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Qatari Media Roles in Maximizing the Qatari Soft Power and Overcoming the Glocal Social Challenges of Hosting World Cup 2022

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From the moment in 2010 when the World Cup was awarded to the tiny oil-rich nation with little soccer history, the event had been shrouded in controversy. Allegations of corruption abounded and investigations commissioned. But FIFA have repeatedly insisted that the competition would not be taken away from Qatar, even if that meant moving it from its traditional summer spot in the calendar. As things stand, the first ever World Cup in the northern hemisphere winter is a go, but that decision is only the start of a complex few years ahead for everyone involved. Since the controversial decision for Qatar to host the tournament, the opinions of both fans and those in the footballing community at large have mostly been against the decision. The president of the German football association said that the decision is “a burden for all of football.” Various writers have called the decision “FIFA’s folly,” a “farce,” and a “disaster.” Others have said the award “make[s] no sense” and “you might as well hold the World Cup on Mars.” The plan is troubled by more than mere unpopularity—allegations of bribery and corruption have surfaced repeatedly over the five years since the vote was taken. The situation worsened when FIFA admitted it was likely that the tournament would have to be moved from its traditional June–July timeslot to sometime during the winter months due to the extreme summer heat in the region. This proposed move would have massive effects, both logistical and financial, on professional football leagues throughout the world. Shifting the 2022 Qatar World Cup to winter would be financially detrimental to professional football leagues and the many businesses that depend on them. The study employed a mixed descriptive – method design combining both content analysis of 1246 Qatari media items (including Qatari newspapers, television news and editorial material from 11 December 2010 till 30 September 2015) plus field study via semi structured interviews with 100 senior level experts and surveying 500 as a stratified random sample from diversified Qatari respondents. The study depended on well structured scales to measure media interest capacity and respondent’s exposure and interaction. Qatar struggled to host this event either in the preparation stage or after winning the bid and the Qatari media concentrated only on the external aspect

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of hosting this event as reactive action instead of being proactive. The study depended on “issue attention cycle model” as a theoretical framework. The cycle has five stages as follows: (The pre-crisis stage, alarmed discovery, euphoric enthusiasm, realizing the true costs, declining interest and the post-crisis stage). The study wondered that Qatari media didn't cover the Qatari society internal challenges of hosting the world cup such as the cultural and social issues that contradict with Qataris religion, values and traditions. As Qatar is not accepting homosexuality, (LGBT) (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/ Transsexual community) or selling beer in the stadiums, it is expected to witness cultural conflict. In a very small country like Qatar, as there are no World Cup-ready stadiums, and entire cities that are necessary to host the event don't exist yet, all of the venues and stadiums need to be built from scratch. As we saw with the record \$50-billion Sochi Olympics, building these things from scratch is an incredibly expensive and unpredictable enterprise. This will require massive infrastructure, up to \$200 billion — four times the amount Russia spent on the historically expensive Sochi Olympics. Costs are already getting so out of control that Qatar will only build eight stadiums, as opposed to the 12 that were originally planned. This will impose certain challenges either in allocating fund for social, educational and infrastructure services or in creating terrible traffic jam in the preparation and hosting stages. The result of this traffic jam could lead to prevent or limit fans turnout. This of course will weaken the championship. The study hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between Qataris exposure to passive news about the world cup and their reluctant or refusal attitude toward hosting this event. The study suggested a comprehensive integrated communication strategy that Qatari media must adopt via issue attention cycle model in qualifying and orienting the Qatari society to deal with ethical, social and cultural challenges of hosting this event. The internal public opinion is vital not only in supporting the Qatari institutional efforts but also in guaranteeing the event success. Overcoming the internal challenges will enable Qatar from maximizing the social impact of a global event as equal as the economic benefits. This would be reflected positively on Qatar's Nation Branding Strategies as an extension to the Qatari extensive efforts in emerged mediating, peacemaking and humanitarian role all over the world.