

The role of sports communication on the Qatar World Cup by football confederations

A mixed methods approach examining the communication practices by football confederations on Instagram

Student Name: Laura Anastacio Beco
Student Number: 625960
Word Count: 17.915
Supervisor: Dr. Ofra Klein

Master Media Studies - Media and Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

In 2010, the Fédération Internationale Football Association (FIFA) appointed Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup. Since then, Qatar has been linked to human rights violations in the media. Football has become more political, entailing that football confederations are applying sports diplomacy to implement and promoting confederations' values. The confederations - Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) and Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL) – have criticised FIFA for the lack of acknowledgement on the violations that have been happening leading up to the 2022 World Cup, but maintain to stay loyal to the organization. Thus, the aim of the study is to understand the role of sports communication on the Qatar World Cup by the football confederations during the event. Furthermore, what topics are being discussed on the Instagram accounts, how politics is being discussed during the World Cup, and how the variety in online communications can be explained by the football confederations. To answer the research question and sub-questions, a mixed-method approach has been applied with a constructivist grounded theory approach to analyse 154 Instagram posts of the AFC, CAF, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, OFC, UEFA, and FIFA-accounts. The findings of the study revealed that the football confederations used Instagram to promote themselves extensively and the World Cup. Furthermore, the confederations are acting as politically uninvolved as possible by promoting content related to the matches, the fans and the events. However, results have shown that the confederations, often implicit, contribute to the political communication that evokes nationalism, branding Qatar as a hospitable host nation, and to contribute to the discussion of human rights. The variety in online communication is depended on the money that the confederations receive from the FIFA and in which the confederations are located and based on the relationship that the Qatar has developed with the confederations during the World Cup. In return, and to also prevent loss of international image, the confederations promote Qatar through nation-branding and nationalist-evoking content.

KEYWORDS: *Sports diplomacy, Sports communication, Instagram, Football confederations, Qatar, World Cup*

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2. List of abbreviations

Table overview of the abbreviations that are being used in the thesis	
Abbreviation	Definition
AFC	Asian Football Confederation
CAF	Confédération Africaine de Football
CONCACAF	Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association of Football
CONMEBOL	Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol
FBTL	Football For The Fans
FIFA	Fédération Internationale Football Association
OFC	Oceania Football Confederation
PBS	Place Branding through Sports
SD	Model of Sports Diplomacy
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations

3. Introduction

In 2010, the Fédération Internationale Football Association (FIFA) appointed Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup after winning the bid from the United States, Australia, South Korea, and Japan (Ramsey, 2022). Since winning the bid, Qatar has been linked to human- and workers rights violations in the media (Amnesty International, 2022). Although many countries pay attention to these violations, both Qatar and FIFA do not want to acknowledge to which extent it has been happening since 2010 (Amnesty International, 2022; Ramsey, 2022). Moreover, FIFA received criticism for its lack of response despite the organizations' goal to "protect positive values within football" (FIFA, 2021). This goal focuses on putting an end to any form of discrimination, racism, and promoting human rights.

Over the years football has become more political, entailing that football confederations are applying sports diplomacy to implement and promote their confederations' values (Nascimento, et al., 2019). The advent of social media has become an important platform for the confederations to promote diplomatic goals and values (Nascimento, et al., 2019). Furthermore, the popularity of social media drives football confederations to invest and spend more time and resources to engage with the respective audiences (Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

The confederations - Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) and Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL) – have criticised FIFA for the lack of acknowledgement on the violations that have been happening leading up to the 2022 World Cup, but maintain to stay loyal to the organization. Yet, FIFA does not use its social media account for political communication, considering that the organization hosts and promotes the World Cup with the Qatari government (Winand, et al., 2019). Whereas, confederations are more inclined to deliver criticism from a confederations' value stance, e.g., the UEFA applies European values in social media communication strategy (European Commission, 2022).

Sports fans are considered to be heavy users of social media platforms, e.g. on Instagram, which can also lead to the growth in online discussions on the football confederations' stance and the position of football confederations on particular events (Parganas, et al., 2017). Yet, football confederations find it difficult to deliver criticism online as it can jeopardise the financial aid received from FIFA (Kobierecki & Strożek,

2021). As L'Etang (2006) has mentioned: "Sport is a microcosm of social life which reveals underlying values and power relations and is an arena in which issues emerge." (p. 389). While social media has become a more prominent player for confederations to engage with their audiences. Yet, little is known about what content they share with their respective audiences. Social media also allows for new opportunities to express political criticism, however little has been known about to what extent these confederations use it to deliver political criticism.

Accordingly, the following research question has been constructed; "*How do football confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup?*" To guide the research, the following sub-questions are established:

RQ1: *What topics do football confederations discuss on social media during the Qatar World Cup?*

RQ2: *How do football confederations use social media for political communication during the Qatar World Cup?*

RQ3: *How can we explain the varieties in online communication by the football confederations during the Qatar World Cup?*

3.1. Relevance

3.1.1. Scientific relevance

This research is relevant to academia, as it explores and investigates the role of football confederations in political communication, social media content strategies, and branding related to Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted in Qatar. In academia, extensive amounts of research on sports diplomacy is focused on the (host)nations. Additionally, significant research focuses on sports diplomacy and football confederations' communication on Twitter (Abdi et al., 2019; Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020; Kobierecki & Strožek, 2021). Yet, little research has been conducted on the role of the continental football confederations in relation to sports diplomacy and the use of social media by the confederations (Chauvin & Durante, 2017; Kobierecki, 2020). Furthermore, this research is of scientific relevance as it explores the underlying meaning in visuals and text that is being applied in sport related content posted by the football confederations. The research addresses as one of the few studies on sports diplomacy as an aspect of online communication, particularly used on Instagram. Considering Instagram is becoming increasingly relevant for consuming political information for users (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

3.1.2. Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this research is that it gains insight on the role of the football confederation in relation to political and persuasive communication on Instagram. As aforementioned, the role of Instagram in consuming political content has been increasing especially since football confederations are becoming a more powerful resource in politics. Also, understanding how users from different backgrounds perceive the communication differently on social media in regards to the FIFA World Cup 2022. Especially considering that the football confederations that make up the FIFA contain a lot of political power over the football industry. Furthermore, these confederations make the diplomatic agreements with collaborating organizations in order to promote the values, objectives and ideals they want for followers to live by (Tomlinson, 2018).

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide more insights into the theory and previously conducted research on the main concepts used for the study at hand. Moreover, it will outline some key features that are relevant to understand the communication of football confederations on Instagram.

According to Aichner (2018), there is a significant interest in football on social media platforms. Fans bases and their devotion to football, the football fandom, and confederations are able to benefit from the advent of social media and its ability to engage online (Vale & Fernandes, 2017). The popularity of social media has allowed for football confederations to invest both time and resources into establishing content that would engage with their audiences (Hallinan, et al., 2022; Vale & Fernandes, 2017). In addition, the football confederations use social media to build and retain relationships with business partners and their followers, produce revenue and to leverage the value of their confederations' brand (Parganas, et al., 2017).

4.1. Social media as a new communication outlet for football confederations

Social media has become more important in the communication practices for football confederations (Aichner, 2019). Hence, social media provides opportunities for the confederations to develop relationships and engage with followers through promoting football (Winand, et al., 2019). Football confederations are using social media platforms to increase their visibility, to promote their sports vision and to communicate their to their followers (Nascimento, et al., 2021). Formerly, fans engaged with the football confederations through a one-way communication format, in which the fans solely consumed the news that were being disposed in the media in regards to the football confederations (Skye, 2022). Nowadays, with the advent of social media, football confederations are able to communicate the political messages to their followers themselves without the dependency of the framing on media reports on the confederations (Aichner, 2019). Which has led to a gain influence by the confederations on the media (Winand, et al., 2019).

Meng and colleagues (2015) have developed a framework that highlights four communication assets that confederations apply in the online communication strategy: informing, marketing, personalization, and activation. Firstly, informing aims to provide, often unwanted, information related to the game, players, nation, or organization. Secondly,

marketing occurs when the organization delivers promotions or advertisements that are of relevance or engaging for the fans. Additionally, personalizing creates a direct conversation with individual fans on the platforms, which is one of the most important factors for football confederations to consider. Finally, activation ensures that the (online) fans are going to become involved in particular activities that the organization is promoting, or it is being used to receive feedback from the fans on the organizations' recent activities.

Social media allows the sports confederations to build a community feeling with the respective followers. The confederations' social media profile's allows to affect the attitude towards the confederation strongly, as it ensures relationship building and can generate behavioural responses of the fans to the content (Vermeer & Araujo, 2019). Winand and colleagues (2019) argue that communicating the sports vision of confederations has become a persuasion strategy to include the followers in the aims, values, and beliefs that the confederations want to transmit online.

Social media has opened the door for confederations to be able to promote themselves more extensively, to communicate their values more explicitly, and to apply their soft power on the content that is being posted on their respective Instagram profiles (Aichner, 2019; Nascimento, et al., 2021). Næss (2023) adds that the application of soft power in the online content of the confederations has become more prominent. Soft power adds to the development of gaining and retaining relationships with the followers by exchanging information, being transparent and having a direct communication on the developments of football by the confederations (Freeman, 2012; Næss, 2023).

4.2. Sport politics and soft power

For centuries, sports are correlated to politics. As sports does not only concern the match, the game or the rules, but also the functions embraced by the ruling elites in organizations (Murray & Pigman, 2013). Yet, there are a range of active players, involved in the diplomatic transactions, that make the sport manifold. The active players include, but are not limited to, football players, football clubs, (national) leagues, (national) associations, (continental) confederations, governance structures that are part of the football clubs' international system, multi-national sponsors, and many more distinguished actors (Rofe, 2016).

4.2.1. Soft Power and Sports: Sports as a tool to gain power and promote values

Soft power ensures that sports diplomacy can be conducted by the football confederations to achieve their goals. Nye (2008) has defined soft power as a resource with the aim of generating admiration and attraction for the host country's values, culture and policies. Which is contrary to the notion of hard power, as soft power aims to co-opt and attract others to want what you want (Rookwood, 2019). Brannagan and Giulianotti (2014) add that soft power has become increasingly important in sports, especially within the global context and cultural representation of the nations. In particular when hosting the FIFA World Cup, as such a sporting mega-event attracts a wide range of actors and utilizes the actors to achieve the diplomatic goals of the nation (Abdi, et al., 2022). Yet, Murray (2012) argues that soft power in sports allows for people to reunite with one another, with each others' nations, and bring states closer together. As a demonstration of collegiality between nation states through the use of sports.

Thus, sporting events are considered to be an attractive tool for nations to become internationally engaged with businesses and diplomacy (Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020). States gain soft power by applying sports diplomacy in order to improve the international image, financial position and policies (Abdi et al., 2019; Dubinski, 2019). Søyland and Moriconi's (2022) research highlights that there are four main pillars to gain soft power through sports. The four pillars consist of: (1) hosting an international mega sports event and building sports facilities; (2) investments in sports and sports broadcasting rights to promote the sports initiatives; (3) promoting the nations success at an elite sporting level; and (4) engaging with celebrities athletes who want to talk in favour of the nations' political regime and society. Additionally, the host country can showcase its culture on a global televised format, it allows for attracting new tourists into the country and it helps to showcase the national pride of the host country (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014).

By exercising sports diplomacy and soft power, nations are able to influence power on foreign policies, improve their image to the outside world and achieve goals for the nation (Abdi et al., 2019; Dubinsky, 2019). Similarly, football confederations carry out sports diplomacy and soft power to become more well-known on a world stage but particularly through social media (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Particularly, when promoting football confederations' sports diplomatic values to the followers (Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020). (Rookwood, 2019). As soft power contributes to communicating identity with

followers, and leads to reproduction of the confederations' shared values, norms and identity that are at the core of the content that is being posted (Grix & Lee, 2013).

There is an association that soft power has a positive effect on sports diplomacy. Hence, Brannagan and Giulianiotti (2014) have introduced the negative outcome applying of soft power by confederations; *soft disempowerment*. Soft disempowerment occurs when countries, that host a mega sporting event. They may upset, offend, alienate, lead to a loss of attractiveness or a loss in global influence to the followers that engaged with the promoted mega-event.

4.2.2. *Sports diplomacy in football*

Traditionally speaking, public diplomacy is defined as the use of communication with foreign states to achieve foreign policy goals (Dubinsky, 2021). However, there has been a push towards conducting new forms of public diplomacy due to globalization, and recently developed hybrid forms of diplomacy. Sports diplomacy can be considered an example of this new hybrid form of diplomacy (Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020). Murray (2012) defines sports diplomacy as: "sports, people and sporting events to engage, inform, and create a favourable image amongst foreign publics and organisations to shape their perception in a way that is more conducive to achieving governments foreign policy goals" (pp. 581 – 582). Hence, sports diplomacy has become an important asset for achieving foreign policy goals, gaining attention and credibility for states (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

Sports diplomacy has become an attractive tool for governments to be used, as it is considered to be a more pro-active, original and pioneering form of engaging with the public (Dubinsky, 2019; Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020). Furthermore, sports diplomacy closes the gap with the audience on the perception that diplomacy is an elitist and out-dated form of engagement by nations (Murray, 2012). It is believed that sports diplomacy has a significant impact on the international relations between nations, particularly in positive outcomes such as friendships, solidarity with athletes, and the promotion of world peace (Abdi, et al., 2022). Jankovic (2017) adds, through sports and diplomatic powers, countries are able to demonstrate to the world their hospitality and strong points.

Hence, Abdi and colleagues (2022) have developed the Model of Sports Diplomacy (SD). As shown in *Figure 1*, the model explains the resources of sports diplomacy that are being used as conversion tools to generate vast media coverage to achieve nations' sports diplomatic goals. However, there is no guarantee that the preferred outcome of the sports

diplomatic goals can be achieved. This depends on the context, the targets, the quality of the power-conversion strategies and the variety of choices to make the goals realisable (Murray and Pigman, 2013). Therefore, sports diplomacy supports nations to be branded when hosting a sporting mega-event. As nation branding enhances the visibility of nations, economic position, world image, and the influence soft power on policies (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021; Rookwood, 2019). Yet, Ganohariti and Dijxhoorn (2020) argue that although sports diplomacy contains a positive association when being executed, it can also be used as a promotional tool such as propaganda or for evoking nationalistic sentiments.

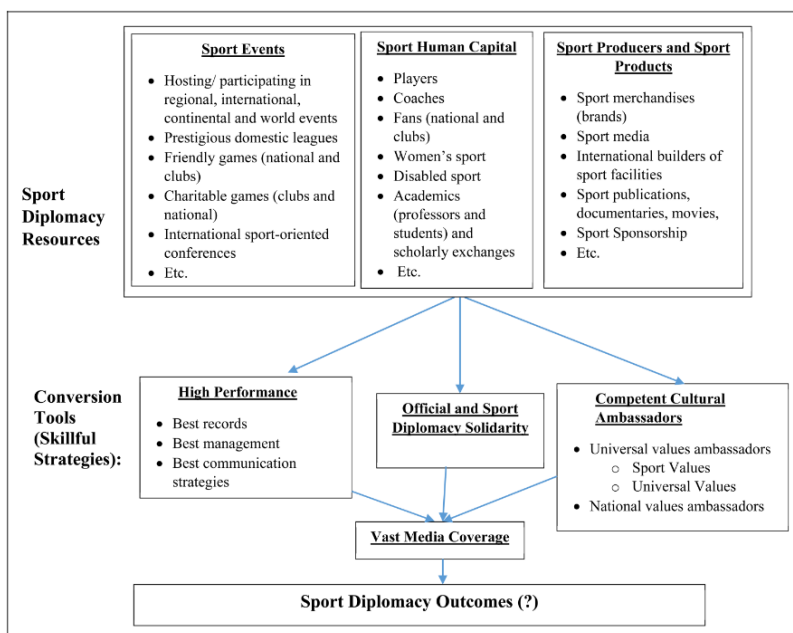


Figure 1 - Model of Sports Diplomacy (SD) (Abdi, et al., 2022, p.326)

Although sports diplomacy carries positive associations with it, it is not a form of diplomacy that can solve global issues by collaborating with nations. For example, issues such as corruption, human rights-, workers rights-, and gender rights violations – these type of issues often need to be nationally resolved through the nations’ governments (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Yet, sports diplomacy can assist in promoting the international values of the, aforementioned, rights through negotiations with nation states (Abdi, et al., 2022). Since the football confederations allows for political actors to combat their social, national and international public relations issues. This is due to the sports organisations’ global popularity and the vast media coverage it receives (Ginesta & De San Eugenio, 2014). However, sports diplomacy will not succeed without soft power in political and diplomatic communication (Dubinsky, 2022).

4.2.3. *Sportswashing*

The term sportswashing is relatively new, however, has been practiced for a very long time in the sports world and, in particular, through the PR of mega-sports events host countries (Chen & Doran, 2022). Moreover, the neologism ‘sportswashing’ derives from similar terms, e.g., ‘greenwashing’ and ‘pinkwashing’, which all address a moral violation that has been receiving attention but not to the extent that it should have been addressed in the media (Fruh et al., 2022). Hence, Søyland and Moriconi (2022) describe sportswashing, as a form in which authoritarian states try to create a positive image on their global reputation, often related to human rights violations, through the use of sports and sporting events. Furthermore, Chadwick (2022) add that sportswashing is also conducted through investments into the sport, sport clubs and/or sporting events that can affect the perception of the audience.

Boykoff (2022) claims that sportswashing overlaps with the application of soft power by the confederations. Because the confederations impose, through sociolinguistic constructions, their representational forces and ideas on the respective followers. The media, national governments and public opinions around the world are being influenced by the performances of the national football teams and the authority of the football confederations (Beck, 2021). In addition, Skey (2022) emphasized that sportswashing can be considered to be the new form of propaganda within the era of digital advancements. Hence, Chen and Doran (2022) describe sportswashing as “the usage of sports as propaganda to manipulate soft power coercion, nationalist-invoking stratagems, and the methods for covering political scandals and problems” (p. 3).

There is not one singular form in which sportswashing is being executed by the football confederations’ content. Yet, Fruh and colleagues (2023) have distinguished that there are two distinctive wrongs that distinguish sportswashing from other forms of content. Firstly, positive associations which refers to the positive emotions, feelings, and identity that users have with the confederation and the sport. Secondly, community infiltration – entailing that the sportswasher wants to become engaged with the supporters of the football confederation to obtain the acceptance and status of being a more important, and prominent, member of the sports community (Fruh, et al., 2023; Skey, 2022).

Amnesty International (n.d.) also refers to sportswashing as the, subtle or unsubtle, rebranding of a human rights violating country. Mainly conducted on social media and in the press through communication practices. However, Chen and Doran (2022) deflects that

sportswashing can also be considered an effort to promote change within the country and that through the use of sports the audience can be open to accept the changes. Hence, nations use sports to digress the interest of discussing the violations in the media to a positive sports mega-event (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Hosting the FIFA World Cup, investments into sponsorships and the football clubs, the (host) nations want to create a liberal, modern and Western-friendly image to enhance the global reputation (Lenskyj, 2020).

4.2.4. *Sporting events and nation branding*

Nation branding, also known as place or destination branding, refers to the process in which the communication of images or brand images help to change the perception on a city, region, or country to the target market (Richelieu, 2018). Rein and Shields (2006) argue that sports play a crucial role in nation branding, as the sports industry is one of the industries that continues to grow significantly and is further globalising. In addition, Rookwood (2019) mentions that by engaging in strategic nation branding, countries can position themselves higher on the international stage. Hence, countries are interested in hosting sporting mega events as it further enhances the visibility to global actors, improving economic position, improving the nations image, and can generate soft power (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021; Rookwood, 2019).

“Branding is everywhere and everything is a brand” (Richelieu, 2018, p. 354). Hence, Kobierecki and Strożek (2019) argues that countries brand themselves as a product to generate a desirability from the audience on getting to know the country better and to become familiar with the services of the country. Place branding through sports (PBS) can be applied in four ways: (1) a sport event platform either major or minor, (2) a sport team platform either private or national, (3) a sport participation platform, or (4) a sport place platform (Richelieu, 2018). In addition, Chen and Doran (2022) distinguished particularly Middle Eastern countries, i.e. Qatar, want to develop the nation’s’ economy, culture and national image through the use of sports. The branding occurs internally, meaning within the nation, and externally, in democracies in which the nation is planting a seed on the new branding (Boykoff, 2022).

However, L’Etang and colleagues (2007) argue that the use of sports and sports diplomatic communication in relation to the branding of a nation can be modified into political propagandic communication. As Potter (2018) describes this relation: “nation-branding is more transparent than public diplomacy, which the latter always open to the

criticism that it is a form of state propaganda under the guise of dialogue” (p.229). In relation to Qatar, the nation controls what can be exhibited online and what is not a topic of discussion to be demonstrating to the audience (Rodner & Preece, 2016). This form of propaganda is referred to as ‘multi-front propaganda’, through which sports are being used to alter the perceptions of democratic states. Yet, within the host nation the sense of pride for the global power that is being displayed against the rest of the world is growing, and how the host nation positions itself as a cultural influencer (Boykoff, 2022).

4.2.5. *Nationalism in football*

Nationalism is identified as the emotional bond and attachment that a person has for its nationality and country (Gellner & Büning, 1991). Aji and colleagues (2018) add that: “Awareness of nationalism within a nation can be built together to achieve, maintain and perpetuate the identity, integrity and prosperity of the nation” (p. 41). Football has played a significant role in the creation of the national identity and national sentiments among its supporters (Tamir, 2014). Confederations, as political entities, play a vital part in the expression of nationalism on social media. By demonstrating what ties people and nations together, i.e. flags and national anthems on social media as a supporting mechanism from confederations to their representing nations (Aji, et al., 2018; Tamir, 2014)

Football confederations use social media to increase the visibility on the sports vision, which is expressed through nation sentiments and values that are being communicated to followers (Chauvin & Durante, 2017; Nascimento, et al., 2021). Chauvin and Durante (2017) consider nation sentiments, enforced by confederations, as a factor that can be primed through sports diplomatic communication strategies on social media. Nation sentiments are nationalistic feelings that are evoked by followers when listening to or reading a message regarding the confederations’ promotion of sports (Chauvin & Durante, 2017). Nation sentiments and sports diplomacy allow for confederations to become proactive in establishing relationships with followers and generating a positive stereotype to the host country (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

In relation to politics, nationalism allows political actors to gain power and are to provide impact to the sport promotion. When the followers recognize the effort that bond with their nation through nationalistic content, the followers unintentionally will become subjected to content that glorifies the host nations of events (Bairner, 2001). This type of content is not only to boost national identity, but also to affect the sentiment of the followers on events, their nations, and the confederations (Bairner, 2001; Tamir, 2014).

Although nationalism is considered to be a positive element, it also carries negatives elements with it in online communication. As football confederations can decide not to represent cultures and nations in its content which will lead to feelings of exclusion among the followers (Tange, & Jenks, 2023). However, the aim of the confederations is too include all of the represented nations to feel both linguistically and visually represented on social media (Skey, 2022). Considering that there has been a decline in nationalism in football over the past few years among the football fans. The football confederations are actively trying to make the football fans more enthusiastic again to support their national teams during mega events, such as the World Cup (Tamir, 2014).

4.3. Variations in sports diplomacy of football confederations

Football confederations use social media to increase the visibility on the sports vision, which is expressed through nation sentiments and values that are being communicated to followers (Chauvin & Durante, 2017; Nascimento, et al., 2021). As mentioned before. Chauvin and Durante (2017) consider nation sentiments, enforced by confederations, as a factor that can be primed through sports diplomatic communication. Nation sentiments are nationalistic feelings that are evoked by followers when listening to or reading a message regarding the confederations' promotion of sports (Chauvin & Durante, 2017). Nation sentiments and sports diplomacy allow for confederations to become proactive in establishing relationships with followers and generating a positive stereotype to the host country (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

There are several reasons to explain why confederations use social media differently to express their soft power in their content. However, this theoretical framework will try to explain some possible explanations to the variations. Inglehart and Abramson (1999) theory of Post-materialism is significant to understand how there has been this shift in what people prioritize in terms of values in modern-day society. The theory suggests that society have become more affluent and secure since the transition from materialist to post materialist values. Materialist values are concerned with economic and physical security, meaning job stability, income, and basic needs to survive (Inglehart & Abramson, 1999). Whereas, post materialist values become more meaningful when the basic, materialist, needs are, largely, met. Hence, post materialist values allow people to prioritize self-expression, quality of life, and non-materialist aspects such as freedom, autonomy, tolerance, and environmental sustainability (Inglehart, 2008; Inglehart & Abramson, 1999). Meaning that because of

people's' shift in priorities, new social and political movements emerge that focus on topics such as civil rights, gender equality, and environmentalism. This emergence of movements challenges traditional political structures, advocating for policies that reflect this change in values, and greater information and social resources to inform society better (Grix & Lee, 2013; Inglehart & Abramson, 1999).

Firstly, the emphasis on the political participation of the confederations. Grix and Lee (2013) argue that confederations take strategic political stances to minimally affect their international status and credibility. Secondly, differences in values of the continents where the confederations are located. As Inglehart (2008) explains, there is a difference in how developed the different continents are and how those effects affect the value of people on countries. Self-expression values, which often let new political issues and political movements rise, that are normalized in Western countries are not so common for African or Middle Eastern countries (Inglehart, 2008). Middle Eastern and African countries tend to be traditionalistic countries with their culture and values, which place a strong emphasis on the guidance of religion and the respect to authority. On the other hand, European and American nations shifted away from the traditional survival expressions and moved towards self-expression, which allows the people to be very expressive about political orientations (Grix & Lee, 2013; Inglehart, 2008). Therefore, it is likely that these differences in values are reflected in the communication of the football confederations on human rights matters.

Søyland and Moriconi (2022) argue that confederations promote their continents based on their online communication strategy in relation to the World Cup. Particularly through international sports confederations, the confederations demonstrate and exercise various types of superiority and ideologies to its followers on sports diplomacy and promoted football (Murray, 2012). Yet, Aichner (2018) argues that the use of social media varies per country, continent, culture and the level of interaction with the confederations' social media profile. Considering Inglehart's (2008) previously established theory on the variations, it can be argued that followers might not be interested about the sports diplomatic communication practices that are being applied and the political stance that is being discussed by the confederations. But are only interested in the development of the football, events and athletes, as part of the communication on social media (Aichner, 2018; Vermeer & Araujo, 2019).

However, an argument for the variations in sports diplomatic content on social media by the football confederations can lie in the dependency in money received from the FIFA.

In the budget rapport of the FIFA, for the 2023 – 2026 financial years, it mentions that based on the development of the football performance per confederations' need the FIFA will make more money available (FIFA, 2022). In addition, the FIFA has made extra funds available for confederations that are part of the Football Development Fund and are partaking in the Forward 3.0 project of the FIFA football development. Based on the dependency on the FIFA's financial aid, confederations can decide to be less diplomatic within the content that is being promoted on social media (Aichner, 2018). Hence, confederations that receive less money for the development of football have a variance in how the communication towards and about the FIFA is transmitted online (Rookwood, 2019).

The FIFA remains politically uninvolved on social media, whereas the confederations are more inclined to deliver criticism, but do not want to jeopardise financial aid termination from the FIFA (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021). The FIFA aims to promote and add value to the events, sponsors, host nations, cities, football confederations, and fans (FIFA, n.d.). Yet, the UEFA promotes the confederation differently on social media. As the UEFA has signed an agreement with the European Commission, stating that the UEFA needs to promote the European values and objectives using football in promotional activities (European Commission, 2022).

4.4. Persuasion practices in sports communication

Although persuasion might not be superficially enforced within the communication practices of the football confederations, but the underlying meaning of some content by the confederations can be used to persuade its followers to adapt similar values, beliefs and ideas (Hazari, 2017; Kobierecki & Strożek, 2020). Related to sports there are various forms in which the audience can be persuaded through sports diplomatic communication online both through visuals and texts. Related to the 2022 Qatar World Cup, it has been argued that the following forms have been recognized from an outsider perspective.

4.4.1. Political convincing tactics on visuals

Formerly, politics and policy making bodies had a strong relation with the use of images in relation to propaganda and public communication (Bekkers & Moody, 2014).

However, social media platforms, e.g. Instagram, have changed the process of visualization for organizations and diplomatic instances. Steffan (2020) argues that the current visual culture is being disrupted and fragmented by the advent of social media and content editing. Demonstrating that content is becoming part of a dynamic fluid culture of consuming content by the followers (Steffan, 2020). As political organizations aim to collaborate with user-generated hashtags and images, as opposed to solely with politically developed content (Trillò, et al., 2021). Content, nowadays, needs to fall under the scopes of “branding” and “visual landscape” in which users need to consume the content to become aware of the goals of the organizations, brands or locations (De San Eugenio Vela, et al., 2017). Similarly to what Bekkers and Moody (2014) state, visual materials, whether it is dispersed online or in print, are powerful resources that frame political issues in such a manner that influences the shape and outcome to the audience. Yet, Militaru (2014) argues that in order to persuade the audiences of the goals, the political organization needs to create a strong relationship between the visuals and the verbal symbols.

“Visual communication only increased ambiguity of values, since the visualization of abstract concepts is particularly open to interpretation” (Trillò, et al., 2021, p. 876). Relating to the associations people can place with content depending on the values and community feeling that are being evoked with the visual and verbal communication (Hallinan, et al., 2021). Social construction allows for the relationship between values and the visuality of content to take place between the sender and the user of content (Bekkers & Moody, 2014; Steffan, 2014). Hallinan and colleagues (2021) have defined that there are three levels of expression that the sender of the content wants to transpose. The ‘explicit’, ‘implicit’ and ‘invisible’ values are being communicated within the verbal and visual cues on Instagram. Hallinan and colleagues (2021) defined that explicit values are goals that are being mentioned in the caption or shown in visuals, values that are being named as part of a policy in the captions, and matching aesthetics in visual content. Whereas, implicit values are characterized by how the confederations apply the values into the content without defining them, qualities of the visual content that is being posted, and how visual and textual content might show different things. Yet, the invisible cues refers to how goals and concerns are not being spoken about, and how topics are absent from both text and visuals (Hallinan, et al., 2021; Trillò, et al., 2021).

The three levels of expression are considered part of the visual rhetoric strategy organization apply to generate support from the users to the organization. Visual rhetoric is a

strategy that uses a significant amount of images featuring people, destinations, symbols, stadiums, and sports to create awareness and to provoke positive feelings with the confederations on social media (De San Eugenio Vela, et al., 2016). Confederations apply these strategies to evoke sentiments, to generate support on their posted content, and to ensure that there is a positive association with the confederations' content (Bekkers & Moody, 2014; De San Eugenio Vela, et al., 2017).

4.5. Conclusion

To conclude, sports diplomacy and soft power contribute to the development of nations and diplomatic communication on social media (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). In addition, the FIFA and the supporting confederations in favour of Qatar faced soft disempowerment, as the focus of the World Cup was built on the idea of glorifying the wealth of Qatar and not in the interest of the spectators of the World Cup (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014; Brannagan & Rookwood, 2016). As Rein and Shields (2006) have distinguished, hosting a FIFA World Cup is the best form of nation branding. However, by appointing Qatar as the 2022 FIFA World Cup host nation, the FIFA and the representing continental confederations have upset their respective followers for the choice in nation (Brannagan & Rookwood, 2016). Hosting allows for nation states to become internationally known and engaging in foreign policies (Murray, 2012). Therefore, countries and football confederations are persuading foreign audiences that the love for football is commonly shared during sporting mega-events (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). However, African confederations are probable to apply different sports diplomatic communication to social media based on the development and expression values (Inglehart, 2008).

5. Research design and methods

This chapter discusses the methods that have been used to answer the research question of this thesis: *“How do football confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup?”* This chapter will start with an explanation on the chosen methods and elaborate as to why these chosen methods were the most appropriate methods to use for the research. In addition, it will discuss the quantitative and qualitative methods that were employed to answer the research questions. To finalize, clarifications on how validity and reliability were assured will be discussed.

5.1. Research design

The aims of the study was to discover the role of sports diplomacy in communication practices by the football confederations about Qatar and the variety in the language and visuals that were being applied on social media. To guide the research, it was necessary to analyse the data both: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data allowed the researcher to present the topics that football confederations discuss on their social media profiles related to the World Cup and Qatar. While qualitative data allowed the researcher to measure what the variety in online communication by the football confederations was on the World Cup and Qatar. Therefore, a mixed methods approach was deemed the most effective manner to conduct the present study, as it drew on both quantitative and qualitative data, which had been necessary to investigate and to answer the question. Mixed method is an approach that collects, analyses, and mixes qualitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data to create integrated findings, and to make interpretations from both methods (Schram, 2014; Snelson, 2016). Furthermore, the level of depth and breadth of the study could only be achieved by conducting a mixed method study (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). Postman (1984) adds that mixed methods help to uncover meaning-making processes of technological communication to people and why messages maintain in the conscious mind.

Previously conducted research on sports diplomacy and social media has looked at the purpose of Twitter for communicating sports diplomacy (Winand, et al., 2019). Besides Twitter, Instagram is the platform with the most active users and is the platform in which users interact the most with the football confederations' profiles in comparison to Twitter (Nascimento et al., 2021; Statista, 2023). Therefore, Instagram had been elected as the platform to investigate how football confederations use social media to communicate during the World Cup. Hence, this research has taken on a mixed methods role to get a deeper

understanding on the communication practices of football confederations regarding Qatar on Instagram and the varieties in communication by the football confederations.

For the first sub-question of the study, which aimed to explore which topics the football confederations discussed during the Qatar World Cup on their respective Instagram accounts. To answer this question, a quantitative content analysis had been applied along with a frequency table to illustrate the topics per confederation during the World Cup. This method was appropriate to employ, to answer the research question about exploration of content and their co-occurrence in the visualised and written content of the confederations (Lawrence, 2014; Oleinik, 2011). This form of quantitative method was preferred over other quantitative methods, as it allowed to generate a general conclusion on the phenomenon that is under study (Sarstedt, et al., 2018).

Furthermore, to get an answer to the second sub-question of the study, which was aimed to understand how the football confederations used social media during the Qatar World Cup to communicate politics. To research this question, a qualitative content analysis had been applied to produce a more detailed and in-depth analysis that could allow for the interpretation of the social world (Ritchie et al., 2013). A qualitative method was utilized for this part of the research, as it allowed to get a systematic description of data which reduced the number of materials to be used for the analysis (Schreier, 2013). Hence, that a qualitative content analysis was the best-suited method to answer the second sub-question of the research.

Finally, the third and final sub-question aimed to explain the variety in how the confederations used Instagram during the World Cup to communicate. This question compared the results from the first and the second sub questions to discover the variety. By drawing on the results that have been gathered from the quantitative and the qualitative results, a comparison and explanation was given on the football confederations variety in Instagram communication.

5.2. Sampling

5.2.1. *Quantitative Content Analysis*

The first sub-question, which aimed to explore what topics the football confederations discuss during the Qatar World Cup on their Instagram account. For this segment of the study, the football confederations' Instagram accounts were elected to analyse: the AFC, CAF, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, FIFA, FIFA World Cup, OFC UEFA.

These football confederations were elected to study, since they are the official continental confederations and are forming the FIFA as an international confederation. In addition, these football confederations are all active on Instagram, share similar traits in football content and are the official accounts of the confederations. After taking the requirements into consideration, 154 posts were extracted to analyse for the study at hand. The content had been coded within an Excel document in which the frequency of topics had been monitored to develop the frequency table.

A short description of the confederations will be given now. Firstly, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is the official football confederation of the Asian continent and of Middle Eastern countries comprised of 46 country football associations (NTT, n.d.). Secondly, the African confederation (CAF) consists of 54 member associations that are located within the continent of Africa (CAF, n.d.). Furthermore, the CONCACAF is the official confederation that represents three areas within America: North-America, Central-America and the Caribbean, containing 41 member associations (CONCACAF, n.d.). Moving over to the CONMEBOL, who represents the South American member associations comprising of 10 members (CONMEBOL, n.d.). The Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) is the most recently added confederation to the FIFA, yet it is the representative over 11 member associations within Oceania (FIFA, n.d.). The UEFA who is responsible for the European member associations in football containing 55 member associations (UEFA, n.d.). Finally, the FIFA is the main confederation that guards the rights and developments in football over all the other confederations and its member associations (FIFA, n.d.).

5.2.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

As mentioned before, the second sub-question was answered using a qualitative content analysis. Before analysing the Instagram content, the sample frame and size needed to be determined. The aim of the qualitative content analysis was to get a deeper understanding of the use of politics that the football confederations used both explicitly and implicitly during the Qatar World Cup. Therefore, the sample frame was a non-probability purposive sample. Purposive sampling sought to identify and select related information to a phenomenon of interest (Brennen, 2017). Furthermore, Etikan and colleagues (2015) have identified that purposive sampling helps the researcher to decide on what is to be known about the group of interest and the provided information. Furthermore, as part of the purposive procedure a homogeneous sample has been applied. Homogeneous samples focus

on participants that share similar characteristics or traits (Etikan, et al., 2015). As aforementioned, the research will focus on the Instagram profiles of the AFC, CAF, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, FIFA, OFC, and the UEFA. These accounts are considered to be a homogeneous sample, as it concerned verified Instagram accounts with similar traits in football content and being the official accounts of the football confederations (Etikan et al., 2015).

Following the guidelines for the mixed methods content analysis of social media content, the sample contained between the required 150 to 180 Instagram posts (Methodological Guidelines Thesis Research, 2022 – 2023). To be more precise, this research has analysed 154 posts, derived from the Instagram accounts of the confederations, both quantitatively as qualitatively. The criteria for the data sample was determined before the data collection. To be included, the data had to be shared on the official, verified, Instagram account of the football confederations. Furthermore, 154 posts devoted to Qatar and the World Cup posted between 2020 and 2023 have been used for the analysis. This timeframe had been elected since the discussion on Qatar on the confederations' social media accounts started after their respective continental championships, e.g. European Championships. In addition, the collected data of 2023 was elected as particular confederations were still discussing the World Cup and its achievements after the event had finished. To conduct the qualitative analysis the software Atlas.ti was used to code the content that was used for the analysis.

However, in terms of a language there could have been a potential issue with the language barrier between the researchers knowledge of languages and the used languages in the content of the confederations. For example, with the content that was distributed by the CONMEBOL in Spanish. To combat this issue, the researcher used the language translation option offered by Instagram and used the application DeepL Translations to eliminate the language barrier on the in-picture text and captions of the analysed content by the confederations.

5.3. Operationalisation

This thesis is guided by the research question “How do football confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup?” To answer this question, the present thesis employs theories and empirical studies within the theoretical framework, to which three sub-questions have risen: firstly “what topics do football confederations discuss

on social media during the Qatar World Cup? Secondly, “how do football confederations use social media for political communication during the Qatar World Cup?” And thirdly, “How can we explain the varieties in online communication by the football confederations during the Qatar World Cup?”

As Babbie (2011) mentions, operationalisation is important to understand the process by which a study’s concepts are transformed into variables that can be measured. Furthermore, during the operationalization process, researchers are constructing the measuring instruments to, e.g., a mixed-method approach. The theoretical framework, in the previous chapter, gave insights into social media as a communication outlet, sport politics, the variations in sports diplomacy by the confederations, and persuasion practices. These notions are essential to understand the communication that the confederations used during the World Cup. Furthermore, it helped to determine how the confederations used social media during the World Cup. The analysis used an inductive approach to conduct the mixed-methods content analysis. The outcomes of the analysis were data-driven, yet supported with theory from the theoretical framework.

The concept of social media as a new communication outlet for football confederations was operationalized according to the framework of Meng and colleagues (2015). The framework highlights that there are four strategies that social media channels can apply to their content: (1) informing, (2) marketing, (3) personalisation, and (4) activation. This, allowed to understand what type of communication the confederations were applying to their content. Additionally, it helped to distinguish what was considered to be political communication and what was considered to be promotional communication during the World Cup whilst quantitatively coding in Excel. Hence, this model helped to answer RQ1.

The concept of sport politics and soft power were operationalized by distinguishing the various forms of politics that football confederations can conduct, both positively and negatively, to achieve their goals. Positive forms of sport politics can be defined as soft power, sports diplomacy and nationalism. Whereas, nation branding and sportswashing are considered to be negative forms of sports politics on social media during the World Cup. These concepts helped to answer the second research question of the study, to understand what political communication the confederations apply during the Qatar World Cup.

The variations in sports diplomacy of the football confederations has been operationalized through Inglehart’s and Abramson theory of Postmaterialism (1999). This

theory provides a possible explanation to the variance in the prioritization of confederations to discuss politics or other topics within their content. Self-expression, religion, values, and financial support are reasons for confederations to either express themselves or to remain uninvolved concerning Qatar and the World Cup. These concepts helped to comprehend the different stances of the football confederations in their communication and to recognize the how the confederations communicate their political values on social media. Therefore, this theory and its explanation to the variance helped to answer the third sub-question of the study.

Finally, persuasion practices in sports communication was operationalized through political convincing tactics that were being applied on visuals. The previous concepts helped to understand the context and the captions of the Instagram content. Yet, visuals add value to the fragmentation of content related to political communication that is being transmitted to the followers of the confederations (Bekkers & Moody, 2014; Trillò, et al., 2021). This fragmentation allows three forms of expression to be visualised which can affect the manner in which the content is taken in by the followers. These forms are; implicit, explicit, and invisible, and help confederations to visually persuade followers to support their content. These concepts helped in understanding the visual cues that the confederations apply within their content during the Qatar World Cup to enhance their relationships with their followers and what the visuals were trying to communicate.

5.4. Data collection and analysis

The collecting of data started on the 21st of March, 2023, up until the 12th of April 2023 on Instagram and the supplementary tool ‘CrowdTangle’. CrowdTangle allowed for a more in-depth search on the confederations’ content that fitted with the sample of the research. The tool provided an overview on all the content that needed to be gathered from the confederations Instagram profiles with additional links to follow, to ensure that it matched with the aim of the study. The Instagram data has been stored in a separate file titled ‘MA thesis’ on the personal Instagram of the researcher. Afterwards, screenshots have been taken including the visuals and the captions of the post, stored and named within a file on the computer.

In the initial stage of the analysis, the data had been classified under the topics that the content discusses in a frequency table in Excel. Afterwards, the data has been coded and analysed through Atlas.ti. The programme allows for multiple rounds of coding, ensuring to

uncover themes and patterns from the data, and for putting codes onto the content for the analysis. Atlas.ti allowed for multiple rounds of coding to discover to classify the results that were needed to answer the posed research questions. In appendix B an overview on the patterns that were discovered after the open, selective, and axial rounds of coding has been made available. This allowed to further analyse the classified quantitative and qualitative content to understand how the confederations used social media to communicate during the World Cup in Qatar.

5.5. Validity and reliability

The present study applied a mixed-method approach to research the topic of the study. This method is able to produce accurate and a comprehensive representation of the topic that is being studied (Snelson, 2016). As Burns (2009) explains, when a study is including a comparison of data related to the phenomenon but is derived from various sources, it may lead to the increase of internal validity. However, it can be argued that there are various reasons and issues that leads to affecting the validity within a mixed-method study. Issues with validity mainly occur during the data collection and the analysis process, since there are various sampling methods that can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, issues with validity can also be the cause of incompetent conducting the data transformation (Ivankova et al., 2006). However, issues with validity can be prevented through constructing the design and the data analysis carefully to fit the study at hand (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). Which have been carefully considered before conducting the study in order to prevent validity issues.

In addition, issues could have arisen within validity when the researchers inadequately follows the practical guidance of the methods that are being applied related to mixed-methods studies (Ivankova et al., 2006). However, this issue has been prevented by carefully following the guidelines that are being set on conducting the content analysis with constructivist grounded theory established by Babbie (2010), and Etikan and colleagues (2015). Burns (2009) adds that there can be issues in validity based on the sampling method that is selected for the study. Hence, that this study uses a purposive non-probability sample which permits the researchers to select the data that needs to be researched. However, this could lead to a potential issue with subjectivity within the study. Marshall (1996) argues that by using a judgement sample the researcher may not always receive the information of the data that is necessary to answer the questions with the collected data.

Another important aspect to address is the subjectivity of the research in the process of researching the phenomenon. In particular, when the researcher conducted the qualitative content analysis. A researcher is never fully unbiased or can remain objective when conducting a study (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A researcher should always consider its own positionality during the data analysis, and should be able to justify its decision-making processes during the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Snelson, 2016). When conducting the qualitative content analysis, the researcher should be transparent in its decision-making in order to prevent a subjectivity issue with the data. As an European citizen self, it can be very difficult to not have an pre-established idea on how communication should be applied and can be challenged by all the media related to Qatar from different continents. However, this was prevented by remaining as neutral as possible and trying to understand other cultural values in communication through research on variations in communications (Inglehart, 2008; Inglehart & Abramson, 1999).

Finally, important to discuss, is the internal reliability of the research. Considering that this study has used constructivist grounded theory and is inductive in nature. The results of the study will be difficult to reproduce, since every researcher has a different interpretation of the results within quantitative and qualitative research that not works with statistical outputs from SPSS.

6. Results

This study aims to explore and interpret the role of sports diplomatic communication and the variations online that are being carried out by the football confederations amid the Qatar 2022 World Cup. First, the results of the quantitative content analysis in order to answer the first sub-question will be presented. The first sub-question seeks to identify which topics the football confederations discuss on their social media platform during the Qatar World Cup. Subsequently, the second sub-question aims to discover how the football confederations communicate politics during the Qatar World Cup. Finally, the last sub-question pursues to explain the variety in the use of communication on social media during the World Cup by the football confederations.

6.1. The topics that football confederations discuss on social media

As afore mentioned, a quantitative content analysis has been applied in order to answer the first sub-question of the current study: *What topics do football confederations discuss on social media during the Qatar World Cup?* Table 1 provides an overview of a frequency analysis of the topics discussed in 154 posts from the Instagram accounts of the eight football confederations' accounts. Furthermore, this section will discuss what football confederations communicate on their respective Instagram accounts per topic.

Table 1 describes the categories of communication that the confederations have applied within their content during the World Cup; promotional communication and the promotion of values. The distinction between promotional communication and promotion of values was made during the coding process of the visuals and the texts of the content. As multiple topics were being discussed by the confederations in their content related to Qatar and the World Cup on Instagram. Furthermore, the table illustrates what the confederations deemed as relevant and irrelevant topics to mention in text or illustrating in images during the World Cup. While the emphasis in the discussion of the results lies on how confederations use social media for political communication, the absence of political communication in the Instagram post of the accounts of the confederations, makes the question also relevant which topics they discuss instead of politics and values.

Table 1: Frequency table of the topics discussed on Instagram per football confederation (N = 174)

	AFC (N = 12)	CAF (N = 15)	CONCACAF (N = 12)	CONMEBOL (N = 20)	OFC (N = 10)	UEFA (N = 14)	FIFA (N = 71)
Promotional communication:							
Promotion of Qatar	91.7% (n = 11)	40% (n = 6)	100% (n = 12)	95% (n = 19)	60% (n = 6)	35.7% (n = 5)	90.1% (n = 64)
(Self)promotion of confederation	66.7% (n = 8)	53.3% (n = 8)	91.7% (n = 11)	55% (n = 11)	80% (n = 8)	85.7% (n = 12)	80.3% (n = 57)
Promotion of World Cup	83.3% (n = 10)	93.3% (n = 14)	58.3% (n = 7)	80% (n = 16)	50% (n = 5)	71.4% (n = 10)	93% (n = 66)
Promotion of matches	41.7% (n = 5)	33.3% (n = 5)	16.7% (n = 2)	30% (n = 6)	40% (n = 4)	35.7% (n = 5)	19.7% (n = 14)
Promotion of events	25% (n = 3)	6.7% (n = 1)	66.7% (n = 8)	50% (n = 10)	30% (n = 3)	7.1% (n = 1)	22.5% (n = 16)
Promotion of fans	0% (n = 0)	80% (n = 12)	58.3% (n = 7)	66.7% (n = 10)	10% (n = 1)	21.4% (n = 3)	62% (n = 44)
Promotion of players	33.3% (n = 4)	13.3% (n = 2)	33.3% (n = 4)	5% (n = 1)	10% (n = 1)	42.9% (n = 6)	12.7% (n = 9)
Promotion of sponsors	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	42.3% (n = 30)
Promotion of values:							
Positive nationalism	50% (n = 6)	80% (n = 12)	91.7% (n = 11)	80% (n = 16)	60% (n = 6)	57.1% (n = 8)	69% (n = 49)
Discrimination	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	10% (n = 1)	28.6% (n = 4)	2.8% (n = 2)
Human rights	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	21.4% (n = 3)	2.8% (n = 2)
LGBTQIA+ rights	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	14.3% (n = 2)	4.2% (n = 3)
Workers' rights	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	7.1% (n = 1)	15.5% (n = 11)
Sustainability	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	7.1% (n = 1)	0% (n = 0)
Football as a driver of positive values	41.7% (n = 5)	20% (n = 3)	33.3% (n = 4)	35% (n = 7)	60% (n = 6)	71.4% (n = 10)	25.4% (n = 18)

Self-promotion refers to the content that communicates or demonstrates how the confederations are performing during the World Cup. FIFA World Cup promotion discusses how the confederations are communicating how the FIFA World Cup experience is or how well the mega-event is being organized. The promotion of matches during the World Cup indicates that the confederations are promoting the matches that are being held as part of the World Cup event itself or the qualification matches to be part of the World Cup. Promotion

of events concerned events such as the FIFA Fan Festival or the CONCACAFÉ that were hosted during the World Cup in Qatar. In addition, fans were also part of the promotion strategy of the confederations and displayed visually and textually in the Instagram content. Football player promotion refers to the football players that are being highlighted for their achievements during the World Cup period or outstanding performances. Finally, promotion of sponsors involves content that discusses the contribution of companies or organizations to realise the World Cup.

The results show that confederations particularly use Instagram for promotion during the World Cup. There are several ways in which the confederations use Instagram for promotion, such as for the promotion of the World Cup itself, World Cup related events, matches during the World Cup, but also promotion of sponsors, players and the organization by Qatar. Table 1 shows that all confederations are heavily involved in the promotion of Qatar, promotion of their own confederation and of the World Cup mega-event itself. Furthermore, table 1 illustrates that CONCACAF uses Instagram the most to promote themselves during the World Cup (91.7%). Whereas, The FIFA strongly promotes sponsors of the event. An issue that the confederations like to highlight in their content is self-promotion (42.3%).

To continue with the promotion of World Cup matches, results show that the AFC (41.7%), CONMEBOL (30%) and the OFC (40%) are particularly active in discussing the football matches with its followers on Instagram. The content regarding the matches is mainly focused on the achievements of the nations in winning a match or about a football player that has accomplished something significant during the World Cup. Interestingly, the CONCACAF (16.7%) is the least active in discussing the matches that relates to the World Cup. Whilst being very active on discussing other topics concerning their promotion (91.7%) and positive nationalism (91.7%).

Another commonly used strategy by the confederations is to promote Qatar. The table illustrates that the European (35.7%) and the African (40%) confederations were not as devoted to promoting Qatar during the World Cup. In comparison to the other confederations whom were actively using their content to highlight Qatar during the World Cup. In particular, the AFC (91.7%), CONMEBOL (95%), and the FIFA (90.1%), used their content to promote Qatar. The content contained promotion tools such as #Qatarworldcup or used the Qatari wealth in their visualised content during the World Cup. Furthermore, the

content related to the promotion of Qatar contained the buildings, stadiums, or Qatari citizens.

The confederations also used Instagram to promote values, particularly nationalism, and the expression of loyalty and devotion to the nation during the event. Values were more often not being discussed by the confederations, than being discussed by them. The UEFA and FIFA were the only confederations to actively communicate values in regards to human-, LGBTQIA+, workers rights, and sustainability. However, football as a driver of positive values concerning sport development was a topic that received attention by the confederations during the World Cup. This concerns the discussion in regards to sport development, how the nations are devotion themselves to programs initiated by the FIFA, events to promote sports development. In particular, for the UEFA (71.4%) and the CONMEBOL (60%) this was a topic that was frequently discussed during the World Cup.

6.1. Using Instagram for promotional purposes

6.1.1. Self promotion of the confederations

Confederations are promoting themselves based on their communication strategy to exercise their superiority and ideologies to its followers (Murray, 2012; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). By having these confederations brand themselves on social media, they are able to generate more visibility for themselves and for the initiatives that they are illustrating in their content (Nascimento, et al., 2021).

An example of the self-promotion executed by the CONCACAF is shown in figure 2. The example illustrates the logo of the CONCACAF-confederation alongside the Qatar World Cup logo; and various football players that are representing their CONCACAF countries in the World Cup. Furthermore, the caption of the post mentions that the CONCACAF and Football For The Fans (FBTL) are collaborating to showcase how the fans are celebrating the World Cup. FBTL is an account of the CONCACAF that posts content devoted to the fan experiences within the CONCACAF member nations. By promoting themselves in the content, the fans are able to recognize the commitment of the confederations towards football and the represented nations in the World Cup. Which relates to Vermer and Araujo's (2019) findings, that confederations are able to affect the attitude of the public towards them through posting content of themselves with their member nations to build relationships.



Figure 2 - Instagram post by @concacaf on November 17, 2022

6.1.2. Promotion of World Cup matches

The content concerning the World Cup matches are mainly focused on the achievements of the nations in winning a match, announcing the upcoming matches, or about the predictions of the match results. Figure 3 shows an announcement of the times of when the matches will be hosted at. Furthermore, the post contains a carousel with the three different schedules based on the time zones in which the followers, world wide, could be located.

By informing the followers on the upcoming match schemes, the confederations are able to build reputations for themselves as transparent and informative confederations towards the followers (Meng, et al., 2015; Skey, 2020). By engaging in content related to World Cup matches, as in figure 3, confederations are attempting to elicit positive feelings towards their nations and towards the confederations on their, upcoming, performance in the World Cup. Images that apply sports are creating awareness and provoking positive feelings on content that is being shared on social media (De San Eugenio Vela, et al., 2016). Hence, why the AFC is engaging in content that helps to elicit these sentiments towards their member nation as a host country.



Figure 3 - Instagram post by @theafchub on July 15, 2020

6.1.3. Promotion of Qatar

Qatar has been the most coded item in the coding process, related to the infrastructure of the country and the discussion and promotion of the country. The results of the analysis affirmed that the promotion of Qatar was happening in the content of the confederations. Qatar is a small state that does not have a rich history in football, yet most of the confederations were branding Qatar's culture and infrastructure as extraordinary. As Boykoff (2019) states, branding occurs often within a nation. However, in this case confederations were actively helping to promote the international branding of Qatar.

The results of the frequency table and of the qualitative analysis have shown that the majority of the confederations use Instagram posts in some way to promote Qatar. Figure 4 illustrates a post concerning the stadiums that Qatar were planning to build. The post illustrates how the stadiums would look like when operating during the World Cup, what their names would be and what the overview of the stadiums would be during the World Cup. The AFC is trying to generate admiration for Qatar in order to improve the international image of the country amidst hosting the World Cup and the stadiums. Which explains the reasoning to promote the developments with positive and inclusive language with no forms of criticism towards Qatar, to elicit the interest on the World Cup. The posts contains no criticism towards the plans of building these stadiums in Qatar amid the World Cup. By incorporating the timeframe, to discuss how long it would last before the World Cup starts, the confederation is trying to evoke interest and excitement on World Cup. Along

with showing the stadiums, the followers are getting an impression on how the environment could feel like when they would be attending one of the matches in Qatar. Therefore, it is noticeable that the AFC uses social media for nation branding in order to achieve and promote diplomatic goals for themselves and for Qatar as a host-nation.

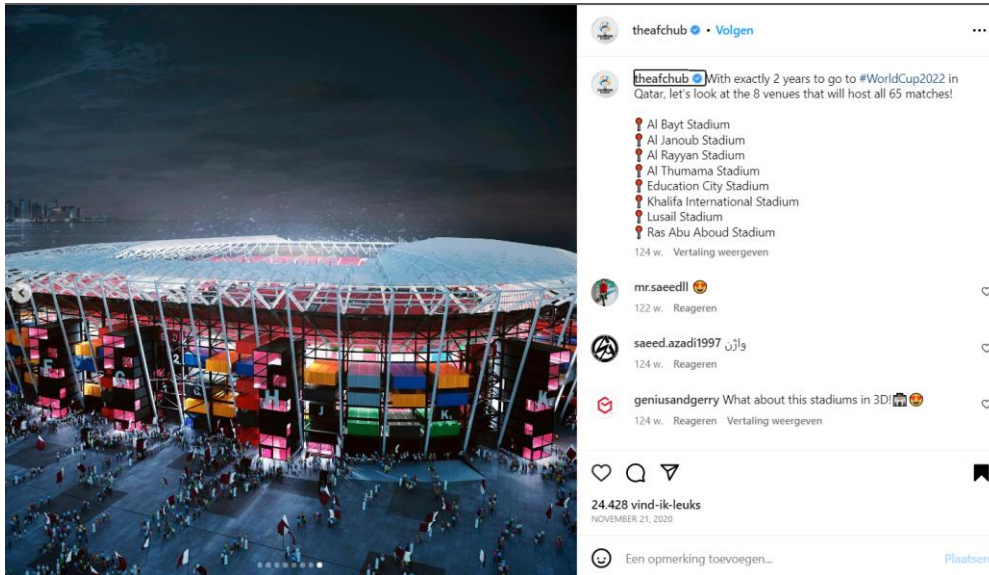


Figure 4 - Instagram post by @theafchub on November 21, 2020

Similarly to the AFC, the FIFA also has interests in promoting Qatar. In 90% of the FIFA's content Qatar was coded, which is not outstanding considering its co-hosting the World Cup with Qatar, such as in figure 5. Both the FIFA and the AFC are trying to exercise their authority, implicitly, in these posts to demonstrate that there is a positive image to be given to Qatar as a host nation. The confederations do this through illustrating the proposed plans and initiatives which Qatar is taking to become more engaged in football. To continue, by posting this themselves, the confederations are able to give the followers the impression that Qatar is a worthy nation for hosting the World Cup. This is a form of sportswashing conducted by the FIFA and the AFC, which allows the confederations to manipulate the followers to become less critical of political scandals and topics concerning Qatar (Chen & Doran, 2022; Skey, 2022).

Thus, it is not surprising that the AFC is invested into the promotion of Qatar, as Qatar is a nation member of the Asian football confederation. With having Qatar as their member of the confederation, the AFC remains neutral on political communication concerning Qatar. However, it does try to achieve the sports diplomatic goals the country wants to achieve for themselves through the incorporation of Qatar in the content.



Figure 5 - Instagram post by @fifaworldcup on December 15, 2022

The CONMEBOL and the CONCACAF are actively promoting the host nation and generating vast media coverage on Instagram. Because the CONMEBOL (95%) and CONCACAF (100%) have positive associations with Qatar, which can affect the perception of the followers to develop similar behavioural responses to Qatar and their promotional content on the World Cup (Vermeer & Araujo, 2019). The CONMEBOL will create propaganda for Qatar in its promotion regarding the World Cup, but still wants to show the importance of the CONMEBOL to its followers (figure 6). However, for CONCACAF the relationship with Qatar is different. The Qatari organisation helped the CONCACAF to host a special café, called CONCACAFÉ, to celebrate the member nations' culture and food within Qatar (figure 7). Therefore, to return the favour of granting them to host their café, the CONCACAF is promoting Qatar as a hospitable country that allows for multiple cultures and countries to be represented. Which ensures that nationalistic-evoking propaganda to demonstrate Qatar's hospitality has been posted during the World Cup by the CONCACAF and the CONMEBOL.



Figure 6 - Instagram post by @conmebol on December 13, 2022



Figure 7 - Instagram post by @concacaf and @2010misterchip on December 1, 2022

6.2. The use of Instagram to express political values

This section aims to provide an answer to the second research question: *How do football confederations use social media for political communication during the Qatar World Cup?* Although a significant amount of the content relates to promotional communication, content communicating the promotion of values remained to be posted online by the confederations. This section will discuss the most significant outcomes of the frequency table, the qualitative content analysis, with support from examples that have been gathered from the data.

6.2.1. Nationalism

What became a intriguing result deriving from the frequency table was that all the confederations have used Instagram to promote their national pride as part of their political communication content. Interestingly, the FIFA has used their content to promote this pride in 35 out of the 71 posts that have been collected. The FIFA is the promoter of all the confederations, including all the represented countries within the World Cup. Thus, is more active on representing all the cultures and nations to its followers. As is shown in figure 8, the FIFA has shared content containing Japanese fans who were ‘passionate from the stands’. The Japanese fans are seen wearing their national colours, carrying their national flags and are full of emotions whilst representing Japan in the World Cup stands. Which relates to Gellner & Büning’s (1991) definition of nationalism, referring to the emotional bond and attachment of people towards their nationality and country.



Figure 8 - Instagram post by @fifaworld cup on December 12, 2022

Content devoted to the nationalistic feelings and sentiments of the fans during such a mega-event, like the World Cup, is used to establish relationships with followers and to ensure that there is sufficient support on the World Cup (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Although the FIFA remains politically uninvolved, it is however trying to create this feeling of mutual interests and that people are sharing an equal love for football all over the world. Abdi and colleagues (2019) consider this as implicitly applying soft power as a tool of attraction for the promoted nations.

Similarly to the FIFA, the CAF uses Instagram for expressing nationalist sentiments in 80% of its content during the World Cup. By applying nationalistic cues, such as a flags

and national instruments like the drums, they are evoking national sentiments among the African followers in their content. An example of this is demonstrated in figure 9, in which the Tunisian fans are celebrating at the Qatar World Cup, with their national flags and instruments, with supporting caption “Tunisia fans on the global stage = Top. Will the Eagles of Carthage come out on top in their second #FIFAWorldCup2022 game?”. Along with promoting visuals that represent nationalism, the CAF is trying to further enhance the nationalistic feelings by using a synonym for the Tunisian national football team: Eagle of Carthage in its caption.



Figure 9 - Instagram post by @caf_online on November 26, 2022

Although, nationalism is mainly subjugated in content concerning people, national symbols, and celebrations, the CONMEBOL has taken a different approach in communicating, both visually and textually, its nationalism strategy to the followers as shown in figure 10. As it used the ‘CONMEBOL Tree of Dreams’ to promote how the South American people have a special relationship with their national football. The ‘CONMEBOL Tree of Dreams’ is an initiative initiated by the Qatari government and the CONMEBOL to demonstrate the rich history of South American football through an event. The tree signifies the roots of football that has allowed for the Southern American countries to excel in their performances throughout the years. The CONMEBOL mentions in its post that football is a natural and instinctive sport that everyone can participate in regardless of their backgrounds.

The image of the tree is to support the claim made in the post that the tree is showcasing a vibrant and connecting life that people have in their member nations and their national success in football. However, we can argue that the Tree of Dreams is a symbol that

is open to interpretation for the followers of the CONMEBOL. The South America confederation is shaping the followers to become more engaged with their nations, but also to engage with the nationalistic sentiments of the confederation. As the followers are probed to start thinking about their nations' football history in relation to the World Cup, in this way the CONMEBOL is trying to evoke the nationalistic sentiments among its followers and fans on social media.

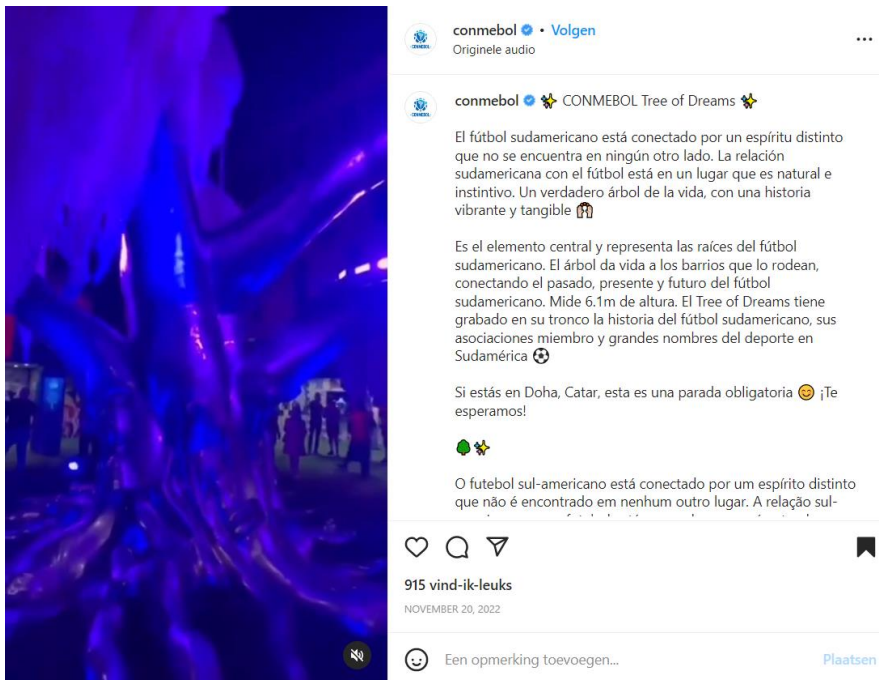


Figure 10 - Instagram post about the CONMEBOL Tree of Dreams by @conmebol on November 20, 2022

By collaborating with hashtags, posing questions and visuals, the confederations are able to shape the followers' feelings and visibility on the confederations' goals to strengthen the nationalistic sentiment on social media. In addition, by becoming more engaged with the confederations and accepting their nationalism strategies, the followers will be more open to consume the content that relates to political goals and topics (Aji, et al., 2018; De San Eugenio Vela, et al., 2016). Considering that the social construct of the content is based on nationalism and evoking positive associations with the confederations, the followers are viewing the content from a more nationalistic point of view and could be influenced to share similar positive associations on the promoted content of the confederations.

6.2.2. Discussing rights

However, there are some results that stood out in terms of sports diplomatic

communication on rights and Qatar. Firstly, the UEFA's Instagram post in figure 11, the UEFA has used its platform to inform the audience on its policy goals in relation to football to safeguard the respect during competitions and matches. The post shows that the European confederation is communicating values that are important within Europe, such as; diversity and inclusion, environment, human rights. Furthermore, the post discusses that the UEFA referees are needed in the men's World Cup in order to maintain the image of football from declining internationally. What makes this post fascinating is that the UEFA is an active user of social media to promote rights. Figure 11 illustrates an image of only female referees. The UEFA, does not explicitly state in its content that the post concerns females referees, but groups them as just referees. Suggesting that it is the norm for them that female referees are equal to men's referees and that it should be normalized that women are part of the men's World Cup. As mentioned before, the post mentions that referees are crucial to prevent the image from "cracking down on disrespectful behavior", and that they will support in the men's World Cup to combat this issue. This Instagram post is an example of how confederations can use online communication to gain attention on achieving goals that are important to the confederations and to achieve a significant impact whilst promoting equality by applying their soft power in content (Abdi, et al., 2022; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).



Figure 11 - Instagram post by @uefa_official on February 10, 2022, about expressing values on the image of football

Confederations publish reports in which they state how they are representing the interests of their member nations and football players on a yearly basis. Yet, it does not

happen very often that it is expressed on social media by the confederations. Figure 12 is a collaborative post between the FIFA and the FIFA president, Gianni Infantino, portraying the former prime minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and the former president of Tunisia, Moncef Marzouki, during the match between Denmark and Tunisia. The aim of the post is to demonstrate that the FIFA president is involved in politics with (former) head of states. Yet, this post is outstanding in terms of representation, as Ms. Thorning-Schmidt is representing the LGBTQIA+ flag on her coat. Which has been a highly controversial topic in Qatar and during the FIFA World Cup, but has still been shown in the post. Which gives the idea that the FIFA is implicitly expressing its support to the LGBTQIA+ community. As De San Eugenio Vela and colleagues (2016) discussed, by using content with symbols and people the confederations are trying to create awareness for the cause, in this case the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, it is trying to generate positive feelings towards the FIFA for implicitly taking a political stance towards a controversial topic in Qatar, openly sharing it and showing its collegiality towards the community through their soft power (Murray, 2012).



Figure 12 - Instagram post by @gianni_infantino and @fifaworldcup on February 20, 2023 with Helle Thorning-Schmidt (top left) and Moncef Marzouki (bottom right)

6.2.3. Football as a driver of positive values

Football as a driver of positive values is a result that emerged from using representatives of the confederations during the world cup to support the goals and to demonstrate the sports diplomatic commitment of the confederations on Instagram.

Figure 13 shows the CONMEBOL and their 'CONMEBOL Tree of Dreams' on the official opening in Doha, Qatar. In addition, the posts visualizes the CONMEBOL and Qatari representatives that are opening the spectacle to the audience. The CONMEBOL is trying to showcase the close relation it has with Qatar during the World Cup. They do that by having both parties help with cutting the ribbon during the opening. This is implicitly stating that the ties between both the confederation and the event organization are united and can be recognized by their followers in the post. Yet, there is the argument that the CONMEBOL is branding Qatar on its hospitality and support to promote the South American confederation amid the World Cup. Which is a form of propagandic nation branding between CONMEBOL and Qatar. This post is a strategic form of nation branding, as the CONMEBOL is positioning themselves and Qatar through diplomatic events as sporting cultures that generate a desirable image of Qatar (Boykoff, 2022; Chen & Doran, 2022). Hereby, the fans are able to create an image of Qatar as a state that is open to different cultures to represent themselves, through the use of football, during the World Cup



Figure 13 - Instagram post by @conmebol on November 21, 2022

The OFC has used its Instagram to promote that football is a driver of positive values in 60% of the content that it has posted during the World Cup. The OFC uses its content to promote the sports developments that are occurring within the confederation. However, as

shown in figure 14, the OFC often uses its content to demonstrate sports diplomacy. The posts represent the OFC competitions director, Chris Kemps, alongside the FIFA president, Gianni Infantino, during the Oceania qualifying competition in Doha, Qatar. The aim of the post is to demonstrate how the Oceanic confederation is able to host the FIFA president during its qualifying matches, but at the same time it is showcasing the soft power of the OFC whilst hosting this event. This ties in to what Murray (2012) has argued, as this post is visualising the reunion between the FIFA and the OFC through an event to bring them closer together. Furthermore, with creating content to demonstrate the efforts the OFC is making to develop the football in the Oceanic countries it helps to close the gap between the confederation and the followers (Murray, 2012).

Sports diplomacy has a significant impact on establishing international relations between nations and their confederations (Jankovic, 2017; Murray, 2012). Hence, why the OFC is highly involved in establishing international relations with the FIFA to retrieve more financial aid from the Forward 3.0 project and receive money from the Football Development Fund (FIFA, 2022). Furthermore, by having official representatives be present at football matches can also be a strategic political stance that the OFC takes to further enhance their international status, and to increase their credibility online to the followers and to the other confederations (Grix & Lee, 2013; Inglehart, 2008). However, it can be argued that the OFC is not discussing politics in relation to Qatar to safeguard its financial aid from the FIFA and from the Qatari organization to host their qualifying matches in the Qatari stadiums.



Figure 14 - Instagram post by @ofcfootball on March 18, 2022

6.3. The variations in online communication explained

This section aims to provide to answer the final research question before answering the main research question of this research; *How can we explain the varieties in online communication by the football confederations during the Qatar World Cup?* This will be conducted through comparing the data from the frequency analysis and the thematic analysis.

Theoretically speaking, there can be several explanations given to the variations in the communication of the football confederations on Instagram. This can rely on the financial support that is being provided to the football confederations by the FIFA to develop their associations' football (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021). In addition, it can be dependent on the values which the nations, which make up these confederations, adhere to. Inglehart (2008) provides the explanation that continents carry different values in order to express themselves and their respective cultures. These values could guide how the confederations are expressing themselves online and how their cultures might affect the communication strategies for content during the World Cup. However, the results of the analyses have shown that there are more possible explanations to be given for the variations in the promotion of political values during the Qatar World Cup by the confederations.

6.3.1. Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF)

Firstly, the priority confederations give to promote the nations and the confederations

over promoting values such as human rights, equality and diversity. This derives from results that show that confederations like the AFC, the CAF, and the UEFA are more interested in demonstrating to the followers how well their confederations' countries are performing in the World Cup. As aforementioned, the CAF is highly involved in the creation of the community feeling and the representation of the African culture in their Instagram content. However, the African confederation does not use their social media platform to take a stance in regards to the human rights issues Qatar has been linked to.

Content in regard to political communication on the confederations' values and stance during the World Cup is not being discussed nor demonstrated. However, highly promoting one-self and the nations falls under the scope of nationalism in online communication employed by the African confederation. This has been discovered by visualising the national items, i.e. flags and symbols, related to football content to stimulate the diplomatic communication on African football and its development for African countries by gaining financial aid. In addition, the African confederation is invested in the promotion of nationalism to evoke positive associations with the World Cup and to be respectable towards the authority of FIFA and Qatar during the World Cup. Hence, the CAF is also contributing to the nation branding of Qatar within their content. This ensures that with the positive nationalism, the followers may accept Qatar as a host-nation by showing that the host nation is able to host a, for Africa, beneficiary competition in terms of achievements.

6.3.2. Asian Football Confederation (AFC)

The AFC is the representing confederation of Qatar, also known as the host country of the World Cup. The Asian confederation has a different relationship with maintaining politically uninvolved on their social media platform. The Asian confederation and Qatar are very traditionalistic and are bounded by religious guidance in their culture. Thus, resulting into the AFC not being expressive about political goals that they want to achieve amid the World Cup in Qatar to not affect their reputation on Instagram. The content of the Asian and African confederations reflect a traditionalistic approach and respect to authority, but mainly that their cultures are the core to their content during the World Cup (Inglehart, 2008). Hence, CAF and AFC pay high respect to authority, in this case Qatar and the FIFA, and let this be the guide to not interfere with political communication to generate a negative association to the host- and member nation of the World Cup.

As a result, the Asian confederation is letting the Middle Eastern values guide the

content related to the World Cup and is more involved in the nation branding of Qatar. The AFC is trying to show in its content and positivist language that Qatar is a country that is highly invested in creating a positive atmosphere, attractive for its visitors, and trying to improve its national image amid the World Cup. Furthermore, the AFC wants to achieve the national diplomatic goals for Qatar to ensure that Qatar becomes more involved in football and the development of football in the country (Abdi, et al., 2019; Dubinsky, 2019). By maintaining uninvolved with discussing politics on the AFC's Instagram, the AFC is trying to sportswash the audience to maintain an unaffected international image on Qatar and their human rights issues (Fruh, et al., 2023).

6.3.3. Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)

The UEFA has turned out to be the most active Instagram account on the promotion of various rights and other political topics that are important to address in sports diplomacy. The UEFA is very expressive on political topics, e.g. discrimination and sustainability, and how the confederation is able to provide aid in these political movements. However, the content is never directly aimed towards the FIFA nor towards Qatar as a form of criticism. Results have shown that the UEFA does not contribute to the branding of Qatar in its Instagram content. However, the UEFA is devoted to sharing content that contributes to the development of football but that also demonstrates their sports diplomatic values to the followers. As mentioned before, the UEFA's content is guided by an agreement with the European Commission on promoting the European values in its communications online. Hence, the active stance on values that are considered important to be addressed in Europe and the right to self expression within the European Union (European Commission, 2022; Inglehart & Abramson, 1991). Yet, it became clear that although the UEFA has this agreement it is not politically active on Qatar and the human rights violations that have occurred amid the World Cup. This is can be the result of the financial aid the UEFA receives from the FIFA, but it can also be a form of self-protection. Meaning that the UEFA is trying to protect its qualified member nations in the World Cup from being excluded from the event by explicitly discussing their position on human rights. Which explains why the UEFA discusses their stances, but not explicitly mentions that its concerning their criticism to the organization of the World Cup.

6.3.4. *Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association of Football (CONCACAF)*

The CONCACAF's Instagram content varies from that of the other confederations as the confederation carries positive associations with the Qatari government and their hospitality during the World Cup. They allowed the CONCACAF to host their CONCACAFÉ in order to combine Qatari traditional food with the Northern American cuisine and cultures. Due to the Qatari hospitality, the CONCACAF actively branded the host nation in its Instagram content to generate positive associations among their followers towards Qatar and the World Cup. Chen and Doran (2022) claim this as applying nationalist-invoking propaganda by actively branding the host nation during a mega-event through the use of sports. In addition, the CONCACAF's content carries aspects of sports washing, which allows the North American confederation to enhance their relationship with the Middle Eastern investors in football and to achieve their sports diplomatic goals.

The sports diplomatic goals of the CONCACAF are to become more internationally recognized for its football, to become closer with their followers, and to promote their own values. The CONCACAF has mainly focused on the USA, Canada, and Mexico in its nation promotions. A potential reason for this is that these are the three most populated member nations of the CONCACAF account. The CONCACAF is interested in promoting its three most populated countries, as these countries might carry a higher value in building a community online. By creating nationalist-invoking propaganda for Qatar, the confederation is trying to ensure that its own goals are going to be achieved with sufficient support on Instagram towards the World Cup and its host nation. Whilst simultaneously, trying to enhance the cultural representation of its member nations in their promoted content during the World Cup.

6.3.5. *Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL)*

Similarly to the CONCACAF, the CONMEBOL's communication is dissimilar to the other confederations' online communication during the World Cup. The CONMEBOL has been gifted the 'Tree of Dreams' to promote the football legends of the CONMEBOL and to showcase that the best football in the world is the Southern American football. Yet, it was also trying to showcase the relationship between the Southern American confederation and the Qatari organization, and how they were uniting over the tree. Majority of the content of the CONMEBOL illustrates the positive association they have with Qatar and the

hospitality of the Qatari government towards them.

Therefore, the South-American confederation is utilizing sports to create nationalist-invoking propaganda for a mega-event like the World Cup (Chen & Doran, 2022). Vermeer and Araujo (2019) claim that confederations pursue sportswashing as they believe that they are able to affect the attitude of the followers on Qatar through the content that it is posting. The CONMEBOL pursues sportswashing to enhance their relationships with Middle Eastern investors in football and to achieve their sports diplomatic goals. Which are to become internationally recognized as the top confederation in football, create stronger bonds with their followers, promoting their member nations' achievements, and to promote the confederations' values. By creating nationalist-invoking propaganda for Qatar and for the confederation-self, they are trying to ensure that these goals would be achieved with as much support and positive sentiments as possible on social media towards the World Cup and Qatar by the Southern American followers.

6.3.6. *Oceania Football Confederation (OFC)*

The OFC is a recently added confederation to the FIFA Forwards 3.0, which is an investment program of the FIFA for its member nations and confederations to cover the costs of football activities within the confederations. The football development program provides financial support on further developing the sports within the nations of the OFC. Thus, explaining why the OFC is engaged in self-promotion and the match promotions during the World Cup. Although the OFC is the least active confederation out of all the confederations on its Instagram profile. There are result to be taken away from the analysis, which is that the OFC contributes to the nation-branding of Qatar. This is remaining very implicitly since the Oceanic confederation is communicating to its followers that Qatar is a collegial nation, to strengthen the international relations between both the host nation and the confederation (Jankovic, 2017). Furthermore, the OFC uses content involving representatives of the confederation to establish credibility and visibility on its sports diplomatic goals it wants to achieve by recently becoming members of the development programs of the FIFA (Grix & Lee, 2013; Murray, 2012). This is the case because the OFC is not a well-known confederation yet in the international football industry. In addition, the OFC does not have the capacity to hold qualifying tournaments in the member nations' stadiums. This is why Qatar became an important player, as the Qatari organization allowed for the OFC nations to host their matches in their stadiums amid the World Cup. In return, to

show respect and to remain politically uninvolved it does not contribute to political communication on Qatar nor on the World Cup.

6.3.7. *Fédération Internationale Football Association (FIFA)*

Finally, the FIFA as co-host and the confederation with the most power over the other confederations. Entailing that the FIFA is the confederation holding the most soft power in its communication on Instagram during the mega-event (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2014; Nye, 2008). In addition, it is the confederation for whom the FIFA World Cup is an event that needs to raise a lot of money through investors and media rights. Which explains the reasoning behind to self-promotion of the FIFA during the event, as it wants to earn a lot of money for their contribution to the event. Since the FIFA appointed Qatar themselves to co-host the World Cup, it is out of self-protection and best interest to limit international image damage that the confederation remains politically uninvolved.

However, results have shown that the FIFA is implicitly very political in its content during the World Cup. As the FIFA is active in showing the emotional bond and attachment the people have with their nations to ensure support on the World Cup (Gellner & Büning, 1991; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Besides contributing to positive nationalistic communication, the FIFA is implicitly also taking a political stance on the representation of certain rights, such as the promotion of the LGBTQIA+ flag. Leading to developing positive feelings towards the FIFA for implicitly taking a political stance towards a controversial topic in Qatar and openly sharing it and showing its collegiality towards the community through their soft power (Murray, 2012).

7. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how the football confederations use social media during the Qatar World Cup. To answer the main research question of this study, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify the ways in which the football confederations use social media during the Qatar World Cup. This informed a quantitative analysis to uncover the topics that were being discussed by the confederations in their content during the Qatar World Cup. The thematic analysis led to further elaborate on the topics the confederations discuss and to provide an answer as to why there is a variation in the content of the confederations on social media. In this section, the research question: *“How do football confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup?”*, will be answered by concluding the results of the study at hand. Finally, the theoretical and societal implications of the conclusion will be discussed. As well as, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research to take on.

7.1. Main findings

7.1.1. RQ1: What topics do football confederations discuss on social media during the Qatar World Cup

To provide an answer to the posed research questions: What topics do football confederations discuss on social media during the Qatar World Cup? The frequency table showed that there were two main topic that were being discussed by the confederations on their respective accounts: promotional communication and promotion of values (Table 1). If we delve into the topics, that were discussed it became noticeable that ‘self-promotion’ is considered one of the most valuable and applied forms of promotion that the confederations have applied during the World Cup in their Instagram content. Yet, the confederations have a variety in topics that were being discussed during the World Cup besides self-promotion. The AFC was more invested in the promotion of Qatar and the promotion of the World Cup in its content. Whereas, the UEFA is more invested in the discussion regarding the promotion of their football players and the World Cup. Similarly to the AFC, the CAF, CONMEBOL, CONCACAF, OFC and FIFA prioritize the same topics of FIFA World Cup promotion and the promotion of Qatar over the other non-political topics on their accounts.

7.1.2. RQ2: How do football confederations use social media for political communication during the Qatar World Cup?

The second sub-question aimed to understand how the confederations use social media to communicate politics during the World Cup. To get an answer on this question a qualitative content analysis has been applied to uncover themes and patterns from the data to get a deeper understanding on the topics that were discovered within the frequency table. After running the analysis, the data showed that the confederations discuss politics through the promotion of values. Such as to provoke the feeling of nationalism among the followers, applying aspects of nation-branding and sportswashing through the confederations' content on Qatar to the followers, to discuss rights that need to be brought to the users' attention, and to promote football as a driver of positive values as part of their sports diplomatic efforts and contribution to the development of football.

It was discovered that not all the confederations are actively contributing to political communication, rather implicitly discussing political matters to protect their international image and to safeguard the financial aid that the FIFA provides. Moreover, the results have shown that nationalism is used as a positive form of political communication to enhance and provoke sentiments of belongingness among the followers during the World Cup. The confederations do this to generate positive associations on the content that is related to Qatar and the World Cup through their use of nationalism. Additionally, as part of the sports diplomatic goals of the confederations, the content was to generate positive associations among the followers to have similar feelings as the confederations towards Qatar during the World Cup. Whereas, content related to equality, diversity, human rights, and workers rights, are not being discussed by the majority of the confederations. There was only a small selection of confederations that prioritized the discussion on rights whilst the World Cup occurred. Yet, there was not an explicit indication that the content of the confederations was directed on criticizing Qatar and its human rights violations.

7.1.3. RQ3: How can we explain the varieties in online communication by the football confederations during the Qatar World Cup?

Finally, the third and final sub-question that intends to answer why there is a variation in online communication by the football confederations during the Qatar World Cup. This sub-question compares the findings provided by the first two sub-questions to compare and understand the variations in the content. The theory already explained some variations in the

content, however the analysis discovered additional reasons that were theoretically not considered.

To begin with special relationships between the confederations and the Qatari government to host events for the confederations, which lead for the confederations to further promoting Qatar and brand them as a hospitable host nation. Secondly, confederations do not contribute actively to political communication in relation to the Qatar World Cup as a form of self-protection. This self-protection is not only to protect the international image of the confederation on social media, but also to ensure that the financial aid that is to be provided by the FIFA will not be terminated. The FIFA is the confederation that helps the other confederations with their programs and the development of the sport. Yet, we can argue confederations are unable to deliver criticism on a nation that is a member. As the confederation want to achieve the sports diplomatic goals, to gain support in the international image building and branding of these host nations. But confederations are also trying to protect their member nations from being banned from playing in the World Cup, if criticism were to be delivered on social media. Value differences based on the continents and political agreements can be an explanation as to why these confederations carry different values and express themselves differently on social media. These values, religion and expression, could guide how the confederations are expressing themselves online and how their cultures might affect the communication strategies for content during the World Cup.

7.1.4. Conclusion: How do confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup?

To conclude, this research aimed to research how the football confederations use social media for communication during the Qatar World Cup. Through the results of the three sub-questions, this research has shown that confederations use social media to promote themselves extensively and the FIFA World Cup. However, remain politically uninvolved unless it concerns evoking positive nationalism and the branding of Qatar on their Instagram accounts. Except for the UEFA and the FIFA, these two confederations were actively contributing to the discussion of human rights and equality in their content. Which demonstrates that influential confederations that carry different expressional values. Whom are able to discuss more topics that are politically oriented and will not heavily affect their international image that they have established. Furthermore, social media has been actively

used to promote the football as a driver of positive values to further enhance that the aid that has been received for the development of the sports ensured that nations would be able to participate and attend the World Cup. To continue, the confederations use social media to communicate positive nationalism to its followers during the Qatar World Cup. Yet, there is a variation on the reasoning to apply positive nationalism and self-promotion among the confederations. As mentioned before, this is due to cultural values that the confederations abide by. During the World Cup, the confederations wanted to ensure that there was sufficient support on the event and on the host nation. Which meant that the confederations applied national sentiments and nationalistic cues to their content to evoke a positive association through nationalism with the World Cup. Hence, we can state that the confederations, both explicitly and implicitly, have contributed to the branding of Qatar and the World Cup during the event. As their social media communication has provided content that carries elements of nation-branding, sportswashing, and nationalism to generate positive associations and support on the World Cup among the followers. Meaning that social media has been used to communicate positive sentiments and feelings, in various forms, across all the accounts of the football confederations during the World Cup.

7.2. Theoretical and managerial implications

This research has looked into the communication of the football confederations during the Qatar World on Instagram, what topics were being discussed, the political communication, and the explanation on variations in communication by the confederations on Instagram. Reflecting back on previously conducted studies on sports communication and sports diplomacy, the findings of this researching are deviating from what has been previously established as results (Aichner, 2019; Ganohariti & Dijxhoorn, 2020; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). This is due to the fact that previously conducted studies have looked at Twitter as the main platform for political communication conducted by the FIFA or by national football associations. In addition, the confederations that make up the FIFA have only been researched in relation to nation-branding (Kobierecki & Stozek, 2017; Murray & Pigman, 2013; Richelieu, 2018).

We can argue that this deviation is because of the platform which has been elected for this study to collect its data from: Instagram. Twitter is a more political oriented platform that confederations and football representatives use to publish reports and to communicate their political stances and values on about football (Hong & Kim, 2016). Whereas, in

comparison to Twitter, Instagram is a more positive platform in which the members are interacting and experiencing content in a good manner (Hyken, 2022). Which explains the positive forms of political communication that the confederations apply on their Instagram content, such as positive nationalism and hospitality as part of nation-branding. This is more prevalent on Instagram, as visuals add more value to the captions that the confederations want to communicate. Yet, we can argue that Instagram content has less value in terms of communication than on Twitter by the confederations. Since the content is less direct in terms of politics and more positive driven to generate positive associations with the content.

This study is also the first study to compare all the confederations' communication in relation to the World Cup systematically. Allowing to not only show how the confederations use Instagram, since it is becoming a more relevant and vocal communication platform, but also to provide reasonings as to why there is a variation in the form of communication conducted by the confederations. Furthermore, the Instagram content carries less political and news-related content. Yet, it contains a more personal and carries a lighter tone.

7.3.Limitations and recommendations for future research

This research knows, like any other research, some limitation. A limitation of this research is that it focuses on Instagram to uncover political communication conducted by the football confederations. Whereas, Twitter as a platform would be a more suitable platform to uncover the variances in political and non-political communication applied by the confederations. Furthermore, another limitation of the study at hand is that there is an unequal distribution in the gathered content from the confederations. For example, only 10 posts of the OFC could be analysed that fitted with the sample criteria and the time frame that was elected for the study. Whereas, the two FIFA accounts, their official and World Cup account, ensured that 71 pictures could be analysed for the results of the study. As results have shown, there are various reasons as to why some confederations are more active in communication during the World Cup. Yet, all the content that made up the data were researched and analysed with the same significance for the analysis.

An additional limitation of the research is the cultural background of the researcher. Confederations that are located in Asia or in Africa carry different cultural backgrounds, values and religious considerations for posting and communicating through their content. However, these varieties in culture and values were predefined in the theoretical framework to remind the researcher of being objective and considerate towards the data during the

process of analysing. Furthermore, this study has looked at a specific time period in which the confederations communicate on social media. This means that less information could have been collected on how the confederations use social media for sports diplomacy in general outside of the Qatar World Cup as an event.

A recommendation for future research to focus on is to hold interviews with social media staff of the confederations to understand their motives for posting certain types of content related to mega-events. To understand the protocol behind the posting behaviour of the confederations, what values need to be taken into account before posting, and the aim of the content for the confederations. In addition, to focus the perceived experience of the fans of these confederations' social media channels during the World Cup or other mega-events. To discover how they experienced how the confederations were behaving during the World Cup and what they were expecting from them during the World Cup as a confederation through a quantitative study.

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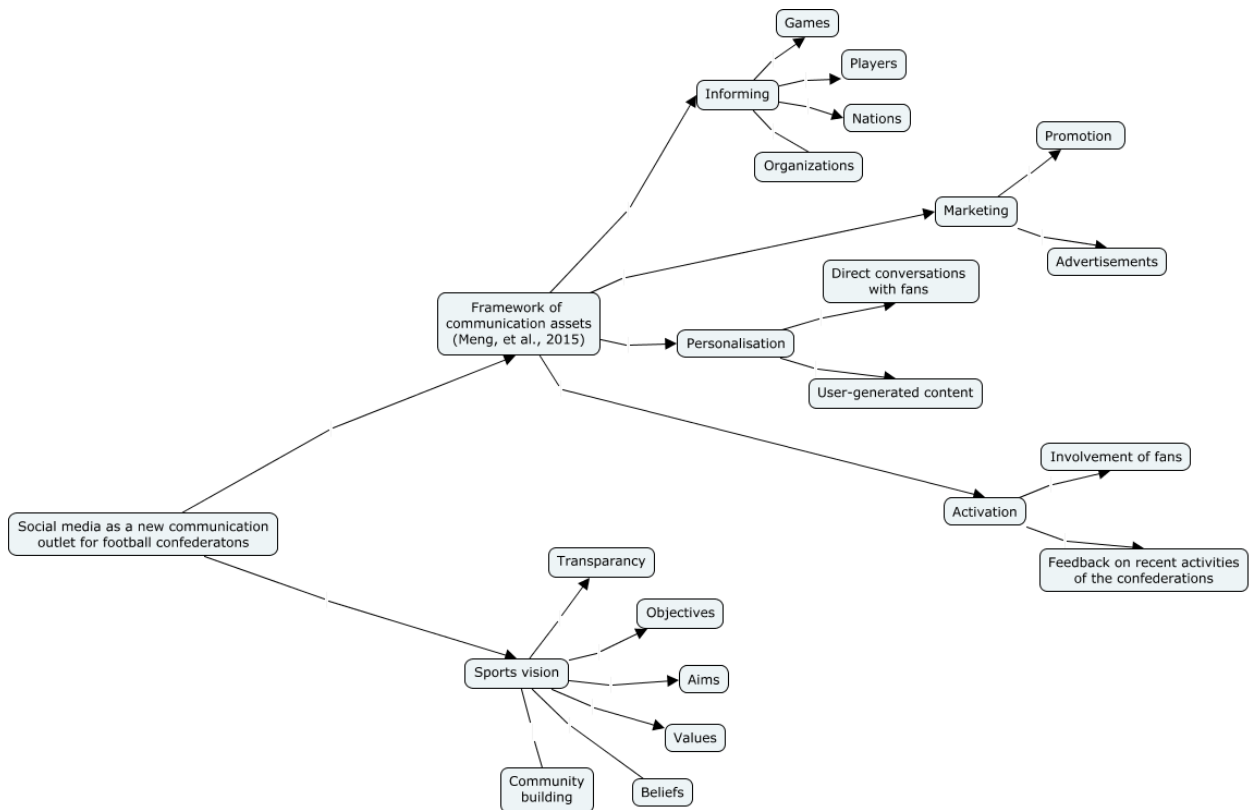
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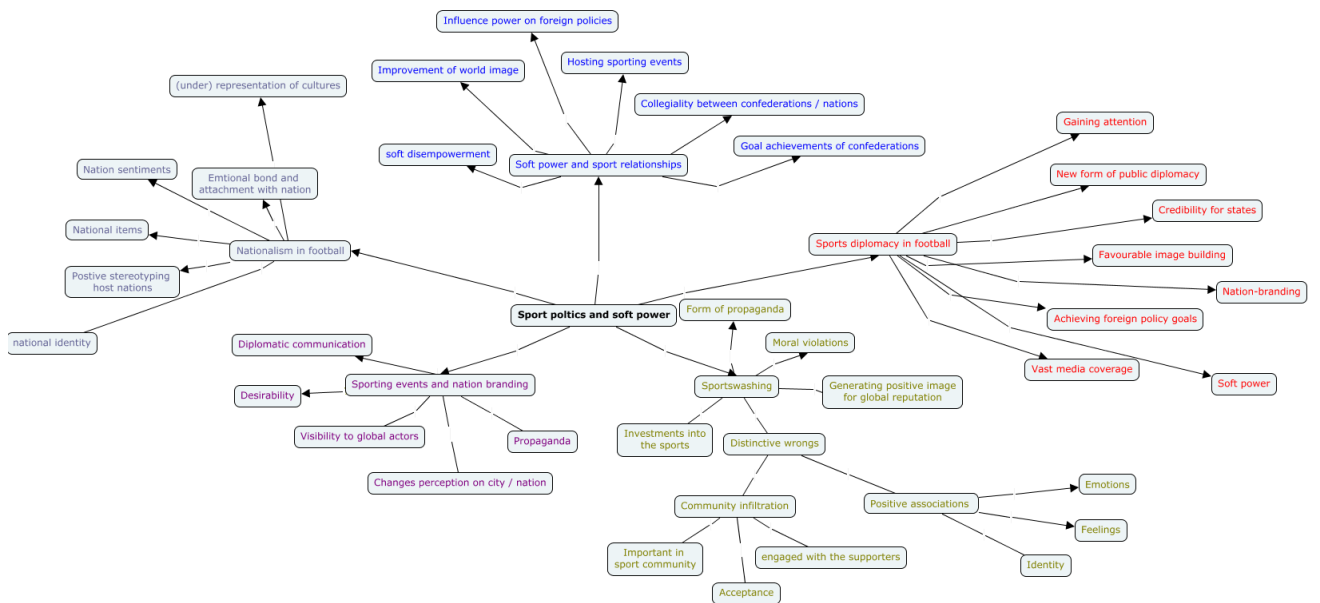
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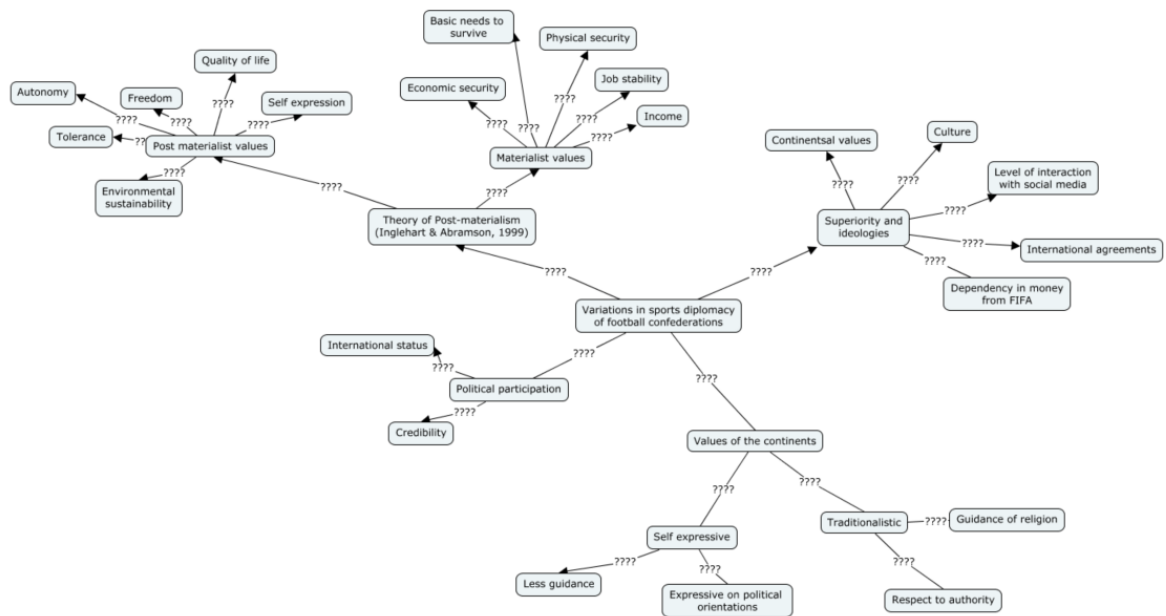
Appendix A: Operationalisation table



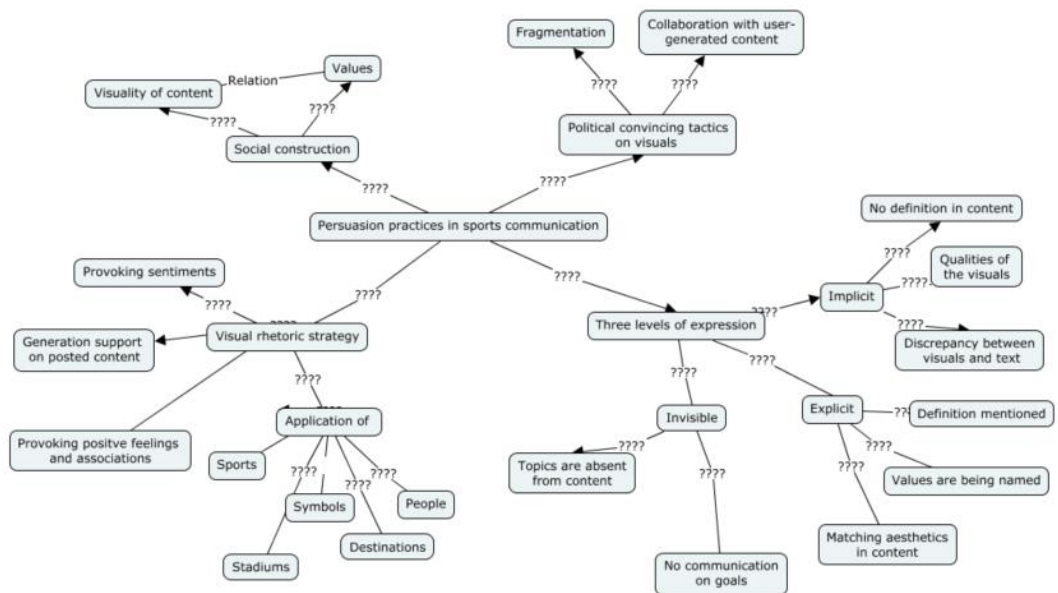
Appendix A1 - Operationalisation table for 'Social media as a new communication outlet for football confederations'



Appendix A2 - Operationalisation table for 'Sport Politics and Soft Power'



Appendix A3 - Operationalisation table for 'variations in sports diplomacy of football confederations'



Appendix A4 - Operationalisation table for 'Persuasion practices in sports communication'

Appendix B: Data

Table 1: *Selected Instagram content by the football confederations*

ATLAS.ti Report

Thesis Laura Beco

Documents

Report created by Laura Anastacio Beco on May 2, 2023

1 @CAF_Online (CAF) – December 4, 2022

Image Document

2 @CAF_Online (CAF) – December 6, 2022

Image Document

3 @CAF_Online (CAF) – December 21, 2022

Image Document

4 @CAF_Online (CAF) – January 21, 2020

Image Document

5 @CAF_Online (CAF) – March 29, 2022

Image Document

6 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 20, 2022 (2)

Image Document

7 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 20, 2022

Image Document

8 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 25, 2022 (2)

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9 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 25, 2022

Image Document

10 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 26, 2022

Image Document

11 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 27, 2022 (2)

Image Document

12 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 27, 2022

Image Document

13 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 28, 2022

Image Document

14 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 29, 2022 (2)

Image Document

15 @CAF_Online (CAF) – November 29, 2022

Image Document

16 @CONCACAF – August 19, 2020

Image Document

17 @CONCACAF – December 1, 2022

Image Document

18 @CONCACAF – December 3, 2022

Image Document

19 @CONCACAF – December 11, 2022

Image Document

20 @CONCACAF – March 31, 2022

Image Document

21 @CONCACAF – November 17, 2022 (2)

Image Document

22 @CONCACAF – November 17, 2022

Image Document

23 @CONCACAF – November 18, 2022

Image Document

24 @CONCACAF – November 20, 2022

Image Document

25 @CONCACAF – November 21, 2022 (2)

Image Document

26 @CONCACAF – November 21, 2022

Image Document

27 @CONCACAF – November 27, 2022

Image Document

28 @CONMEBOL – December 3, 2022

Image Document

29 @CONMEBOL – December 9, 2022

Image Document

30 @CONMEBOL – December 11, 2022

Image Document

31 @CONMEBOL – December 13, 2022 (2)

Image Document

32 @CONMEBOL – December 13, 2022 (3)

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33 @CONMEBOL – December 13, 2022

Image Document

34 @CONMEBOL – December 18, 2022 (2)

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35 @CONMEBOL – December 18, 2022

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36 @CONMEBOL – November 20, 2022 (2)

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37 @CONMEBOL – November 20, 2022 (3)

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38 @CONMEBOL – November 20, 2022 (4)

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39 @CONMEBOL – November 20, 2022 (5)

Image Document

40 @CONMEBOL – November 20, 2022

Image Document

41 @CONMEBOL – November 21, 2022 (2)

Image Document

42 @CONMEBOL – November 21, 2022 (3)

Image Document

43 @CONMEBOL – November 21, 2022

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44 @CONMEBOL – November 24, 2022

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45 @CONMEBOL – November 25, 2022

Image Document

46 @CONMEBOL – November 26, 2022

Image Document

47 @CONMEBOL – November 28, 2022

Image Document

48 @FIFA – April 3, 2023 (2)

Image Document

49 @FIFA – April 3, 2023

Image Document

50 @FIFA – December 5, 2022

Image Document

51 @FIFA – December 10, 2019 (2)

Image Document

52 @FIFA – December 10, 2019

Image Document

53 @FIFA – December 11, 2022

Image Document

54 @FIFA – December 12, 2022

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55 @FIFA – November 20, 2022 (2)

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60 @FIFA – November 20, 2022

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61 @FIFA – November 22, 2022

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63 @FIFA – November 27, 2022

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64 @FIFA – November 29, 2022 (2)

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65 @FIFA – November 29, 2022

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66 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 1, 2022

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70 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 6, 2022

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71 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 8, 2022 (2)

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72 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 8, 2022

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73 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 10, 2022 (2)

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74 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 10, 2022 (3)

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76 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 10, 2022

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77 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 11, 2022

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78 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 12, 2022 (2)

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79 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 12, 2022 (3)

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80 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 12, 2022 (4)

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81 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 12, 2022

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82 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 13, 2022 (2)

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83 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 13, 2022 (3)

Image Document

84 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 14, 2022

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85 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 15, 2022 (2)

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86 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 15, 2022 (3)

Image Document

87 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 15, 2022 (4)

Image Document

88 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 15, 2022

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89 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (2)

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90 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (3)

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91 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (4)

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92 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (5)

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93 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (6)

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94 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022 (7)

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95 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 17, 2022

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96 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 18, 2022 (2)

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97 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 18, 2022 (3)

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98 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 18, 2022 (4)

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99 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 18, 2022

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100 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 19, 2022 (2)

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101 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 19, 2022

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102 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 22, 2022

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103 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 24, 2022 (2)

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104 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 24, 2022 (3)

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105 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – December 24, 2022

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106 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – February 20, 2023

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107 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – February 24, 2023

Image Document

108 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – March 8, 2021

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109 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – March 9, 2023

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110 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 1, 2022

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111 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 13, 2022

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112 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 14, 2022

Image Document

- 113 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 16, 2022**
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- 114 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 17, 2022**
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- 115 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 18, 2022**
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- 116 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 19, 2022**
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- 117 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 21, 2022 (2)**
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- 118 @FIFAWorldcup (FIFA) – November 21, 2022**
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- 119 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – December 1, 2022**
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- 120 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – March 11, 2022**
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- 121 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – March 18, 2022**
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- 122 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – March 22, 2022**
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- 123 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – March 31, 2022**
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- 124 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – November 27, 2021**
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- 125 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – November 28, 2022**
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- 126 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – October 20, 2022**
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- 127 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – October 24, 2022 (2)**
Image Document
- 128 @OFCFOOTBALL (OFC) – October 24, 2022**
Image Document
- 129 @Theafchub (AFC) – December 2, 2022 (2)**

Image Document

130 @Theafchub (AFC) – December 2, 2022

Image Document

131 @Theafchub (AFC) – December 13, 2022

Image Document

132 @Theafchub (AFC) – February 25, 2020

Image Document

133 @Theafchub (AFC) – July 1, 2021

Image Document

134 @Theafchub (AFC) – July 15, 2020

Image Document

135 @Theafchub (AFC) – June 5, 2020

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136 @Theafchub (AFC) – June 16, 2020

Image Document

137 @Theafchub (AFC) – November 8, 2022

Image Document

138 @Theafchub (AFC) – November 21, 2020 (2)

Image Document

139 @Theafchub (AFC) – November 21, 2020

Image Document

140 @Theafchub (AFC) – November 29, 2022

Image Document

141 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – April 28, 2020

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142 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – December 4, 2019

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143 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – December 18, 2022

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144 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – February 10, 2022

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145 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – June 2, 2022

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146 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – June 6, 2022

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147 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – November 8, 2022

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148 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – November 10, 2022

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149 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – November 17, 2022

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150 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – November 20, 2022

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151 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – November 24, 2022

Image Document

152 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – October 23, 2018

Image Document

153 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – September 1, 2021

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154 @UEFA_official (UEFA) – September 7, 2022

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Appendix C: Coding scheme

Qualitative coding process



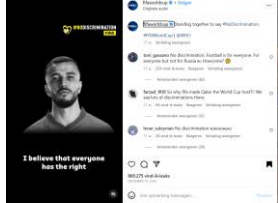



Selective codes	Axial codes	Clustered codes	Sample open codes
Football unites people	Feelings of the fans	Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmosphere • Journey • Positive attitude • Post match
		Feelings and emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation • Enjoyment • Happy • Mesmerized • Passionate
		Proud of your country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration of the match • Pride • Proud of continent • Proud of country
	Social media promotion	Publication of content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the world cup • Announcement of partaking into the WC 2022 • Before the world cup • During the world cup
		Follower engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonding with the followers • Creation stimulus to followers
		Social media tactics and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animations of popular football players • Memories of the World Cup • Online challenges • User generated content • Redirection to multiple platforms

Confederations celebrate nations, but mainly themselves	Confederational promotions	Confederations' events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIFA Fanfestival • OFC qualifiers • Opening of the 2022 World Cup • Super League
		Confederation promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFC logo • CONMEBOL promotion • Mascots • UEFA colour scheme
		Represented countries / continents in the WC 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argentina • European countries • Promotion of participating country
	Promoting football and its achievements in the sports	Celebrate every achievement in football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievements by fans • Achievements in football • Appreciation • Champions
		Football developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UEFA Assist • Video Assistant Referee (VAR)
		Football promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football players • Match promotions • Statue • Trophies
	Promotions of nations and continent	Fans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan engagement • Fan promotion • Interviews with the fans
		Continental and nation promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flags • Nation face painting • National musical instruments
		Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Diverse audience members • Food of countries

Sports diplomacy is the new football talk	Sports diplomatic language	Diplomatic information by confederations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation on the FIFA system • Official reports • Sports diplomatic relationships
		Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emoji usage • Inclusivity of foreign language • Interpretive • Vivid language
		Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert • Sustainability • Training ground
		Slogans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al Hilm (EN: The dream) • Believe in your continent • #Equalgame • Welcome to Qatar
		Sponsorships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adidas • HEC Paris • Kia Motors
	Sports diplomacy representations	Activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • LGBTQIA+ flag • No discrimination initiative • Respect promotion
		Officials and diplomats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONMEBOL officials • CAF representative • Gianni Infantino • Hassan Al Thawadi
		Other sports promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycling promotion • World Cup of 2026 promotion
		Partnering organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UEFA's Centre of Refereeing Excellence • World Health Organization

		Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality and women's empowerment • Human rights • Sustainability
		Spokespeople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cristiano Ronaldo • Celebrities • Volunteers • Women in football
	Promoting Qatar	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity • New(er) infrastructure • Stadium(s)
		Qatar being promoted and discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghutra • La'eeb • Qatar capital: Doha • Qatari citizen • Qatari culture

Appendix D: Operationalisation table for the promotion of values

Variable	Operationalisation	Example:
Human rights	All posts expressing their support on human rights values and development of human rights in relation to football.	
Positive nationalism	All posts expressing the national flags, music instruments, and partying peoples.	
Discrimination	All posts expression their political stance against discrimination that occurs against football players on and off the pitch.	
LGBTQIA+ rights	All posts expression their support to the LGBTQIA+ community and expressing their rights online.	
Workers' rights	All posts expressing the promotion of workers, volunteers and other forms of help that the FIFA World Cup have used to realise the mega-event.	
Sustainability	All posts expressing their interests in sustainability and achieving sustainable goals.	
Football as a driver of positive values	All posts expressing interests in sports development, partaking in development programs, and confederations' interest to enhance the sport and their values.	