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## An Analysis of International Soccer Fans' Knowledge of Qatar, Perceptions of Qatar's Country Image, and Intention to Support the 2022 FIFA World Cup

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An Analysis of International Soccer Fans' Knowledge of Qatar, Perceptions of Qatar's Country  
Image, and Intention to Support the 2022 FIFA World Cup

by

Taleb Al-Adbah

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement of the degree of  
Mater of Art  
with a concentration in Strategic Communications Management  
Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **ABSTRACT**

International sporting competitions have become an essential tool for countries to promote a favorable image of themselves around the world. This study focuses on the FIFA 2022 World Cup, which will be hosted by Qatar - the first Arab country ever to host the event. Since 2010, when Qatar was awarded the FIFA 2022 World Cup, several studies have shown that soccer fans are hesitant to attend matches in Qatar. This study investigates the correlations between soccer fans' level of knowledge, soccer fans' perception of Qatar using a 4D model of country image, and soccer fans' behavioral intention to support the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar. The research data was collected by an online survey of 397 participants who were selected from the U.S population and recruited by the Mturk website. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between soccer fans' level of knowledge and the four dimensions of a country image or between soccer fans' level of knowledge and their behavioral intention to support the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar. However, we did find a statistically significant correlation between the 4 dimensions of country image and soccer fans' behavioral intention to support the FIFA 2022 World Cup.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Soccer is the world's most popular sport with billions of followers around the globe. The sport, which according to soccer historians, originated from England in the mid-19th century, has continued to grow exponentially and continues to make huge social-cultural, economic, and political impacts around the world (Murray,1988). Since the introduction of the *round leather* ball, the following, interest, impact, and patriotism have grown around the sport (Rohde & Breuer, 2016). Over the years, countries have established national soccer teams that compete in internationally sanctioned competitions. Such competitions include regional and world tournaments during which the national teams become the rallying points for citizens of those countries. It has also become a unifying factor for countries that may be embroiled in political turmoil. Soccer clubs for amateur and professional players have, over the years, been established at the local and national levels all around the globe. Organizations and institutions have also joined the fray in forming soccer clubs to foster unity and to create a sense of loyalty and patriotism among supporters (Murray,1988).

On the global stage, the World Cup has become the most followed and viewed sporting event in the world (Al-Emadi et al, 2017). Held every 4 years and garnering a worldwide viewership running into the billions consistently since 1930 (FIFA, n.d), the World Cup remains among the most anticipated sporting events in the world. This event is organized and supervised by the world soccer governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), which was formed in 1904 and is headquartered in Switzerland. The maiden edition of the

competition was held in 1930, with only 13 invited countries and was won by the host country, Uruguay (FIFA, n.d). Ever since the first competition, the number of participating countries has increased—to 32—and the scope and impact of the event have widened, with more countries joining the competition every 4 years. In 2022, Qatar will be the first Middle Eastern country to host the FIFA World Cup and, for the first time, the competition will occur between November 21 through December 17—late in the year—rather than the June mid-year staging of the past.

The staging of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar has resulted in expressions of concern by relevant stakeholders regarding the suitability of a Middle Eastern country to host the event due to safety, religious, and cultural concerns. Qatar has expended enormous resources to prepare for and stage the event, including building modern state-of-the-art stadiums and facilities. However, skeptics still point to the known hostilities in the Middle East as one of the reasons for concern. These concerns and other negative perceptions about the capacity of Qatar to stage this event will likely be a factor in the success or failure of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The examination of the link between people’s knowledge of Qatar, perceptions of Qatar as a country, and the effect of such perceptions on Qatar’s successful hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup is the focus of this study.

Historically, FIFA has used soccer to boost tourism around the globe and has helped in increasing positive perceptions of countries that have hosted the World Cup (Gibson, 2005). Prior to the hosting of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, a lot of soccer enthusiasts were skeptical about the ability of an African country to successfully stage the event. However, people’s perceptions of South Africa and African culture, in general, became more favorable after that



year's World Cup due to the impressive infrastructure and event organization demonstrated by South Africa. The image of Africa was changed by the way South Africa managed the World Cup. Although the country's image has been positively changed in 2010, the world cup did not develop the country in the way of organizing any similar events. After a decade of hosting the FIFA 2010 World Cup, sports journalists stated that the level of hosting sports events is still very low, and African countries made several mistakes in their national sports events (Wilson, 2020).

Similarly, other countries have faced scrutiny regarding stakeholder perceptions of the ability of the country to successfully stage a large-scale global competition. For example, prior to hosting the 2002 World Cup, South Korea faced a barrage of criticisms and doubts regarding its ability to meet the infrastructure requirements to host the competition (Kim & Morrision, 2005). The country staged a successful month-long event through its precise organization of the event and the impressive facilities created for it.

Over the years, FIFA has committed to developing the game of soccer all over the world, with the objective of increasing awareness and bringing social change to every corner of the world, especially to underrepresented regions. It also has continued to make contributions to member associations toward the development of soccer and to future World Cup hosts (Ramdas et al., 2015). In 2010, Qatar won the bid to host the 2022 world cup, making it the first Arabic or Middle Eastern country to host a sporting event of such magnitude. For the first time, this popular global sport will be hosted by an Islamic nation, and this has attracted diverse views concerning the safety of participants and attendees at the event.

During the five-year period since the announcement of Qatar as host of the 2022 World Cup, many commentators and the media have continued to express concerns regarding safety for the 2022 event. Most of the concerns expressed stem from lack of knowledge of the country and the perception of Qatar as an Islamic nation. The negative image expressed in some quarters arose because of the never-ending hostilities in the Middle East, to which Qatar was easily linked.

For many people, Qatar is an unfamiliar country in international sports; however, its economic viability as an oil-producing country placed it at the forefront of countries capable of funding the World Cup. In 2019, FIFA announced that the construction of the competition venues for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar were complete. These stadiums, according to FIFA, were built with sophisticated infrastructure and unprecedented architectural design (FIFA, n.d). In 2021, The Guardian News published statistical information showing that about 6,500 death cases were recorded during the last decade among construction workers in Qatar (Pattisson, 2021). Therefore, it is important, after years of preparation and only a few months remaining before the start of the competition, to identify the beliefs and attitudes about Qatar that may potentially hamper attendance and participation in the event.

Negative perceptions and beliefs can have serious consequences on the global event if not properly understood and addressed through communication. Therefore, effective communication about the tourism potential of Qatar, as well as the projection of a positive country image of Qatar, is needed by both the people and government of Qatar, as well as FIFA as the organizing body.

A better understanding of existing knowledge and beliefs of Qatar is needed to ensure that accurate information regarding the people and culture of Qatar is being disseminated to the global

soccer community. Several studies showed and predicted there is a negative perception of FIFA 2022 and Qatar that could impact the event attendance and the country's reputation.

The 4D-Model of the Country Image has been used in several studies to examine the perception of a country's image and is considered a suitable theoretical foundation for this study. Buhmann (2016), measured a country's image using the cognitive and effective components. The cognitive component includes functional, aesthetic, and normative dimensions whereas the affective component includes the sympathetic dimension which captures the general belief about the country. This new model can be used to analyze the construction of different countries' images in different stakeholder groups through comparative analysis. Using a communication management perspective, the scholars systemize the notions of country image, country reputation, country brand, and country identity by providing a terminology framework (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2013). Thus, this new model will showcase people's perceptions in different aspects according to its components and will statistically break down the general beliefs and attitudes toward Qatar.

### **Significance of Research**

This study is very important to develop international strategic communications and recognize the impact of destination familiarity on international stakeholders' views. It will participate in strengthening Qatar's strategies for hosting international events in the future. In addition, this study will contribute to the growth of countries' strategies that aim to increase their tourism by hosting such global events.

This study examines the impact of soccer fans' knowledge, perception and image of Qatar regarding the hosting of the 2022 World Cup. Many studies in the past have argued over Qatar's ability to host this event due to concerns related to lack of infrastructure, unfavorable weather conditions, and some religious and cultural practices that may hinder active participation during the event. This has led to the shifting of the competition period by FIFA from the traditional summer months of June and July to the winter months of November and December. To address the concerns of the inadequacy of facilities for the competition, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SCDL), a body charged with the responsibility of bidding for the event, announced the completion of six ultra-modern state of the art stadiums ahead of schedule in 2020. It remains to be seen how these measures can influence perceptions about Qatar and how those decisions and actions can ultimately influence the attendance and participation in the tournament.

This study is essential in unravelling the extent to which these measures will impact the general organization of the competition. This study also aims at reaching conclusions that will be beneficial to other countries in similar positions that may want to host global sporting events such as the world cup in the future. The outcome of this study will outline the challenges and the impact of strategic communications in changing perceptions and attracting new followership. Moreover, having a good image and perception of Qatar among international sports stakeholders will significantly contribute to Qatar's development vision for 2030.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section is divided into four and will review past studies focusing on; sport events and country image, hosting FIFA in the Arab region, the power of culture in discovering new destinations and the four dimensions model in countries' image.

### **Sporting events and the country image**

Understanding the image of a country and how it was created is a very important element that can significantly impact Qatar's standing in the world. Thus, a country's image is a mixture of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes created by people about a destination, and sports events can have a positive impact on a country's image (Nadeau et al, 2007). Nadeau et al (2007) showed how people's perceptions can create an image of a destination and are huge factors in enhancing or empowering the country's image.

These successful stagings of the World Cup have been applauded by the international media and soccer stakeholders around the world. Minimal research has reported on the effect of the successful hosting of the World Cup on a country's image (Doidge et al, 2019) however, one study found that the image of South Korea significantly improved after the FIFA 2002 World Cup (Kim & Morrision, 2005). According to Kim and Morrision (2005), perceptions of South Korea improved following the broadcast of a series of cultural displays and demonstrations in 10 cities, which successfully projected positive aspects of South Korea's history, culture, and people to the world as part of World Cup media coverage. Audiences around the world were introduced to Asian heritage through these displays. As a result of this and other past successful examples, the

opportunity to host the World Cup is seen as an opportunity to introduce newly developed or developing nations to the global community (McBride,2021).

Griffin (2019) stated that hosting the FIFA World Cup in an unfamiliar territory such as Qatar, an Arab and Muslim country, might have critical ramifications because of the negative perceptions arising from extreme Islamic practices in most of the middle east. McLamb (2016) observed that the western media has always represented Islam as radical, aggressive, and harmful to the people, hence the trepidation by soccer enthusiasts from other regions of the world. Islam, like other religions, is founded on peace and respect for the rights of others to practice their religion. However, this doctrine has been undermined by some extremist Islamic organizations in some parts of the Middle East. According to Testa and Amara (2015), the 2022 World Cup, if the World Cup is successfully staged, provides a great opportunity for Qatar to change the negative narrative of Islam. Undoubtedly, the stereotypes may impact attendance and participation in the World Cup if misperceptions and lack of knowledge about Qatar are not addressed through strategic communication.

The 2022 FIFA World Cup is an opportunity to present Qatar's culture, and by extension the culture of the Middle East, to an international audience. Should this happen, Qatar will be following the footsteps of Germany which encountered similar negative views prior to hosting the 2006 World Cup. During the World Cup of 2006, carefully planned and well executed cultural displays that portrayed the rich German culture were in full display, especially in Munich. These were major features throughout the tournament, which attracted a large number of visitors and

viewers. The result was a great improvement in the perception of Germany's culture and people (Grix, 2013).

This study seeks to examine the opportunities and challenges and the effects of perceptions of Qatar's image by international fans on the 2022 World Cup and to examine how successful hosting of the event may impact stakeholder perceptions.

### **Hosting FIFA in the Arab region**

Andersson, Bengtsson, and Svensson (2021) found that Swedish soccer fans' likelihood of attending the 2022 world cup was low due to uncertainties. These uncertainties arose because of the fear of being denied the opportunity to drink alcohol due to laws in some Arab countries. Fans were also not confident of the hot weather conditions as well as poor facilities, including accommodation and transportation in the region. One of the limitations of Andersson, Bengtsson, and Svensson's study was that it focused on one country, while the current study draws participants from several countries and aims at generalizing to a wider population.

Youd (2014) stated that the shift of FIFA 2022 world cup from June to November may be a good way to cope with the heat in the Qatari region. Furthermore, the change will likely impact the European and American soccer leagues because the leagues usually take place within the same period (Youd, 2014). This change may benefit Qatar's image if things go well as all eyes will be focused on Qatar this period. However, the negative perception will continue should things go bad during the competition. Qatari culture could play a significant role in attracting international audiences especially with the sophisticated designs used for the construction of the six Qatari stadiums which reflects the country's traditions in its style (Scharfenort, 2012). The presence of

culture in its stadium architecture showcases a variety of Qatari traditional themes to international audiences. For instance, Al Bait stadium shows desert heritage “Qatari tent” the icon of welcoming our guests, Alwakra stadium displays a legacy of Qatari seas “wooden boat” or the “Dhou boat” and Ras Abu Abood stadium reflects the Islamic texture on the Qatari boy’s hat that calls “Ghfiah” the icon of Islamic youth (Scharfenort, 2012). Thus, the cultural aspects play a significant role to address the research hypotheses in terms of international soccer fans’ level of knowledge about Qatar and the country image.

Additionally, Al-Emadi et al. (2016) stated that there would be a significant impact of hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. The impact is expected to be felt among Middle Eastern nations. On the other hand, Ottenfeld, Poremba, and Haug (2019) asserted that there was an extreme curiosity regarding the hosting of the World Cup in Qatar in 2022. For example, there were some issues concerning the organizational aspect of the event in Qatar. It was believed that the venues to be used for the world cup will likely limit the usual number of world cup activities due to some existing Muslim laws.

As a Muslim nation, there were fears that cultural clash was likely to occur between the western visitors and the host country. For instance, they “wouldn’t appreciate a girl wearing shorts and tank tops whereas in the summer girls like to do that so they would be treated a little different” (Ottenfeld et al., 2019, p. 7). In addition, people also say that the cultural dietary limitation in food dishes will prevent some kinds of meat (Ottenfeld, 2019). Kaplanido, Al-Emadi, Triantafyllidis, Sagas, and Diop (2016) further opined that one of the key promises of World Cup events in Qatar is that it will help in enhancing the destination image of the host country. In this context, the



destination image emphasizes the overall beliefs, as well as impressions of a visitor or intending visitor.

### **The power of culture in discovering new destinations**

FIFA World Cup, or simply World Cup, is an international football competition contested by national teams. The competition covers senior male and female teams and junior male and female teams. However, the male seniors are more popular compared to the other teams. The football tournament was inaugurated in 1930, and since then, it has been played after every four years (Tennent & Gillett, 2019). Thirty-two teams play in the tournament, selected from qualification matches played in every continent. Since its start, 79 teams have played in the tournament, but only 8 have secured the trophy (Swart & Bob, 2018). The Brazilian team has managed to win the title 5 times, the highest recorded. France is the defending champion after emerging victorious in the 2018 finals. Other winners include Argentina, Germany, Spain, England, Uruguay, and Italy (Tennent & Gillett, 2019). Seventeen countries have managed to host the world cup so far, with the forthcoming one to be hosted in Qatar.

Besides World Cup, another popular sport, internationally, is Formula One, often referred to as F1. The tournament was initially called the World Drivers Championship, but it changed to Formula One World Championships in 1981 (Wesselbaum & Owen, 2021). Currently, it has over 1 billion active followers worldwide. The tournament brings together drivers from many parts of the world who come with cars of their choice. However, they must conform to the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) rules (Savage, 2018). The sport is composed of the Grand Prix, a series of races where the drivers participate; different races require different

cars and have different rules. The competition is one of a kind because it rewards not only the Winning driver, but also and the winning car manufacturer. 7 Grand Prix have been held this year, with Max Verstappen winning 5 of them with a Red Bull Racing RBPT (*FiA*, n.d.). The Spanish Grand Prix is the most recent race, which Max Verstappen also won. Formula One gathered people from different backgrounds and cultures to compete and win, similar to the FIFA World Cup.

According to Jethro (2014), the use of vuvuzela during the 2010 FIFA world cup was a big shift in football support and that has ever since, showcased African culture in a different light. Vuvuzela is a long traditional instrument that was used by spectators in Africa to encourage their football teams. Today, this African loud horn has become a part of supporting soccer players across the world. FIFA World Cup gave South Africa the critical chance to lead the development between African countries. Soccer fans had been interested in listening to African drums and using Vuvuzela's supporting instrument in stadiums (Gatsheni, 2011). These studies are relevant because they will reveal the extent of the effect of Qatar culture on a global competition such as the world cup.

According to Ahmed (2020), prior to winning the bid for the hosting of the 2022 World Cup, Qatar's hospitality and her friendly culture were repeatedly showcased on several occasions. Different appealing key words including 'warm', 'kind', and 'excellent', to drive home the message of how receptive the people of Qatar are. The Qatar Bid Committee submitted compelling and convincing reasons that demonstrated the welcoming and warm rituals or traditions of Arabian hospitality which ultimately enhanced and won the bid for Qatar. Furthermore, the brand identity

of the host nation was presented as a ‘Modern Qatar’ in the bid documents. Herein, the term ‘Modern Qatar’ was qualified by adjectives such as 'progressive' and ‘forward-thinking’ to portray the modernity of the new nation. Also, the nation successfully showcased their brand to be ‘modern’ and showed a highly valued cultural heritage at the same time. It also stated, “Qatar is a modern, forward-thinking country that, at the same time, maintains a strong sense of its values and traditions” (Ahmed, 2020, 35). On the other hand, Griffin (2019), affirmed that the FIFA World Cup is an effective way for Qatar to improve its image at the global level. One of the main aims of bidding to host the World Cup was to show to the world the beautiful sides of not only Qatar but the entire middle east region, correcting some negative stereotypical views. Qatar further focuses on using the tournament platform to launch herself as an emerging world giant that abides by international conventions and treaties. It further emphasizes portraying the nation as a society respecting and upholding universal norms and values irrespective of the cultural and geographic differences with the western countries.

The findings of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (2019) revealed that when the nation made a bid for hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022, Qatar had the vision to capitalize on the opportunity to make sustainable, as well as long-term changes. The nation from the start, believed in the ‘power of football’ in encouraging innovation as well as bridging the gap between different cultures and people. Qatari stadiums were built in a different sustainable system, for example, Althumama stadium will be a large market including cafes and several shops and Ras Abu Abood Stadium was built with recycled containers and will be deconstructed and donated to needy countries after the World Cup (Londoño, 2022). This can help in maintaining a positive

social transformation and perception among fans all around the world which also helps in attracting fans to attend the event, thereby making the event a major success. According to Windum (2020), fans are considered to be an important aspect of the FIFA World Cup. Additionally, “the loyalty and affiliation of fans explains the extensive commercialization in the world of football”. Corporations and businesses invest to have their names associated with a club or national team (Windum, 2020, p. 11). Hence, the organization of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar has the potential to attract fans from all over the world by providing adequate and efficient infrastructure for the games. This can ultimately assist in enhancing the image of Qatar at an international level.

#### **Theoretical Foundation: The 4D-Model of the Country Image**

Several theories have outlined the ways of shaping the image of a country among individuals. The 4D model is a combination of national identity, which was developed by Smith in 1991, while the attitude theory was founded by Azjen and Fishbein in 1980. Conversely, the model of reputation was developed by Eisenegger and Imhof in 2008 along with Thiessen and Ingenhoff in 2011 (Buhmann, 2016). According to Buhmann (2016), a public relations researcher can expand his/her focus by employing four dimensions of the model, comprising functional, normative, aesthetic and sympathetic. This model measures a country’s image in a theoretical foundation that used a public relations method in examining stakeholders’ attitudes toward such a country (Buhmann, 2016). The model typically explains the process of people's beliefs in conative component, wherein the first three dimensions lead toward emotional dimension as an affective component (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

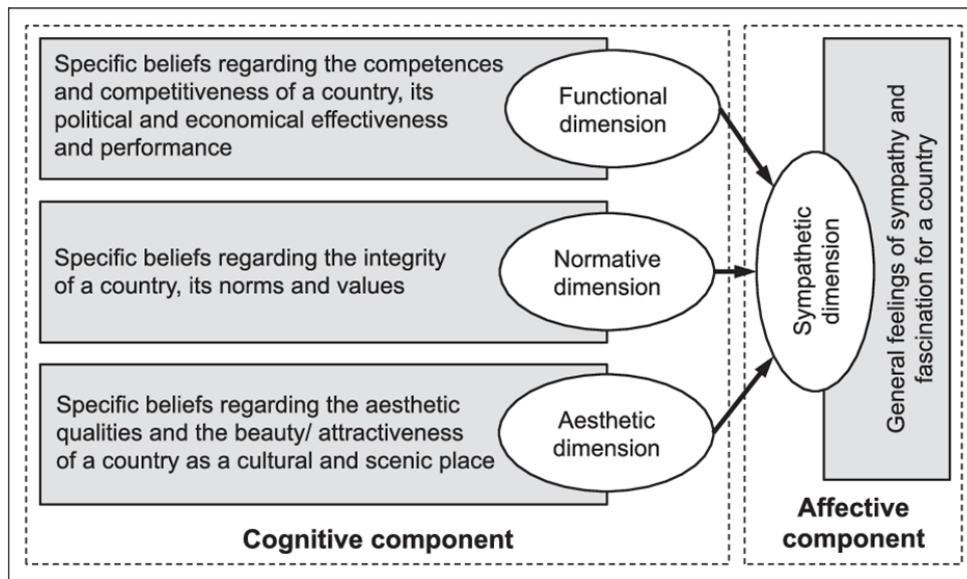


Figure 1. The four-dimensional model (“4D Model”) of the country image (Buhmann&Ingenhoff, 2015).

Since the model is new, there are few studies that focused on the areas of public diplomacy, business and public relations. Recently, Ayhan and Gouda (2021) have used the 4D model with the international students in South Korea to determine the country’s image. The authors created a survey, comprising 33 items in 3D cognitive component and 7 items in the affective component. They found that the four dimensions successfully outlined how students can create a positive or negative perception about the country. Even though the functional dimension negatively affected the general feeling about South Korea, the normative and aesthetic dimensions played a significant role in creating a positive image of the country. For example, a country’s culture and values were found to have positive impact on the image of South Korea among the foreign students (Ayhan & Gouda, 2021). Thus, the 4D model’s dimensions helped in obtaining appropriate outcomes about the country’s image.

Ayhan and Gouda (2021) built their conceptual framework by explaining that the four dimensions, comprising two components, resulted in the negative or positive effect of word of mouth. Basically, the positive dimensions led to positive word of mouth whereas negative dimensions led to negative effects of word of mouth. According to this study, the level of knowledge about a country was found to be related to the four dimensions, as well as word of mouth because the word of mouth and the level of knowledge are both external testable variables that could impact a country's image. This indicates that the high level of knowledge of a country positively affected the four dimensions, which create a high behavioral intention and low level of knowledge about a country will negatively influence the four dimensions results which will create a low behavioral intention.

The image of Qatar can also be evaluated using the 4D model, which mainly focuses on highlighting functional dimension, normative dimension, aesthetic dimension, and emotional dimension (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015). In terms of functional dimension, Khodr (2012) stated that strategies, including benchmarking global best practices, along with the recruitment of best event management firms worldwide, gives a nation a competitive advantage over other nations. In the context of the normative dimension, Gremm, Barth, Fietkiewicz, and Stock (2018) stated that Qatar focuses on its values for maintaining balance concerning further challenges. This includes modernizing traditions, along with ensuring their preservation and managing the growth and expansion of the nation. Concerning its aesthetic aspect, Golkowska (2014) stated that Qatar has the potential to attract more visitors through culture & sports, politics & policy, and tourism initiation. The growth in the Qatari educational system in the last two decades and the change in

women's role in work and education who became leaders in several places in Qatar reflected the flexibility and the ability to positively interact with any upcoming development (Golkowska, 2014). In terms of sympathetic dimension, Qatar can be cited as a fascinating example of a progressive country that has embraced change across the Middle Eastern region. This is because of the pace of modernization, as well as industrialization, which is perceived to be unprecedented. Furthermore, the striving "plans for the future imply profound socio-cultural changes. In addition to being an important political player, Qatar wants to become a regional leader in education, scientific research and sports tourism" (Golkowska, 2014, p. 52). Thus, the 4D model image of Qatar is favorable to hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. All these aspects help with the perception that the nation is highly capable of organizing the event successfully and attracting football fans from across the globe.

When image is evaluated using the four dimensions, all components were found to be related to fans' beliefs which directly impacts their attitudes toward a country. Buhmann (2016), identified three cognitive components that directly affect the behavioral intention toward visiting or supporting a country. In addition, Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), examined the effectiveness of two components in stakeholder behavior and found that both reflective and normative dimensions significantly affected people's behavior. This survey was conducted among Swiss students with the goal of identifying or aligning with a specific U.S. image. The advantage of this model is that it brings together several theories and models about attitudes, images, and reputation. As a result, the model can identify soccer fans' intended behavior toward the 2022

FIFA World Cup and outline the challenges and opportunities of Qatar as a new hosting destination.

### **Research Questions:**

In summary, this research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by determining the elements that lead to negative or positive country image among international soccer fans. Moreover, previous studies did not focus on how the level of knowledge of an individual might impact their beliefs and perception about the country. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between soccer fans' level of knowledge of the country, perceptions of the country's image, and support for FIFA World Cup 2022 Qatar.

RQ1: How do the four dimensions of country image predict soccer fans' behavioral intention?

RQ2: How does the level of knowledge influence soccer fans' behavioral intention?

RQ3: How does the level of knowledge influence the 4D Model?

RQ4: How does gender affect soccer fans' behavioral intention?

RQ5: How does the soccer fandom influence soccer fans' behavioral intention?

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: The four dimensions of country image will predict soccer fans' behavioral intention.

H<sub>2</sub>: The high level of knowledge is more likely to have a high behavioral intention and a low level of knowledge is more likely to have a low behavioral intention



H<sub>3</sub>: The high level of knowledge is more likely to have higher perceptions of the four dimensions of Qatar's image and a low level of knowledge is more likely to have lower perceptions of the four dimensions of Qatar's image.

H<sub>4</sub>: Soccer fans' behavioral intentions differ significantly by gender.

H<sub>5</sub>: The high level of soccer fandom is more likely to have a high behavioral intention and a low level of soccer fandom is more likely to have a low behavioral intention.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The study is a quantitative survey using correlational design. The use of a correlational survey will help in understanding the relationships between soccer fans' level of knowledge of the country and their perception about the country. It will further assist in understanding whether soccer fans, who are knowledgeable about Qatar and Qatar's ability to host FIFA 2022 World Cup will be more likely to have a positive perception of Qatar than those that have limited or no knowledge of Qatar. Additionally, correlational research focuses on determining the degree of a relationship between either two or more variables with the implementation of statistical data. In this particular design, "relationships between and among a number of facts are sought and interpreted. This type of research will recognize trends and patterns in data, but it does not go so far in its analysis to prove causes for these observed patterns" (Winston-Salem State University, 2014, p. 1). Thus, the use of a quantitative survey can be considered to be highly appropriate for this study.

### **Recruitment**

The participants were recruited among soccer fans using the Mturk Platform. The validated electronic survey instrument will be used to collect data from soccer-loving fans and those who may be intending to participate actively during the world cup. The participants bear no risk in participating and participation is purely voluntary. There will also be no compensation for

participation. The recruitment and data collection were spent three days to reach the aimed population.

### **Participant's information**

The anticipated sample size is 397 and participants will be drawn from all races, genders, and regions of the U.S. The minimum age to participate will be 18 years of age and the participants will be able to read and write in English to participants. Interest in Soccer will also be one of the major inclusion criteria

### **Instrumentation**

The survey items were adopted from Ayhan and Gouda (2021), the items will measure the independent variable which is Qatar's image among the international soccer fans. Following the four Dimensions Model that categorizes people's perception about the country image, the survey items will lead the participants to answer the research questions to examine how Aesthetic and Normative dimensions create the sympathetic dimension which is the general perception about the country. The survey answers will be measured on a seven-point likert scale with: 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6= somewhat agree, and 7= strongly agree.

#### *Functional Dimension*

1. Qatar's economy is highly innovative and fit for the future
2. Qatar produces very high-quality goods and services

3. Qatar has highly competent entrepreneurs
4. Qatar is very wealthy
5. Qatar is technologically highly advanced
6. Qatar holds a strong position in the global economy
7. The labor market in Qatar is equipped with highly competent people
8. Qatar has a globally influential culture
9. Athletes and sports teams from Qatar are internationally known for their success
10. Qatar has a very stable political system
11. Qatar has a well-functioning infrastructure
12. Qatar provides well-functioning welfare systems and pension plans
13. Qatar is highly innovative in science and research
14. Qatar provides great educational opportunities
15. The level of education in Qatar is very high

#### *Normative Dimension*

1. Qatar does a good job of protecting the environment
2. Qatar is known for its strong commitment to social issues (e.g. development aid, civil rights)
3. Qatar has high ethical standards
4. Qatar is a socially responsible member of the international community
5. Qatar respects the values of other nations and peoples
6. Qatar takes responsibility for helping in international

7. Qatar is a welcoming country
8. Qatar has excellent civil rights
9. Qatar has a very just welfare system
10. Qatar acts very fairly in international politics

#### *Aesthetic Dimension*

1. Qatar is home to beautiful cultural assets (e.g. arts, architecture, music, film etc.)
2. Qatar has delicious foods and a wonderful cuisine
3. Qatar has a very fascinating history
4. Qatar has rich traditions
5. Qatar has beautiful scenery
6. Qatar has a lot of well-preserved nature
7. Qatar has lots of charismatic people (e.g. in politics, sports, media etc.)

#### *Sympathetic Dimension*

1. I like Qatar
2. Qatar is an attractive country
3. Qatar is fascinating
4. If somebody speaks negatively about Qatar, it bothers me

In addition, there are items to measure participants' attitudes and behavioral intention toward Qatar and FIFA 2022 World Cup. Attitude items will be measured using a five-point semantic differential scale from 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (extremely positive). Behavioral intention

items will be measured using a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

*Attitude measurement*

- My attitude toward Qatar is.
- My attitude toward FIFA 2022 is.

*Behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup*

- If I have a chance, I will attend or watch FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- I will recommend FIFA 2022 World Cup to other people.
- My willingness to know more about Qatar and FIFA 2022 World Cup is high.

Participants will respond to five different sports fandom items to know the extent of their soccer fandom. This questionnaire has been adopted from Wann (2002), and the five items will be answered by seven likers scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

- I consider myself to be a Soccer fan.
- My friends see me as a Soccer fan.
- I believe that following Soccer is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
- My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow Soccer.
- Being a Soccer fan is very important to me.

## CHAPTER 4:

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between soccer fans' level of knowledge about Qatar and the four dimensions of the country's image, find the relationship between soccer fans' level of knowledge and their behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022, and examine the relationship between the four dimensions of the country's image and the behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup.

All research hypotheses were addressed using correlational analyses. The Pearson correlation coefficient value determines the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. A significance level of 0.05 has been used to determine if the relationships are statistically significant. An obtained p-value of less indicates a statistically significant relationship. A positive significant correlation value will indicate that one variable increases as the other increases. On the other hand, a significant negative value will indicate that one variable increases as the other decreases. All analyses have been run using the SPSS statistical software.

The sample included 397 participants comprised of 215 males (54.2%) and 182 females (45.8%) who were considered international soccer fans. The majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (69.8 %), and the majority of the sample identified as White (88.2%).

Participants rated themselves as moderately interested in soccer ( $M = 7.88$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ), and moderately interested in FIFA ( $M = 7.12$ ,  $SD = 2.19$ ). Additionally, it was very important to specify their interest in the national or international teams and competitions. Thus, the survey asked two different questions to address their following and watching. The percentage of

participants who follow soccer teams was 20.7% in national soccer teams only, 39.3% in “international soccer teams only”, 39.3% in “national and soccer teams” and 0.8% of participants did not follow any soccer teams. The majority of participants (59.4%) watch “International Competition (ex: FIFA World Cup, European Championships)” and 19.9% watch “club and international competitions”.

To find out how participants are soccer fans, five items have been adopted from Wann (2002), and it has been scaled from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Item means ranged from 5.36 to 5.62 which signifies that they have a high level of soccer fandom. (Table 7)

**Table 1**

*Soccer Fandom Scale*

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- I consider myself to be a soccer fan.	397	1	7	5.55	1.271
- My friends see me as a soccer fan.	397	1	7	5.55	1.211
- I believe that following soccer is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.	397	1	7	5.46	1.325
- My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow soccer.	397	1	7	5.36	1.317
- Being a soccer fan is important to me.	397	1	7	5.62	1.184
Valid N (listwise)	397				

Soccer fans’ level of knowledge was divided into 3 items pertaining to the FIFA World Cup, and 4 items about Qatar. These questions were structured as multiple choice questions with



one correct answer. Each item had one point, thus the mean scale was between 0 to 1. For the item “FIFA Cup is held every 4 years”, the mean was 0.8060 (SD=0.39589). The item “FIFA 2022 will be held in Fall and Winter” mean was 0.5139 (SD= 0.50044). The lowest item was “FIFA 2018 was held in Russia” with a mean of 0.2746 (SD= 0.44686). In terms of the level of knowledge about Qatar, the majority of soccer fans only know Qatar’s location in Asia (M= 0.7003, SD= 0.4587) and Qatar’s main language (M= 0.8035, SD= 0.3978) (Table 8).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics in soccer fans' level of knowledge about FIFA and Qatar*

<b>Level Of knowledge about FIFA</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
The FIFA Cup is held every 4 Years	397	.00	1.00	0.8060	0.39589
FIFA 2018 was held in Russia	397	.00	1.00	0.2746	0.44686
FIFA 2022 will be held in Fall and Winter	397	.00	1.00	0.5139	0.50044
<b>Level of knowledge about Qatar</b>					
Qatar is located in Asia	397	.00	1.00	0.7003	0.45873
Qatar’s primary resource is oil	397	.00	1.00	0.1587	0.36585
Qatar is neighbored by Dubai	397	.00	1.00	0.1159	0.32047
The main language of Qatar is Arabic	397	.00	1.00	0.8035	0.39783
Valid N (listwise)	397				

To determine the level of soccer fans' knowledge about Qatar and the FIFA 2022 World Cup the survey included seven different multiple choices questions and one correct answer. Hence, these items have been transformed to (1) one point for each correct answer and the total is (7) seven. Despite the sample being highly interested in soccer and international competitions, their level of knowledge about Qatar and FIFA 2022 World Cup was ( $M= 3.37, SD= 0.94$ ) which means that they are in the middle to low range of knowledge level.

**Table 3**

*Level of Knowledge about Qatar and FIFA 2022 World Cup*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Level_of_knowledge	397	.00	7.00	3.3728	.94391
Valid N (listwise)	397				

Soccer fans' perception was estimated by the 4 dimensions of the country image including functional (15) items, normative (10) items, aesthetic (7) items and sympathetic dimensions (4) items. In terms of the functional dimension, all 15 items had high means which means that soccer fans have a positive perception about country's politics, economic and the general performance (Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics of Functional Dimension of 4D Model*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- Qatar's economy is highly innovative.	397	1	7	5.24	1.377

**Table 4 (Continued)** *Descriptive Statistics of Functional Dimension of 4D Model*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- Qatar produces very high-quality goods and services.	397	1	7	5.37	1.285
- Qatar has highly competent entrepreneurs.	397	1	7	5.51	1.228
- Qatar is very wealthy.	397	1	7	5.60	1.195
- Qatar is technologically highly advanced.	397	1	7	5.47	1.213
- Qatar holds a strong position in the global economy.	397	1	7	5.40	1.247
- The labor market in Qatar is equipped with highly competent people.	397	1	7	5.39	1.241
- Qatar has a globally influential culture.	397	1	7	5.31	1.402
- Athletes and sports teams from Qatar are internationally known for their success.	397	1	7	5.24	1.400
- Qatar has a very stable political system.	397	1	7	5.26	1.321
- Qatar has a well-functioning infrastructure.	397	1	7	5.44	1.239
- Qatar provides well-functioning welfare systems and pension plans.	397	1	7	5.26	1.370
- Qatar is highly innovative in science and research.	397	1	7	5.31	1.305
- Qatar provides great educational opportunities.	397	1	7	5.41	1.210
- The level of education in Qatar is very high.	397	1	7	5.45	1.245
Valid N (listwise)	397				

Similar to the functional dimension, the normative dimension item means were from 5.24 to 5.60. This indicates that soccer fans' perception of country norms, values and rules is positive (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics of Normative Dimension of 4D Model*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- Qatar does a good job of protecting the environment.	397	1	7	5.19	1.470
- Qatar is known for its strong commitment to social issues (e.g. development aid, civil rights).	397	1	7	5.10	1.583
- Qatar has high ethical standards.	397	1	7	5.35	1.455
- Qatar is a socially responsible member of the international community.	397	1	7	5.31	1.404
- Qatar respects the values of other nations and peoples.	397	1	7	5.35	1.323
- Qatar takes responsibility for helping in international issues.	397	1	7	5.31	1.362
- Qatar is a welcoming country.	397	1	7	5.37	1.331
- Qatar has excellent civil rights.	397	1	7	5.24	1.494
- Qatar has a very just welfare system.	397	1	7	5.35	1.356
- Qatar acts very fairly in international politics.	397	1	7	5.45	1.332
Valid N (listwise)	397				

In addition to normative dimension results, the aesthetic dimension, which examines participants' beliefs about country attractiveness, culture, and beauty has a similar range of the other dimension's means. This was reflected in the results, with soccer fans' having reflected a positive perception in the aesthetic dimension (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Aesthetic Dimension of 4D Model*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- Qatar is home to beautiful cultural assets (e.g. arts, architecture, music, film, etc.).	397	1	7	4.98	1.188
- Qatar has delicious foods and cuisine.	397	1	7	5.11	1.206
- Qatar has a fascinating history.	397	1	7	5.15	1.167
- Qatar has rich traditions.	397	1	7	5.16	1.133
- Qatar has beautiful scenery.	397	1	7	5.17	1.134
- Qatar has lots of well-preserved nature.	397	1	7	5.06	1.189
- Qatar has lots of charismatic people (e.g. in politics, sports, media, etc.).	397	1	7	5.09	1.196
Valid N (listwise)	397				

The sympathetic dimension, which examines soccer fans' general beliefs and perceptions of country image, illustrated that soccer fans have a high mean range of the sympathetic dimension (Table 7). All dimensions showcased the positivity of soccer fans perception about Qatar's image.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics of Sympathetic Dimension of 4D Model*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- I like Qatar.	397	1	7	5.50	1.336
- Qatar is an attractive country.	397	1	7	5.54	1.375
- Qatar is fascinating to me.	397	1	7	5.52	1.306
. - If somebody speaks negatively about Qatar, it bothers me.	397	1	7	5.23	1.578
Valid N (listwise)	397				

RQ1: How do the four dimensions of country image predict soccer fans' behavioral intention?

Results show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the four dimensions of country's image and the behavioral intention to support the 2022 FIFA World Cup. The correlation is strongly positive in all four dimensions. The relationship between the behavioral intention and four dimensions of country's image are functional dimension ( $r= 0.819, p=0.000$ ), Normative dimension ( $r= 0.786, p=0.000$ ), Aesthetic dimension ( $r= 0.786, p=0.000$ ), and Sympathetic dimension ( $r= 0.848, p=0.000$ ). It has been clear that H1 is supported. (Table 12)

**Table 8***Relationship Between the Behavioral Intention and The Four Dimensions of the Country Image*

		Behavioral Intention	Functional Dimension	Normative Dimension	Aesthetic Dimension	Sympathetic Dimension
Behavioral Intention	Pearson Correlation	1	.819**	.786**	.794**	.848**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Functional Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.819**	1	.867**	.820**	.830**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Normative Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.786**	.867**	1	.725**	.882**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Aesthetic Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.794**	.820**	.725**	1	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Sympathetic Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.848**	.830**	.882**	.737**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	397	397	397	397	397

*Note:* \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Linear regression was conducted to predict the behavioral intention based on the four dimensions of Qatar's image. The overall model with all four independent variables was significant,  $F(4,392) = 244.304, p < .001$ . This indicated that all four independent variables

significantly predicted behavioral intention. The most influential predictor was the aesthetic dimension ( $\beta = .387, p < .001$ ). The amount of variance in the dependent variable (behavioral intention) explained by the four independent variables was 71.4% ( $R^2 = .714$ ).

Soccer fans' predicted behavioral intention equals  $0.39 + 0.022^*$  (Functional)  $- 0.013^*$  (Normative)  $+ 0.064^*$  (Aesthetic)  $+ 0.083^*$  (Sympathetic) dimensions.

**Table 9**

*Model Summary: Behavioral intention and 4D Model*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.845 <sup>a</sup>	.714	.711	.56417

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sympathetic\_D, Aesthetic\_D, Functional\_D, Normative\_D

*ANOVA<sup>a</sup>: Behavioral intention and 4D Model*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	311.040	4	77.760	244.304	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	124.770	392	.318		
	Total	435.811	396			

a. Dependent Variable: Behavioral\_intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sympathetic\_D, Aesthetic\_D, Functional\_D, Normative\_D

*Coefficients<sup>a</sup>: Behavioral intention and 4D Model*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	.039	.171		.226	.821
	Functional Dimension.	.022	.005	.298	4.520	.000



**Table 9 (Continued) Coefficients<sup>a</sup>: Behavioral intention and 4D Model**

_Normative Dimension.	-.013	.006	-.145	-2.168	.031
Aesthetic Dimension.	.064	.008	.387	8.051	.000
Sympathetic Dimension.	.083	.014	.361	5.936	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Behavioral\_intention

RQ2: How does the level of knowledge influence soccer fans' behavioral intention?

Soccer fans' attitudes scales include 3 items about Qatar and 3 items about FIFA

2022. The data shows that international soccer fans had positive attitudes towards Qatar and FIFA 2022 (Table 12).

**Table 10***Descriptive Statistics in soccer fans' attitudes toward Qatar and FIFA 2022*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Attitudes toward Qatar</b>	397	1	7	5.76	1.325
My attitude toward Qatar is: - Unfavorable:Favorable	397	1	7	5.75	1.318
My attitude toward Qatar is: - Bad:Good	397	1	7	5.71	1.326
<b>Attitudes toward FIFA 2022</b>					
My attitude toward FIFA 2022 is: - Negative:positive	397	1	7	5.67	1.403
My attitude toward FIFA 2022 is: - Bad:Good	397	1	7	5.74	1.335
My attitude toward FIFA 2022 is: - Unfavorable:Favorable	397	1	7	5.80	1.332
Valid N (listwise)	397				

Additionally, the behavioral intention items were also divided as 5 items about FIFA 2022 and 1 item about Qatar. The highest behavioral intention item was the item about Qatar (M= 5.33, SD= 1.245). The lowest item was “If I have a chance, I will attend the FIFA 2022 World Cup” (M= 4.92, SD= 1.448). In general, all results shows that soccer fans have high behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup and Qatar (Table 13).

**Table 11**

*Descriptive Statistics in soccer fans' behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
- If I have a chance, I will attend the FIFA 2022 World Cup.	397	1	7	4.92	1.448
- I intend to watch the FIFA 2022 World Cup.	397	1	7	5.25	1.291
- I will recommend that others watch the FIFA 2022 World Cup.	397	1	7	5.27	1.321
- I will recommend that others attend the FIFA 2022 World Cup.	397	1	7	5.14	1.388
- I would like to know more about the FIFA 2022 World Cup.	397	1	7	5.22	1.245
- I would like to know more about Qatar.	397	1	7	5.33	1.243
Valid N (listwise)	397				

The results illustrate that there is no association between international soccer fans' level of knowledge and their behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. The significance of the relationship is ( $p= 0.21$ ) which is greater than 0.05 has determined that the H2 is not supported because the two variables are not correlated. (Table 14)

**Table 12**

*International Soccer Fans' Level of Knowledge of Qatar and Their Behavioral Intention To Support The 2022 FIFA World Cup*

		Level of knowledge	Behavioral intention
Level of knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.218
	N	397	397
Behavioral intention	Pearson Correlation	.062	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.218	
	N	397	397

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to find the differences between level of knowledge groups (high and low) in behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. Results show that there was no statistically significant difference in behavioral intention,  $F(1, .371) = .173, p = .678$ . Results outlined that level of knowledge has no influence on soccer fans' behavioral intention. As a result, H3 is not supported.

**Table 13**

*Descriptives : Level of knowledge groups and behavioral intention*

		95% Confidence Interval for Mean						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimu m	Maximu m
1.00	58	5.1408	1.30332	.17113	4.7981	5.4835	1.00	7.00
2.00	315	5.2042	1.01819	.05737	5.0914	5.3171	2.00	7.00
Total	373	5.1944	1.06578	.05518	5.0859	5.3029	1.00	7.00

**Table 13 (Continued)** *Level of knowledge groups and behavioral intention*  
*ANOVA*

Behavioral intention

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.197	1	.197	.173	.678
Within Groups	422.350	371	1.138		
Total	422.547	372			

RQ3: How does the level of knowledge influence soccer fans' the 4D Model?

The results show that there is no relationship between the level of knowledge and the four dimensions of the country's image. The significance was greater than 0.05 between the level of knowledge and all four dimensions; however, there is a strong positive and significant relationship between functional, normative, aesthetic, and sympathetic dimensions. Therefore, that H2 is not supported (Table 8).

**Table 14***International Soccer Fans' Level of Knowledge of Qatar and Four Dimensions.*

		L of knowledge	Func D	Norm D	Aesth D	Symp D
L of knowledge	Pearson	1	.009	.024	.049	.032
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.857	.639	.326	.519
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Functional Dimension	Pearson	.009	1	.867**	.820**	.830**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.857		.000	.000	.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Normative Dimension	Pearson	.024	.867**	1	.725**	.882**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.639	.000		.000	.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Aesthetic Dimension	Pearson	.049	.820**	.725**	1	.737**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.326	.000	.000		.000
	N	397	397	397	397	397
Sympathetic Dimension	Pearson	.032	.830**	.882**	.737**	1
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.519	.000	.000	.000	
	N	397	397	397	397	397

*Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the differences across level of knowledge groups (high and low) in dimensions of Qatar's image (i.e., functional, normative, aesthetic and sympathetic). Results reveal that there was no statistically significant difference in functional,  $F(1, 371) = 2.954, p = .086$ , normative,  $F(1, 371) = 2.301, p = .130$ , Aesthetic,  $F(1, 371) = 1.291, p = .257$ , and Sympathetic,  $F(1, 371) = 1.570, p = .211$  on soccer fans' behavioral intention. Findings suggest that level of knowledge has no influence on four dimensions of Qatar's image.

**Table 15**

*Descriptives: Level of knowledge groups and 4D Model*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Functional Dimension	1.00	58	83.5517	16.73757	2.19775	79.1508	87.9526	41.00	105.00
	2.00	315	79.9873	14.07192	.79286	78.4273	81.5473	34.00	105.00
	Total	373	80.5416	14.55141	.75344	79.0600	82.0231	34.00	105.00
Normative Dimension	1.00	58	54.9828	12.08086	1.58629	51.8063	58.1593	23.00	70.00
	2.00	315	52.4381	11.67658	.65790	51.1436	53.7325	10.00	70.00
	Total	373	52.8338	11.76011	.60892	51.6364	54.0311	10.00	70.00
Aesthetic Dimension	1.00	58	36.5345	6.40782	.84139	34.8496	38.2193	21.00	49.00
	2.00	315	35.4952	6.40132	.36067	34.7856	36.2049	14.00	49.00
	Total	373	35.6568	6.40482	.33163	35.0047	36.3089	14.00	49.00
Sympathetic Dimension	1.00	58	22.4310	4.53877	.59597	21.2376	23.6244	11.00	28.00
	2.00	315	21.6095	4.59818	.25908	21.0998	22.1193	7.00	28.00
	Total	373	21.7373	4.59261	.23780	21.2697	22.2049	7.00	28.00

**Table 15 (Continued)** ANOVA: Level of knowledge groups and 4D Model

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Functional Dimension	Between Groups	622.312	1	622.312	2.954	.086
	Within Groups	78146.294	371	210.637		
	Total	78768.606	372			
Normative Dimension	Between Groups	317.169	1	317.169	2.301	.130
	Within Groups	51130.526	371	137.818		
	Total	51447.694	372			
Aesthetic Dimension	Between Groups	52.901	1	52.901	1.291	.257
	Within Groups	15207.174	371	40.990		
	Total	15260.075	372			
Sympathetic Dimension	Between Groups	33.056	1	33.056	1.570	.211
	Within Groups	7813.196	371	21.060		
	Total	7846.252	372			

RQ4: How does gender influence soccer fans' behavioral intention?

Based on a one-way ANOVA, it was determined if there is a difference in behavioral intentions between the male and female groups. Results show that there was no statistically significant difference in behavioral intention,  $F(1, .395) = .010, p = .922$ . Results illustrated that gender does not affect soccer fans' behavioral intentions.

**Table 16***Descriptive: Gender and behavioral intention***Behavioral intention**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Male	214	5.1963	1.03052	.07045	5.0574	5.3351	1.00	7.00
Female	182	5.1941	1.05737	.07838	5.0395	5.3488	2.00	7.00
Total	396	5.1953	1.04162	.05234	5.0924	5.2982	1.00	7.00

*ANOVA***Behavioral intention**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.011	1	.011	.010	.922
Within Groups	435.800	395	1.103		
Total	435.811	396			

RQ5: How does the soccer fandom influence soccer fans' behavioral intention?

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to find the differences between levels of soccer fandom (high and low) in their behavioral intention. An analysis determined that there was a statistically significant difference in behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup,  $F(1, 395) = 163.839, p > .001$ . Results show that level of soccer fandom has an influence on soccer fans' behavioral intention. Hence, H5 is supported.



**Table 17***Descriptives: Fandom scale groups and behavioral intention*

Behavioral intention

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1.00	37	3.4189	.91255	.15002	3.1147	3.7232	1.00	5.00
2.00	360	5.3704	.88008	.04638	5.2792	5.4616	2.17	7.00
Total	397	5.1885	1.04906	.05265	5.0850	5.2920	1.00	7.00

*ANOVA: Fandom scale groups and behavioral intention*

Behavioral intention

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	127.770	1	127.770	163.839	.000
Within Groups	308.041	395	.780		
Total	435.811	396			

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study was designed to discover international soccer fans' perceptions of Qatar and FIFA 2022 and the factors that shaped their perception, such as the level of knowledge, behavioral intentions, gender differences, and soccer fandom. Regarding RQ1, there is a strong positive correlation between the 4D model of the country's image and soccer fans' behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022. It has been hypothesized that the high perception will lead to a high behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. Soccer fans' behavioral intention was predicted by the four dimensions of Qatar's image. The results of H1 are contrary to the previous research results in the literature review. For example, Andersson et al. (2021) and the hesitancy of attending FIFA 2022 World Cup and Griffin (2019), and the impact of negative stereotypes about Islam on soccer fans' perception of Qatar. However, these findings support Testa and Amara's (2015) findings as a great opportunity to change the previous negative perceptions of the middle eastern region. In addition, it supports Youd's (2014) statement about the advantage of season shifting to overcome the heat challenges.

In contrast to the earlier finding, no evidence of the soccer fans' level of knowledge was detected. This study has been unable to demonstrate that level of knowledge had any influence on soccer fans' perceptions and behavioral intentions. Surprisingly, there are no differences between the (high and low) levels of knowledge groups which resulted in the rejection of H2 and H3. Consequently, the lack of knowledge about FIFA 2022 and Qatar might impact the relationship between the two variables of the H2. Additionally, a similar result has appeared with

H3 while the soccer fans had high behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup and a low level of knowledge about FIFA 2022 and Qatar.

It was hypothesized that gender might differ in soccer fans' behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup and the results indicated that gender differences did not influence the behavioral intention. The similarity of perceptions among genders leads us to know that the difference in middle eastern cultures could not distinguish between genders as referred to cultural clash dilemma in Ottenfeld's (2019) study. Ottenfeld (2019) stated that there is a limitation in communicating with women in the Muslim region. As a result, cultural limitations did not change soccer fans' perceptions of Qatar among genders.

The fifth question in this study was about soccer fandom and its influence on soccer fans' behavioral intention. The analysis illustrated that there is a difference between high soccer fandom and low soccer fandom groups in their behavioral intention. It's interesting to find that in contrast to the level of knowledge, soccer fandom influences behavioral intention. There are numerous potential explanations for these findings. The first explanation is none of the previous studies about FIFA 2022 measured participants' sports fandom which means that Andersson et al. (2021), and Ottenfeld's (2019) data were gathered from a low fandom scale group. A second explanation is soccer fans are attending to support their teams thus they care about matches, stadiums, soccer activities, and accommodations which reflects that a stadium's cultural design was a strong indicator from the SCDL to improve and promote Qatar's culture and this result supports the idea of Scharfenort (2012), study about the great opportunity of stadiums designs and Qatari culture.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the research questions and hypotheses, the results revealed that there is a positive perception of Qatar and FIFA 2022 World Cup and there is a high intention to attend and support this global event. Moreover, the absence of knowledge did not lead to a negative perception and low behavior intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. However, the FIFA 2022 committee should increase international soccer fans' knowledge about Qatar as a new destination. A fandom scale indicated that the research participants are soccer fans which distinguish this result from previous studies' results. A sports fandom plays a significant role in soccer fans' behavioral intentions so the Qatari government might focus on fans' interests to improve the country's image. This research extends the knowledge of strategic communication in examining sports audiences' needs and understanding their behaviors. Furthermore, the 4D model of the country's image provided a new way to investigate how stakeholders' perceptions will be of a destination.

## **Limitations**

The research items on the level of knowledge were not enough to examine soccer fans' knowledge about Qatar. For instance, scaled items could clearly reflect participants' background about a destination. Thus, findings published in destination familiarity in tourism or public policy could help the future research to adopt published items that examine individual knowledge about such destinations. Even though the aesthetic dimension examines people's perception of the country's attractions and culture, future research could follow the experimental

methods to understand the extent of Qatari culture's influence on soccer fans' perceptions of the FIFA 2022 World Cup.

### **Recommendations**

- Future research might study the cause and effect of the relationships between the level of knowledge, perception about Qatar, and the behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- Future research could focus on the impact of the destination's culture on soccer fans' behavioral intention to support such events as well as FIFA 2010 and South Africa.
- After FIFA 2022 World Cup, similar research could be conducted to determine how the sport could impact the destination image and brand among stakeholders.

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**Appendices A:**  
**Survey instruments**

**SOCCER INTEREST**

- **What is the degree of your interest in the following:**

**Soccer:** (1: not interesting at all) ←2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9→ (10: Extremely interesting)

**FIFA:** (1: not interesting at all) ←2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9→ (10: Extremely interesting)

- **What type of soccer teams do you follow?**

- National soccer teams only
- International Soccer teams only
- National and international soccer teams
- I don't follow any soccer teams

- **What soccer competitions are you likely to watch ?**

- Club competitions (ex: UEFA Champions League)
- International Competition (ex: FIFA World Cup, European Championships)
- Club and International Competitions
- None

**THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FIFA AND QATAR**

- The FIFA Cup is held every: 1 Year – 2 Years – 4 Years – 5 Years
- What country was FIFA 2018 held in: Germany – Russia – USA – UK

- FIFA 2022 Will be held in : Summer – Spring – Winter – Fall
- Qatar is located in : America – Africa – Asia – Europe
- Qatar’s primary resource is: Cotton – Oil – Technology – Gold
- Qatar is neighbored by: China – Dubai – Morocco – Turkey
- The main language of Qatar is: Indian – Persian – Arabic – English

### **Open-ended question**

**What do you know about Qatar?**

---

**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by selecting the appropriate response on the scale provided.**

**1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6= somewhat agree, and 7= strongly agree.**

#### **Functional Dimension**

1. Qatar’s economy is highly innovative and fit for the future.
2. Qatar produces very high-quality goods and services.
3. Qatar has highly competent entrepreneurs.
4. Qatar is very wealthy.
5. Qatar is technologically highly advanced.
6. Qatar holds a strong position in the global economy.
7. The labor market in Qatar is equipped with highly competent people.
8. Qatar has a globally influential culture.
9. Athletes and sports teams from Qatar are internationally known for their success.
10. Qatar has a very stable political system.
11. Qatar has a well-functioning infrastructure.
12. Qatar provides well-functioning welfare systems and pension plans.
13. Qatar is highly innovative in science and research.

14. Qatar provides great educational opportunities.
15. The level of education in Qatar is very high.

### **Normative Dimension**

1. Qatar does a good job of protecting the environment.
2. Qatar is known for its strong commitment to social issues (e.g. development aid, civil rights).
3. Qatar has high ethical standards.
4. Qatar is a socially responsible member of the international community.
5. Qatar respects the values of other nations and peoples.
6. Qatar takes responsibility for helping in international.
7. Qatar is a welcoming country.
8. Qatar has excellent civil rights.
9. Qatar has a very just welfare system.
10. Qatar acts very fairly in international politics.

### **Aesthetic Dimension**

1. Qatar is home to beautiful cultural assets. (e.g. arts, architecture, music, film etc.)
2. Qatar has delicious foods and a wonderful cuisine.
3. Qatar has a very fascinating history.
4. Qatar has rich traditions.
5. Qatar has beautiful scenery.
6. Qatar has a lot of well-preserved nature.
7. Qatar has lots of charismatic people. (e.g. in politics, sports, media etc.)

### **Sympathetic Dimension**

1. I like Qatar.
2. Qatar is an attractive country.
3. Qatar is fascinating.

4. If somebody speaks negatively about Qatar, it bothers me.

**Attitude measurement**

- My attitude toward Qatar is.

Negative \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Positive

Bad \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Good

Unfavorable \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Favorable

- My attitude toward FIFA 2022 is.

Negative \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Positive

Bad \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Good

Unfavorable \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_ Favorable

**Behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup**

**Please, answer the following questions about your behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6= somewhat agree, and 7= strongly agree.**

- If I have a chance, I will attend the FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- I intend to watch the FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- I will recommend that others watch the FIFA 2022 World Cup.
- I would like to know more about the FIFA 2022 World Cup .
- I would like to know more about Qatar.



**Please, answer the following questions about your behavioral intention to support FIFA 2022 World Cup. 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6= somewhat agree, and 7= strongly agree.**

### **Sport fandom**

- I consider myself to be a Soccer fan.
- My friends see me as a Soccer fan.
- I believe that following Soccer is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
- My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow Soccer.
- Being a Soccer fan is very important to me.

### **Demographics**

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your sex?  Female     Male     Other.     Prefer not to say

What is your highest level of education?

- High school or equivalent             Some college
- Associate's degree                       Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree                           Ph.D.

What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian                       White.                       African- American
- Hispanic.                       American Indian                       Asian

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendices B:**  
**IRB Approval Letter**



May 31, 2022

Taleb Aladbah  
19104 Wood Sage Dr Tampa , FL 33647

**EXEMPT DETERMINATION**

Dear Mr. Taleb Aladbah:  
On 5/31/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type: Initial Study	
IRB ID: STUDY004348	
Review Type: Exempt 2	
Title:	An Analysis of International Soccer Fans' Knowledge of Qatar, Perceptions of Qatar's Country Image, and Intention to Support the 2022 FIFA World Cup
Funding: None	
Protocol: • Edited protocol without track	

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any

changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely, Katrina Johnson

## **Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance**

FWA No. 00001669

University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 974-5638

/ 813-

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IRB Research Compliance Administrator

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## **Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance**

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University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 974-5638

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## Appendices C:

### Informed Consent to Participate in Research



#### Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

**Title: An Analysis of International Soccer Fans' Knowledge of Qatar, Perceptions of Qatar's Country Image, and Intention to Support the 2022 FIFA World Cup**

**Study # 004348**

---

**Overview:** You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Taleb Al-Adbah who is a mass communications master's student at/in The University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Thesis Chair Dr. Kelly Werder. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at the United State of America utilizing Mturk and is supported/sponsored by University of South Florida. The purpose of this research is to identify and quantify the factors that contribute to a positive or negative country image among international soccer fans. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between soccer fans' level of knowledge of the country, perceptions of the country, and support for FIFA World Cup 2022 Qatar. The participation will involve a 10-minute questionnaire.

Participants: You are being asked to take part in this study to know if there is a relationship between the level of knowledge, Qatar's country image, and the intention to support the FIFA 2022 World Cup. Your participation will contribute to determining the role of international soccer fans in supporting the FIFA 2022 World Cup.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or

opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Alternatives to participating in the study include financial benefits for your time and effort in filling this questionnaire. The benefit amount will be measured upon the Mturk category in selecting their participants. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: You will be compensated from the Mturk website for your participation.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

---

---

## **Why are you being asked to take part?**

This research seeks to fill the gap in the literature by determining the elements that lead to negative or positive country image among international soccer fans. You have been selected as a soccer fan who has a good information about FIFA World Cup and your point of view about FIFA 2022 is very important to fill the previous studies gab about the impact of level of knowledge in people perception about country image.

## **Study Procedures**

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to answer the online survey for approximately 10 minutes and the data will be collected by Qualtrics and analyzed by the SPSS program. The research has been designed to be a master thesis at Zimmerman School, University of South Florida.

## **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

## **Benefits and Risks**

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study. This research is considered to be minimal risk.

## **Compensation**

You will be compensated between 0.00 to 1.00 dollars (depending on your category at Mturk) if you complete all the scheduled study visits. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion you will be compensated the deserved amount for each study visit you complete.

## **Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your study records. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are: Taleb Al-Adbah, Dr. Kelly Werder, Dr. Roxanne Watson and Dr. Travis Bell. In addition, The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Social Behavioral Survey

Version #

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It is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses because you are responding online. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. If you complete and submit an anonymous survey and later request your data be withdrawn, this may or may not be possible as the researcher may be unable to extract anonymous data from the database.

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies.

If you have concerns about the use or storage of your personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country.

## **Contact Information**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Taleb Al-Adbah at 813 6488848. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact the IRB by email at [RSCH-IRB@usf.edu](mailto:RSCH-IRB@usf.edu).

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are. You can print a copy of this consent form for your records.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by proceeding with this survey, I am agreeing to take part in research and I am 18 years of age or older.

I Agree

I Do Not Agree

**Survey link:**

[https://usf.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0uDWwTLEH7UnUaO](https://usf.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0uDWwTLEH7UnUaO)

Social Behavioral Survey


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Version Date  
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## Appendices D:

### Copy Right Permission Email

**From:** INGENHOFF Diana diana.ingenhoff@unifr.ch   
**Subject:** Re: Copy Right Permission for MA Thesis Publishing  
**Date:** July 9, 2022 at 4:37 AM  
**To:** Taleb Al-Adbah taleb@usf.edu, alexander.buhmann@bi.no

ID

Dear Taleb,

as long as you cite the respective journal(s) where the framework and model are published, it is not necessary to ask for a copy right permission:

Buhmann, A. & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). Advancing the country image construct from a public relations perspective: from model to measurement. *Journal of Communication Management*, 19(1), 62-80. [Link](#)

Buhmann, A. & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). The 4D Model of the country image: An integrative approach from the perspective of communication management. *International Communication Gazette*, 77(1), 102–124. [Link](#)

Kind regards  
Diana Ingenhoff

Chair of Organizational Communication and Public Diplomacy  
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