promote, contact, and carry out value to the customer, to establish a relationship with their clients in a profitable way for both the organisation and stakeholders. The marketing process begins with analysing the market conditions, developing the right marketing strategy and the program, and then implementing and controlling these strategies to achieve the marketing and business objectives. The market strategies in Qatari firms are share oriented like Japanese firms focusing their market share against competitors (Souiden et al., 2006). That is probably because consumers here tend to purchase new product editions as soon as they arrive at the market. Pointing this is important because that reflects on the marketing practices as the similarities between Japanese and Qatari marketers continues with the advertisements of both displaying corporate and brand logos compared to Western countries (Souiden et al., 2006). Despite the cultural differences between Qatar and Japan firms, their marketing strategies can be influenced by their businesses' objectives as 'a shared frame-of-reference' (Oosthuizen, 2004). Marketing the country is a task that is difficult and can take several years. After the negative impressions caused by the global press for possible corruption in 2022 bid, the negative impact of these campaigns if forgotten, may fade, and if not, it may affect the country's tourism. Therefore image communication must take place through several media channels; press conferences must work together to promote the country's image.

2.2 Social media and media coverage

Nobar et al. (2020) explained social media marketing as paying attention to an issue by using social media, increasing website or page traffic and making any site or page popular. This media is actually breakthrough innovation in bringing people together and reflecting their minds. Therefore, it serves as source of connection (Roja, 2020). Dibb et al. (2006) indicated that social media eliminates the inefficiencies and redundancies in the marketing channels, increases the shared data size, and allows assessing customer's needs. The social media channels can be hacked, and the message content can be changed, giving adverse results. Moreover, the internet can be distribution channels, allows operating from geographic distance, and allows for a strong customer relationship; the internet allows the 'addressability' to know the customer's information when registering and allows direct marketing. Digital technology and the internet are transforming businesses driving innovation in practices and revealing more digital age opportunities. These advancements have cast their shadows on marketing causing revolutionary changes in attracting customers with Web generations' development that produced a more interactive world for communication and globalisation (Rusaneanu, 2014).

Previously posters were the primary method for marketing World Cup by using famous players kicking the ball, combined with graphic designs and logos inspired by the host country. Trying to make the event available to everyone globally, Qatar has granted the rights to broadcast the event to 52 television networks worldwide, Booth (2015), to cover the football matches. Blackshaw (2012) explains that the sports marketing industry has been growing due to the global admiration of sports overall to become a 'multi-billion global industry' which was estimated for global market revenue in 2013 'at US \$76.1 billion' and expected to 'increase by 5% in 2017'. Events revenues of Europe are estimated at '48% globally' Eurmonitor (2016). According to Euromonitor International [2011 cited in Henderson, (2014), p.285], 'over 3.5 billion are estimated' to watch the matches. Qatar has already given the rights of publishing the FIFA World Cup 2022 to several TV networks that cover the traditional media parts, in other words, more marketing channels equals more profit. Therefore, this study will focus on social media channels to benefit from the increase in the global average internet penetration rate from '35% in 2013 to 46% in 2016' (The Statistics Portal, 2016). In the event of FIFA World Cup 2010, "the internet traffic in the USA has recorded an increase to 11.2 million per minute" (Holtzhausen and Fullerton, 2015).

3 Methodology

This research has focused on two main areas. The first is to investigate the role and benefits of social media in marketing FIFA World Cup 2022. The second is to highlight the positive net economic gain for FIFA 2022 in Qatar. Therefore, the following questions will be examined in this study.

Is social media the right tool for marketing FIFA World Cup 2022? The benefits of hosting and marketing FIFA World Cup 2022? And how previous the FIFA World Cup has been marketed? How strategies and practices need to be adjusted to incorporate social media channels and the subsequent effect of applying such changes. How to maximise the FIFA World Cup 2022 net gain? The benefits of partnerships and engagement of local

companies and international entities? How to identify the opportunities for low-risk investment in FIFA 2022? What is the role of the government in driving such an objective?

To answer the questions under each of these focus areas. The methodology adopted by this research was to gather its data in the following steps to reach concrete and useful recommendations to:

- The collection of data from reference research papers, magazines, studies, etc.
- Performing data mining, analysis and processing to obtain general findings and key findings.
- The formulation of description of the current reality and desired results of the FIFA 2022 World Cup.
 - a 'Current reality' is a current picture/view of FIFA 2022 in Qatar from different angles.
 - b 'Desired results' is a desirable picture/view of what FIFA 2022 in Qatar should be.
- Performing a comprehensive gap analysis between 'current reality' and 'desired results' using root cause analysis, qualitative/quantitative analysis, and comparative analysis.
- The development of specific recommendations aimed at bridging the gaps between current reality and desired results (the recommendation should transfer us from the current reality to the desired results).

The majority of this study's data were collected through secondary sources from government and global institutions reports, statistics, and articles, which would provide a historical view of high-quality data considering the time limitation. Primary data was collected using a web-based survey to allow for some useful data generalisation and to obtain a wider perspective (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The sample was selected through 'simple random sampling'. The larger proportion of participants was contacted through the University of Liverpool e-mail and instant messaging, aiming to obtain a larger sample size and unit of diversified geographical regions to obtain a large appropriate sample frame (Kothari, 2004). This sampling approach would fulfil the research requirements of efficiency and representativeness within the budgetary and time constraints.

3.1 Measures and significance

The secondary sources used are reliable because they originate from credible governmental and global institutions. The documentary and statistical reviews were systematic, thorough and focused on the key topics relevant to the specific research questions. All steps of the methodological approach, analysis, and formulation of recommendations were explained and followed. Research tools (survey template, an e-mail invitation to participate, etc.) documents and statistical sources reviewed, and raw data collected are all available for review. Trustworthiness is achieved by adhering to validity and reliability measures.

The study is considered significant as it will understand how the use of contemporary technologies influences human behaviour. It will also provide evidence of how social media is considered an effective way of globally marketing mass events. This research investigates the historical sequence of the developments in marketing the World Cup, the event's economic effect on the host's economy, and a brief introduction to Qatar. It will illustrate the increased use of social media, its effect and uses in marketing, how it needs to be used to address people's concerns about the country, enhance the country's image to increase tourism, and the economic efficiency of using social media. It offers insights through the case of FIFA 2022 in Qatar, however, its findings offer useful insight and can be generalisable in other contexts, as the conclusions will show.

4 Results and discussion

The study used simple random sampling for data collection. The survey was sent to 2,000 persons, 145 completed the survey. The collected data was analysed by using SPSS. The error margin was less than 7% with more than 90% confidence level. The individuals who completed the survey covered all age groups that included people below 20 years old, between the 20 to 55, between 35 to 55, and above 55. People from age 35 to 55 were the most interesting segment in attending the World Cup because they are in a stage of their careers where they have enough income to afford travel costs, accommodation costs, and ticket costs. Among total responses, 56 % responses were of males and 44 % of females. The education level for responses ranged from high school to PhD. Most of the sample answered that there is no need for information technology (IT) training to surf the internet that is probably related to their education level because they already had it in their studies. The geographical coverage covers Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. The technical gap and digital divide were not evident in the sample because they were contacted through the internet, although high ratios of the participants were residents of underdeveloped countries. The income of the people who responded were anywhere between less than \$2,000 per month up to more than 15,000 in a month. This can categorise as middle to high-income earners who has internet access and higher income increasing the possibility to attend the event. Almost 24% of the respondents have attended the previous World Cup. Almost 86% of the people who responded watch the sport regularly. More than 75% of participants have moderate to extreme interest in attending the event, see Figure 1.

- The motivation for attending the events can be attributed to (see Figure 2):
 - a More than 35% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events is the stadium atmosphere.
 - b More than 33% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events is be part of a major sports event.
 - c More than 45% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events is experience of the excitement.
 - d More than 33% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events is cheering my team.

- e More than 45% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events are having fun.
- f More than 30% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events are discovering Qatar.

Among the 24% of the responses who have attended the FIFA World Cup before, almost 94% of them are interested in attending FIFA 2022 again in Qatar. Moreover, among those who have not attended FIFA before, nearly 70% of them are interested in attending FIFA 2022 in Qatar. A closer look into this finds that the highest percentage of the people from each region interested in attending FIFA 2022 are from Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The level of interest for attending from Europe are almost 50–50, but less than that for North America (close to 30–70), see Figure 3.

Figure 1 Levels of interest among survey responses (see online version for colours)

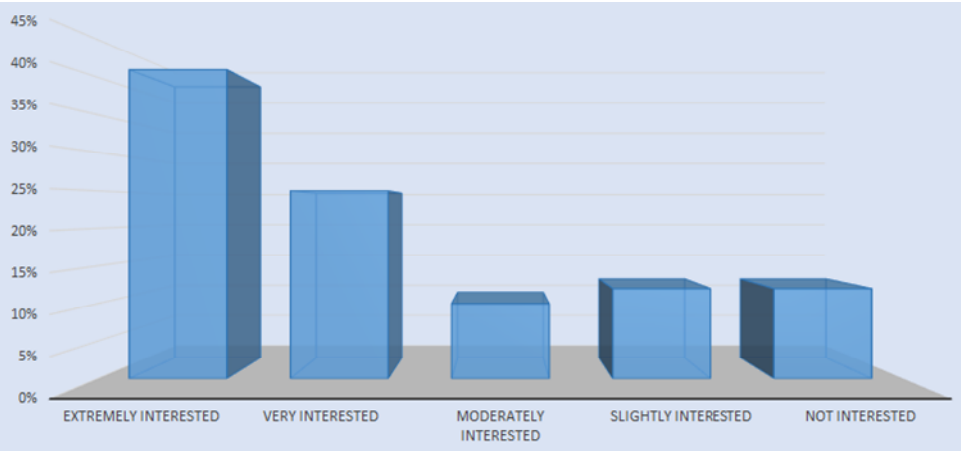
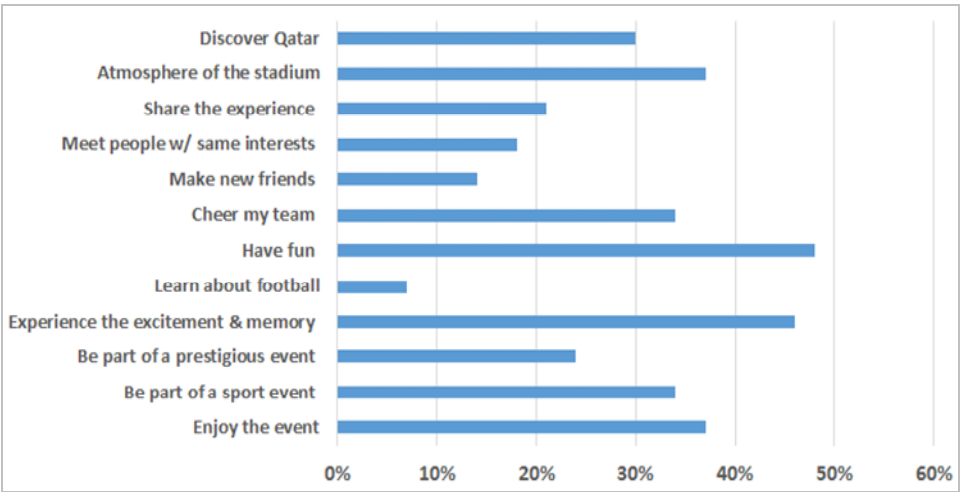


Figure 2 Motivation to attend FIFA 2022 Qatar (see online version for colours)



The location is one concern to further located participants due to longer the distance and flight expenses, although the top reason for not attending Qatar FIFA is the weather. On the other hand, only 12% are concerned about political instability (see Figure 4). Among those who are moderately interested, very interested, or extremely interested in attending FIFA 2022, if there is a concern, it is the weather, economic reasons, Qatar capability to host the event, or distance. Political instability is not the most serious concern for them (is not among the highest three concerns).

Figure 3 Geographical level of interest (see online version for colours)

	2. How interested are you in attending FIFA 2022 World Cup Qatar?					Total
	Extremely interested	Very Interested	Moderately interested	Slightly interested	Not at all interested	
7. In which part of the world do you reside?						
Europe	2 3.6%	4 11.4%	5 27.8%	1 6.3%	9 50.0%	21
Asia	14 25.0%	10 28.6%	4 22.2%	3 18.8%	1 5.6%	32
Africa	7 12.5%	5 14.3%	4 22.2%	1 6.3%	1 5.6%	18
Middle East	28 50.0%	14 40.0%	3 16.7%	8 50.0%	3 16.7%	56
North America	4 7.1%	2 5.7%	0 0.0%	2 12.5%	2 11.1%	10
South America	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%	2
Other, please specify	1 1.8%	0 0.0%	1 5.6%	1 6.3%	1 5.6%	4

Figure 4 Main concern for attend FIFA 2022 Qatar (see online version for colours)

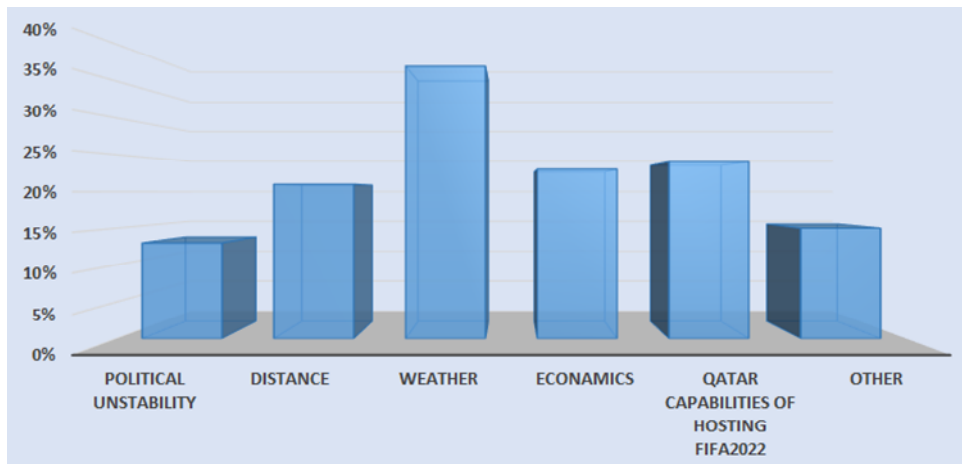


Figure 5 indicates, even though political instability is not the primary concern; it is second in terms that attendees want more information about safety, security, and stability. Therefore, any marketing strategy and marketing content should address the key issues and concerns for the potential attendees FIFA; this includes economics hotels and airfares, information about the country's stability and security, and information on the

country infrastructure regarding transportation, hotels, accommodation, and services. Figure 6 highlights that almost 72% or more prefer non-traditional communication media (traditional is TV, radio, and newspaper). The levels of social media use for individuals (according to survey) are ranked by: Facebook, then YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, then Twitter, see Figure 7. This is very close to findings by <http://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/> regarding the use of various social media types worldwide, see Figure 8.

Figure 5 What removes concern for attend FIFA 2022 Qatar (see online version for colours)

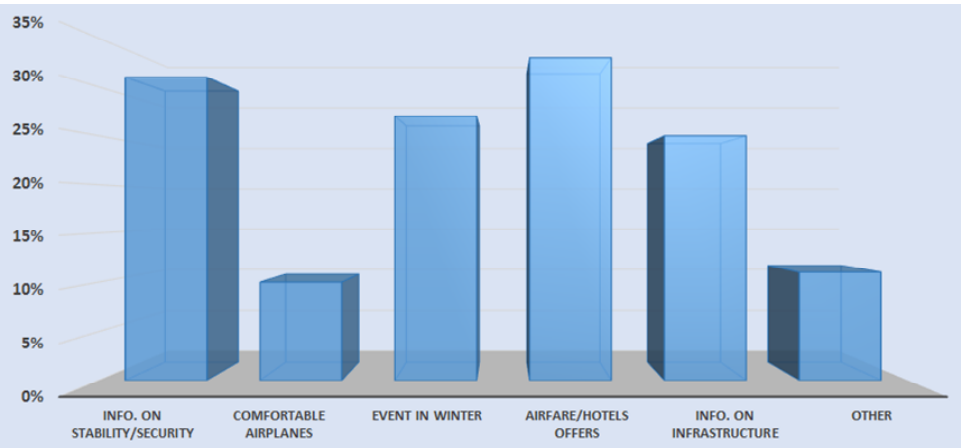


Figure 6 Users' media selection for marketing FIFA 2022 (see online version for colours)

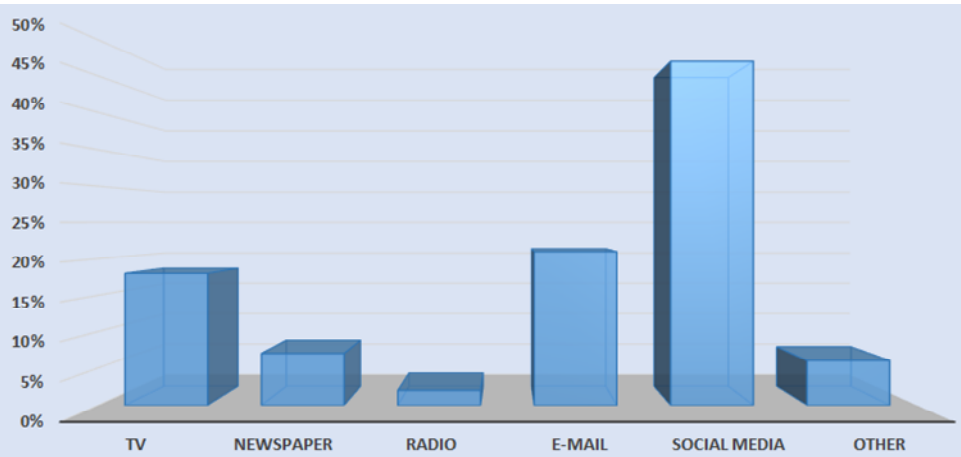
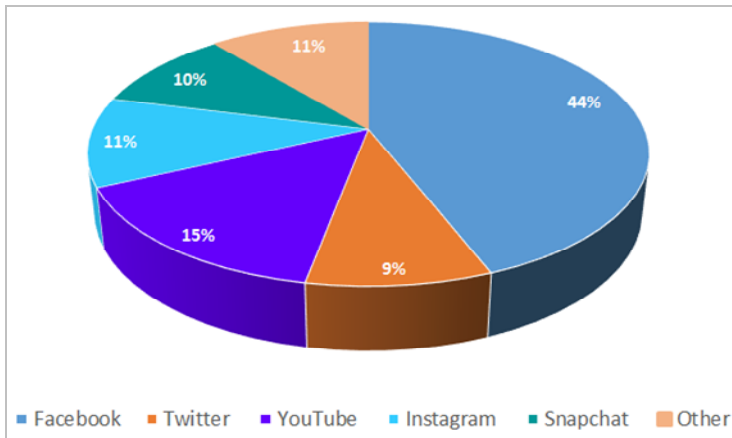
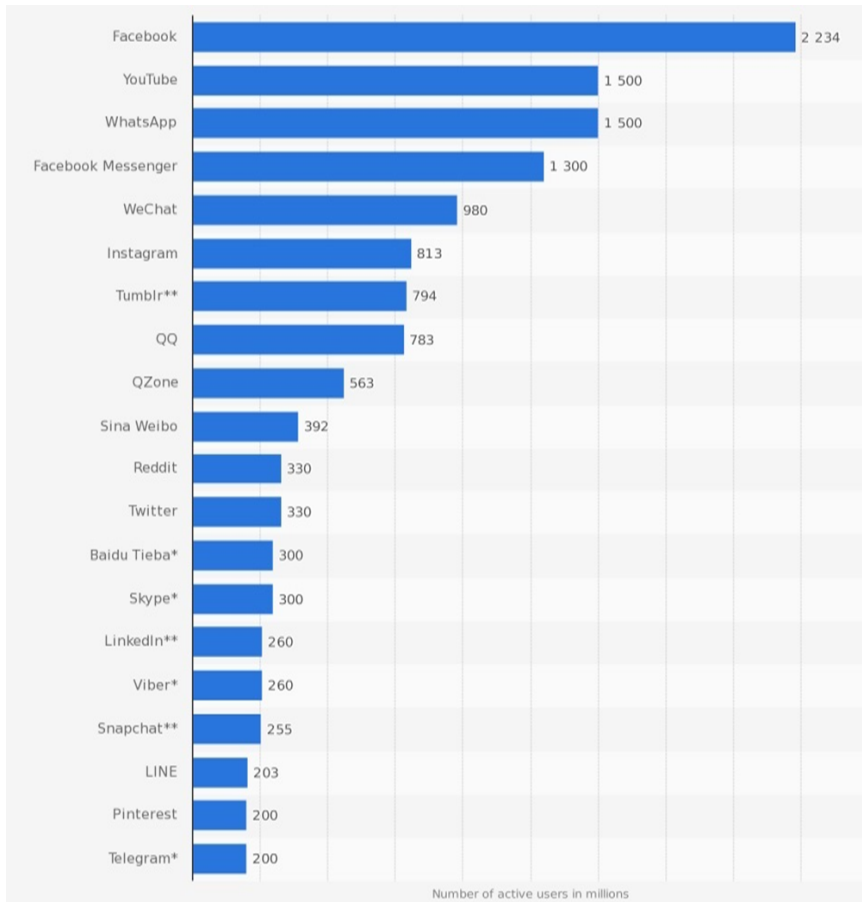


Figure 7 Social media type usage levels among responses (see online version for colours)**Figure 8** Social media type usage levels among users worldwide (see online version for colours)

Source: Statista (2021)

5 Conclusions

Overtime, the social media channels will be the desirable and dominant marketing option. The survey showed that almost 72% or more prefer non-traditional communication media. The levels of social media use for individuals (according to the survey) are ranked by: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and then Twitter. Therefore, there is a paradigm shift in people's habits and behaviour in listening/following social media content v/s traditional content. Furthermore, smartphones and gadgets ease access to users and make the content reach their devices in almost real-time; the ads and products can be at the reach of customers on click away. This necessitates employing social media marketing for the World Cup to reach the right segment of the audience. Social media is powerful, cheaper, and allows transparent interactive communication. Audiences' interaction can be translated in words, photos, and videos rather than silent comments to nearby TV viewers. However, it is not straight old marketing; it requires segmentation of the marketing message to the right audience segment and the right region/locality. A high percentage of previous attendees of the FIFA event are still interested to attending in Qatar 2022. From the online survey, among the 24% of the responses who have attended FIFA World Cup before; almost 94% of them are interested in attending FIFA 2022 again in Qatar. The location/distance of the World Cup will not prevent past attendees/fans from attending Qatar 2022. Among those who have not attended FIFA before, nearly 70% of them are interested in attending FIFA 2022 in Qatar. This reinforces the fact that having World Cup in Qatar or any new region will gain new World Cup attendees and not prevent previous fans from attending. It was worth noting that attending world cup event usually carries multiple reasons. From the Online survey, the motivation for attending the events can be attributed to:

- more than 35% of participants indicated that the reason for attending the events is the stadium atmosphere
- more than 33% of participants indicated that attending the events is part of a major sports event
- more than 45% of participants indicated that the reason for attending the events is the experience of excitement
- more than 33% of participants indicated that the reason for attending the events is cheering my team
- more than 45% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events are having fun
- more than 30% of participants indicated that the reasons for attending the events are discovering Qatar.

6 Theoretical and practical implications

This research study could provide information on social media marketing issues, particularly in the event marketing and promote the host country – Qatar – focusing on

the sport tourism sector. This research would be beneficial to the government and the 2022 event committee in:

- 1 enhancing the knowledge of the social media tools in marketing
- 2 targeting potential participants of the event
- 3 increasing tourism
- 4 taking steps to enhance the country image via addressing the adverse effect of the western negative articles.

Furthermore, this research would be beneficial to the middle-eastern marketers as it would provide the necessary information on the difference between traditional and social media marketing, recommending the integration of both. This would expectedly heighten the marketers' awareness supporting the government's plans of presenting a historical event that lasts in the memory of the attendance for many years. The recommendations provided in this research are practical and solve the problems identified between the current reality and the desired results. There is room for future research to look into the effect of organising such event if the number of teams in World Cup has increased from 32 to 48.

7 Limitations and recommendations

This research can provide baseline information on the recent trends in the marketing field. This study has looked at much past research and best practices for World Cup events. Moreover, it provided new and novel methods to improve the marketing of the event and improve the net return on investment for Qatar World Cup 2022 or any World Cup event. The study only focused on FIFA World Cup and linked it with social media. For the future studies, important area of research is the integration of social media marketing with online internet-based retailers for World Cup events; knowing that online retailers have increased tremendously over the years and are still increasing. Moreover, the researchers can build a conceptual model for empirically investigating the efficacy of social media in promotion of sports events.

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