

Can Qatar rise to the challenge and accommodate alcohol at the 2022 Football World Cup?

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The issue of alcohol consumption is the latest in a long line of talking points raised by the decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, according to research from Taylor & Francis. From allegations of bribery and exploitation of migrant workers to the challenges posed by Qatar's scorching weather, controversy surrounding the decision has never been far from the back pages.

Recently published in the Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, the article 'No beer, no way! Football fan identity enactment won't mix with Muslim beliefs in the Qatar 2022 World Cup' looks at the issues surrounding the availability of alcohol in Qatar during the World Cup. Susan Dun observes that "alcohol and football are like two peas in a pod for many fans who [...] can't imagine attending a match without beer in hand". However, in a country where alcohol use is strictly regulated, this is likely to pose a serious challenge.

While Qatar is in the midst of a massive programme of modernisation that has exposed it to Western culture and beliefs, traditionalist Islamic values are still very much deep-rooted, which makes it a "curious case within the contemporary debate surrounding alcohol". Whereas anxieties around [alcohol consumption](#) and public safety have shaped the debate on drink availability in the UK, in Qatar concerns are rooted in the practice of Islam as, "for Muslims, the behaviour of others in their presence affects their standing in front of God and their community". Many

Muslims believe exposure to drinking could taint them in the eyes of God, therefore expect other people to refrain from partaking in alcohol in public spaces. Qatar's quartering strategy, which aims at separating the places where alcohol is available from those accessible to the native population, has also raised significant questions about the challenges of hosting the World Cup in the country. This has been further emphasised by Qatar's new restrictions on alcohol consumption; after an initial loosening of the rules, a number of hotels have seen their licenses being revoked, which "indicates the existence of deep divisions between progressive and conservative elements [in Qatar,] which is particularly evident in the use of public spaces".

Alcohol is an integral part of tourists' dining-out culture as well as a key component of football's identity. In a country where the current ratio of nationals versus foreigners is 1:10, and where millions of fans are expected to descend in 2022, the question of how Qatar plans to manage alcohol consumption in practical terms remains open. Moreover, FIFA's ability to demand conditions, especially in regards with alcohol availability at matches, shows that working out a deal between the association and Qatar may well present new challenges. Whether football fans will be left dry at the 2022 World Cup still remains to be seen.

More information: Susan Dun, "No beer, no way! Football fan identity enactment won't mix with Muslim beliefs in the Qatar 2022 World Cup." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, Volume 6, Issue 2, 2014, [DOI: 10.1080/19407963.2014.925256](https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2014.925256)

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