

The FIFA World Cup 2022 - Ticketing
An exploratory case study

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Abstract

This case study explores the methods and best practice recommendations for the FIFA World Cup 2022 ticketing operation in Qatar. Using empirical evidence and practitioner experience, the study explores the foundations of event ticketing and applies these to tournament and host environments. The approach is justified through an inductive method, exploring the theory behind the rationales and purposes of the research. The case study details how tournament ticketing operations are formulated and implemented, while providing step by step guidance of the critical activities involved. Recommendations are made which would maximise the sustainable opportunity presented to Qatar. Lastly, a bespoke teaching case is presented which tests the critical tasks required in allocating and pricing tickets for a tournament through a hypothetical scenario.

Keywords: *FIFA, Qatar, World Cup, Ticketing, Sustainability, National Vision.*

The FIFA World Cup 2022 – Ticketing

An explorative case study

An introduction to ticketing – overview and review of literature

This case study explores the critical factors and activities required to successfully ticket a major event. The processes and recommendations made are generated from research in the field and aim to raise awareness of Qatar's ticketing environment, develop understanding of key activities and increase knowledge in how to deliver sustainable ticketing services beyond the 2022 FIFA Tournament.

Essentially tickets are tokens which permit entry to events or services provided by the organisation. For organisers this means selling access in an appropriate way to consumers by way of providing tickets which are also a form of payment receipt.¹ Ticket sales are a major revenue generating activity and primary source of income for events. Ticketing helps organisers overcome cash flow issues and provides opportunities to raise revenue during event life cycles.² A key challenge is that of cost and the attraction of attendees to the event, thus ticketing requires development of complex processes which engage event marketing and operational plans. For tournament and event organisers, the issue of successful ticketing

¹ Z. Beaven, Laws, C. , "Principles and Applications in Ticketing and Reservations Management," in *Festival and Events Management : An International Arts and Culture Perspective* ed. Ian Yeoman (2003).

² Razaq Raj, Paul Walters, and Tahir Rashid, *Events management : principles and practice* (2013).

depends on an array of activities for the maximum long-term benefit of the organisation.

With risk a critical factor, the potential for harm and negative publicity arising from poor ticketing operations can impact the reputation of organisers and partners.³ Today, social media access of fans and the lens of the world focussing on hosts during the tournament means risks are amplified.⁴ Past tournament organisers have been criticised for poor ticketing operations, as seen prior to the 2012 Olympics when customers failed to get the tickets they expected.⁵

Effectively, ticketing is a control mechanism as it informs organisers on how many people will attend, while it is also used as a means of controlling capacity within limited capacity venues.⁶ Demand for World Cup tickets will always exceed supply and the finite number of seats available for each match means that capacity management is a critical factor.

With event paradigms shifting towards service dominant logic within experience economies, the ticket is essential to fulfilling customer needs and enhancing experience.⁷ A common failing in event organisations occurs during the early stages, involving enquiries and the issuing of tickets.⁸ Purchasing tickets is

³ Peter E. Tarlow, Joe Jeff Goldblatt, and Library Ebook, *Event risk management and safety*, Wiley event management series, (2002).

⁴ W. Liu, Sparks, B. & Coughlan, A., "Event Experiences Through the Lens of Attendees," *Event Management* 21 (2017).

⁵ O. Gibson, "Olympics ticketing problems highlight public state of indifference. For now.," *London Olympics Blog* (2012). <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/jan/11/london-2012-public-isolated>.

⁶ Anton Shone and Bryn Parry, *Successful event management : a practical handbook* (2004).

⁷ Graham Berridge and London University of West, *Event experiences : design, management and impact* (2014).

⁸ Shone and Parry, *Successful event management : a practical handbook*.

often the first point of contact between customers and organisers, and, as the beginning of experiences, it is therefore critical that ticketing operations are among the first to be planned as part of the overall strategy.

However, it is not merely a case of tallying up numbers of sellable seats for a tournament and putting them on-sale. Ticketing requires a detailed and analytical approach, ensuring financial aims and objectives are achieved. Therefore, pricing strategies are critical to the dilemma of attracting customers while covering competition costs within limited capacity venues.⁹

Experience is a key factor in the decision-making process and for this reason, FIFA control and manage the ticketing operation for their tournaments having developed the networks, databases and best practices while continually improving their strategic frameworks.¹⁰

The World Cup tournament presents a unique investment and research opportunity for Qatar in developing the understanding of ticketing processes and is relevant in light of the increase in event tourism to Qatar and the schedule of international events planned into the current decade.^{11 12} Thus, this case study presents the critical aspects for ticketing a large tournament while managing the expectations of clients and customers.

⁹ Raj, Walters, and Rashid, *Events management : principles and practice*.

¹⁰ Giles Bayliss, "FIFA's World Cup Ticketing Process," interview by Iain Earle, 19th June 2020, 2020.

¹¹ "Sport In Qatar," Government Communications Office, 2020, accessed 15th May 2020, <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/focus/sport/>.

¹² J. C. Henderson, "Hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup: opportunities and challenges for Qatar," *Journal of Sports and Tourism* 19, no. 3-4 (2014).

Qatar National Vision 2030

Within the Qatar National Vision (QNV) there is a desire to adopt new approaches for economic development which are sustainable through the 21st century.¹³ This document emphasises sustainable economic development and growth, and social development through investment in world class infrastructures, particularly within private sector service industries. Thus, a key challenge within Qatar's development is encouraging private sector investment towards achieving sustainability, particularly training and support for entrepreneurs in providing incubation for SMEs.

Leisure and entertainment markets are key drivers for social and economic development and key objectives within the QNV.¹⁴ Thus, the tournament reflects the recent increased activity seen regionally and delivers some satisfaction for the needs of a young, technically skilled and diverse population, as the state moves to the forefront of the global lens.

The Ministry of Economy and Commerce (MEC) identifies event ticketing as a significant contributor to sustainable success within its service industries. In its 2017 report, the MEC unveiled investment opportunities in ticketing services for sports, while further conceptualising the role of ticketing in Qatar as a means to create value.¹⁵ These points are relevant when considering current growth within Qatar's

¹³ GSDP, Qatar National Vision 2030, (Doha, Qatar 2008).

¹⁴ Henderson, "Hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup: opportunities and challenges for Qatar."

¹⁵ "Ministry of Economy and Commerce highlights investment opportunities in event ticketing services ", 2017, accessed 10th May 2020, https://www.moci.gov.qa/en/mec_news/ministry-of-economy-and-commerce-highlights-investment-opportunities-in-event-ticketing-services/.

service sector, representing one of the pillars adopted in achieving the QNV goals, whilst receiving strong support from tourism authorities.

Current ticketing environment in Qatar

The proliferation of events in Qatar has seen the shift towards service industries as a provider of popular cultural activities along with sponsorship and investment opportunities.¹⁶ However, when comparing more dominant global markets it could be argued that events and ticketing in Qatar are at the stage of relative infancy. As noted by the MEC, local companies currently lack the ability to sell international tournaments, instead focussing on less complex sectors such as cinemas. As the main provider, Q-Tickets currently delivers access to movies, cultural events, MICE events and sports adventure activities, via a single platform to online users and has expanded its business into the Indian sub-continent.¹⁷

However, previous sporting tournaments have seen ticketing services outsourced to overseas agents.¹⁸ While companies like Ticketmaster provide analytics, systems and processes, the relationship may not assist long-term sustainability and development within Qatar. Moreover, this has potentially contributed to some publicised issues where local managers have been forced into

¹⁶ "Sports tourism in Qatar: Remarkable growth," 2018, accessed 16th May 2020, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/581621/Sports-tourism-in-Qatar-Remarkable-growth>.

¹⁷ "Q-Tickets wins 'Fastest Growing Company of the Year' award.," (Online news article), 2016, accessed 7th May 2020, <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/04/10/2016/Q-Tickets-wins-'Fastest-Growing-Company-of-the-Year'-award>.

¹⁸ Bayliss, interview.

somewhat controversial decisions, such as issuing free tickets to schoolchildren in order to fill unsold seats within a venue.¹⁹

The gaps in the capacity of local providers, are due possibly to a lack of understanding and identity within the country's own ticketing industry. Thus, a strategic re-evaluation of the approaches from 'top to bottom' would be required in order to meet the objectives of the QNV, the recommendations of MEC and the needs and demands of event consumers. Thus, the 2022 World Cup is the critical opportunity for Qatar to develop an agile and flexible system which meets the national needs of sustainability and the complex demands of event stakeholders.

From strategic standpoints, a vertically integrated approach could benefit Qatar's own sustainable ticketing service.²⁰ The implementation, development and management of a unique ticketing service would open the opportunities sought by the QNV and MEC. Systems that are managed, controlled and developed 'in-house' would provide sustainable models which create long-term employment and training opportunities, while supporting local SMEs as key elements of the QNV vision. Furthermore, this would provide a sustainable model for growth and personal development as knowledge is shared, experience gained and additional value to Qatar's event and leisure industry is delivered.

¹⁹ "How Qatar's sporting vision failed at World Athletics ", ejinsight, 2019, accessed June 14th 2020, <https://www.ejinsight.com/eji/article/id/2266658/20191003-How-Qatars-sporting-vision-failed-at-World-Athletics>.

²⁰ S. Balakrishnan, & Wernerfelt, B., "Technical Change, Competition and Vertical Integration," *Strategic Management Journal* 7 (1986).

Research approach

A case study approach was chosen as a fitting way to illustrate the processes and rationales behind the ticketing process. Case studies are a preferable method in establishing phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly where researchers require an understanding of reality.^{21 22}

This study derives from analysis of empirical evidence within public domains from a range of conventional sources and the researchers' own practitioner experiences. Much literature published within leisure and tourism arises from the interest of practitioners who owe allegiance to the discipline.²³ Thus, the majority of existing research originates from people working within the industry who wish to increase the body of academic knowledge. While there is a limited range of empirical theory currently, media reports, official documents and government websites were triangulated where possible to enhance case validity.

Some organisational data and information remains unavailable to researchers, particularly that of FIFA and their ticketing operations. To bridge these gaps, telephone interviews with Giles Bayliss (owner GbaySports, formerly of AXS Group) were conducted and delivered valuable information.

Practitioner experience lends well to historic primary observations and provides key evidence and rationale behind this study, enabling detailed

²¹ Robert K. Yin, *Case study research and applications : design and methods* (2017).

²² B. Flyvberg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Enquiry* 12, no. 2 (2006).

²³ A. J. Veal, *Research methods for leisure & tourism : a practical guide* (2011).

understanding of the values, motives and practices of those processes being observed and considers the purpose of the research. This results in an inductive approach where the observations can be analysed and explained.²⁴

TICKETING CASE STUDY – QATAR vs BRAZIL, Lusail Stadium, Qatar.

This case study explores the key processes required to successfully ticket a tournament match, such as Qatar vs. Brazil. A hypothetical match has been used to include the Lusail Stadium, venue for the opening and final matches in the tournament. Some details, (stadium block numbers, seats per block etc.) have been assumed due to the lack of data available. For this case, where specific examples or illustrations are required, reference will be made to Wembley Stadium in London, which is a similar size to the Lusail Stadium.²⁵

The tournament ticketing operation requires close collaboration between the organiser and host, and responsibility for this is held by FIFA Tickets AG, a subsidiary of FIFA who manages the process under their corporate umbrella.²⁶ Thus, they can direct tournament ticketing policy and manage the overall operation from the outset. As such, they are the parent body who engages with the local ticketing platform providers for each nation or region (e.g. Ticketmaster handle all England bookings in the UK). From this point, ticketing companies will sell tickets to

²⁴ Veal, *Research methods for leisure & tourism : a practical guide*.

²⁵ "Lusail Stadium ", 2020, accessed 15th May, 2020, <https://www.afl-architects.com/projects/lusail-stadium>.

²⁶ Bayliss, interview.

pre-registered fans (a FIFA requirement to ensure fairness and accessibility), often via ballots in cases where high demand will exceed supply.

Allocating tickets and pricing

Generally during the tournament bidding process, hosts identify proposed locations and venues for each specific match.²⁷ This requires stadium specification and capacity analysis in order to construct the operational frameworks. With finite capacity in each of the stadia proposed, this is critical in establishing total seat availability for the tournament. Once capacities are known, FIFA determines the number of total tickets of different types which can be sold (or not sold) and the percentage values of the total ticket inventory established.

Using official data from the 2018 World Cup in Russia it could be reasonably assumed that ticket inventories will be allocated similarly in Qatar, using the following percentage of total capacities:

Ticket Role	Allocation %
Purchasable Tickets	88%
VIP Tickets	2%
Complimentary Tickets	6%
Media Tickets	3%
Contingency Tickets	1%

FIFA World Cup ticket allocations

Source: FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 – Ticketing Information .²⁸

²⁷ Bayliss, interview.

²⁸ FIFA, *FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 - Ticketing Information* (2017), <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/2018-fwc-ticketing-information-2919892.pdf?cloudid=ims6xizmb8oiptjn2eoh>.

With percentage values established, FIFA allocates tickets to participating nations depending on a variety of factors including the nation's historical attendance at previous tournaments and their current domestic interest in the tournament.

While the FIFA tournament is effectively an entertainment service, staging a tournament of this scale remains incredibly costly, therefore pricing tickets is a key factor that must ensure that financial targets are achieved. Generally, tournament pricing is proposed by the host during the bid, taking into consideration critical factors such as domestic and international financial environments, the diverse socio-economic environments of competing nations and the expectations of their fans.²⁹ For example, European fans are likely to have more disposable income than fans from Africa, therefore will expect to pay higher prices for tournament tickets. A tournament which is unaffordable to large segments of supporters would reflect badly on the organisers and fail to engage the spirit of the tournament itself.

Essentially, it is down to FIFA understanding each nation's audience, if they traditionally travel to tournaments in significant numbers and what they expect normally when paying for tickets. Pricing ultimately comes down to the tournament's expectations and there are many ways to achieve this.

²⁹ Bayliss, interview.

KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND
The pricing has structure
It's easy for fans to understand
There is a consistent approach across the whole tournament
There is a sense of fairness and clarity

Ticketing for the tournament

Tournament ticketing comprises of four key phases, identified as critical to the operation. These four phases are:

Phase 1 - Stadium	Incorporating mapping, naming, allocating and pricing for on-sale
Phase 2 - Holds	Identifying the tickets or areas that cannot be sold to customers
Phase 3 - Printing	Ensuring access information is provided on each ticket correctly
Phase 4 – Match Day Preparations	The operational aspect of ticketing on day of the event

These phases occur over time, starting from when the tournament bid is initially presented and can begin in earnest once the winning bid is formally announced. Phases 1 and 4 should be considered the most complex and time-intensive phases requiring attention to detail, diligence, resources and an understanding of the event's strategic aim.

Phase 1 – Stadium

Stadium plans

Each participating venue including the Lusail Stadium, provides a detailed seating manifest to the organisers as part of their obligations. This ordinarily comes in three component parts;

Part A	An overview of seating plans, identifying each block name and where it is situated within the Lusail Stadium.
Part B	A detailed seating plan displaying seat block, detailing each numbered seat location in relation to every other seat in its vicinity.
Part C	A list of all seats where each line shows every seat along with accompanying detail i.e. stand name, block, row, seat etc.

Price banding

Some seats in the Lusail Stadium will be considered of greater or lesser quality and it is imperative that these differences are reflected within the price categories e.g. seats located on the half-way line would be considered better seats than those behind the goals; seats in upper tiers are likely deemed of lower value to seats in lower tiers etc.

As a result, it is important that price banding reflects these differences in perceived value. As the Lusail Stadium appears uniformly constructed with the same block layouts throughout the stadium, applying price bands would be relatively straightforward.

There are no rules on the number of price categories that can be produced, but it is worth noting that while offering more price alternatives provides more choice it increases the complexity for fans, ticketing and finance teams when reconciling sales or final event accounts. Price bands are commonly listed as *CAT 1, CAT 2, CAT 3, VIP, HOSP (*CAT being an abbreviation of Category) and fans across the world are generally familiar with this terminology

Ticket types

As a partner to Price Bands, it will be necessary to identify the ticket types being offered and the associated pricing. Ordinarily a Full Price Adult Ticket is considered the default price option for any category of seat. Once identified, it is important to understand what other ticket types are required specific to the event. For example, fans of senior age are normally retired and thus can be offered a reduction in price when compared to an adult ticket. Additionally, under-16's might also be considered a primary concessionary option along with wheelchair users / ambulant disabled fans who may be offered a complimentary ticket for their assistant.

Aside from disabled supporters, it may not be necessary to apply all ticket types to all price bands. For CAT 1 / VIP / HOSP, it can be deemed acceptable for only *full price tickets* to be available in these areas with concessions only offered at lower price categories.

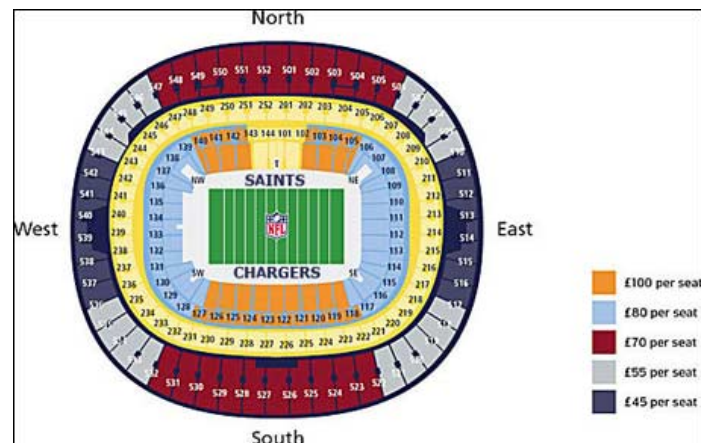


Figure 1: Wembley Stadium, NFL event. Prices banded into ticket types depending on quality of seat/view

Note the 2nd tier (yellow) is unavailable for sale/reserved for corporate and sponsors.

Source: *nflondon.net*

Creating blocks of seats

It's unusual for any two stadia to be built the same and ticketing systems have differing methods of building each venue. However, for the majority of sport-specific software, the venue is the first thing to be created virtually and the task of creating blocks of seating for sale can begin.

While procedures can vary across systems, it is important from the outset to get a sense of build order for the Lusail Stadium. Stadia with numbered blocks, would normally see builds starting with the lowest numbered block in the lower tier and building up to the highest.

For example, at London's Wembley Stadium it would be expected to start at block 101 on the half-way line of the first tier and build clockwise around to block

144, the last block in the tier (see Figure 2 below). This process is repeated for the other tiers in the stadium.

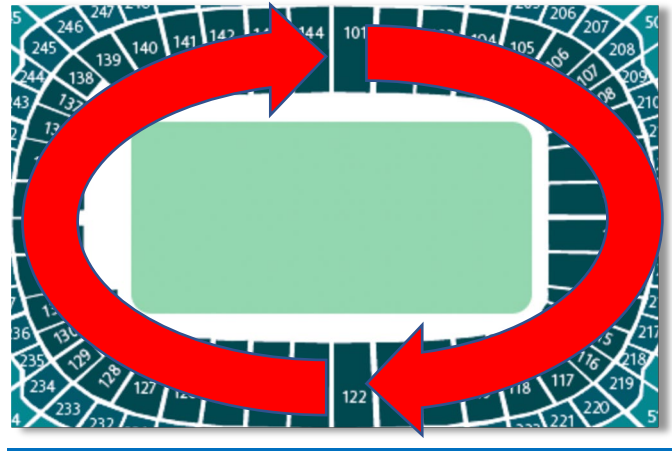


Figure 2: Seating Block Plan from Wembley Stadium, London

Creating block 101 through to block 144

Source: Wembley

Seat labels

As seats are added to the blocks within the system, attention must be paid to all details across the seating plan. Ordinarily seats are added one row at a time to the platform and at the point of input, the row and seat numbers are normally assigned to the seat location. For the Lusail Stadium, it is expected to add thousands of rows of data and therefore imperative that managers check and sign off the work.

Naming conventions for individual seats will need consideration at this stage. For example; Wheelchair Spaces and their carers will need to be identified quickly when tickets are being sold, so naming these seats is important given their category of seat.

Entrances

Each entrance at the Lusail Stadium will be allocated a certain number of admissions, normally grouped by block numbers based on the smallest distance from the entrance to the seats. Additionally, within each entrance there will be turnstiles or ticket scanning points. This technology is a vital component to the match day operation as it provides tournament security teams with the real-time data they need to identify potential problems with fans gaining admission, ingress rates and the total number of fans inside prior to kick off.

Aisles

Indicating the end of a row is an important element for customer service and sales teams. It is a strong consideration if booking a group or family together who don't wish to be separated by aisles. Alternately, this may be a desirable seat for people with limited mobility or those suffering from anxiety in crowds who wish to be able to leave their seat at any point.

Stadium plan display

Among the first images fans engage with during the sales process is the stadium seating plan. Fans will use this image to orientate themselves with unfamiliar venues and choose areas in which they wish to sit. The image should be sufficiently detailed for fans to immediately understand where they might wish to buy their ticket, understand the pricing and where their seats are in relation to the playing area, opposition fans and distance from the pitch.



Figure 3: Wembley stadium plan with Gate/Entry blocks identified

Source: stub.com

Pricing seats

As discussed, it is important to understand the event's objectives, the expectations of paying fans and the potential incomes and pitfalls by setting out pricing strategies that generate maximum yield from each event. A good way to begin this is to identify all the available inventory and assign values to totals, as below:

Pricing guide criteria

Item	Description
Stand / Block	The full name and identifying name of each block in the stadium
Total Capacity	Over-all number of seats within the block of seats
Sellable Capacity	Total seats available to sell after subtracting unavailable seats
Attendance	Total number of tickets projected to sell
Full Price	Full price ticket cost for an adult in this particular band

Unsellable	Total seats technically unable to sell (team seats / production holds etc)
Comments	Information regarding seat kills for this area
Capacity Percentage	Total percentage of tickets from each price band expected to sell to fans
Receipts	Section of the report containing any financial projection information
Net Proceeds	Total amount of money projected to generate minus any taxes

Promotional codes

As part of any sales and marketing strategy, promotional codes are almost always employed to encourage sales. It is important that there is an appreciation of discounting mechanisms within ticketing software that allow users to buy tickets at different prices based on set criteria.

Price reductions

Price reductions are common methods which encourage sales and generate interest in the tournament through promotional activities. Generally, this would include reductions for concessionary fans or for sponsored promotions amongst tournament partners.

<u>Fixed price reduction</u>	Reduces ticket price by a set value. For example, if a ticket normally is priced at QAR 100 and a customer has a QAR 10 discount code, the price at check-out will be QAR 90. A key consideration at this point should be
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	whether this discount is for a single ticket or all tickets in the order.
<u>Percentage reduction</u>	Rather than setting a fixed value which might benefit customers paying less, a percentage discount offers buyers a more rewarding approach in that the more they spend, the more they save.

Packages

Another option to increase engagement is creation of package options. This ordinarily appears in the form of a ticket and an additional product to go with it such as catering or discounted hotel offer. Packages are normally the remit of the marketing or hospitality teams, but from ticketing perspectives these can be delivered in one of two ways.

Either	A) Sell the package at a specific price and flag within the ticketing event display page online.
Or	B) Create a secondary hospitality or merchandise event which the primary event has all package sales linked to.

Team Specific Ticket (TST) series

TST packages allow supporters to follow the national team of their choice. However they will not necessarily comprise of all matches played by that team.³⁰

³⁰ FIFA, *FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 - Ticketing Information*

TST's can be sold for a range of matches (group stages) or for specific matches (knockout stages etc). The TST guarantees tickets under the specific package regardless of whether the team itself has qualified. The table below demonstrates the TST principles implemented for the 2018 FIFA World Cup:

TST SERIES	TOURNAMENT STAGE	TICKETS RECEIVED PER TST SERIES	
		If your team participates in this tournament stage	If your team does not progress to this stage in the tournament (round of 16 to final only)
TST3-7	Group Matches	A Ticket for each of your team's 3 Group Matches (all 32 that qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup™ will play their corresponding 3 Group Matches)	
TST4-7	Round of 16	Ticket to your team's Round of 16 Match	A Ticket for the Round of 16 Match to follow the winner of your team's group
TST5-7	Quarter-Finals	Ticket to your team's Quarter-Final match	A Ticket to the Quarter-Final Match to follow the winner of the previous Match attended
TST6 & 7	Semi-Finals	Ticket to your team's Semi-Final Match	A Ticket for the Semi-Final match to follow the winner of previous Match attended
TST-7	The Final	Ticket to the Final	

Figure 4 - 2018 World Cup TST principles

Source: 2018 FIFA World Cup, Ticketing Information.

Further team ticket packages can be offered to customers who may not be staying in Qatar for the duration of the tournament. For example; Supporter Tickets (ST's) can be available for all group matches played by a national team. Conditional Supporters Tickets (CST's) would be available for the four knockout stages played by a national team. All CST's are conditional however, in that elimination of the chosen national team during the tournament would see the customer refunded and seats re-allocated to fans of the team that has qualified for the next stage.³¹

³¹ FIFA, *FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 - Ticketing Information*

Once the complex first phase has been completed, it is possible to move onto the second phase of the ticketing operation.

Phase 2 – Holds

Once the venues are virtually built, prices agreed and allocated, it's time to determine what not to sell. At any event, there are some instances where seats or blocks cannot be put on sale to fans and matches at the Lusail Stadium will be no different. The following are considerations for removing seats from sale:

Broadcast Partner	To identify their preferred camera positions is an important part of the event delivery project.
Corner Cameras	Ordinarily located behind the goal line and situated one in each corner of the playing surface
Halfway Line	In the majority of cases, the half-way area is home to the players tunnel and the team dugouts.
High Behind / Spidercam	A fixed camera positioned high up in the stands centred behind each goal.
Screen	There is an expectation to have a large screen for replays and decision making.

Seats around or near these areas could pose viewing restrictions for customers and therefore should not be placed on-sale. However, it is not merely restrictions which result in tickets being placed within 'holds'. Other reasons include:

Contractual	Part of any tournament negotiation sees an element of ticketing provision for hosts and partners.
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Stadium Hire Agreement	In addition to any standard operating seats required, an additional allocation of seats will ordinarily be required by every venue as part of the agreement.
Sponsors/ Partners /Charities	The reason many events occur is due to the financial and value-in-kind support provided by sponsors and event partners. These organisations are usually tiered based on their contribution to the tournament.

Complimentary (free) seats

As part of the tournament's value proposition, a specific number of complimentary seats are made available to each of the partners as well as government officials, governing bodies and VIPs, whether they use the seats or not. Typically, sponsors receive a high number of tickets per match which they use for distributing to their customers or as prizes within any campaign designed to encourage fans to purchase their products.

VIPs and VVIPs should be afforded the best 'exclusive' experience possible on match day, often seated within the directors' box and they will expect separate access to the stadium to the general public. VVIPs should be considered amongst the highest engagers of complimentary tickets, especially in meeting the needs of key Qatari dignitaries and figureheads. With the tournament representing the culmination of its leaders' long-term vision, it is important for this key cultural demographic to participate in the celebratory aspects of the tournament. Eminent Qataris expect to be able to access events if they choose, regardless of whether they made this intention known, therefore this should be a key consideration during the planning process and match-day contingency plan.

Further comp tickets may be allocated to the following groups for various reasons:

Hosts	Offer financial support and provide access to infrastructure and facilities for the competing nations.
Hospitality	An expectation for all events is a VIP ticket. This premium offering gives fans an opportunity to enjoy improved match day experiences. Fans expect these tickets to come in different tiers to match their expectations.
Internal / Ticket Office Emergencies	For the ticket office to hold back tickets in different areas of the stadium for match-day emergencies. Whether for last minute VIP's or customer complaints, it is the ticketing manager's duty to ensure there are no fan issues to address at kick-off.
Team Complimentary Tickets	Allows members of participating nations the opportunity to observe their competing teams' performance.
Match Officials	Provided with the best seats in prominent positions in the stadium to ensure impartiality and consistency throughout the match.
Working Volunteers	Without the budgets to pay staff to perform various duties, free tickets for volunteers are a common method that provides some satisfaction and thanks for their work.
Press Box and Overflow	Press and media areas are not accessible for the general public so no revenue can be generated from selling any unused seats.
Stewards / Medical / Unlicensed seats	Provision of stewards and medical staff within a crowd is very important as part of any major event, in resolving any issues while ensuring crowd safety.

Once these 'unsellable' seats have been identified and categorised, they can be removed from sale on the software so that these areas are not sold erroneously.

Tickets onsale - Online and contact centre

Whether customers purchase match tickets online or via telephone, contact centres play critical roles in the management and sales of tournament tickets. While online sales are convenient particularly amongst millennials and digitally savvy fans, many customers will want to speak to a person when purchasing their match ticket.³² This is a relevant requirement of the service when considering the majority of fans won't have experienced or travelled to Qatar previously.

There are many benefits for centralising the location for sales and enquiries as the entire ticketing operation can be managed from one secure location including marketing, printing and packing, CRM, client management, specialist services/hospitality and IT systems.

While the merits of contact centres could be argued here, this is potentially a separate avenue of research. As discussed, Qatar's current ticketing provision has limited capacity to deliver services via online channels, for a limited range of events. As a recommendation of this case study, to become self-sufficient and sustainable in managing ticketing services for future events, Qatar would require a centralised

³² A. Luxford, Dickinson, J.E. , "The Role of Mobile Applications in the Attendee Experience at Music Festivals " *Event Management* 19 (2015).

contact and management centre and this should be strongly considered prior to the opening of sales for the FIFA World Cup and other scheduled events.

Interactive seating plan and best available rules

Clickable seating plans effectively allow customers to decide where they want to sit and enables contact centre agents to discuss seat locations without being at the stadium itself. This is a common method for ticketing providers when there is good availability and time for the customer to select their seats. When selling an event as “Choose Your Own Seat”, the status of every seat will be visible to the public and is ideal when customers can identify unsold seats quickly.

For a World Cup match such as Qatar vs Brazil, the demand for match tickets is likely to be high, thus it may better to sell fans “Best Available” seats rather than allowing purchase of specific seat locations. This is a standard feature of most ticketing systems where the buyer selects the price category of seat and makes the purchase. The best available seat is selected by the system according to the categorised inventory and reserved for the customer to purchase immediately.

On-sales occur at different times during the ticket life-cycle. Pre-registered fans usually have the first opportunity to purchase tickets, ensuring that loyal supporters who meet the criteria set by their national associations can benefit from the time and money invested following their nation through the qualification stages.

Following the earliest on-sales, the remaining tickets can be sold to ‘general’ registered fans. Commonly, these on-sales occur over a long period of time as seen by the table below showing the sales information for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.³³

SALES PHASES		DATES	
		From	To
Sales Phase (1)	Random selection draw	14/09/17	12/10/17
	First come first served	16/11/17	28/11/17
Sales Phase (2)	Random selection draw	05/12/17	31/01/18
	First come first served	13/03/18	03/04/18
Last minute sales phase		18/04/18	15/07/18

Figure 5 – Sales Phases

Source: 2018 FIFA World Cup, Ticketing Information.

In the above example, random draws using algorithms to ensure fairness prioritise particular groups of fans³⁴. Once completed, the next on-sale phase can begin and so on. It is important to note here, the timescales involved with the first on-sale beginning nine months before the opening fixture of the tournament.

With tickets now selling to FIFAs customers, it is now possible to move onto the third Phase within the ticketing process.

Phase 3 – Printing

³³ FIFA, *FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 - Ticketing Information*

³⁴ Bayliss, interview.

Souvenir event ticket stock design / printing

Before any customer tickets can be printed, the ticket stock itself requires organisation. Commonly for tournaments, paper tickets are produced as a physical manifestation of the customer's purchase while also serving as a memento of their experience. The marketing and sponsors' teams should provide their requirements for stock design to the design team. Adequate space should remain on the ticket design for overprinting the ticket information.

When printing souvenir event ticket stock on thermal paper (a requirement of all ticket printing), complex security features should feature within the design to make stock difficult to counterfeit. These features are provided by dedicated printing companies engaged via a bidding process. Evidence suggests that there are printing companies located within Qatar capable of providing this key service.



Figure 6 - Ticket from FIFA World Cup 2018 opening ceremony Russia vs. Saudi Arabia. Note the key information on the ticket; Level, Block, Row, Seat etc.

Source: aldiplomasy.com

On the rear of the ticket, general terms and conditions of sale should be added along with any important stadium information – for example, what food and drink can be brought in or baggage policies confirming what will/won't be allowed inside the venue. In the case of the World Cup, it is likely that FIFA will design the souvenir ticket to ensure all terms and conditions and branding designs meet stakeholders needs.

Venue access control compatibility

Connecting ticketing software to venue access control is the least hands-on element of this phase. The process is complex due to differing work expectations and operating speeds of the various available software. Some systems take moments to upload barcode data and are live immediately, others take weeks to complete development work for integrated “live” access control.

In any tournament, working with multiple access control vendors within multiple stadia, is challenging and extra time should be allocated so the project can be addressed as early as possible. This is a key operational activity to develop and test while ensuring that customer experiences on match days help create memorable experiences. With the first three phases now complete, focus can shift to the match day ticket operations for Qatar vs. Brazil.

Phase 4 – Match day preparation

Ticket Office Location	<p>Ticket Offices placed in key locations outside the Lusail Stadium are vital for patrons and tournament staff attending the event. The ticket office is the general public's first point of contact with actual tournament staff and the hub for general enquiries. Ensuring fans and staff have the location of the ticket office in advance, will reduce any levels of anxiety on arrival and comfort them to know where to go in case of any problems. <u>All</u> public enquiries related to the tournament will invariably gravitate to ticket offices, so it is vital that the ticketing team are fully briefed.</p>
Ticket Office Manager	<p>It is likely that two ticket office managers during the match will be present – one from FIFA, the other from the host. It is important that both parties are familiar with each other as their collaboration during the project will be vital to ensuring a successful ticket office operation.</p>
Points of Sale / Enquiries	<p>Part of the planning process for the match-day operation requires identifying the number of available points of sale and enquiry windows which patrons can access. Understanding the number of positions required will help develop a picture of queue lengths, fan waiting times and what capacity is required to support other tournament teams e.g. HOSP/VIP, Press/Media.</p>
IT Requirements	<p>Prior to the ticket teams' on-site arrival, hardware requirements should be submitted to the Field I.T. team and equipment installed. Site surveys should be done to ensure connectivity is not an issue when ticket sales computers and printers are enabled on match day. The high level of digital infrastructure in Qatar should ensure that connectivity isn't an issue on match day.</p>
Prepaid and Complimentary Ticket Collections	<p>Ordinarily, pre-paid or complimentary ticket collections take place at the venue ticket office. If "Match Day Ticket Collections" are managed outside of the normal ticket office operation, a member of the team should be assigned responsibility for managing the</p>

	operation. Particular attention should be paid to VIP and VVIP ticket collections, as the higher status of these guests demands a more dedicated level of customer service. Commonly, a separate window or collection point would be organised for these guests.
Staff Provision	In tournament environments, it's uncommon for match-day ticketing staff to be full time employees, however larger agents like Ticketmaster use their own contact centre staff for event day staffing and numbers should be based on the match requirements. ³⁵ The presence of volunteers inside Box Offices could increase risk and their value is greater outside ticket offices where they can engage with fans. A key match-day operation is the deployment of staff at entrances or turnstiles, who in turn scan each customer ticket ensuring the ticket is valid.
Cash Handling Procedures	Identifying the parties responsible for accepting and reconciling cash and card payments on match-day should be achieved in advance of the tournament to ensure this is not overlooked. There may be still tickets available on the day of the match and day cash sales maximise the potential earning yield of the match. Tournament organisers will not always take responsibility for this function, relying on ticket offices to manage this due to having the infrastructure and procedures already in place for their 'normal' match day operations.
Check Lists	Check lists are a critical aspect of match-day ticketing operations and due to the volume of matches in a tournament (which are all duplicate tasks) this is irrespective of the size of venue or the fixture. A World Cup final will need the same ticketing tasks completing as the first round of group games (the main difference being the number of support staff required). Understanding these

³⁵ Bayliss, interview.

	requirements allows ticketing managers to compile check lists which identify what tasks should be or have been completed.
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Below is an illustration of a tournament summary page showing an example number of tasks to complete in advance of the tournament taking place across multiple venues and which could be used at the Lusail Stadium.

		Phase 1 (initial set up)	Phase 2 (tickets to hold off sale)	Phase 3 (checks before printing)	Phase 4 (match day prep)	Total	%
	Completed and checked	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	Partially completed	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	To do	1350	1035	90	270	2745	100%
	Not Applicable	0	270	0	0	270	
	Total Applicable	1350	1035	90	270	2745	
	% Complete	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

Once checklists have been completed prior to customer arrival, the entrance gates to the Lusail Stadium can now be opened for ingress and customers of Qatar vs. Brazil can take their seats and experience the spectacle of the FIFA World Cup.

Key recommendations

The processes and methods recommended reflect the researchers' experiences in managing ticket operations that provide the best possible experience for fans and financial yield for organisers. These processes are highly adaptable to a range of sporting events, stadium/venue sizes and stakeholders. While the processes described reflect best practice methods, there remain key factors which would require addressing in order to maximise potential.

As discussed, contact centres play a critical role within ticketing operations by centralising key resources, systems and staff required to provide efficient, value adding services. Evidence suggests that Qatar does not possess such a location from which to direct its ticketing service operations. Therefore, a critical recommendation for Qatar would be the creation of a contact centre to meet these needs. This will be vitally important as it is expected that the hosts will manage the allocation for all participating Asian Football Confederation nations.

Moreover, a contact centre would house the relevant and effective ticketing systems and platforms required to manage the necessary inventories, maintain control of the tickets, organise the on-sales and provide the level of service expected for the tournament. While there are a number of platforms used across the world by various companies in sports ticketing, it would require a separate research analysis in order to ascertain the best platforms and systems which are fit for a long-term purpose.

Ultimately, with Qatar emerging as a serious competitor in international event markets, the implementation of a ticketing contact centre along with efficient IT platforms and systems using the processes described, could see Qatar shift from being a mere user of sports ticketing services to becoming a key player in the industry. This potentially provides Qatar with a strong regional and global ticketing identity, whilst meeting the development and sustainability requirements of the QNV.

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Teaching notes

FIFA World Cup – Ticketing

Using the Lusail Stadium plan spreadsheet, this task requires students to set appropriate ticket allocations and prices for a World Cup match between Qatar vs Brazil.

The task requires students to develop problem-solving skills, analytical tools and the decision-making skills expected within real environments. This exercise should take approx. 50-60 minutes to complete.

THE LUSAIL STADIUM SPREADSHEET CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM HERE-

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mP6H0IsUXMKaP7a_Tr7KZ8kuvPGwufFf/view?usp=sharing

Part A – Allocating tickets

Study the stadium map and identify the key locations, blocks and sections. Some blocks will be more desirable than others, therefore the allocated category should reflect the quality of the view. It's worth noting key areas within the stadium i.e. touchline blocks, corner blocks etc. to understand the type of view from those areas.

Allocation totals should be based on the example from FIFA World Cup 2018 below.

Ticket Type	Allocation %
Sellable Tickets	88%
VIP Tickets	2%
Complimentary Tickets	6%
Media Tickets	3%
Contingency Tickets	1%

This should give some idea of how many seats to allocate to: fans, VIPs & VVIPs, partners and staff (comps), local and visiting media and for contingencies.

Task 1 - Calculate how many tickets can be allocated using the above table.

Capacity for the Lusail Stadium is 80,000. This will display how many tickets can be sold and how many cannot be sold.

Sellable Tickets	88% of total stadium capacity	70,400
VIP & VVIP Tickets	2%	1,600
Comps	6%	4,800
Media	3%	2,400
Contingency	1%	800
Total	100%	80,000

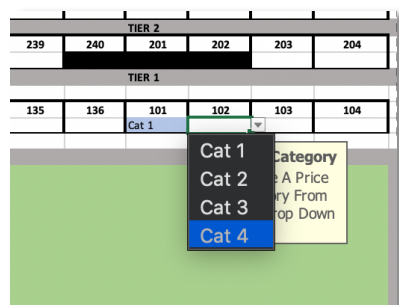
Key points to remember

VVIPs, officials and the media expect the best views and these attendees will likely be allocated the middle tiers overlooking the half-way line. It is desirable that VVIPs etc. access 'exclusive' areas, which other attendees cannot access. Thus, it is recommended the following blocks should be allocated to VVIPs: West Stand -

Blocks 201, 204 & 240. East Stand - Blocks 220, 221 & 222. This means no revenue can be generated from these blocks.

Approximately 50 tickets per block should be held for various reasons including comps for guests, sponsors, staff and contingencies. These are built into the pricing matrix to identify how many seats are 'unavailable'.

Using the stadium plan and pricing matrix, identify the areas which are sellable and assign each block a category (this should include blocks held for VVIPs). Populate each block with the appropriate category using the drop-down menu's as below*



*Exact seating charts and maps for the Lusail Stadium are currently unavailable, therefore this map may not reflect the actual layout and seating order for the FIFA World Cup tournament.

As the block is assigned the ticket category, the map should look as above. Continue clockwise from tier 1 block 101 around the stadium plan on each tier, bearing in mind the view/location of each block and the category allocated. Now that allocating blocks is complete, it is possible to identify which blocks are sellable and which blocks are unsellable.

Part B – Pricing tickets

This teaching case uses four price categories, ranging from Top Price (Category 1) and becoming progressively cheaper, down to Category 4. The four categories can now be priced, to reflect the cost of each seat in that category.

In this case, the match is aiming to generate at least QAR 20m, thus effective pricing to meet this target is critical.

Generally, fans would expect to pay around QAR 500 (approx. £100) for a full price ticket (Category 1) at a FIFA tournament. We can use this price as the benchmark from which the remaining price categories can be calculated. Using the spreadsheet, please add the price QAR 500 to the relevant field as shown below:

Tier	Seat	Category
TIER 3	946	
	947	
	948	
	301	
	302	
TIER 2	238	
	239	
	240	
	201	
	202	
TIER 1	134	Cat 2
	135	Cat 1
	136	Cat 1
	101	Cat 1
	102	Cat 1

Ticket Category Key	Full Price
Cat 1	QAR 500
Cat 2	
Cat 3	
Cat 4	
HOLDS	

This should in turn display within the pricing matrix and the total revenue from the Cat 1 block should now be displayed within the matrix as below:

				Capacity:	80,000	9600	70400	QAR 1,540,000.00
Stand	Tier	Block	Price Category	Full Price	Block Capacity	Unavailable Seats	Total Seats to Sell	Potential Revenue
West	Lower	101	Cat 1	QAR 500.00	650	25	625	QAR 312,500.00
West	Lower	102	Cat 1	QAR 500.00	645	25	620	QAR 310,000.00
West	Lower	103	Cat 1	QAR 500.00	645	50	595	QAR 297,500.00
West	Lower	104	Cat 2	QAR 0.00	645	50	595	QAR 0.00
West	Lower	134	Cat 2	QAR 0.00	645	50	595	QAR 0.00
West	Lower	135	Cat 1	QAR 500.00	645	25	620	QAR 310,000.00
West	Lower	136	Cat 1	QAR 500.00	645	25	620	QAR 310,000.00

Note the potential revenue per block in the last column and the total stadium revenue generated above. Now we can calculate appropriate prices for the rest of the categories in order to meet the events financial target of QAR 20m.

Task 2 - Please do this on your spreadsheet now, calculating the remaining prices required in each category which will achieve the financial target of QAR 20m

This is a case of finding the right balance. Too many high-priced tickets may yield high revenues but means that many seats are unaffordable to fans. Meanwhile, seats priced too cheaply may result in the event losing money.

Once completed you should have: prices for all categories, the potential revenue for each block and the total stadium revenue generated by selling every available seat.

A note about concessions and discounts.

While discounts are commonly calculated into the price structure, this is not required for this exercise. However, there are important factors to be aware of.

Not all categories have a discount or concession price. For example, Cat 1 tickets are full price tickets therefore they yield the highest revenue. For concessionary tickets, it is possible that only Cat 2 or 3 tickets will be available for

discount. This is an important consideration when pricing, as this means the full potential revenue of seats in those categories is unlikely to be yielded.

Conversely, hospitality tickets often have packages which enhance the fans experience therefore are likely to be more expensive than the ticket price of any given category. This means that certain seats may exceed the standard revenue of the categorised ticket and yield more revenue than standard tickets.

Data related to both these groups of customers will be held and managed by the marketing teams who will create and promote the various packages for sale and communicate the anticipated demand to the ticketing managers, who allocate and adjust the seating plan accordingly.

Task 3 - Please now answer the following questions;

1. What is the total revenue generated from selling all the CAT 1 tickets?
QAR 7,825,000 (@ QAR 500 per ticket)
2. What is the total revenue generated from the middle tier of the stadium from all categories of ticket sold?
QAR 7,439,375 (@ Cat 1 QAR500, Cat 2 QAR375, Cat 3 QAR 250, Cat 4 QAR 125).
3. What is the total revenue lost for issuing complimentary tickets to VVIPs, guests, officials etc. based on the Cat 1 price?
QAR 4,800,000 (@ 9,600 x QAR500)
4. Which is greater? The total revenue of all Cat 1 tickets sold or the total combined revenue of all Cat 2, 3 & 4 tickets?

Cat 2, 3 & 4 = QAR 16,366,250 Cat 1 = QAR 7,825,000

5. What is the total potential revenue for this match?

QAR 24,191,250 (@ Cat 1 QAR500, Cat 2 QAR375, Cat 3 QAR 250, Cat 4 QAR 125).

Once this task is complete, you should have a finalised map of the Lusail Stadium seating allocation and pricing attached to all the blocks and sections. This map should clearly identify areas for sale as well as the prices and ensure that customers can book the tickets they want.

The finalised stadium map should look similar to the example below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18klgsG9KiKicr7IzE4P61FCd3efS6efM/view?usp=sharing>

This method of allocating and pricing tickets doesn't just apply to this hypothetical case but can also be used for other event locations and stadia in Qatar.

From this teaching case, students should be able to: use their problem-solving skills to identify which seats to allocate at which price to maximise revenue, analyse the needs of an array of stakeholders including paying customers, VVIP guests and clients, while making the critical decisions expected within the planning for ticketing a tournament match.

Further Reading

FIFA World Cup 2018 Russia – Ticketing Information.

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