

## Souq Waqif And Its Approach Toward Sustainable Cultural Tourism

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### *Abstract*

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlighted the role of culture in sustainable development worldwide. Consequently, recently the concept of sustainable cultural tourism has become increasingly important. UNESCO identified five significant sustainable development targets in culture, which are protecting cultural heritage, transferring knowledge and experience, promoting creativity and artistic innovation, promoting cultural education, and promoting understanding and tolerance. The five targets also emphasize the importance of cultural heritage preservation and presentation for future generations.

Following the global interest in sustainable cultural tourism, Souq Waqif in Doha organized programs that would contribute to keeping the traditions, customs, and cultural values that characterize society's identity. This article examines Souq Waqif's practice, which is contextualized within a long process to regain its historical and heritage values and meanings. The article will explore the aims, plans, and influences on society of eco-friendly cultural tourism.

**Keywords** Sustainable Cultural Tourism, Souq Waqif, Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Qatar, Qatar's Heritage, Qatar's Identity, World Cup 2022.

## Introduction

In recent years, the concepts of sustainable tourism, sustainable culture, or sustainable cultural tourism have become increasingly important, emphasizing the urgency of preserving the natural environment, cultural heritage sites, supporting local communities, and improving travelers' overall experience.

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 ASD), the international community recognized for the first time the role of culture in sustainable development [UNESCO. 2020]. The 2030 ASD refers to culture in many of its goals and objectives. It also reflects a comprehensive view of culture that comprises its contribution to sustainable development through numerous means, including cultural heritage, creative industries, local products, creativity and innovation, local communities, local materials, and cultural diversity [UNESCO. 2020].

Consequently, there has been an increased consideration of the term culture, especially in anthropology and sociology, and its role as a primary driver of sustainable cultural tourism development, cultural coexistence, diversity, and understanding between different cultures and generations. Thus, to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development, UNESCO identified sustainable development goals in culture [UNESCO. 2020]. Those which concentrate on cultural sustainability are protecting cultural heritage, transferring knowledge and experience, promoting creativity and artistic innovation, promoting cultural education, and promoting understanding and tolerance. These five goals highlight the importance of protecting and preserving cultural heritage for future generations, which contributes to keeping the customs, traditions, and cultural values that characterize society's identity. As well as enable it to face the negative effects of globalization and help it to build a community with an active role in achieving economic and social development. Those are the main elements for achieving sustainable development in the culture and heritage field and progress and growth during the next stage.

This article analyses the signature heritage landmark Souq Waqif, which consists of the historic commercial center of Doha, contextualized within a long process to regain its historical and heritage values and meanings. This process has shaped the souq's social composition and precious cultural heritage physical structure. The article will delve into the plans, aims, and influences on society of eco-friendly cultural tourism. To do so, we have first

to explore what sustainable cultural tourism means by looking at the strategy, objective, and impact of sustainable cultural tourism.

By exploring the concept and strategy of sustainable cultural tourism, we may highlight a more profound comprehension of the importance of sustainable cultural tourism in encouraging the protection of the environment, preservation of socio-cultural heritage, and advancement of the economy. The article analyses Souq Waqif's practices and efforts in promoting sustainable cultural tourism and its success or failure in representing an example of sustainable cultural tourism in Qatar. A limited number of publications talk about Souq Waqif, however, from different perspectives, but not from its role in sustainable cultural tourism.

Within this article, I will look at the Qatari experience of sustainable cultural tourism by analyzing the practice of Souq Waqif in cultural preservation and presentation in Doha. Given the rapid strategies of modernization and globalization Qatar is currently following, it is essential, therefore, to analyze the rhetoric and agenda of Souq Waqif about the national identity and cultural heritage. The article raises important questions. How Souq Waqif promotes sustainable cultural tourism in Qatar? Can Souq Waqif be a primary driver or contributor in the strategy of Qatar to provide a platform for sustainable cultural tourism? This discussion is based on the primary sources that document the practice of Souq Waqif during the World Cup 2022 regarding sustainable cultural tourism. To conduct this work, interviews were taken with individuals from the communities and merchants at the Souq, and research in secondary sources was done.

### **Literature Review**

Previous literature about Souq Waqif analyzed its significance as a heritage site, its location and history, and the importance of sustainable culture and tourism for Qatar and Qatar's efforts to enhance its tourism sector. However, it never considered Souq Waqif a landmark for sustainable cultural tourism. Nor did it evaluate Souq's contribution to sustainable cultural tourism.

Fodil Fadli, & Mahmoud AlSaeed, in their article 'A Holistic Overview of Qatar's (Built) cultural heritage; Towards an integrated sustainable conservation strategy,' argue that the preservation of urban heritage and its integration with sustainable practices is crucial for maintaining the cultural, historical, and

economic value of cities. Holistic strategies and conservation approaches should be implemented to retain the uniqueness of historic city characteristics while ensuring long-term sustainability. This requires considering economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects in preservation and regeneration projects. A comprehensive vision, public participation, and policies that preserve local identity and promote sustainable practices are essential. By adopting integrated design and strategies, cities can balance development and conservation, preserving their heritage for future generations while meeting present-day needs [Fadli & AlSaeed 2019].

The authors further divided the urban development of Qatar into three distinct phases. The first phase, known as the pre-oil era, was characterized by the influence of colonialism and the prominence of the pearl industry. The second phase, the oil era, saw rapid modernization and urbanization fueled by petrodollars. Finally, the recent and present age is marked by globalization and the development of iconic structures. Qatar's urbanization process is relatively recent compared to other countries in the Middle East and North Africa region [Fadli & AlSaeed 2019].

The writers analyzed the Souq's distinct geographical location concerning Doha's shoreline and centrally positioned within the city. They highlight the importance of the site as it holds cultural vibrancy due to its commercial activity. Furthermore, the historical evolution and urban character of Souq Waqif are intertwined with its localization and recent revitalization. Additionally, the site holds significant cultural heritage value within the regional context, stemming from its roots in Islamic architecture [Fadli & AlSaeed 2019].

The study also refers to the fact that although some parts relating to the economic plan and regulation are almost met, other significant programs dealing with the environment, socio-cultural and well-being, and consistency in the city's urban expansion still need to be included. Finally, they concluded that the speedy urbanization of Qatar, driven by the economic boom, has led to the destruction and abandonment of its historic solid built heritage [Fadli & AlSaeed 2019].

Ghialy Yap, Shrabani Saha, and Saif Alsowaidi, in their research 'The Competitiveness of Qatari Tourism: A Comparative and SWOT Analysis,' studied the tourism sector in Qatar, its opportunities, and threats. They indicate that Qatar offers a variety of tourism flavors, with cultural tourism being one of its top products. The country has several cultural heritage sites, including Al Zubarah, the Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Waqif, and the National Museum of Qatar. These attractions and significant investments in the tourism sector aim to make Qatar an appealing destination for cultural tourists.

The study also refers to Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy 2030, which positions tourism as crucial for diversifying the country's economy and aims to lead Qatar's sustainable development into a world-class hub with deep cultural roots. The strategy focuses on developing diverse tourism products, encompassing cultural, urban, natural, and educational themes [Yap, Saha, and Alsowaidi 2022]. They also mentioned that despite these efforts, Qatar faces fierce competition from neighbouring nations such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. Regarding international tourist arrivals, Qatar ranked 97th globally in 2019, lagging behind its neighbouring competitors. The country's limited success in attracting tourists can be attributed to a lack of an appealing destination image, little recognition of its cultural heritage, and a lack of solid promotion of its religious and cultural traditions [Yap, Saha, and Alsowaidi 2022].

The researchers highlighted Qatar's plans to invest significantly in the sector to increase tourist arrivals to seven million annually by 2030. The country also aims to promote sports tourism by hosting major sporting events like the 2022 FIFA World Cup and the Arab Cup in 2021. These events are expected to improve Qatar's destination image and increase global awareness of the country as a tourist destination. Overall, while Qatar recognizes the importance of cultural tourism and has made efforts to develop its tourism sector, it faces challenges in terms of competition and establishing a solid destination image. Continued investments, strategic promotion, and hosting international events are part of Qatar's strategy to improve its tourism competitiveness and reap the benefits of its significant investments in the sector [Yap, Saha, and Alsowaidi 2022].

In their article 'An urban regeneration planning scheme for the Souq Waqif Heritage Site of Doha,' Raffaello Furlan & Asmaa Al-Mohannadi discuss the rapid urban growth and development in Qatar, particularly in the capital city of Doha, over the past two decades. They argue that the population of Doha has increased significantly, and the country has initiated various mega projects and facilities in preparation for the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup. However, this instant urban and population growth has resulted in several environmental, economic, and social challenges, such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, fragmentation of the urban fabric, and other threats. The authors highlight that instant urban growth contributes to urban sprawl, leading to overdependence on private vehicles as the primary mode of transportation [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi 2020].

Therefore, in response to the increase in traffic congestion and automobile usage, Qatar is constructing the Doha Metro project, which includes approximately 100 metro stations along its four main lines. The Doha Metro and its stations aim to facilitate the creation of transit-oriented developments (TOD), contributing to smart growth and sustainable development by creating vibrant, walkable, and liveable neighborhoods [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi 2020].

The authors focus on the Souq Waqif, which underwent renovations to preserve its traditional architectural style. Through their analysis, they aim to assess the potential of Souq Waqif as a transit village and provide an urban regeneration planning scheme to enhance the district's urban quality of life while preserving its cultural heritage. The authors also discuss the site-specific requirements of Souq Waqif and emphasize the importance of incorporating its socio-cultural context and cultural heritage into the planning scheme. The objectives of their study are to assess the sustainable adaptive transformative potential of Souq Waqif as a historical-heritage urban node, provide practical solutions to improve the district's urban quality of life, and propose a contextualized urban development model for its long-term health and sustainability. They concluded that although Souq Waqif is integrated into the city's fabric, it lacks pedestrian connectivity, which can be addressed through well-planned transportation development [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi 2020].

UNESCO published a report highlighting Qatar's commitment to promoting cultural diversity as a crucial aspect of sustainable development. Qatari officials and international representatives acknowledge the role of culture in fostering dialogue among civilizations and consider it a fundamental pillar of Qatar's National Vision 2030 and the UN's sustainable development goals [Gulf Times 2023]. The report adds that Qatar has actively supported creativity and cultural activities through various institutions such as Qatar Museums and the Cultural Village Foundation (Katara). These institutions have facilitated the growth of art, diverse cultural activities, crafts, music, and plastic art throughout the country. Qatar has also supported young people engaged in cultural and innovative activities, leading to the globalization of their skills. The Doha Film Institute has significantly nurtured artistic talents through local and international engagements [Gulf Times 2023].

The country has created a conducive environment for creativity through various cultural institutions operating in different fields. Qatar has shown its support for UNESCO's plans and programs in the cultural sector. It joined the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2009 and actively participates in UNESCO's initiatives and cooperative efforts with the international community. The UNESCO Regional Office in Doha acknowledges Qatar's efforts to support creative and cultural activities and protect the freedom of expression. The importance of investing in creativity for community transformation and inclusivity is recognized. Culture is seen as a driver for sustainable development, contributing to human, social, and economic development, education, social integration, sustainable cities, and the environment [Gulf Times 2023].

The burgeoning artistic and creative movement in Qatar, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Qatar Museums, has positioned Qatar as a leader in cultural rapprochement and intercultural dialogue. Qatar's participation in international conferences and networks, such as the Creative Cities Network and the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022, further enhances its role in promoting the creative economy and fostering cultural understanding. Overall, Qatar's dedication to supporting creativity

and active engagement with UNESCO and international initiatives reflect its commitment to leveraging culture as a catalyst for sustainable development and global dialogue [Gulf Times 2023].

### **Strategy, Objective, and Impact of Sustainable Cultural Tourism**

UNESCO has formulated comprehensive criteria to advance sustainable tourism on a global scale. These regulations put the conservation of cultural and natural legacies, encouragement of participation from local communities, and financial sustainability of tourist destinations as the highest priorities. UNESCO emphasizes the importance of ethical and responsible conduct by promoting cultural tourism activities with limited environmental impacts and upholding local traditions. UNESCO's regulation aims to maintain cultural diversity and ecological integrity while promoting tourism growth, creating a sustainable future for visitors and host communities [Assumma et al., 2022].

The sustainable tourism strategy minimizes detrimental effects and amplifies constructive contributions. It is imperative to incorporate responsible practices across the tourism value chain. The essential elements encompassed within this framework comprise the preservation of the natural surroundings, awareness of social and cultural dimensions, and the maintenance of economic feasibility [Hopkins, 2020]. Therefore, adopting sustainable cultural tourism practices entails the establishment of explicit policies, regulations, and guidelines to promote responsible tourism conduct. Moreover, fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, comprising governmental entities, excursionist enterprises, neighboring communities, and tourists, is pivotal in successfully implementing and sustaining sustainable tourism endeavors.

The aims of sustainable tourism cover multiple objectives. The goals related to the environment center on limiting greenhouse gas emissions, safeguarding the diversity of flora and fauna, preserving the earth's resources, and advocating for practices that can be maintained over time. The goals of socio-cultural initiatives are to uphold the customs, values, and ways of life of local communities while also encouraging constructive relationships between travelers and the people who call these places home. The primary aims of the economy focus on promoting regional economic growth, generating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and ensuring fair and even-



handed sharing of the advantages provided by tourism. The main goal is to utilize tourism to promote a positive impact by minimizing the environmental impact, maintaining cultural heritage and identity, and promoting long-term socio-economic gains [Hopkins, 2020].

Sustainable cultural tourism is a complex strategy that incorporates numerous philosophies and actions. It entails encouraging environmental sustainability by reducing resource use, properly managing waste, and protecting natural ecosystems. Respectful involvement with local communities, preservation of cultural history, and support for local enterprises are all ways to demonstrate socio-cultural awareness. Economic viability is achieved by enabling inclusive growth, boosting local employment, and diversifying tourism options. A comprehensive approach to environmentally friendly tourism analyzes the links between ecological, socio-cultural, and economic factors to achieve long-term advantages [Hopkins, 2020].

Societies are deeply influenced by sustainable tourism. The endeavor to safeguard the environment protects unspoiled terrain, diverse flora and fauna, local tradition and customs, and interconnected habitats, thereby guaranteeing their accessibility for future cohorts. The societal and cultural effects encompass preserving and rejuvenating indigenous customs, wisdom, values, traditions, and legacy and reinforcing communal character and honor. Sustainable tourism has the potential to mitigate poverty by creating job prospects and promoting business ventures within local communities. Furthermore, it advocates for appreciating and accepting different cultures among travelers and residents, facilitating intercultural interactions [Hopkins, 2020].

Sustainable culture covers many efforts intended to reduce detrimental effects on the environment, promote fairness in society, and establish resilient communities. Over the past few years, the growing concern for climate change and social disparities has emphasized the importance of implementing a sustainable lifestyle. Therefore, to achieve sustainable culture, it is essential to incorporate the tenets of sustainability into communities' daily routines. This involves adopting environmentally friendly methods in using energy, transportation, waste disposal, and food manufacturing [Kim, Whitford & Arcadia, 2019].

Additionally, creating a lasting culture demands a comprehensive approach that considers multiple aspects and includes diverse groups of individuals and organizations. The initial step involves educating and raising awareness among individuals and communities to ensure they comprehend sustainable practices' significance. To encourage sustainable practices, including using renewable energy, minimizing waste, and responsible manufacturing and consumption, governments, companies, and institutions must establish policies and regulations that offer incentives.

The main aim of promoting sustainable culture is to establish a balanced and restorative connection between humans and their surroundings. Sustainable culture seeks to create adaptable communities that, whether environmental or social, shifts while maintaining economic prosperity and social welfare to secure lasting benefits for the current and future society. A sustainable culture can significantly change communities [Kim, Whitford, & Arcadia, 2019]. This helps to lessen the negative impacts of climate change on the environment, safeguards natural habitats, and maintains the variety of living organisms. A sustainable culture encourages the growth of inclusive and equitable societies by promoting fair labor practices, reducing poverty, and improving access to education and healthcare. It also bolsters the community's ability to withstand and recover from adverse circumstances. Promoting sustainable cultural tourism encourages innovation and economic growth by stimulating the advancement of clean technologies and generating employment opportunities in the green sector. By prioritizing sustainable practices, societies can improve their quality of life, protect their cultural heritage and identity, reduce pollution, and prevent resource depletion [Kim, Whitford, & Arcadia, 2019].

### **Souq Waqif between Originality and Innovation**

The origin of the Souq Waqif goes back to an old commercial market in Al-Beda'a known, currently Doha, built more than 100 years ago, precisely in 1850. The market area is about 20,000 square meters, and it includes 1,200 shops distributed in lots of alleys designed according to traditional markets in the past [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi 2020]. As well as its buildings used local materials such as mud, stone, and coral, which responded to the culture and Gulf's hot climate [Scarfentort. 2014]. Souq Waqif's definition

means the “Standing Market.” Historically the visitors and merchants had to stand throughout the day due to the scarcity of space in the area, which was subdivided by a small gully with running seawater that left a small pathway [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi 2020]. Sellers used to stand on the sides of the road that leads to the large market in Al-Beda’a to sell their goods such as legumes, spices, fish, wood, dairy products, ghee, and Bedouin spinning products such as sadu and other goods [El-Manyawy 2014].

With the flow of oil revenues in Qatar in 1948, like the rest of the Arabian Gulf states, Qatar underwent a modernization process. Its first phase started from the 1950s, focusing on modernizing local infrastructures and constructing new modern houses, sports facilities, roads, schools, hospitals, and communication systems [Scarfenort. 2014]. The comprehensive modernization plans changed Doha's socio-economic structures [Scarfenort dramatically. 2014]. At that time, modernity meant building the country with new modern architecture instead of preserving the element of Qatari architectural styles [Al-Mulla 2017]. In fact, during the 1970s and 1980s, not just in Qatar but also in the rest of the Arabian Gulf countries, the preservation of the architectural heritage of those countries was lost in the need to improve the infrastructures of the Gulf countries [Al-Mulla 2017]. As modernity meant, at that time providing advanced services and facilities, construction of new governmental buildings, development of progressive urban planning, and giving civilian lifestyles for the communities. That was seen as more important than preservation plans [Scarfenort. 2014]. Consequently, by the mid of 1980s, Doha had already transformed into a modern dweller; its architecture was influenced clearly by Western designs. This resulted in the loss of the characters of the Qatari architectural elements and techniques, such as the disappearance of the compact suburb system's principal structures that reflect social interaction, fabric, and cultural values. The disappearance of the use of wind towers for cooling, narrow street systems that were known as alleys in the old suburbs, and the replacement of local building materials such as mud, coral stone, active lime, and wood framing with new building materials such as concrete, glass, and steel [Jaidah and Bourennane 2009 see also Scarfenort. 2014]. It is worth mentioning that the reconstruction of Souq Waqif began after the independence during the era of the Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad

when the government contracted international consultants and contractors in correspondence to economic, social, political, and international developments [Al-Buainain and Fadl1999]. Therefore, buildings that did not meet modern standards were demolished and replaced with new modern Western-style architecture. Souq Waqif was not exempt from this strategy, which resulted in Souq Waqif losing its standard features [Adham 2008].

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, His Highness the Father Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has been keen to restore the Qatari architectural character of Souq Waqif and revive its role as a heritage and cultural landmark that reflects the history of Qatar, especially economic and social histories. He wished to push the country from modernization to post-modernism, where plans are developed considering sustainable development, whether in the environment, culture, tourism, or economy. This decision reflects his awareness of the growing heritage industry. Sheikh Hamad's restoration plans balanced modernity and preserving the local cultural heritage and identity [Al-Mulla 2017]. Therefore, the preservation of the Qatari architectural heritage was a priority for him. He aimed at making the Souq a vibrant site of Doha city that represents genuine Qatari architecture and intangible heritage. With its various components, whether in terms of design or environmentally friendly building materials. Especially after revising the earlier restoration plans of the Souq, which was done during the reign of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad and proved to be degraded from its former position as a social and economic hub for Doha [Al-Mulla 2017]. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Engineering Office at the Amiri Diwan launched a project to restore Souq Waqif. This is done with a Qatari architect and artist Mohammed Ali Abdulla and his team. The artist Mohammed Ali saw the 1970s restoration of Souq Waqif as inappropriate, which used environmentally unfriendly materials, such as neon lighting, aluminum roofs, doors, and windows, which deteriorated the overall look and function of the Souq [Scarfenort. 2014]. Therefore, the new restoration was done by rebuilding the old buildings and building new ones according to the traditional Qatari architectural style with the same materials that were used in the past, such as mud, bamboo, clay, straw, and wood in all roofing, doors, walls, and windows. In addition to the materials, the introduction of the traditional techniques that consider the

climate, such installation of materials that are resilient to extreme heat and reduce carbon emissions [Scarfenort. 2014].

As part of sustainable cultural and economic plans, old shops with their traditional goods are maintained, as well as Souq's historical porters 'Hamali' who push traditional green wheelbarrow carts to help the customers [fig 1].



Fig. 1. Traditional Hamalies wearing Qatari traditional outfits use the same traditional green wheelbarrow carts to help customers carry their purchases[<https://www.iloveqatar.net/> 2023].

In 2021, to accomplish the culturally sustainable plan for the souq, the committee supervising the market area has named many 'Skeek' (alleys) of the souq after the early residents of the Souq Waqif area [Al-Sharq Newspaper 2021]. Such as, Sikkat Muhammad Ali Al-Naama, Sikkat Abdullah Muhammad Marafih, Sikkat Ali Abdullah Al-Ghanim, Sikkat Abdullah Suleiman Fakhro, Sikkat Abdul Rahman Hassan Fakhro, Sikkat Sultan Jaber Al-Jaber, Issa Muhammad Al-Jaber, Sikkat Ahmed Saleh Al-Baker, Sikkat Hassan Jaber, Sikkat Jaber Muhammad Al-Nemah, and so on. This gesture had great positive resonance among the Qatari society, which saw in it an approach that works to preserve the history and heritage of the region and in gratitude for the role played by the previous merchants in establishing this historic market [Al-Sharq Newspaper 2021]. These efforts made it a heritage landmark for Doha and a major destination for anyone wishing to learn about Qatari culture and heritage. Thus, it became the most important open-air heritage destination frequented by residents and tourists.

Souq Waqif is also distinguished by its central strategic location, in addition to its distinction by the presence of many hotels located in the heart of the Souq, which have Qatari architectural designs

identical to the architectural design of Souq Waqif. Souq Waqif's hotels ranked fifth among the twenty best in the Middle East. They ranked thirty-nine among the fifty best hotels in the world and received awards from the readers of (Condé Nast Traveler) magazine for the fifth year in a row in its 35th edition in 2022 [Al-Jazeera 2023]. It has established its position in the hospitality industry worldwide, as the Souq Waqif Hotels Group was distinguished as a name for luxury, such as the Valley Hotel, Al Najada Hotel, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Doha, and Park Hyatt Doha. In addition, the Souq is also distinguished by the presence of several exits that lead directly to several international hotels with modern designs located in the contemporary city of Msheireb, the Heart of Doha. Msheireb City, with its unique location and proximity to Souq Waqif, offers visitors an exciting picture of the marriage between the past and the ambitious present [Al-Hammadi 2020]. We are returning to our main questions in the article, How does Souq Waqif promote sustainable cultural tourism in Qatar? And is it possible to consider Souq Waqif as a primary driver or contributor in the strategy of Qatar to provide a platform for sustainable cultural tourism? I will analyze in the following section Souq Waqif's role during the World Cup 2022 and its function as a site that represents sustainable cultural tourism for the tournament's visitors.

### **Presentation of Sustainable Cultural Tourism During World Cup 2022**

It is worth mentioning that one of the significant criticism appointed to the development plans of the Arabian Gulf countries during the 1970s and 1980s is that their modernization plans need to be more authentic and original. Hence, they copied and mimicked Western capitals during their modernization process. Contrarily, the current restoration is a product of the Father Emir's desire to return to Qatar's original traditional and cultural roots. It is a desire to protect Qatar's identity by making a balance between the country's cultural heritage and post-modernism Doha [Al-Hammadi 2020, see also Scarfenort. 2014].

Therefore, the development of Souq Waqif by the Father Emir reflects the state's vision of preserving and promoting its culture and authentic heritage in the light of the progress it is witnessing in various fields, and this is entirely in line with the state's development plan 2030 [Furlan and Al-Mohannadi 2020].

Furthermore, to ensure that the local community benefits from cultural tourism, it is essential to involve them in the planning process, train them to become guides or artisans, and ensure they receive an equal share of the economic profits.

Souq Waqif has become a distinctive tourist interface for the country with its various services and keenness to display tangible and intangible Qatari heritage and identity. In preparation for the World Cup 2022, Souq Waqif used its finest unprecedented way to present Qatari cultural heritage. Whether in terms of organization, artistic performances, or lighting, which dazzled the guests of Qatar, who found in it a distinctive atmosphere that is difficult to find elsewhere. Especially since the Souq combines tradition and modernity in all its details [Labashi 2023], throughout goods, architecture, Qatari cosines, Qatari clothes, and accessories, Qatari jewelry, Qatari antiques, handicrafts, fabrics, carpets, furniture, musical instruments, etc., the Souq reflects the uniqueness of the heritage in a sustainable manner.

To explore the extent of Souq Waqif's contribution to sustainable culture and sustainable tourism, it was necessary to analyze Souq's preparations to receive the guests of the World Cup 2022. When asking some of the Souq's merchants about the preparation for the tournament, they confirmed that they had made plans to provide several products and new goods that represent Qatari cultural heritage. For instance, the Souq's several restaurants served an exciting selection of Qatari cuisine. Traditional foods like machbous, hares (a porridge-like delicacy), and sweet dumplings tantalized taste buds and allowed guests to appreciate Qatari gastronomy's rich tastes. Cultural performances of traditional dance and music added to the entire experience, having an indelible effect on those who witnessed them [Weber, 2017]. Traditional shops increased the stock of goods in the market to meet all the demands. Genuine Qatari products, including elaborate fabrics, ceramics, and jewelry, were proudly displayed, demonstrating regional artisans' creativity and technical prowess. Skilled artisans created these jewels, giving visitors a first-hand view of the exquisite craftsmanship handed down through the years.

Souvenir shops prepared for a large turnout by providing souvenirs, which are specially made for the World Cup's guests and represent the Qatari heritage, such as old Qatari lanterns that were

used before the introduction of electricity, small statues of camels reflecting the desert, models of Qatari sailing boats reflecting the sea, incense burner, traditional incense, traditional sweets and candies, pearls, and so on [Interview Souq Wagif Merchant October 30, 2022]. At the same time, the merchants also provided souvenirs that reflect Qatar today and what it has become as an oil and gas country, like colored porcelain dishes engraved with skyscrapers that adorn the Doha Corniche, the Pearl District, Lusail City, and other new landmarks in Qatar, such as museum architectures that are designed by the world's renowned architects [Labashi 2022].

These souvenirs reflect the origin and extension of the Qatari cultural heritage and identity. A country that was always proud of its historical linkage to the desert and sea for its survival and as a vital economic source [Labashi 2022]. In addition, the number of workers in the Souq has been increased for two purposes, first providing job opportunities for low-income workers to benefit economically from this occasion. Second, to cover the excessive demand for services and continuous working hours 24/7. It is worth mentioning that workers have been dressed up in traditional Qatari uniforms.

Reflecting on the international experience of the Souq during the tournament, we see that The British Financial Times described the Souq as the busiest spot in Doha during the World Cup period. It added that the Souq is considered the "unofficial focal point of the FIFA World Cup" [Financial Times 2022]. It has become a favorite place for fans, where they take selfies, drink tea, and participate in sports debates and discussions. Paul Williams, who traveled to Qatar to support Wales, proclaimed to the Financial Times, "Going down to the souk, you see all the people walking around from 32 different nationalities," he said, "It's been absolutely fantastic." in his remark about the Souq's atmosphere [Financial Times 2022].

Fans from 32 different nationalities walked and gathered in the Souq's alleys, enjoying buying and wearing especially Qatari traditional headdresses 'Qoutra and Auqal' that were produced according to their national colors [Financial Times 2022], such as blue and white for Argentina, red, yellow, and green for Cameroonians, green and white for the Saudis, red, green, and



dragon image for Welsh, red and green for the Moroccans... etc. [Interview with the Souq's merchants October 20, 2022].

The former Bahraini player, Talal Hassan, described the atmosphere of Souq Waqif as "fantastic," where crowds of all nationalities mingle to exchange cultures, as he put it. Moreover, he added that the Souq is a beautiful tourist attraction because it provides knowledge about local heritage. He found that the Souq was also distinguished by its station, which links it directly to the new metro network in the country. What caught the attention of Talal and his friends was that the area was designated for pedestrians only, and cars were prevented from entering. This impressed them with the extent of the area's observance of the environment and the efforts to reduce car exhaust emissions, which may affect such a picturesque heritage area. Talal pointed out that the market formed a safe place and a green environment for tourism, as everyone wanted to go there, given the atmosphere and the entire world's masses in the Souq [Al-Houra 2022].

Undoubtedly, the activity of Souq Waqif during the World Cup greatly reflected its contribution to the strategy of sustainable cultural tourism. From the tourist point of view, it was an essential major destination for everyone who visited Qatar during the World Cup, and from the cultural significance of the statement, it was a scene for the mixing and interaction of all the cultures of the world's countries. For example, flags were spread in the market for the participant countries, and the various teams' shirts, scarves, and hats were sold. The market was filled with visitors from different cultures, races, ethnicities, and ages, including children, older people, men, and women. The market gave impetus to the tourism sector in the country by being a home to display the local cultural heritage for more than a million visitors during the World Cup [Al-Jazeera 2022].

However, several factors must be noted, which may have played a significant role in making the Souq a representative of sustainable cultural tourism. First, the unique architecture was built traditionally to preserve the charm of the past and simultaneously be environmentally friendly. Tools such as clay were used for entire buildings, wood, bamboo, and dongles for windows, doors, and ceilings, reducing the extremely high summer temperatures and humidity. At the same time add beauty to the overall picturesque.

Second, it is the right place for those looking for authenticity, diving into the Qatari heritage, and having a unique tourist experience in the continuous fragrant past of Qatar. They wander in a noisy atmosphere filling every meter of the cobbled streets and alleys of the Souq. At night, dimly lit lanterns are lit on the facades to add more beauty to the mud architecture, highlighting the features and corners of the traditional Qatari architecture. The alleys spread in the Souq, and the shouts of passers-by enhance the distinct heritage experience, where porters in Qatari uniforms are distributed, pulling the same historical carts that were used in the past to help marketgoers carry their purchases. These alleys emit the scents of different Arabic spices, incense, and local Qatari perfumes. Shops selling handmade Bedouin rugs, luxurious oriental carpets, Qatari gold, kitchen utensils, and antiques satisfy the passion of many Souq visitors. Indian fabrics and spices from all over the Arabian Peninsula, India, and Iran, where the scent of saffron, dates, honey, and curry filled the Souq's alleys. Those spices have become local throughout history, called (Qatari spices), as these products reflect the economic and commercial relations that linked Qatar to the regions of the outside world throughout history [Interview with Focused Local Community Group on 30 October 2022].

Third is the presence of a center for natural and cultured pearl stores. It is worth noting that Qatar's economy in the past was primarily based on pearls, which was considered its primary source of income and led to its global fame in the past. Today, the daring divers looking for these gems are few and far between. However, in the Souq, many shops can be found specializing in selling unique pearls and have guides who introduce pearls' varieties and colors, as well as help visitors get to know the history and nature of a profession that once was dangerous and now has almost disappeared [Merchant at the Souq interviewed on 20 October 2022].

Fourth, the market has also allocated a pavilion to display and sell falcons. The falcon is considered one of the most prominent symbols of Qatar, as it represents an integral part of the country's culture, not only as a result of falcon breeding and hunting but also as a reflection and definition of the history of falconry. That dates back to the era of nomadic tribes when falconry became in Qatar a symbol and a source of pride for

families. The tourist areas are not devoid of at least a shop that allows its customers to take pictures while carrying falcons. These shops sell all kinds of falcons equipped with a GPS positioning system so that the buyer does not lose them, along with all supplies and belongings of the acquisition of falcons [Merchant at the Souq interviewed on 20 October 2022].

The Souq effectively promoted the culture of the Qatari people vibrantly and excitingly, stretching beyond simple preservation. Walking through the colorful streets, the visitors felt they had returned in time and experienced the Qatari culture and traditions first-hand. Saving old buildings with beautiful designs shows how the cultural heritage of the Qatari people and how they lived in the past.

### **The Impact of Sustainable Cultural Tourism During the World Cup 2022**

The significance of sustainable cultural tourism is profoundly interconnected and carries excellent value for both the contemporary and forthcoming periods. Countries can benefit their economies, environment, and communities by endorsing responsible tourism practices and safeguarding cultural heritage. With education, cooperation, restriction, and inventive measures, people worldwide can secure the long-term preservation and enjoyment of cultural assets [Dans & González, 2019]. Souq Waqif incorporated essential history conservation into the current strategy for creating a durable tomorrow.

Integrating sustainable tourism and cultural preservation at the Souq helped to build a well-balanced and harmonious global community. During the tournament, sustainable cultural tourism at the Souq was characterized by adopting prudent travel practices that effectively reduce the adverse effects of tourism on the Souq's environment and overall heritage values. Visitors observed the local cultures' history, traditions, values, and norms. Furthermore, Souq's preparation and sustainable cultural tourism strategy benefited local communities by improving their socio-economic status and contributed to their general welfare. This also established a constructive feedback loop that yielded promising results for visitors and host communities. Adopting sustainable cultural tourism practices not only safeguards vulnerable ecosystems and promotes conservation endeavors but also contributes to preserving cultural heterogeneity, customs, and

heritage landmarks [Dans & González, 2019]. Promoting mutual understanding and respect between individuals from diverse backgrounds during the tournament catalyzed cultural exchange and peaceful relations.

Cultural heritage sites and archaeology can be sufficient for countries to promote sustainable cultural tourism and preserve their culture [Dans & González, 2019]. Qatar's conservation and restoration endeavors have been prioritized to safeguard historical landmarks and objects. The country safeguarded its cultural gems and enabled visitors to enjoy them by adopting sustainable management techniques. The government worked with the community to create cultural tourism plans that envisaged enriching the native customs, and this is precisely what happened within Souq Waqif's practices during the World Cup 2022. Practical educational and awareness initiatives are instrumental in ad-catalyzesism by motivating tourists to be conscious of their influence on cultural heritage spots and participate in sustainable travel methods [Dans & González, 2019]. Sustainability principles integrated into cultural and tourism policies can establish a tourism industry that protects a country's significant cultural heritage while being environmentally conscious. This was noticed at Souq Waqif during the tournament [Dans & González, 2019].

Sustainable cultural tourism at the Souq proved to be an essential element that guaranteed both the Souq's long-term prosperity as an attraction and the host community. The Souq's Sustainable cultural tourism may leave a beneficial legacy for future generations by establishing a complete plan, taking a comprehensive strategy, pursuing particular objectives, and acknowledging its influence on society.

### **Conclusion**

Souq Waqif represents a brilliant example of long-term sustainable cultural tourism. This dynamic marketplace has effectively integrated environmental concepts into its operations while conserving and promoting Qatar's rich heritage. Souq Waqif has arisen as a sustainable tourist destination that encourages economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural appreciation by supporting responsible behaviors, community participation, and the conservation of cultural treasures.

Souq Waqif's management took excellent care to renovate and preserve the old buildings in the market to keep their

traditional Qatari style. Using old-fashioned materials like mud and gypsum plaster and copying historical details makes visitors feel like they are experiencing history. In addition, Souq Waqif helps craftsmen and artisans by giving them a venue and a platform to show their traditional products and skills. This means that by preserving traditional arts and crafts, the organization can assist local communities in generating revenue and supporting their economy for an extended period.

Additionally, they ensure environmental stewardship through conservation policies and measures. Souq Waqif has implemented various environmental practices to lessen its ecological footprint. The market promotes environmentally friendly practices, including waste management and energy efficiency.

Additionally, Souq has adopted lighting solutions that use less energy and emit fewer greenhouse gases, ensuring environmental sustainability and efficient utilization of natural resources. In continuation, Souq Waqif encourages visitors to use eco-friendly transportation options like public transport or walking as the area was designated for pedestrians only. This method helps to lessen traffic and air pollution. It also gives visitors a more sustainable and enjoyable experience. Therefore, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar not only enthralled soccer fans from all over the World but also gave the host nation a unique chance to highlight its rich cultural history. The Souq was among many attractions that enthralled tourists. Almost every traveler to Qatar was captivated and drawn in by this vibrant center of legacy and history, which provided a great window into the country's past as well as the country's cultural heritage and way of life, which are rooted in the Muslim doctrine [Furlan & Al-Mohannadi, 2020]. Additionally, the Souq played a big part in showing Qatari culture during the World Cup. If someone walked through the colorful streets, they would feel like they went back in time and learned about how the people in Qatar used to live. Keeping old-fashioned buildings with fancy decorations and detailed woodwork preserved shows the country's history and interests people of all backgrounds.

The Souq performed an outstanding task of showcasing Qatar's history and culture to the World and the fans that visit to champion their teams. This is the primary reason why numerous people decided to come and visit during the World Cup. This means

football fans enjoyed and learned much from the interactive activities outside the stadiums. The Souq was a special place where people could take a break from the exciting games and learn more about Qatar's history and culture. It helped visitors understand the nature of the country.

They also created an interactive experience with the fans and the rest of the World. The Souq's commitment to preserving Qatari culture extends beyond static exhibitions and performances. Visitors could actively participate in interactive events and learn more about the country's culture. Traditional programs included the practice of calligraphy rooted in the Arabic culture, pearl diving, and falconry, allowing visitors to learn about these essential components of Qatari culture first-hand [Fadli & ALSaeed, 2019]. Furthermore, the Souq provided a venue for the interchange of cultural ideas. Visitors were allowed to converse with locals, encouraging cross-cultural gratitude and understanding. This connection gave a greater understanding of the Qatari people's beliefs, customs, and goals, fostering a sense of solidarity and camaraderie across varied cultures.

Souq Waqif gets the local community involved in their efforts to promote sustainable cultural tourism. Moreover, hiring employees from nearby communities gives them job opportunities and financial security. This promising involvement of the local community in the special occasion, the tournament, helped every shareholder to benefit from tourism and also helped reduce poverty and improve society.

In conclusion, during the World Cup in Qatar 2022, the Souq became famous for preserving and showing Qatari history and cultural heritage. The exciting atmosphere, real examples of skilled work, delicious food, and fun activities impressed people from all over the World and made a significant impact on them. The Souq displayed its culture to visitors and helped them understand different cultures, creating a lasting impact beyond the tournament. The World Cup in 2022 will always be remembered when people from all over celebrated football and learned about the Qatari culture. This was possible because of Souq's management's hard work and commitment.

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