

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Journalism

Master's Thesis

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Leonardo de Sá Ribas Gueber

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**Beyond the Scoreboard: Examining Media Activism
related to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to the 2023
FIFA Women's World Cup**

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Erasmus Mundus Master's in Journalism, Media, and
Globalisation

Supervisor: Ing. et Mgr. Kateřina Turková, Ph. D.

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

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3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.
4. During the preparation of this thesis, the author used MAXQDA software in order to conduct qualitative analysis through coding recurring themes. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as necessary and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

In Prague on 22 April 2024

Leonardo de Sá Ribas Guebert

References

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Abstract

Embarking on an exploration of media activism, this thesis delves into the intricate landscape of Western mainstream media coverage during the Qatar Men's World Cup in November and December 2022. This study, firmly grounded in media framing theory, meticulously dissects news reports and opinion pieces to unravel the nuanced framing of Qatar's hosting from a political perspective. Beyond this examination, the research critically assesses whether media activism persists or alters in the subsequent Women's World Cup in 2023. Analysing news reports and opinion columns of a negative nature towards the tournament, the study employs a comparative approach to illuminate variations potentially influenced by geopolitical considerations. Overall, the findings indicate shifts in media narratives and framings between the two tournaments, likely encompassing changes in emphasis, tone, and focus – from critical and politically-focused framing during the Qatar World Cup to a more supportive and celebratory tone during the Women's World Cup. This work provides a comprehensive understanding of media dynamics and their impact on public perception in major international sports events, emphasizing the role of media in shaping narratives and influencing public discourse.

Abstrakt

Práce zkoumá mediální aktivismus objevující se v mediálním pokrytí Mistrovství světa ve fotbale v Kataru konaném v listopadu a prosinci 2022 Západními mainstreamovými médii. Tato práce, využívající teorii rámcování, analyzuje mediální výstupy a rámcování pořadatelství akce v Kataru z politické perspektivy. Dále je zkoumáno, zda mediální aktivismus dále přetrvává nebo nikoliv, a to na příkladu Mistrovství světa žen ve fotbale konaném v roce 2023. Práce analyzuje a srovnává mediální pokrytí těchto dvou událostí vybranými Západními médii. Výsledky výzkumu naznačují posuny v mediálních narativech a rámcích mezi těmito dvěma turnaji. Ambicí práce je komplexní pochopení dynamiky médií a jejich dopadu na veřejné vnímání na významných mezinárodních sportovních událostí, přičemž je zdůrazněna role médií při utváření narativů a ovlivňování veřejného diskurzu.

Keywords

Media Activism, Media Framing Theory, Qatar World Cup, Women's World Cup, Western Mainstream Media

Klíčová slova

Mediální aktivismus, Rámcování, Mistrovství světa v Kataru, Mistrovství světa žen, Západní média

Název práce

Mimo Výsledkovou Tabuli: Zkoumání mediálního aktivismu souvisejícího s Mistrovstvím světa FIFA v Kataru 2022 až Mistrovstvím světa ve fotbale žen 2023

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank my parents, Fernanda and Jorge, who gave me the opportunity to live my dream of living abroad. It has always been a personal goal that I wanted to achieve and experience. My parents are the people who always root for me, regardless of my decisions and what happens, and for them, I'm extremely grateful.

To my grandparents, Joice, Rutilio, and Ana Maria, who despite missing me a lot, always supported me since the beginning and shared their love for me, which made me strong to face homesickness.

To my friend Eduardo, when I thought my friends had forgotten about me, he reminded me that I always had someone there for me, to listen to me vent, to watch a movie or play a game together. Despite the distance, it never felt like we were far from each other.

To my dear friend Amanda, who kept me company throughout the entire journey of writing this thesis, motivating me every day to face this challenge. Because of you, I never felt alone. Your daily company made me focus and go through all of this with much more ease.

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Approved research proposal

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Expected date of submission (semester, academic year) SS 2023/2024 – Defense September 2024											
Main research question (max. 250 characters): How has Western media activism observed in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 coverage influenced the framing of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by Australia and New Zealand?											
Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters): In late 2022, the FIFA World Cup in Qatar garnered attention as the first in the Arab world, breaking ground by being staged in November-December to counter the region's summer heat. Western media coverage during this period purportedly leaned heavily towards political aspects related to Qatar rather than the sporting spectacle. The decision to extend this scrutiny to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup arises from a key question: Does the observed media activism and narrative persist in subsequent events, or does it take a different form? This shift in focus aims to uncover whether media framing dynamics identified in the Qatar World Cup transcend to the Women's World Cup in Oceania. The rationale behind this extension of the scope lies in the potential continuity or divergence of media narratives. If continuity exists, it indicates a broader trend in major sports event coverage. Contrarily, notable differences prompt exploration into nuanced factors shaping media narratives, be they gender dynamics or geopolitical considerations. This comparative analysis contributes to understanding evolving media portrayal in the context of global sports, offering insights into the continuity or transformation of media narratives across different events and contexts.											
Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters): This study is anchored in media framing theory, drawing on Scheufele's (1999) perspective that „the concept of framing is based on the idea that the way an issue is presented to the public can influence the way people think about and respond to that issue“ (p. 104). In essence, media framing theory posits that news outlets actively shape public perception by emphasizing specific aspects of an issue while downplaying others. As eloquently outlined by Swart and Hussain (2023) in their examination of the Western media discourse surrounding the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar, media framing theory becomes a critical lens for unraveling the nuanced narratives constructed by media outlets. The authors argue that the Western media											

portrayed Qatar negatively, demonstrating the theory's applicability in the context of major international sports events.

By applying media framing theory, the research aims to uncover how news outlets construct narratives around the FIFA World Cup events in 2023. The comparative analysis seeks to determine whether similar frames persist, or distinctive framing emerges, shedding light on potential variations based on gender and geopolitical considerations.

Moreover, inspired by Liu, Chen, and Newman (2021), who conducted a comparative analysis of Chinese and English-language news media representations of Chinese football, this research acknowledges that the framing of major sporting events is influenced by different factors. This integrated perspective provides a robust foundation for interpreting the findings, allowing for a nuanced exploration of media dynamics and their impact on public perception.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):

To examine Western media coverage of the FIFA World Cup events, this study employs qualitative dual-method approach, integrating qualitative content and thematic analysis. A purposive sample of at least 40 articles will be selected from prominent Western media outlets, namely The Guardian, CNN and The Washington Post.

The chosen periods encompass the unfolding of both the Qatar Men's World Cup in November and December 2022 and the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand from July to August 2023. The rationale for selecting these outlets is grounded in their extensive coverage, a major influence, and the prevalence of opinion articles, to capture media activism.

Inspired by Swart and Hussain's (2023) exploration of Western media discourse on the Qatar World Cup, the study aims to assess potential biases and framing in media narratives. The author's arguments about the negative portrayals of Qatar based on Orientalist perspectives form the basis for a comparative examination of the Women's World Cup coverage. The qualitative content analysis will evolve meticulous scrutiny of news reports and opinion pieces to identify biased, misleading, or inaccurate information.

Moreover, drawing from Liu et al.'s (2021) comparative analysis of Chinese and English-language news media representatives of Chinese football, the research will apply thematic analysis methodologies. This approach allows for the exploration of major themes in media narratives surrounding the World Cup events, considering factors such as commercial, cultural, and ideological influences.

By selecting reputable sources and employing a dual-method approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of media dynamics surrounding major international sports events.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

Expected Research Design:

The research design adopts a qualitative approach to comprehensively examine media narratives surrounding two major international sports events: the Qatar Men's World Cup in 2022 and the Australia / New Zealand Women's World Cup in 2023. A diverse range of influential newspapers from Western media will be considered, ensuring a broad representation of narratives.

Data Gathering:

A systematic data collection process will be employed to curate a purposive sample of articles (at least 40) for analysis. The timeframe for data collection spans from November to December 2022 for the male World Cup and from June to August 2023 for the female World Cup. These periods coincide with the lead-up, unfolding, and aftermath of the respective events, capturing the crucial stages of media engagement and discourse.

The selection of newspapers is deliberate, reflecting the prominence of Western media outlets within each country. The specific newspapers, namely The Guardian, CNN and The Washington Post, has been chosen based on their influence, readership, and representation of diverse perspectives. The primary data elements for analysis will include article titles, news reports, and opinion pieces from the chosen Western newspapers. These elements have been identified as key components for capturing the essence of media framing.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):**Introduction:**

First, the introduction chapter will commence with an overview of the Qatar Men's World Cup in 2022, highlighting its historical significance as the first World Cup hosted in the Arab world. It will then introduce the theoretical framework of media framing theory, drawing on the insights of Scheufele (1999) and Swart and Hussain (2023) to articulate the concept's relevance to understanding media narratives. The research question will be clearly presented, and the rationale behind extending the study to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup will be discussed, referencing insights from the existing literature.

Literature Review:

In the literature review chapter, a critical examination of media framing theory will be conducted, incorporating perspectives from Scheufele (1999) and Swart and Hussain (2023). The review will extend to explore the existing scholarship on major international sports events, particularly focusing on studies that employ qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis methods, such as those discussed by Elo et al. (2014). This section aims to identify gaps, synthesize key concepts, and establish a robust theoretical foundation for the research. The literature review will provide valuable insights into the conceptual framework and inform the comparative analysis of media narratives.

Methodology:

Next, the methodology chapter will provide a detailed overview of the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical methods. The qualitative content analysis approach, inspired by Elo et al. (2014), will be elucidated. It will also discuss the thematic analysis used for the comparative examination of media narratives, referencing its application in studies like Sherwood et al. (2020). The justification for selecting specific media outlets and timeframes for data collection will be outlined, aligning with the insights from existing research.

Analysis and Findings:

This section will be divided into two parts to allow for an in-depth examination of media narratives surrounding the Qatar Men's World Cup and the 2023 Women's World Cup separately. The analysis will explore recurring themes, divergences, and potential gender or geopolitical considerations influencing media framing. Findings will be presented in a systematic manner, with references to the works of Liu et al. (2021) and Xue et al. (2019) to contextualize the discussion within the broader academic landscape.

Conclusion:

Finally, the conclusion chapter will synthesize the key findings, revisit the research questions, and reflect on the broader implications of the study. This section will discuss the continuity or transformation of media narratives across different events and contexts, contributing to the academic discourse on sports journalism and media framing. It will also suggest avenues for future research and highlight the significance of the study in the evolving landscape of media representation in major international sports events.

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

Swart, K., & Hussain, U. (2023). FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar: Under the Gaze of Western Media. In *Sports Mega-Events in Asia* (pp. 199-222). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Chapter 9 of the Palgrave Series of Sport in Asia focuses on the Western media discourse surrounding the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar. The authors argue that the Western media has portrayed Qatar in a negative light, with biases against the country based on Orientalist and neo-Orientalist perspectives. They suggest that these biases are largely based on fictional understandings of the East rather than facts. The authors also note a lack of discourse regarding the positive outcomes of the World Cup, such as enhancing Muslim women's sport inclusion and positive changes in Qatar's immigration laws and openness to the LGBTQ community.

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis. *SAGE open*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>.

The article highlights the need for effective strategies to evaluate content analysis studies and discusses the quality of qualitative content analysis findings. The article covers various aspects of content analysis, including data collection, analysis, and result reporting, and provides a checklist for researchers attempting to improve the trustworthiness of their content analysis study.

Al-Saai, N. (2022). *Missing coverage from the Western media during the Qatar World Cup*. SOAS University of London. Retrieved December 11, 2023, from <https://www.soas.ac.uk/study/blog/missing-coverage-western-media-during-qatar-world-cup>.

An article published by Qatar-focused researcher Noora Al Saai, will help to understand how the mainstream media approached the major event with biased and inaccurate information.

Liu, Z., Chen, R., & Newman, J. I. (2021). The Football Dream of a Sleeping Dragon: Media Framing(s), East-West Geopolitics, and the Crisis of the Chinese Men's National Team. *Communication and sport*, 9(1), 55-87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479519852141>.

This research article presents a comparative analysis of Chinese- and English-language news media representations of Chinese football. The authors identify and analyze major themes that frame how east and west media publics perceive various aspects of Chinese football, including commercial, cultural, and ideological factors. The study also argues how institutional constraints such as governmental regulation and commercial imperatives may influence media coverage.

Sherwood, M., Donaldson, A., Dyson, S., Lowden, D., Marjoribanks, T., Shill, J., Bolam, B., & Nicholson, M. (2020). Football, Media, and Homophobia: Public Framing of the First Pride Game in the Australian Football League. *Communication & Sport*, 8(4-5), 545-565. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479519901118>

The study examines the media coverage and public response to the event, which aimed to promote inclusion and support for the LGBTIQ community in professional sport. The article utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings suggest that the media coverage was predominantly supportive, but with some instances of pernicious homophobia in the public response.

Xue, H., Mason, D. S., Humphreys, B. R., Johnson, B. K., & Whitehead, J. C. (2019). Framing the Olympic Elite Athlete Funding Issue: A Case Study of Canadian Newspaper Coverage. *Communication & Sport*, 7(3), 310-336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479518775427>.

The article analyzes the Canadian newspaper coverage of the funding issue for elite athletes during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. The study uses media framing theory and qualitative content analysis to identify the frames used by the media to discuss the issue. The Canadian newspaper coverage chose frames such as „investment in national pride“, „fairness and equity“ and „economic benefits“, which were used to construct the debate over public funding to support elite athlete development and to shape public opinion on the issue.

Scheufele, D. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02784.x>

This essay discusses the concept of framing in the context of media effects research and outlines its theoretical premises. The essay then develops a typology of framing research that classifies the applications of framing in media effects research along two dimensions: media versus audience frames, on the one hand, and frames as independent versus dependent variables, on the other.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

SLABÝ, Martin. Komparace mediálního obrazu FC Viktoria Plzeň a AC Sparta Praha ve vybraných českých médiích. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Němcová Tejkalová, Alice. Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra mediálních studií.

KWEI, Quaye-Foli. A comparison of online news media framing of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict in Ukraine, Russia, the U.S. & China. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Van Puyvelde, Damien. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra bezpečnostních studií.

DOUBRAVOVÁ, Zuzana. Obraz přírodních a antropogenních katastrof v současném audiovizuálním prostoru - (hlavní české zpravodajské relace ČT, Nova, CNN Prima News). Bakalářská práce, vedoucí Macková, Veronika. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky.


JUNG, Hansol. Framing of Indonesian Radicalisation Pathways in the Australian news media: A Comparison of Broadsheets and Tabloids. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Conway, Maura. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra bezpečnostních studií.

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14/11/2023



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I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.	
I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.	
Kateřina Turková, 11/12/2023	
Surname and name of the supervisor	Date / Signature of the supervisor
Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:	
Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:	

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, by **November 15**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Sandra Lábová. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

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Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of global media, the coverage of major sporting events serves as a significant lens through which societies perceive and interpret diverse cultures, socio-political dynamics, and international relations. Among these, the FIFA World Cup stands as a pinnacle of athletic competition, uniting all nations in celebrating and competition. The 2022 FIFA World Cup held in Qatar marked a historic moment as the first-ever tournament of its kind to be hosted in the Arab world, signifying a relevant milestone in the globalization of football and the increasing prominence of Middle Eastern nations on the world stage (Brannagan & Reiche, 2022).

Nevertheless, behind the spectacle of the beautiful game lies a complex interplay of media representation, cultural narratives, and socio-political agendas. The World Cup, with its unparalleled global reach and cultural significance, provides a unique platform for media organisations to shape narratives and influence public opinion. In this context, this thesis delves into the multifaceted realm of media framing theory, examining various ideas and applications of this approach through several academics in the field of communication, journalism, and social sciences. This theory emerges as a crucial framework for understanding the processes in which news outlets construct and interpret information to create narratives that resonate with their audiences.

The concept of media framing, a theoretical framework that sheds light on how news organisations choose, highlight, and interpret information to create narratives that influence public opinion, is at the core of this research. Building upon the foundational work of scholars such as Entman (1993) and Scheufele (1999), this thesis aims to reveal the mechanisms through which media frames impact how FIFA World Cup global events are depicted, thereby casting light on the underlying biases, agendas, and cultural lenses that shape media discourse. Therefore, this thesis focuses on exploring the media framing theory application in the context of Western media coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and its influence on the subsequent framing of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by Australia and New Zealand. As the first World Cup to be held in the Middle East, the Qatar tournament garnered immense attention from media outlets worldwide, providing a rich dataset for analysis (Swart & Hussain, 2023).

Following the establishment of a theoretical foundation in media framing theory, the thesis proceeds to conduct a content analysis of Western media coverage of the Qatar World Cup, which is accompanied by a thematic analysis comparing the men's

tournament portrayal with the Women's World Cup. Therefore, integrating these methodologies, this work examines chosen media outlets, including The Guardian, CNN, and The Washington Post, to discern patterns of framing, bias, and representation across different cultural, political, and linguistic contexts. With the comparative analysis being a fundamental method, the thesis delves into a comprehensive literature review, exploring existing scholarship on media coverage of important sporting competitions and the role of media activism within this context.

The relevance of this study lies in its exploration of how Western media activism observed in the Qatar World Cup coverage influenced the framing of the Women's World Cup. Through examination the framing of both events, this research attempts to offer insights on how the media impacts public views, influences policy agendas, and promotes social change. Understanding the mechanisms through which media frames impact public discourse is essential for fostering informed dialogue, promoting diversity and inclusion, and addressing inequalities within sports and society at large. Moreover, the study intends to improve the comprehension of the relationship between sports, media, and society by incorporating perspectives gathered from various scientific standpoints.

1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first covers the Theoretical Framework, and it is heavily anchored in media framing theory, drawing on Entman's (2007 p. 164) definition of framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation”. This section examines several writers and discusses their outlooks in order to provide a strong conceptual foundation for the study. Many academics have utilized media framing in the sports' realm to explore the ways news coverage shapes the public's understanding of a range of subjects, such as “political ideology, individual athletes, and mega-sport events” (Liu et al., 2021, p. 60). Later, the literature review will be addressed, providing an overview of the existing studies on media activism and media coverage. This literature review serves as a basis for understanding the theoretical and empirical landscape encompassing media activism, sports journalism, and aspects of their coverage and framing of international sports championships, establishing a context within which the current study contributes to the academic discourse.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

As a means to understand and communicate about reality, individuals, groups, and communities organise themselves through an array of theoretical ideas and concepts known as framing. Frames highlight particular facts, values, and other considerations, giving them stronger perceived importance to the topic than they might have under a different framework. According to Tuchman (1978), frames represent “an essential feature of news” that “organizes everyday reality” (p. 193), serving as a fundamental component of daily life. Therefore, framing involves highlighting certain characteristics of a imagined reality in a communication text (Entman, 1993).

Likewise, Goffman (1974, p. 21) argues that frames allow people to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” mundane events. The rationale underpinning framing suggests that the way an issue is portrayed to the audience can affect how that public perceives and reacts to it. Leveraging priming – the process by which news information advises readers that they should use particular topics as criteria for assessing the effectiveness of policymakers and governments (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11) – framing aims to influence and modify the perceptions and predispositions of its viewers,

readers, and listeners. To put it in another words, frames activate models that lead individuals to engage in thought, emotion, and behavior in a specific way by introducing or highlighting the prominence or seeming relevance of particular concepts (Entman, 2007).

In their work about media discourse and public opinion, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) analyse different media representations of nuclear power, such as television coverage, newsmagazine articles, animations, and opinion columns, to understand the impact on public perceptions. They highlight the concept of “packages”, which are frames or narratives constructed by the media to interpret events related to nuclear power. The authors propose the concept of interpretive packages as a form of media framing that consists of “central organizing ideas or frames that help audiences make sense of the events and issues presented in the media” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). As they explain, framing devices within these interpretive packages, such as metaphors, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images, play a crucial role in conveying the core message and positions on the issue.

Cultural resonances, sponsored operations, and an appropriate alignment with media standards and procedures are the three main factors that render packages thrive in the communication debates. Nonetheless, packages get indirectly impacted by the public perception due to journalists’ occasional erroneous assumptions regarding what their viewers believe. The line separating content makers and users is often blurred by reporters. These include “editorial writers, cartoonists, opinion columnists” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 9), who seldom develop narratives or recount actual events. The journalists watch and respond to similar media channels that are accessible to other consumers, but which have already been partially framed and placed in a meaningful scenario.

Media framing theory posits that news outlets actively shape public perception by emphasizing specific aspects of an issue while downplaying others. Frames change over time considering journalists define a range of topics and events. Therefore, news media may favour or disfavour certain frames (Ryan, et al., 2001, p. 176). Scheufele (1999, p. 109) discusses factors that may influence a journalist’s approach to a story, whilst recalling “social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political considerations of journalists”. Journalists are intended to utilize the frames to arrange “strips from the

everyday life”, strips being “any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity (...)” (Goffman, 1974, p. 10).

Analysing the US media covering during the Cold War, Entman (1993, p. 52) discusses that frames “define problems – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; diagnose causes – identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects.”. The concept of framing has gained traction in the communication disciplines, providing direction for studies on the interaction between media and public opinion as well as media content studies (de Vreese, 2005, p. 51). Mindful of that, a communication source presents and characterizes an issue as part of the framing process.

Claes de Vreese (2005) understands framing as a dynamic process that plays a vital role in influencing public opinion through the media. In his work, framing is separated into three different stages, which are frame-building, frame-setting, and individual and societal level consequences (de Vreese, 2005). In the first stage, factors both internal and external to journalism influence the structural qualities of news frames, with journalists, elites, and social movements all playing a role in shaping how issues are portrayed in the media. The frame-setting phase focuses on the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions, highlighting how audiences interpret and internalize the frames presented to them (Scheufele, 1999). Finally, the individual and societal level consequences stage examines the effects of framing on both individual attitudes and broader societal processes, emphasizing the impact of framing on political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions (de Vreese, 2005).

In an effort to better understand the concept of framing as a term used to describe how the public is impacted by the perspectives of journalists on the news, Van Gorp (2005, p. 485) points out an usual characteristic of framing, which is “the linkage between, on the one hand, the journalistic approach of shaping the news within a frame of reference and according to a latent structure of meaning and, on the other hand, the stimulation of the public to adopt these frames and to view reality from the same perspective as the journalists do (...)”. Entman (1993, p. 52) helps to clarify the different moments that framing occurs within the communicative process, explaining that frames have at least four locations in the communication process: “the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture.”

When choosing what to say, communicators employ frames that structure their what they believe to help them create intentional or unintentional framing decisions. The inclusion or lack of specific “keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements” are examples of the frames that are present in the text (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The communicator’s goal and the text’s frames will either be or not be reflected in the frameworks that direct the recipient’s thoughts and conclusions. The collection of frequently utilized frames has been referred to as culture. Indeed, culture may be characterized as an assortment of widely used frames that can be objectively shown in the language and reasoning processes of the majority of members of a social group.

Nevertheless, what a news outlet will convey to its viewers and readers also varies according to different factors in addition to the journalist’s values and beliefs. Journalistic frames, as Ryan et al. (2001, p. 176) explain, “are influenced by the frames sponsored by multiple social actors, including corporate and political elites, advocates, and social movements. News stories, then, become a forum for framing contests in which these actors compete in sponsoring their definitions of political issues.”. The world is represented in news through the lens of the journalist. As every discourse, this one pattern what it says positively. Ideological distinctions are conveyed through variations in language, which leads to discrepancies in representation. Thus, the information contained in news articles reflects “ideas, beliefs, values, theories, and ideology” (Qing, 2000, p. 666).

Considering the varied premises of different scholars on media framing mentioned above, Tuchman (2018) simplifies the foundations on which media framing theory is supported and hence elaborated, utilizing a parallel in which “news is a window on the world”. The scholar puts that “the news aims to tell us what we want to know, need to know, and should know. But, like any frame that delineates a world, a news frame may be problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard.” (Tuchman, 2018, p. 1).

His statement metaphorically compares news to a window through which people perceive the world. News serves the purpose of informing individuals about what they want, need, and should know, offering insights into various aspects of society and events. However, Tuchman (2018) highlights that news, like any frame, may present a limited or skewed view of reality. The quality and accuracy of the information provided depend on

several factors, symbolized by the characteristics of the window: the object's size, the number of panes, transparency, and orientation. All these ideas contribute to our understanding of media framing theory and emphasize the role that different journalism aspects play in the interpretation and development of meanings and values.

1.2 Literature Review

As the literature review delves into the multifaceted dimensions of media coverage, it inevitably intersects with the realm of media activism. An increasing amount of research on media activism shows promise as a key factor in influencing public opinion and displacing long-standing power hierarchies. In the contemporary ever-changing media environment, activists use a variety of venues and strategies to raise awareness of the voiceless, promote social justice, and effect real change. This section investigates the relationship between media activism and the coverage of societal issues in Western media outlets. It explores how reporters work within established media structures and engage in activism as a means of influencing public opinion and bringing about social change. This section highlights the transformational potential of the association of journalism and activism inside mainstream media platforms by examining the behaviours, motives, and societal impact of journalists.

1.2.1 Media Activism

In examining the convoluted interplay between activism and media, academics have shed light on the various manners in which media platforms function as vehicles for social and political change. Media, as described by Meikle (2018), encompasses a broad spectrum of communication systems facilitating the proposal, sharing, and visibility of meanings. It serves as a dynamic space where citizens and governments negotiate social structures and cultural responses, shaping the fabric of society. This negotiation extends to the circulation of information, the formation of movements, and the interpretation of societal norms, ultimately influencing the collective consciousness (Scheufele, 1999). Therefore, the media does not only reflect existing social structures but also play a pivotal role in challenging and reshaping them. Furthermore, Meikle (2018) defines activism as a complex endeavour aimed at effecting social or cultural change. This definition comprises a wide array of activities, ranging from modest initiatives to organised campaigns, all aimed at influencing representational politics. While acknowledging the

potential for activism within established political systems, Meikle (2018) highlights the primary focus on initiatives operating outside traditional party structures, that is, events, campaigns, projects, and movements occurring beyond conventional spheres of political influence.

In this scholarly investigation, academics such as Russel (2013, 2016), Cammaerts (2007), Atton (2002), Fenton (2008), Ashuri (2012), and Ginosar & Reich (2022) have explored different facets of media activism, illuminating its diverse manifestations and ramifications. Russel (2016) delineates the evolving landscape where journalism and activism converge, demonstrating how journalists and activists increasingly blur traditional boundaries to navigate what she terms the “network terrain” of contemporary media. In her book, the author scrutinizes this convergence, mapping the coverage of transnational protests and unveiling the practices of the “news-media vanguard”. This emergent space, as Russell (2016) contends, challenges conventional notions of media control, necessitating an understanding of the hybrid media environment where rhythms, flows, and affective dimensions shape the “mediapolis”. This concept, derived from Silverstone’s (2007) research, encapsulates the networked landscape enabled by digital connectivity, embodying a space where diverse actors connect to shape public opinion.

Cammaerts (2007) emphasizes that activism extends beyond direct action to include practices such as judicial activism and lobbying, operating within political and judicial systems. His analysis highlights the important role of media and communication in activist strategies, encompassing different forms of activism including electronic advocacy, hacktivism, and culture jamming. Atton’s (2002) contribution to the discourse of this subject examines the integration of media activism, notably the concept of “native reporting”, within mainstream news outlets. The scholar discerns a significant distinction between the journalism produced by liberal press and that of radical media, despite occasional overlaps in their adoption of activist techniques. Central to Atton’s (2002) analysis, “native reporting” can be understood as a journalistic approach wherein reporters, who often double as activists or members of voiceless communities, provide first-person, insider perspectives on events, experiences, and social movements.

Further enriching this discourse, Fenton’s (2008) study elaborates on media activism’s transformative potential, which extends beyond challenging media power structures to include citizen-led campaigns that promote participatory democracy and social justice. In parallel, Ashuri (2012) probes the interaction between technology and activism, investigating how digital platforms facilitate the dissemination of

disempowered voices and engender new social structures. Drawing on structuration theory, Ashuri (2012) elucidates how ordinary organisations leverage digital technologies to challenge traditional media narratives and amplify human rights violations. Complementing these insights, Ginosar and Reich (2022) offer a nuanced investigation of activist journalism, illuminating the motivations, practices, and social impact of journalists deeply committed to social causes. Through their study, the scholars delineate the characteristics of obsessive-activist journalists, who navigate the delicate balance between professional reporting and advocacy.

1.2.2 Media Coverage of Mega-Sports Events

The landscape of media coverage around major international sports tournaments has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of media framing. Entman (1993; 2007), Goffman (1974) and Scheufele (1999) are academics that laid the theoretical groundwork for understanding framing in media effects research, emphasizing how the journalistic presentation of an issue significantly influences public perception. The concept of framing has proven instrumental in unpacking the complex narratives constructed by news outlets during important events, where selective emphasis and portrayal shape the audience's understanding.

Teke Ngomba's (2014) analysis highlights the prevailing negative portrayal of Africa in Western media coverage leading up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Mainstream Western media often depicted Africa through a lens dominated by famine, conflict, poverty, and disease, perpetuating stereotypes and lacking contextual depth. Ngomba (2014) underlines that, despite expectations for a more positive narrative surrounding the tournament in South Africa, media coverage remained largely critical, focusing on issues such as insecurity, corruption, and social inequality. However, towards the conclusion of the event, there was a shift on tone as global media acknowledged South Africa's achievements in hosting the tournament, recognizing aspects such as modern infrastructure and efficient event management. Nonetheless, despite some shifts in the general stance of coverage – from usual, stereotyped criticism to acclaim for South Africa particularly following the World Cup's conclusion – the general impact on changing the negative narrative about the African continent in the Western media seemed minimal (Ngomba, 2014).

Likewise, building on Swart and Hussain's (2023) analysis of the Western media discourse surrounding the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar, media framing theory becomes

an important tool for exposing the stories that Western media outlets fabricate. The authors argue that the Western media portrayed Qatar negatively, therefore investigating the biases and inaccuracy evident in the portrayal of the host country, which highlights Orientalist and neo-Orientalist perspectives that coloured Western media narratives. Swart and Hussain (2023) examine Western media's criticisms of the Qatari hosting of the tournament, underscoring concerns such as corruption allegations, migrant workers' rights, women's rights, LGBTQ issues, and so forth. In general, their findings showed that "78% of opinion pieces had a negative slant related to the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar" (Swart & Hussain, 2023, p. 209).

Human rights and corruption problems have dominated Western mainstream media coverage of the Qatar World Cup. Many news outlets have depicted Qatar as encouraging connections to terrorist activity and dealing with accusations of corruption and bribery in order to get the right to host the tournament. The Guardian, CNN, and The Washington Post are news outlets which have extensively covered this issues, often overshadowing discussions about the competition itself. Swart and Hussain (2023) also discovered that few publications highlighted this mega-sporting event's beneficial effects in the country. While some positive changes and initiatives have emerged in Qatar in response to hosting the World Cup, media scrutiny has perpetuated a narrative of controversy and critique.

Similarly, another work regarding the World Cup in Qatar was developed by Samuel-Azran et al. (2016), in a previous period in which preparations for the event were unfolding. The authors examined the tournament's coverage by Al-Jazeera Arabic as well as Al-Jazeera's English and American representations, comparing it to Western news networks such as CNN International, Sky News, and ITV. The research discovered variations in blame attribution, tone of coverage, and bias among the different networks. Considering 'blame attribution', the first theme identified, Al-Jazeera Arabic demonstrated a scarcity of critique concerning Qatar in its reportage by failing to name the country as a party responsible for any associated problems. In tandem with CNN International, Al-Jazeera America and Al-Jazeera English were harsher in their assessments of Qatar and labelled it as "the main culprit in the World Cup affair" (Samuel-Azran et al., 2016, p. 204). Secondly, compared to the other news outlets analysed, Al-Jazeera Arabic published World Cup events primarily with a positive perspective and with a larger proportion of stories in a favourable mood. Alternatively, the American Al-Jazeera had the highest percentage of articles with a detrimental tone.

Lastly, the authors' findings illustrate that Al-Jazeera Arabic reported on the Qatari affairs in a more favourable light than did Western news outlets and their UK and US counterparts. Therefore, Al-Jazeera Arabic was found to be more biased in favour of Qatar compared to Al-Jazeera English and America, which adhered more closely to Western journalistic norms and were critical of the country in their reports (Samuel-Azran et al., 2016).

As defined by Liu et al. (2021), who conducted a comparative analysis of Chinese and English-language news media representations of Chinese football, this research acknowledges that different factors influence the framing of major sports events, revealing notable discrepancies in framing. Their research highlighted the influence of cultural, political, and ideological factors on media narratives, demonstrating that different contextual elements can significantly shape the framing of the World Cup spectacle. Although both Chinese and Western media outlets tended to emphasize "political and policy-based" aspects of the game in their coverage of Chinese football governance, the specific angles and tones of this reporting may differ (Liu et al., 2021, p. 62). Chinese newspapers concentrated more on these dimensions as a part of a broader narrative regarding national development and progress, whereas Western media frequently underlined the shortcomings of the Chinese men's national football team as an indicator of broader issues within Chinese society, including authoritarianism and a dearth of personal liberties. According to the authors, several Western mainstream news organisations have targeted the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its influence on the Chinese football management through dramatic stories and inflated assertions. Furthermore, this exaggeration was perceived "as less analytical and more hyperreal" in contrast to a more complex comprehension that could be attained via direct engagement with the football culture in China (Liu et al., 2021, p. 81).

2. Methodology

This chapter elaborates the methodology utilized to investigate the objects of study and guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings. This study employs a dual-method approach, combining qualitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis to closely investigate how two FIFA World Cup events – the Men’s World Cup and the Women’s World Cup – were covered by Western media. Qualitative content analysis, as Elo et al. (2014, p. 8) suggests, “is a popular method for analyzing written material. This means that results spanning a wide range of qualities have been obtained using the method.” It implements an organised approach to textual data analysis to provide an objective and systematic way to communicate and measure events.

Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (see Holsti in Carey & Mason, 2016, p. 124). Scholars employ established coding schemes or categories to meticulously examine the data’s substance, facilitating a methodical and structured approach to data interpretation (Elo et al., 2014). As per Holsti’s definition, a qualitative analysis is not just restricted to textual analysis – it can also be applied to other formats such as photos and videos, which is outlined by Flick (2014, p. 5): “qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it”. This characteristic is particularly important in this thesis since images have the ability to transmit important messages in news media stories (Carey & Mason, 2016).

In turn, the thematic analysis, described by Clarke & Braun (2016, p. 1) as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” can effectively employ a comparison of events. This approach, which involves identifying cross-references between data and evolving themes, is particularly useful for extracting information and determining relationships between variables (Alhojailan, 2012). Thematic analysis aims to go beyond summarizing data content by finding and interpreting key features of the data guided by the research question, while also providing a framework for organising and reporting analytic observations (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This method represents an important instrument in social science research because of its extensive, complete analytical account and theoretical independence (Majumdar, 2019). Furthermore, thematic analysis is a useful tool for combining the

results of several qualitative studies new conceptual frameworks and hypotheses (Thomas & Harden, 2008). As Alhojailan (2012, p. 40) suggests, qualitative thematic analysis “allows the researcher to determine precisely the relationships between concepts and compare them with the replicated data.”

In regard to this thesis, the thematic analysis will serve as a basis for building a comparison between events, looking through the information to identify the recurring themes, topics, concepts, and meaning patterns. According to Flick (2014), there are multiple goals for qualitative data analysis. Providing a more detailed description of a phenomenon could be the initial objective. Also, *comparing* several cases (individuals or groups) and identifying their similarities or differences may constitute the focus of the study. The second aim explained by the author – finding *explanations* for these disparities – may involve addressing the conditions that lead to these differences. Lastly, the third goal might be *to develop a theory* of the phenomenon being studied based on the examination of empirical data (Flick, 2014).

This thesis aims to determine whether the media framing dynamics seen during the World Cup in Qatar apply to the Oceania Women’s tournament. The potential continuity or divergence of media narratives serves as the justification for this expansion of the scope. If there is consistency, there is a broader pattern in the media coverage of important sporting events. Alternatively, significant variations encourage investigation into subtle elements, such as geopolitical aspects, influencing media narratives.

Under this explanation, this thesis examines the media activism that occurred during the World Cup in Qatar and considers whether this had an impact on how the media covered the subsequent event of similar magnitude, the Women’s World Cup, which was held in Australia and New Zealand. In light of that, the methodological strategy employed seeks to answer the research question:

How has Western media activism observed in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 coverage influenced the framing of the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup hosted by Australia and New Zealand?

2.1 Definition of the Observation Period and Research Sample

During the data collection process, focus was given to retrieving newspapers that yield an extensive audience and are renowned for their international coverage, journalistic

integrity, and widespread recognition as leading sources of news in their respective regions, even though The Guardian, CNN, and The Washington Post are not sports-focused news outlets. As a result, these news outlets became significant players in the discussion and storytelling surrounding important competitions such as the FIFA World Cup, which is one of the most-watched sporting events in the world. Furthermore, the decision to concentrate on opinion pieces alongside news stories provides the analysis with greater depth since these articles frequently reveal the ideological slants and biases of media organisations.

Through a purposive sampling technique, this selection systematically identifies media outlets according to predetermined standards that are considered essential to the purpose of the investigation. The method of purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling (Patton, 2002), is a qualitative research technique that is utilized to choose certain participants or sources that are expected to provide valuable and pertinent information. According to Campbell et al. (2020), the purposive sampling enhances the trustworthiness and rigour of the research by improving the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

As explained by Patton (2002, p. 230), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling.”. Therefore, it guarantees that the outlets selected are the most suited to address the research problems. The research design is strengthened by clearly outlining the justification for the application of purposive sampling and illustrating how this technique adds to the methodological rigor of the investigation, thus enhancing the validity and robustness of the study results.

The primary information objects for examination will comprise a total of 60 journalistic articles, such as news stories and opinion pieces from reputable Western media publications, namely The Guardian (21), CNN (20), and The Washington Post (19). The Guardian was founded in 1821 by John Edward Taylor and “reform-minded businessmen interested in promoting civil and religious liberty” (Mody, 2014, p. 76) in Manchester, England. Formerly called “The Manchester Guardian” was prompted due to the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, during which British government forces attacked a peaceful pro-democracy rally in the city (The Guardian, 2017). Taylor and his associates believed there was a need for a newspaper that would support liberal and reformist ideals (Poole, 2019). Later, the organisation shifted from a weekly to a daily publication and

gained a reputation for becoming a trustworthy news source as well as a proponent of transparency with social media viewers.

Papanagnou (2023) remembers that, over ten years ago, The Guardian adopted and eventually achieved recognition for what Alan Rusbridger called “open journalism” under his direction, which means that “journalists engage in conversations with various networked users, subsequently incorporating their stories, posts, or comments in the reportages (...)” (Papanagnou, 2023, p. 1650). The Guardian became well-known among academics for its thorough reporting on global events. In addition to being widely recognized for its investigative work on Wikileaks and phone hacking in 2011 and 2012, the news organisation has also received recognition throughout history for its outstanding coverage of the Spanish Civil War and its critique of the UK’s invasion of Suez (Mody, 2014).

Even before the World Cup took place, The Guardian published an article called “Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded” (The Guardian, 2021). This was countered by a sociolegal researcher focused on Qatar Noora Al-Saai (2022), who explained that the widely shared article was based on information gathered from many South Asian embassies about migrant fatalities over several years, irrespective of their line of employment, and it was connected directly to the World Cup. Despite the daunting number, only 37 of those workers deaths had a clear connection to building World Cup infrastructure (Ioanes, 2022). The entire scheme was based on the “racialization of all immigrants from South Asia to Qatar” as workers in the construction industry, even though many of them are “domestic helpers, service providers, and white-collars professionals” (Al-Saai, 2022). This argument is corroborated by the World Population Review (2024) data, which illustrates that migrant labourers represent around 90% of the country’s workforce.

Furthermore, The Guardian has several opinion columns covering the tournament that highlight the authors’ discontent with the host country. Some of the headlines are “I hate the very idea of this World Cup in Qatar, but I’ll have to watch: it’s the beautiful game” and “I hate that FIFA and Qatar exploited Lionel Messi’s genius. But I’ll cherish the football”, both by journalist Mihir Bose (2022), “As Qatar’s World Cup ends it is time for truth: FIFA chose death and suffering” and “The damned World Cup kicks off and Qatar is not in any mood to apologise” by Barney Ronay (2022), and “Qatar 2022: this World Cup has taken place in a crime scene” from Marina Hyde (2022).

The second company studied was CNN (Cable News Network), a globally renowned broadcast network founded in 1980 by media mogul Ted Turner in Atlanta, United States. When it was established, CNN became “the world’s first twenty-four-hour cable television news channel” at the time (Hughes, 2004), providing round-the-clock television news coverage. CNN revolutionized the broadcasting industry by offering continuous news updates and live reporting, establishing itself as a leading source of up-to-date news from around the world (Gilboa, 2005). Recognized for its remarkable in-the-moment coverage of breaking news, it gained notoriety through its “CNN Factor” (Li, 2023, p. 329), which can be understood as a term that describes how the media, especially news channel networks like CNN, influences public opinion and how government reacts to global crises. For instance, Hawkins (2002) explains that this characteristic is seen to have effectively contributed to the US and UK’s whole policy turnaround in the north of Iraq after they operated to defend Kurdish refugees in the region.

CNN also published some opinion articles regarding the World Cup in Qatar such as “Let’s call out the Qatar World Cup for what it really is”, later completing the headline’s reasoning throughout the text as “bullshit”, paraphrasing the former coach of the Dutch national team, Louis Van Gaal (Bennett & Vietor, 2022). Besides, CNN focused heavily on activism unrelated to football. In addition to praising the inaccurate number published by The Guardian, reporters Roger Bennett and Tommy Vietor state in their article that “in Qatar, journalists are thrown in jail for investigating migrant worker conditions. LGBTQ+ people are treated as criminals. Women need to ask men permission to marry, travel, and study abroad in many cases” (Bennett & Vietor, 2022). Other headlines such as “What fans can’t do in Qatar” (Woodyatt, 2022), “Fresh criticism for Qatar and FIFA as World Cup on International Migrants Day” (Madowo et al., 2022), and “US journalist says he was initially denied entry to a stadium because of rainbow t-shirt” (Dotson & Morse, 2022) underscore CNN’s activism related to the World Cup host.

Similarly, The Washington Post’s prestige in the media landscape supports its selection. The reputable American newspaper that was established in 1877 by Stilson Hutchins and was initially founded as a daily newspaper in Washington, D.C. (The Washington Post, 2021), has since become one of the most influential and respected news organisations in the United States (Lee, 2007) and the world. The Post has a history of impactful journalism. This includes its investigative reporting that resulted in the Watergate scandal’s exposure in the 1970s, which ultimately led to the resignation of Richard Nixon from the presidency (Quinn, 2020). Nevertheless, Kenney and Simpson

(1993, p. 347) remember that the Post is a “publicly-owned company”. They argue that once a news organisation is owned by investors, political or ideological beliefs tend to lose significance and financial goals take precedence, seeking to maximize profits.

The Post created a widespread infographic by comparing data gathered in a similar way with project-specific fatalities in other nations. The previous version of this graph mentioned “migrant deaths in Qatar from all causes in 2012 and 2013”, without comparing them to comparable countries (Al-Saai, 2022). It was then updated to clarify that it displayed “all migrant deaths in Qatar since Dec 2012”, hence the Post published a note correcting themselves and removed the infographic years later (Ingraham, 2015). The American newspaper also presents a few harsh opinion pieces against the host country, including “This was a World Cup of human rights and horrors” (Washington Post, 2022), “America is here to save the World Cup in 2026. You’re welcome, world” (Leitch, 2022), and “Families of migrant workers who died in Qatar are waiting for answers” (Masih et al., 2022).

2.2 Data Collection and Coding Process

In light of the aforementioned, a thorough approach has been employed to curate a representative sample of articles for analysis. The timeframe for data gathering spans from November and December 2022 to July and August 2023. This period corresponds to the respective Men’s and Women’s tournaments’ lead-up, unfolding, and aftermath, capturing the fundamental stages of media engagement and discourse. To ensure a comprehensive and systematic data collection, I employed a purposive sampling method consistent with the methodological framework previously established. A total of 60 articles were meticulously selected to provide a representative sample for analysis. The articles were initially categorized by newspaper source and subsequently by the respective competitions covered.

The data collection process commenced with The Guardian, from which 11 articles exclusively focused on the Men’s World Cup in Qatar were gathered, alongside 10 pieces addressing the Women’s World Cup in Oceania. Similarly, at CNN, 11 articles pertaining to the tournament in Qatar were collected, complemented by nine articles discussing the Women’s World Cup. Lastly, The Washington Post contributed with 10 articles on the Men’s World Cup and the equal number of nine articles discussing the women’s event. All articles were sourced from online platforms and diligently collected

and organised utilizing MAXQDA software, recognized as a premier tool for qualitative and mixed methods research analysis. This software facilitated the storage and encoding of all collected content, laying the groundwork for the content analysis and the subsequent thematic analysis. This analytical approach aims to recognize recurring themes across the articles, enabling comparisons between the two events under scrutiny: the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and the 2023 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Once the articles were imported into the MAXQDA software, they were coded qualitatively and carefully reviewed to identify prominent themes and topics relevant to the research question. To guide this process, a set of predefined codes based on the research question and related literature was developed. The chosen codes for thematic analysis were thoughtfully chosen to capture nuanced aspects of the coverage, guaranteeing a thorough investigation of relevant issues. Drawing upon Swart and Hussain's (2023) research findings, these codes encompassed a range of themes such as Human Rights Violations, Corruption and Governance, Workers' Rights and Labour Conditions, Women and LGBTQ+ rights, Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity, Global Critique and Public Opinion, and the Impact on Host Country. Each code serves as a lens to explore and interpret the media discourse surrounding the two tournaments, allowing a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical dynamics at play.

The three first coding themes – Human Rights Violations, Corruption and Governance, and Workers' Rights and Labour Conditions – elucidate the social, political, and ethical dimensions of mega-sporting events. The topics covered in articles and opinion pieces classified under these headings delve into subjects such as discrimination, exploitation, and practices associated with the planning, organisation, and implementation of the World Cup tournaments. Articles coded under “Human Rights Violations” focus on instances where mainstream media outlets report on allegations or evidence of human rights abuses related to the tournament. This includes issues such as restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, or association; discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality; and violations of basic civil liberties. Corruption and Governance codes are assigned to articles that discuss allegations or investigations of corruption, bribery, or governance issues surrounding the sports event. Therefore, this category includes scrutiny of FIFA, bidding processes, and financial transparency. The Workers' Rights and Labour Conditions code identifies instances where media coverage highlights the working conditions, rights, and treatment of both local and migrant labourers involved in infrastructure projects and stadium construction for the World Cups.

This might comprise subjects such as worker safety, fair wages, living conditions, and specifically regarding the Men's World Cup, the unique challenges faced by migrant workers in Qatar, given their significant presence in the country's workforce.

In addition to these categories, Women and LGBTQ+ Rights and Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity offer insights into the interactions between gender and morality in the context of sports media. Articles coded under the Women and LGBTQ+ Rights umbrella address issues related to gender equality and minorities rights within the context of the World Cup tournaments. This encompasses coverage of unequal opportunities, representation, and inclusivity, as well as discussions regarding LGBTQ+ rights and visibility within the host countries and the football community. Next, the Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity categorization focuses on pieces that delve into the moral challenges faced by various stakeholders involved in the Qatar World Cup and the Women's World Cup, including sponsors, individuals, media organisations, and governing bodies such as FIFA. These articles may discuss the ethical implications of supporting or participating in events tarnished by allegations of human rights abuses, corruption, and labour exploitation. While these issues may be prevalent in the context of the Qatar World Cup, the theme also considers any ethical quandaries present in the organisation or execution of the Women's tournament. They may explore questions of complicity and accountability, examining whether stakeholders deliberately overlook or actively enable unethical practices in pursuit of financial gain or prestige associated with either tournament.

The remaining codes, Global Critique and Public Opinion, and Impact on Host country provide perspectives on the broader societal, economic, and cultural implications of organising popular and outstanding sports competitions. Articles classified beneath Global Critique and Public Opinion investigate or contemplate the global reactions and views of the general audience throughout the world concerning the tournaments. These articles could cover topics such as calls for boycotts, protests, and diplomatic actions aimed at holding Qatar and FIFA accountable for their actions. Additionally, they may explore the role of social media, advocacy groups, and journalism in shaping public discourse and influencing decision-making related to both the World Cups. Therefore, this code comprises expressions of disdain of journalists, reflecting sentiments of dissatisfaction or outrage towards the World Cup's organisation or associated issues. In turn, the Impact on Host Country bracket revolves around the place where the competition happened and matters regarding its citizens. It analyses the implications of large-scale

infrastructure projects, stadium construction, and tourism initiatives associated with the tournament on local communities, urban development, and national identity. These pieces assess the long-term legacy of the tournament, in consideration of its effects on national prestige, international perception, and public sentiment towards future major events.

Each article analysed was then systematically coded using these predetermined codes following its descriptions. This involved identifying passages or sections of the text that corresponded to each theme and applying the relevant code. To ensure consistency and reliability, multiple rounds of coding were conducted, with careful attention paid to the context and meaning of each text. The process revealed a total of 384 themes identified within the 60 articles. The frequency of occurrence of each theme varied, with Human Rights Violations appearing 35 times, Corruption and Governance 27 times, Workers' Rights and Labour Conditions 53 times, Women and LGBTQ+ Rights 68 times, Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity 41 times, the most frequently occurring theme – Global Critique and Public Opinion – with 113 appearances, and Impact on Host Country with 47 times.

Moreover, the pieces were categorized by news outlet and competition, with variations observed in the number of themes identified in each category. For instance, The Guardian's coverage of the World Cup Qatar 2022 yielded 87 themes in total, whereas their portrayal of the Women's World Cup 2023 resulted in 34 themes. Similarly, CNN's coverage of the first tournament produced 99 themes, while their reportage of the second showed 31 themes. The Washington Post's coverage of the competition in Qatar generated 85 themes, with their coverage of the Australia and New Zealand World Cup resulting in 48 themes. When all articles were coded, the data was analysed to pinpoint trends, patterns, and relationships between the themes. This involved examining the frequency of occurrence of each code, as well as exploring the connections between different themes and how they intersected within the media discourse. Furthermore, color-coding was employed to visually distinguish between different themes within the articles. Each code was assigned with a specific colour, allowing for easy identification and comparison of themes across the dataset. This visual representation facilitated the recognition of patterns and helped to organise the data in a clear and systematic manner.

3. Analysis

In order to address my research question concerning the portrayal of FIFA World Cup events in Western media, this research employs a comprehensive methodological approach. Initially, a content analysis of The Guardian, CNN, and The Washington Post was undertaken to examine their coverage of the FIFA World Cup hosted in Qatar. This initial phase serves a foundational exploration into the media portrayal and discourse surrounding the event. Subsequently, a parallel examination will be conducted focusing on the Women's World Cup, utilizing the same media outlets for comparative analysis. Therefore, this approach will culminate in a thematic analysis that juxtaposes key themes across both events, shedding light on the similarities, disparities, and overarching narratives emerging from the world of sports journalism.

3.1 Qatar World Cup 2022 – The Guardian

Starting the analysis with The Guardian publications, the first journalistic piece examined is titled “I hate that FIFA and Qatar exploited Lionel Messi’s genius. But I’ll cherish the football”, an opinion column by reporter Mihir Bose (2022). It encapsulates a juxtaposition of sentiments towards the World Cup in Qatar. Notably, the headline itself reflects a personal sentiment of anger and discontentment, indicating a critique of FIFA and Qatar’s involvement in hosting the tournament. The author expresses discontent with the ‘exploitation of Messi’s talent’ amidst concerns of corruption and the influence of money in sports organisations. The narrative thus delves into the complexities of the event, highlighting instances of corruption and governance, as implied by the description of Qatar as a “rich state, which had bought the World Cup.”, which showcases the scepticism towards the transparency and fairness of the bidding process. Furthermore, the author touches upon the restriction on Harry Kane from wearing the symbolic ‘One Love’ armband, an incident that reflects the limitations of freedom and expression within the Qatari context. The narrative concludes with a reflection on the transformative potential of the World Cup in fostering a more inclusive landscape in international football (Bose, 2022).

In the second opinion piece written by Bose (2022), “I hate the very idea of this World Cup, but I’ll have to watch: it’s the beautiful game”, the author condemns Qatar’s dreadful human rights records and the appalling treatment of migrant workers involved in constructing the stadiums. His firsthand experience in the country reinforced these

concerns as he apparently witnessed the dire living conditions of the workers. Moreover, the author criticizes the relationship between political leaders and FIFA officials, citing instances where FIFA presidents have been treated with sovereign-level respect. Bose (2022) stresses that Qatar's denial of corruption charges contrasts with the reality that a significant portion of those involved in the bidding process of Qatar for the World Cup have faced accusations or indictments, implicating corruption within the decision-making process. In both of his articles, the narrative contributes to the Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity theme, where the public is increasingly aware of the moral issues associated with the tournament (Bose, 2022).

The next article "Mixed reaction as Lionel Messi draped in Arab cloak before lifting the World Cup" captures the pivotal moment when the captain of Argentina's squad was draped in a black *bisht* – a traditional Arab men's cloak – by the Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. As the headline says, it happened at the moment of lifting the iconic golden trophy, the pinnacle of football for fans who will remember that unique and historic moment for generations. The piece puts that this symbolic gesture, which covered part of Messi's Argentina jersey, "will remain a reminder of whose World Cup this was". Therefore, it sparked contrasting reactions, eliciting praise in the region for its cultural significance yet drawing criticism from Western observers on social media platforms, including BBC host and former English footballer Gary Lineker expressing disappointment that Messi's shirt was covered during what he deemed a "magic moment" (The Guardian, 2022).

The Guardian's journalist Barney Ronay (2022) piece "Qatar 2022: Shifting sands where the real and almost-real collide" scrutinizes the peculiarities of their World Cup, underscoring the blurred lines between authenticity and simulation. One notable incident involved the alleged recruitment of around 1,500 foreign fans who were provided with incentives such as free flights, accommodation, and match tickets for supporting Qatar. The author delves into the artificiality that extends beyond the stadiums, addressing the creation of a false Venice inside a shopping mall and the introduction of a synthetic green carpet aimed at emulating pastoral scenes, illustrating the juxtaposition between traditional football aesthetics and the harsh desert environment of Qatar. Additionally, the omnipresence of David Beckham's image in Qatar epitomizes the convergence of corporate branding and sporting events and highlights the commodification of celebrity endorsements and the moral compromises involved (Ronay, 2022).

Ronay (2022) also wrote “As Qatar’s World Cup ends it is time for truth: FIFA chose death and suffering”, a piece that presents a scathing critique of FIFA’s role in Qatar. The author accuses the organisation of complicity in the deaths and suffering of migrant workers, highlighting the lack of transparency and accountability around the project, thus addressing ethical dilemmas inherent in FIFA’s prioritization of profit over human rights. Despite mounting evidence of worker exploitation and poor work conditions, the journalist puts that FIFA decided to proceed with the Qatar bid disregarding all the potential consequences. The article concludes with a call for accountability and justice, urging FIFA to address the systemic issues surrounding the competition (Ronay, 2022).

“The damned World Cup kicks off and Qatar is not in any mood to apologise” is the last Ronay’s (2022) work analysed. He addresses the backdrop of corruption within FIFA, where a significant number of committee members involved in awarding Qatar the hosting rights have been tainted by allegations of corruption. Moreover, the article delves into the appalling conditions faced by migrant labour force, with reports suggesting thousands of deaths and lack of proper investigations into these fatalities. Ronay (2022) also critiques Qatar’s motives for hosting the World Cup due to the country’s lack of footballing culture and its use of the tournament for purposes of sportswashing. He also sheds light on the World Cup’s role in the Qatar national security agenda, presenting as a means to acquire visibility and global influence (Ronay, 2022).

In the article “Qatar 2022 is actually happening: a horrifying but irresistible prospect”, the reporter Jonathan Liew (2022) highlights the imposition of the tournament by FIFA’s executive committee, despite the litany of human rights abuses associated with the event. He points out the harsh reality that football, in this case, has contributed to making the world measurably worse, with literal loss of life. Liew (2022) emphasizes the need for acknowledgment of the tournament’s moral expense and the importance of remembrance and vigilance for its victims. The author concludes with a reflection, once again, on the conflicting emotions encompassing the World Cup, as he states “maybe anger is the appropriate answer here: anger at the lack of compassion or foresight, anger at the way powerful men have simply strong-armed this ruinous tournament into existence. But equally, this thing is also irresistibly enjoyable” (Liew, 2022).

The next piece analysed has the headline “‘Disappointing and unsurprising’: Qatar 2022 organisers reject ‘fake fan’ claims” written by Sean Ingle (2022), in which the Qatar Supreme Committee dismisses allegations of false paid football fans at the World Cup.

The board refutes scepticism surrounding videos of Indian expats cheering for the England team in Doha, emphasizing that many supporters demonstrate genuine knowledge of the Premier League and the England national team. Despite doubts raised by journalists and commentators, one supporter from Kerala vehemently denied receiving cash to cheerlead, claiming that “none of us is getting paid... Our love is to this team”. In Ingle’s (2022) other work named “‘I feel gay, disabled... like a woman too!’: Infantino makes bizarre attack on critics”, FIFA President Gianni Infantino launched a provocative strike on critics of the tournament’s records in a press conference. He accused Western nations of hypocrisy and racism, suggesting that they are not in a position to lecture Qatar given their own histories. Infantino also defended the country regarding human rights violations, asserting that Qatar has made significant reforms in workers’ rights with FIFA’s assistance. The media conference ended with Bryan Swanson, FIFA’s director of media relations and a gay man, affirming that everyone will be welcome at the event. Infantino’s remarks sparked immediate backlash, with critics accusing him of deflecting legitimate concerns and aligning himself to closely with Qatari authorities (Ingle, 2022).

The next article, “This World Cup is about much more than football. I’ve seen the human cost”, notably conveys the exploitative and harmful conditions migrant workers have endured as the host country prepared for the event. The article emphasizes that the ‘beautiful game’ of football has blood on its hands due to the suffering of these labourers. The story recounts the tragic death of a teenager worker in 2013, along with numerous other Nepali workers, and exposes the appalling catalogue of abuses faced by Qatar’s migrant workforce. Despite initial distress caused by media reports such as The Guardian, FIFA’s response is criticized for not being proactive enough. The article documents instances of workers facing slave-like circumstances, poverty wages, unexplained deaths, and inadequate living conditions. It also highlights the fear and risks faced by journalists reporting on these issues in Qatar (Pattison, 2022).

Last piece analysed from The Guardian is an opinion column “Qatar 2022: this World Cup has taken place in a crime scene” produced by Marina Hyde (2022), in which she sharply condemns Qatar’s hosting of the tournament amidst allegations of corruption and human rights violations. She sarcastically refers to the recent declaration of Qatar as a “frontrunner in labour rights” and highlights the irony of such a statement given the ongoing issues encompassing migrant worker conditions. Hyde (2022) mocks the timing of these declarations, particularly in light of recent arrests related to Qatar’s attempts to influence global politics. The piece expresses scepticism regarding the effectiveness of

foreign politicians' attempts to challenge Qatar on its human rights record, suggesting that sumptuous trips and hospitality are unlikely to promote meaningful change. The column concludes painting a damning picture of Qatar's hosting of the World, characterizing it as taking place in a crime scene. Therefore, she emphasizes the lack of responsibility and criticizes the willingness of influential figures such as David Beckham to ignore these issues (Hyde, 2022).

3.2 Qatar World Cup 2022 – CNN

The CNN collection starts with the opinion column titled “Let’s call out the Qatar World Cup for what it really is” by journalists Roger Bennett and Tommy Vietor (2022). The authors highlight issues such as the treatment of journalists, LGBTQ+ discrimination, and gender equality. In addition, they criticize Qatari labour practices, associating them to modern slavery, and point out the high death toll among migrant workers involved in construction for the tournament. The authors also question the legitimacy of Qatar’s bid to host the World Cup, suggesting it was won through a fraudulent process. Furthermore, the authors argue that Qatar’s motive for hosting the global event was to improve its international image and project a cosmopolitan image, similar to its neighbouring UAE, rather than genuinely benefiting the nation or the sport. They emphasize the need to expose the reality of human rights abuses in the host country and urge national teams and governments to take action in holding Qatar and FIFA accountable, calling for support of initiatives such as the #PayUpFIFA campaign to demand compensation for affected migrant workers and advocate for athlete activism to raise awareness about these issues (Bennett & Vietor, 2022).

In the opinion piece “Qatar’s Ambassador on why the Middle East deserves the opportunity to host soccer’s biggest event” by the Qatari ambassador to the United States, Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad Al-Thani (2022). He defends the country’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup, emphasizing the significance of this event for the Arab world and celebrating it as a historic moment and an opportunity to showcase the region’s culture and hospitality to the world. The ambassador asserts that Qatar has made significant efforts to overcome these problems, working with global institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of the UN to implement reforms and improve conditions for workers. Moreover, Al-Thani (2022) acknowledges the existence of public campaigns attempting to disparage Qatar’s hosting of the World Cup, often presenting one-sided and factually

inaccurate arguments, thus reflecting preconceived views about the region. Instead, the author emphasizes the potential of sports, particularly soccer, to unite people and promote understanding among different cultures (Al-Thani, 2022).

In the article “What fans can’t do in Qatar” by Amy Woodyatt (2022), various aspects of Qatar’s laws and customs regarding activities and behaviours during the FIFA World Cup are underlined, including Qatar’s regulations on alcohol consumption. The piece states that sale and consumption of alcohol in public spaces are tightly regulated, with legal consequences for those who violate these rules. Additionally, the article addresses various social norms and behaviours that tourists should be aware of. Public displays of affection, sex outside marriage, and homosexuality are all subject to legal restrictions in Qatar, with potential penalties including imprisonment. Qatar’s strict laws regarding illegal drugs, rules on ‘dress codes’, and limitation on freedom of expression and religion are also highlighted in the article. The author notes restrictions on public worship by non-Islamic faiths and the potential legal consequences for those who engage in activities deemed blasphemous or offensive (Woodyatt, 2022).

As the 2022 World Cup concludes, global rights institutions have emphasized the significant cost that thousands of foreign workers bear. The article “Fresh criticism for Qatar and FIFA as World Cup ends on International Migrants Day” highlights that organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Equidem, and Migrant Defenders have urged Qatar and FIFA to take more substantial action to support migrant workers. Amnesty International’s head of economic and social justice, Steve Cockburn, draws special attention to the plight of workers who faced illegal recruitment fees, withheld wages, and loss of life, calling for compensation and remedy from the authorities. Minky Worden, the global initiatives director at Human Rights Watch, accused FIFA of often siding with Qatar against the most vulnerable despite having human rights policies in place. Malcom Bidali, co-founder of Migrant Defenders, stressed persisting issues such as unpaid wages, cramped living conditions, physical and verbal assaults, discrimination, and long working hours (Madowo et al., 2022).

The Qatar World Cup is portrayed as a departure from tradition and marked by its different cultural aspects in the article “Why this has been a culturally unique World Cup” by Don Riddell (2022). Hosted for the first time in the European winter and in the Middle East, the tournament offered a unique experience for both participants and spectators. Despite all the controversies surrounding the World Cup, the article shows fans expressing gratitude to Qatar for hosting it. However, the author also acknowledges the

challenges faced by LGBTQ fans, who felt unsafe to travel to Qatar due to the country's laws criminalizing homosexuality. The piece remembers that reports emerged of security officials asking individuals to remove rainbow-colored items of clothing, also touching upon FIFA's decision to threaten sanctions for wearing the "One Love" armband. Besides that, the article addresses the tragic deaths of migrant workers, underscoring and remembering the human cost of the tournament (Riddell, 2022).

In "Brand it like Beckham: How has this World Cup affected the 'brands' associated with?", the journalist Issy Ronald (2022) focuses on the impact of the Qatar World Cup on various brands and their interrelation with the tournament. The article highlights how several major companies, including Budweiser, Visa, Coca-Cola, Qatar Airways, Adidas, McDonald's, Wanda, Vivo, and Hyundai Kia, traditionally have a strong presence during the World Cup through sponsorship and advertising. However, Qatar 2022 presents a different scenario. Many of these brands, particularly those rooted in the Western World, find themselves entangled in geopolitical controversies regarding human rights issues. Therefore, the article delves into the ethical dilemmas faced by these companies. Although some of them have taken action to address human rights concerns, many other have remained relatively quiet. Moreover, the article connects the multinationals with David Beckham, who faces criticism for endorsing Qatar 2022, thus tarnishing his personal brands. Despite the challenges, FIFA's revenue from the tournament has reached a record of 7.5 billion dollars, with record-breaking TV audiences (Ronald, 2022).

The journey of Qatar to hosting the 2022 World Cup has been a controversial and complex one. When the country was awarded the hosting rights back in 2010, it faced scepticism due to the lack of footballing history and culture, existing infrastructure, and the intense summer heat in the region. The piece "How Qatar ended up hosting the World Cup" discusses that the decision to award Qatar sparked controversy and raised questions about the integrity of the selection process. Allegations of bribery and corruption concerning the voting process arose, with the US Department of Justice investigating claims of illicit payments to top officials involved in the selection of host countries. Furthermore, the article covers the country's reliance on migrant labour for infrastructure projects related to the World Cup, which has caused distress about working conditions. In turn, the piece puts that Qatar has invested billions in its football infrastructure and implemented some reforms such as a non-discriminatory minimum wage, also

emphasizing its commitment to hosting a discrimination-free World Cup regarding the treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals (Ramsay, 2022).

Likewise, the piece “How has holding a World Cup changed the way the world sees Qatar?” stresses that the hosting of the competition has undeniably shoved the nation into the global spotlight. The article states that Qatar’s bid to host the event was part of its broader strategy to assert itself economically and politically. However, the world’s attention has been shifted to the treatment of migrant worker and LGBTQ+ rights. The author touches upon The Guardian’s inaccurate claim of workers deaths to enhance its argument, arguing that “the report did not connect all 6,500 deaths with World Cup infrastructure projects and has not been independently verified by CNN.” (Ronald, 2022). Moreover, the statement attributed to the World Cup ambassador Khalid Salman, characterizing homosexuality as “damage in the mind” was highlighted in the article to exemplify the challenges faced by minority groups in the country (Ronald, 2022).

The next article showcases US football journalist Grant Wahl and former Wales captain Laura McAllister experiences at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium when attempting to enter wearing rainbow-colored clothing. The piece “US journalists says he was initially denied entry to a stadium because of rainbow t-shirt” illustrates that Wahl was briefly detained and refused entry due to his t-shirt, which security staff deemed “political” and prohibited. Despite assurances beforehand, both Wahl and McAllister encountered resistance from security personnel, including having Wahl’s phone and McAllister’s rainbow-colored hat confiscated before being allowed to enter the stadium, thus highlighting the freedom of expression issue. Meanwhile, the article mentions that the Belgian delegation faced commercial conflicts leading to the removal of the word “love” from the team’s kit (Dotson & Morse, 2022).

Thomas Schlachter’s (2022) work “Amnesty International says ‘abuses persist’ and ‘too little has been done’ to protect workers after Qatar World Cup” discusses the organisation’s briefing named “A Legacy in Jeopardy”, which notes a decline in efforts to ensure fair work conditions. Amnesty maintains that, albeit improvements allowing workers greater mobility, Qatar and FIFA have failed to address pervasive abuses adequately. The controversial reporting of foreign worker deaths from The Guardian is again mentioned in this article to raise concern about inadequate investigations within this theme. Steve Cockburn of Amnesty International is also cited, stressing that Qatar’s failure to properly enforce or strengthen pre-World Cup labour reforms jeopardizes any potential legacy for workers. The organisation reiterates its 10-point plan, initially

published in the lead-up to the 2022 World Cup, which calls for an end to forced labour, the allowance of trade unions, and compensation for historic violations (Schlachter, 2022).

The final piece from CNN “‘It’s not safe and not right.’ Qatar says all are welcome to the World Cup but some LGBTQ soccer fans are staying away” shows that the anticipation surrounding the World Cup in Qatar is accompanied by voices of dissent, particularly in terms of LGBTQ+ rights. The article touches upon a passionate plea for inclusivity by a gay football fan named Dario Minden, which underscores the contradiction between Qatar’s claims of openness and its criminalization of homosexuality. Minden and other activist groups as Pride in Football remain unconvinced to attend the tournament. The article also covers the decision of individuals such as Rob Sanderson to boycott the World Cup, which reflects broader apprehensions within the LGBTQ+ community. His refusal to attend, coupled with past controversies in host countries like Russia, highlights the enduring struggle for acceptance and safety at major sporting events (Lewis, 2022).

3.3 Qatar World Cup 2022 – Washington Post

The Washington Post’s collection began with the opinion column “This was a World Cup of human right horrors”. The article highlights the egregious human rights violations that overshadowed the event, citing Qatar’s restrictive laws on homosexuality, women’s rights, and labour abuses in the construction of stadiums. It condemns FIFA’s complicity in ignoring these issues and emphasizes the importance of upholding human rights and dignity in global sports events. German players’ symbolic protests, including covering their mouths in team photos, and planned demonstrations against Qatar’s LGBTQ+ rights infringements are mentioned, underscoring the widespread objection among athletes to the host nation’s practices. Despite FIFA’s threats to penalize players for such protests, the article applauds those who stood up against the injustices (Washington Post, 2022).

Next article titled “Families of migrant workers who died in Qatar are waiting for answers” sheds light on the difficulties of foreign workers and their families in Qatar. It narrates the tragic story of Ramulu Maraveni, a construction worker who collapsed and died while working on the roads around World Cup stadiums. Despite his gruelling work schedule and signs of health issues, Maraveni continued to work tirelessly to support his

family back in India. The piece foregrounds the broader issue of unexplained deaths among migrant workers in Qatar, since many fatalities have been attributed to natural causes on official certificates, obscuring the true toll of the harsh working conditions. Furthermore, the article highlights the ongoing struggles faced by the labourers and their families, such as exorbitant fees, nonpayment of wages, and dire living conditions (Masih et al., 2022).

The following piece, “America is here to save the World Cup in 2026. You’re welcome, world”, an opinion column developed by Will Leitch (2022), looks ahead to the 2026 tournament to be hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, but also critiques Qatar and FIFA for its numerous issues. Therefore, the author labels the 2022 tournament as the worst men’s World Cup in memory, highlighting human rights abuses, stifling of political speech, compressed game schedule, and the impracticality of hosting the tournament in Qatar’s scorching summer heat. However, Leitch (2022) expresses optimism for the upcoming tournament, which he believes “just about everything Qatar got wrong will be fixed at the 2026 World Cup”. He anticipates improvements such as existing infrastructure for stadiums, hosting the tournament back in June and July to avoid programming conflicts, and the expansion of the field to 48 teams. Additionally, he emphasizes the more welcoming atmosphere in his country, where wearing rainbow clothing would not lead to backlash (Leitch, 2022).

John Feinstein’s (2022) piece titled “The players saved this World Cup, but soccer deserves so much better” begins by praising the athletes for their performances on the field, which he acknowledges as saving the games. He highlights the issues leading up to Qatar 2022, including the awarding of the tournament to the country, the reports of migrant worker deaths, and the government’s corruption. The author criticizes FIFA President Infantino for his dismissive attitude towards media criticism, condemning FIFA’s actions regarding the “One Love” program and the suppression of players’ expressions against discrimination. He questions the involvement of high-ranking officials in Qatar, criticizing the endorsement of what he calls ‘sportswashing’ – the usage of sports events to distract from human rights wrongdoings. The author also suggests that the US should reconsider hosting the competition in 2026, questioning FIFA’s integrity and ethical standards (Feinstein, 2022).

Next is Sally Jenkins’s (2022) satirical piece, “The beautiful game is fine. Suitcases full of cash are better”, which skewers the corruption and ethical compromises encompassing the World Cup in Qatar. Written as a mock address from “Soprani

Ilbambino”, as a representation of Gianni Infantino, the article ridicules FIFA’s actions. Ilbambino’s speech sarcastically defends FIFA’s decision to ban rainbow-coloured armbands and suppress LGBTQ+ rights, highlighting the hypocrisy of Qatar’s human rights violations. Jenkins (2022) mocks the lavish accommodations built at the expense of exploited labour while dismissing criticisms from Western moralists. Through humour, she underscores the absurdity of FIFA’s regulations and the complicity of global organisations in perpetuating corruption and human rights transgressions (Jenkins, 2022).

Chuck Culpepper’s (2022) piece “An immortal World Cup final rewards Argentina’s Lionel Messi at last” contemplates the unforgettable final between Argentina and France, capturing the drama of the match and emphasizing Lionel Messi’s long-awaited triumph and Kylian Mbappé’s stellar performance. Among discussions about the future of the World Cup and reflections on memorable moments, the author addresses the controversy around Qatar as the host country. In the midst of the celebration, his commentary adds depth to the narrative by acknowledging broader implications surrounding the tournament. The statement “Far-flung people might not even pinpoint where it happened, which will relieve those who wished it hadn’t happened here, with its controversial host of both charms and misgivings” encapsulates the debate about Qatar’s suitability as a host (Culpepper, 2022).

The author also wrote about the remarkable and historical journey of the Moroccan national team in the Qatar World Cup, which became the first African country to reach a World Cup semi-final. The performance left a lasting impact on the tournament and reshaped perceptions of African and Arab football. Manager Walid Regragui emphasized the positive image his team portrayed and expressed pride in their performance, which garnered support from King Mohammed VI, the Moroccan people, and the world at large. The article discusses Morocco’s victories against top teams such as Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, as well as their competitive match versus France in the semifinals, which showcased their quality in the field. Looking ahead, Regragui and his team are focused on managing expectations and hope that Morocco’s presence in future World Cup stages will be seen as normal and recurrent (Culpepper, 2022).

Rick Noak’s (2022) article titled “Many French vowed to boycott the World Cup. Then their team did too well” outlines how worries over Qatar’s treatment of LGBTQ+ people and migrant workers initially led to demands for boycotts. However, the success of the French national team has caused many fans to reconsider, with President Emmanuel Macron’s support for the team and his stance against politicizing sports influencing in

this shift. Nonetheless, ethical concerns persist, especially regarding French officials' involvement in Qatar winning the bid and allegations of bribery associating European Union officials. Furthermore, the decision of major French cities not to assemble public viewing events for the final reflects the uneasiness about the Qatari issues. The article states that Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has faced criticism for her apparent inconsistency, given the support to Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain, the richest football club in the country (Noack, 2022).

Next piece "Fitting the World Cup into tiny Qatar" is a joint work of five journalists that discusses the unique challenges and innovations associated with hosting the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, the smallest country ever to host the event. Regardless of its size, Qatar has managed to create a compact tournament experience, with stadiums visible from the airport road and easily accessible along the capital's highways. With over one million visitors expected to converge on the country during the tournament, Qatar has implemented solutions to accommodate them, such as Stadium 974, constructed from shipping containers and designed for future use in other countries. Although Qatar's hosting of the World Cup highlights its organisational capabilities, the article remembers it is essential to address the human rights issues around the construction process. Qatar's case signifies its ability to showcase a global sporting event within its limited space, albeit with important considerations regarding workers' rights and welfare (Mellen et al., 2022).

The last article collected from the Post, "Rainbow-wearing soccer fans confronted at Qatar World Cup", exposes the hurdles encountered by football fans donning rainbow symbols at the tournament in Qatar. While some were able to take the symbol into the stadiums without issue, others faced obstacles and were asked to hide or remove the emblems. The article highlights the discrepancy and lack of clarity regarding guidance provided to tournament staff and the potential impact of Qatar's conservative social norms on LGBTQ inclusivity. The situation has drawn criticism, with European football teams announcing their captains would not wear the "One Love" armband after FIFA's warning of penalties for players wearing them. Moreover, the article remembers the incidents involving American journalist Grant Wahl and former Wales player Laura McAllister reported by CNN (Sands & Hudson, 2022).

3.4 Women's World Cup 2023 – The Guardian

First work of the collection from the Women's World Cup, "It hurts as a coach, mother, and wife': Sarina Wiegman on Rubiales scandal", shows the England women's coach addressing the scandal involving Luis Rubiales, president of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF). Rubiales got suspended by FIFA for kissing Spain player Jenni Hermoso on the lips without her consent after their World Cup final win over England. Wiegman expressed her distress over the incident, stating it deeply affected her as a coach, mother, wife, and human being. She dedicated her UEFA women's coach of the year award to the Spanish team, emphasizing the need to celebrate their achievements and calling for change. Aitana Bonmatí, the Spain midfielder who won The Best FIFA women's player of 2023 prize, voiced support to Hermoso and condemned abuse of power in employment relationships. Gareth Southgate, England's men's coach, stressed the responsibility of male leader in their behaviours, specially towards females (Ames, 2023).

In the opinion column "Dear Luis Rubiales: sportswomen are not dolls to be kissed, touched, and patronised" by Barbara Ellen (2023), the absence of an immediate apology from the president of the RFEF, Luis Rubiales, is highlighted as a significant matter. The article emphasizes that sportswomen should not be objectified or sexualized, asserting that they are there to play sports, not to be kissed, touched, or otherwise patronised in what remains a predominantly male-dominated sphere. In addition, the piece questions Rubiales's entitlement and his response to the outcry, including his use the terms "false feminists" and "witch hunts". It also raises questions about gender equality, such as whether Rubiales would have behaved similarly towards a male football player and why he felt entitled to embrace Hermoso. The author argues that the failure of Rubiales to issue a prompt apology "speaks chauvinistic volumes" about persistent attitudes, particularly in the "supposedly enlightened 21st century" (Ellen, 2023).

The following opinion piece "As a queer sports fan, the World Cup was an incredible time. Why is the AFL so different?", written by journalist Rebecca Shaw (2023), contrasts the inclusive atmosphere of the Women's World Cup with the lack of openly queer players in the Australian Football League (AFL). The author praises the World Cup for its significant queer player representation and supportive environment, contrasting it with the AFL's pervasive homophobia and absence of openly queer players. Shaw (2023) criticizes the AFL's failure to create an environment where players feel comfortable coming out, rejecting that suggest queer athletes should keep their personal lives private. She argues that being closeted is not the same as being private, highlighting

the unfair pressure placed on LGBTQ+ players to hide their identities. The article addresses the impact of homophobia in sports and calls for a more inclusive ambience in men's sports, similar to what was experienced in Australia and New Zealand, where queer athletes can be themselves without fear of discrimination or backlash (Shaw, 2023).

The article "Jorge Vilda's Spain tenure hangs in balance as federation looks to sack him" discusses the imminent sacking of Jorge Vilda, coach of Spain's women's football team, by the RFEF. This decision comes in the wake of the scandal involving Rubiales, the president of the Federation. With Rubiales suspended by FIFA, the new RFEF leadership is reportedly moving to terminate Vilda's contract and negotiate with female players who had previously gone on strike over the Rubiales case. Vilda's occupation has been marked by controversy, including player discontent and calls for his resignation preceding the current situation. While Rubiales initially praised Vilda and offered him a new contract, tensions rose after Vilda expressed regret over the kiss incident. However, the piece shows that leading female players have indicated their refusal to return to the national team under the existing leadership (Reuters, 2023).

The next article "'I felt the victim of aggression, a sexist act' – Jenni Hermoso's statement in full" presents Hermoso's declaration regarding the disturbing episode with Luis Rubiales, which was translated by the football reporter Alex Ibaceta (2023). The player vehemently denies Rubiales' claim that the kiss was consensual, emphasizing that there was no such conversation and describing the act as nonconsensual, impulsive, and sexist. She describes feeling shocked and vulnerable due to the unexpected and inappropriate nature of the act. Moreover, Hermoso expresses disappointment with the pressure exerted on her to justify Rubiales' actions, underscoring the manipulative and hostile culture within the RFEF. Ultimately, she announces her decision not to return to the national team as long as the current leadership remains in position (Ibaceta, 2023).

The following opinion column "'Ego above dignity': defiance over kiss shocks Spain" by Ashifa Kassam (2023) explores the aftermath of Luis Rubiales' refusal to resign following the controversy over the kiss he planted on Jenni Hermoso during the Women's World Cup medal presentation. Initially expected to step down, Rubiales instead defiantly declared his intent to remain, drawing widespread criticism, but also received applause from some federation members. The article highlights that this sparked outrage and condemnation from various quarters, including politicians such as ministers Yolanda Díaz and Irene Montero, football clubs like Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, coaches, players, and figures outside the football community, with many expressing

solidarity with Hermoso. Moreover, Rubiales' attack on feminism during his speech drew heavy backlash, with the Spain's women's league president Beatriz Álvarez "describing him as someone whose ego is above his dignity" (Kassam, 2023).

Shifting the focus from the Spanish context, Jack Snape's (2023) article titled "Matildas 'rewrite history books' as semi-final smashes TV ratings records" examines Australia's fervent response to the Matildas' (nickname for the Australian female national team) Women's World Cup semi-final against England. With 11.15 million Aussies tuning in, it became the most-watched television program in the country since 2001. Channel Seven's Lewis Martin hailed the Matilda's performance, stating it captured the nation's spirit and rewrote history. The match's viewership eclipsed previous benchmark events, such as the 2003 men's Rugby World Cup final. Additionally, streaming platforms saw a surge, with 957,000 viewers on 7plus and outstanding interest on Optus Sport. The article highlights that the Matilda's success has sparked enthusiasm, evidenced by over 20 million social media views related to the tournament (Snape, 2023).

Jack Snape's (2023) second article "Women's World Cup was close to perfect for millions of Australians" illustrates the profound impact of the 2023 tournament in Australia, marking a significant change in priorities for football and women's sport. The Matilda's performance captured the nation's attention, fostering a sense of pride and unity. Record-breaking viewership, with over 30,000 fans attending each match and close to 2 million tickets sold, underscored the World Cup's success, surpassing initial targets. While politicians and local communities rallied behind the Matildas, there remains cautious optimism regarding the long-term impact of this support, particularly in translating it to grassroots football and addressing challenges that female players meet. The article highlights the tournament's potential for social change and empowerment, exposed by Matilda's advocacy for indigenous advancement, LGBTQ+ representation, and gender equality, lingering issues such as prize money disparities (Snape, 2023).

The article "No envy for Spain's exiles as Vilda's World Cup run fails to bring unity" touches upon the internal divisions within the Spanish women's football team under coach Jorge Vilda. Despite reaching their first major final in the absence of several key players who revolted against the national team in 2022, Spain's success under Vilda's leadership remains uncertain. The rift between the coach and the rebel faction of players runs deep, rooted in grievances such as poor treatment of players, control, and lack of transparency. Therefore, critics argue that Spain's victory is essentially due to the depth of talent rather than Vilda's competency. The piece states that the RFEF's steadfast

support of the manager exacerbates the divide, with players in exile feeling ignored and marginalised. The Federation's response to the protesting athletes, characterized by threats and leaks to the press, points to a larger problem with accountability and power dynamics within the organisation (Liew, 2023).

Lastly, the opinion column "Luis Rubiales' actions are not abnormal, they are symptomatic of the system" by journalist Suzanne Wrack (2023) highlights broader systemic issues within football governance globally. Rubiales' inappropriate behaviour, including grabbing his crotch, kissing a player without consent, and carrying another over his shoulder, exemplify a culture of entitlement and impunity that pervades football administrations worldwide. The author argues that instances of abuse and corruption are not unique to Rubiales, but emblematic of a broader pattern of misconduct within football federations globally. In this system, votes and money dictate decisions, whereas players are commodified and treated as expendable assets. Officials, shielded by their positions of authority, act with impunity, knowing they are insulated from consequences. Wrack (2023) emphasizes the need for reform, including the establishment of robust reporting mechanisms for players and meaningful sanctions for offenders, which she believes have been met with little progress. Ultimately, she contends that the systemic dysfunction within football governance mirrors larger societal issues, demanding fundamental change to prioritize integrity, accountability, and player welfare (Wrack, 2023).

3.5 Women's World Cup 2023 – CNN

The CNN collection starts with the article "Everything you need to know about the four 2023 Women's World Cup semifinalists", which offers a concise overview of Spain, Sweden, England, and Australia, the remaining contenders in the tournament. Spain's journey has been marked by internal strife, with players initially withdrawing due to concerns over coach Vilda. Sweden has demonstrated remarkable determination, reaching its fifth overall semifinal, whereas Australia as the host country has captured attention, especially with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese publicly supporting the team and endorsing the idea of a national holiday in case of victory. Meanwhile, England's talented lineup and resilience under manager Sarina Wiegman make them a formidable competitor. In general, the piece sets the stage for the tournament's climax and emphasizes the unpredictability of the outcomes (Morse, 2023).

The following text, “The history makers and the groundbreakers: how the US became women’s soccer’s dominant force”, explores the rise of the US Women’s National Team (USWNT) to global prominence. It elucidates the pivotal role of visionary leadership, especially under coach Anson Dorrance, who revolutionized the team’s playing style and fostered a culture of relentless pursuit of excellence. Through winning the inaugural Women’s World Cup in 1991 and securing Olympic gold in 1996, the USWNT established a legacy, setting high standards for future generations. Yet, the narrative is not solely celebratory. It candidly addresses the challenges the team faced, such as the fight for better conditions and pay equality. The article states that, albeit facing increased competition from other nations investing in women’s programs, the USWNT remains a formidable force with a rich story of achievement and commitment to social justice (Lewis, 2023).

The following piece, “Female soccer players earn 25 cents to the dollar of men at World Cup, new CNN analysis finds”, reveals a stark reality: female football players competing in the 2023 Women’s World Cup will earn only a quarter of what their male counterparts earned in the previous tournament. Ronald et al. (2023) argue that such disparities persist across various national teams, with players facing financial instability and the necessity to take unpaid leave from the other jobs to participate in World Cup qualifying competitions. Moreover, the authors highlight that achieving equal pay in football goes beyond monetary compensation. It encompasses ensuring equitable conditions, such as facilities, scheduling, and maternity leave, to foster an environment where female players can thrive professionally. Nevertheless, entrenched sexist attitudes and the predominance of male policymakers in soccer governance pose significant barriers to achieving gender equality in sport (Ronald et al., 2023).

In “First Australia embraced Barbie, then came new heroes in cleats” by Hilary Whiteman (2023), the author argues that there has been a notable shift in society ideals from idolizing Barbie to endorsing Matildas. Whiteman (2023) stresses that Barbie represented a fictional notion of empowerment, but the Matildas represent real-life tenacity, perseverance, and teamwork on the field. As seen by record-breaking audience numbers and sold-out stadium crowds, the Matildas have attracted unparalleled attention and support over early doubts about the viability of women’s sports. Furthermore, the author points out that the Matildas recently secured equal pay and privileges as their male counterparts, marking a significant milestone in the pursuit of gender parity within the realm of sports (Whiteman, 2023).

In the piece “Spanish soccer chief apologizes for giving Women’s World Cup winner an unwanted kiss on the lips”, the authors delve into the fallout from Luis Rubiales. The president of the RFEF received widespread condemnation, with politicians and journalists describing his actions as “unacceptable” and “simply disgusting”. In response to the backlash, Rubiales issued an apology, understanding his mistake and expressing regret for any offense caused. The article states that he attributed the incident to a moment of spontaneous affection, emphasizing his lack of malicious intent. Rubiales sought to turn the topic back to celebrating the team’s accomplishment, but the controversy overshadowed Spain’s victory in the Women’s World Cup (Sinnott et al., 2023).

The following article explores the marvellous journey of Spain’s national team to the final against England amid internal conflicts. The piece “Spain’s women make history at the Women’s World Cup against a backdrop of turmoil and dispute” illustrates that the Spanish performances have been exceptional, culminating in historic victories over formidable opponents such as the Netherlands and Sweden. The author highlights the dispute between players and coaching staff, rooted in dissatisfaction with coaching methods and training standards, led to several star players, 15 from the squad in total, announcing their withdrawal from the national team unless changes were made. As the piece shows, the athletes sent personally signed letters identically stating that “‘the situation’ within the Spanish national team, of which RFEF ‘are aware’, were affecting the players’ ‘emotional state’ and health” (Greze, 2023).

In “Spain celebrates ‘indescribable’ Women’s World Cup victory”, the authors Matias Greze and Issy Ronald (2023) capture the euphoria around Spain’s historic triumph juxtaposed with internal discord within the team. The article vividly portrays scenes of jubilation as Spain secured its first-ever Women’s World Cup title. The authors state that underlying tensions between players, coach Vilda, and RFEF persisted amidst the immense delight, evident in certain social media posts that depicted these strained relations. The article shows prominent Spanish athletes, including tennis stars Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz, congratulated the team on social media, emphasizing the significance of the country’s achievement. However, the piece recognizes the unresolved issues within the team, highlighting the challenges they may face in maintaining unity and success moving forward (Greze & Ronald, 2023).

In the article “FIFA President Gianni Infantino says women should ‘pick the right battles’ to ‘convince us, men, what we have to do’ in fight for equality”, the author Ben

Morse (2023) highlights Infantino's remarks suggesting that women should strategically engage in advocacy efforts to influence men's understanding of equality matters within the sport. Furthermore, the piece emphasizes Infantino's perspective on equal pay in the Women's World Cup, where he views it as a symbolic gesture rather than a solution to challenges faced by female players. Notwithstanding recent progress in earning equal pay agreements, for instance those reached between the United States Soccer Federation and its women's national team players, concerns persist regarding systemic issues such as unpaid leave and unstable compensation structures, as highlighted in a FIFPRO report (Morse, 2023).

The last article analysed highlights that Australia's Women's World Cup journey concluded with a 2-0 defeat to Sweden in the third-place playoff, yet it represented a milestone for women's football in the country. Even with the loss, the Matilda's performance captured and penetrated the nation's imagination, with fervent support evident throughout the match. The piece states that the atmosphere in Brisbane defied expectations, as fans cheered passionately for every pass and tackle, reflecting the growing enthusiasm for women's football in Australia. Moreover, the piece "Australia's fairytale home Women's World Cup ends in defeat to Sweden in third-place playoff" highlights the Swedish victory, showcasing their quality on the pitch. Although Australia's campaign came to an end due to defeat, the piece argues that the competition had a lasting effect, signaling new horizons and heightened interest in women's football across the country (Ronald, 2023).

3.6 Women's World Cup 2023 – Washington Post

The analysis of the Post starts with three opinion columns developed by journalist Candace Buckner (2023). The first piece, "Spain and England played quality soccer. That should be enough.", highlights the importance of the final between Spain and England, suggesting that it symbolized a battle against sexism in sports, with Spanish captain Olga Carmona's goal representing a momentous breakthrough. Buckner (2023) critiques Gianni Infantino's comments about women's football, suggesting they lack genuine understanding of the challenges confronted by female players. She argues that women in sports must not only excel on the field but also confront institutional barriers and demand accountability from governing bodies. The author asserts that female athletes do not need patronizing advice but rather meaningful support and recognition for their efforts. She

praises the achievements of both Spanish and English squads, highlighting their talent and resilience in the face of adversity (Bucker, 2023).

Secondly, in “Lauren James messed up in front of the world. A second chance awaits.”, Buckner (2023) highlights James’s opportunity for redemption following public scrutiny stemming from a previous mistake: stepping her cleats at the opponent’s’ back – an unsportsmanlike act – that led to a red card against Nigeria in their round of 16 match. The author believes that James has the chance to change her story and become a hero on the biggest stage of all by emphasizing her recent outstanding performance and describing her as England’s top player. The article suggests that, whether she starts or not, her presence in the match symbolizes hope for athletes who have stumbled in the past, demonstrating that with perseverance and determination to learn from their mistakes, one can overcome the toughest challenges in the world of sports (Buckner, 2023).

Ultimately, Candace Buckner (2023) sheds light on the presence of diving in women’s football during the 2023 World Cup. In her opinion column “Who says women’s soccer players don’t dive?”, Buckner (2023) questions the misconception that diving is absent in the women’s game, presenting instances from the tournament where players resorted to such tactics. Despite the physical nature of the sport and the physicality typically associated with female players, the article suggests that diving has become a part of its realm, albeit to a lesser extent than in men’s football. Players such as Swedish Hanna Bennison humorously attribute the absence of diving to toughness, suggesting that women simply play without the need for dramatics. The author emphasizes the importance of evaluating players based solely on their on-field conduct and performance, rather than resorting to gender-specific biases (Buckner, 2023).

Next article “Spain’s soccer president says kissing player on the lips was ‘a mistake’” sheds light on the controversy around Rubiales, who faced retaliation for kissing midfielder Jennifer Hermoso on the lips, prompting calls for his resignation. Rubiales admitted his error in a video statement, clarifying it was a gesture without malicious intent. Nevertheless, the piece underscores the widespread criticism of the kiss as intrusive and emphasizes the importance of respecting consent, with Spain’s minister of equality Irene Montero condemning it as a form of sexual violence. Social media users and women’s rights organisations denounced the event, stressing its consequences for women in sports and requesting FIFA to take disciplinary action against Rubiales, even though he defended his actions and downplayed concerns. Overall, this article points out

the implications of such incidents for gender equality in sports, reflecting on the intersecting dynamics of gender, consent, and power (Hassan & Boren, 2023).

The following piece addresses “The ‘genius’ coach who has guided England to a World Cup final”, highlighting Sarina Wiegman’s exceptional coaching abilities, as evidenced by her successful stints with both the Netherlands and England, culminating in England’s advancement to the World Cup final. According to the author, Wiegman’s understated demeanour conceals her strategic intelligence and capacity to navigate obstacles, earning ovation from players and peers who regard her as a coaching genius. The article states that Wiegman’s philosophy prioritizes teamwork and adaptability, empowering players to make crucial decisions and adjust to dynamic game scenarios. England has advanced to the final owing in large part to Wiegman’s direction, overcoming hurdles including injuries and bans during the competition, which underscores her as a coach who seamlessly integrates tactical expertise with compassionate leadership, garnering admiration, and respect from those in the sport (Culpepper, 2023).

The FIFA women’s World Cup reignited interest in women’s sports. The piece “With World Cup, Australia embraced women’s sport. Can it continue?” states that the Australian Football League (AFL) announced equal prize money for its men’s and women’s leagues, representing a broader push for investment in women’s athletics following the success of the Matildas during the tournament. Despite these strides, disparities persist, with women’s leagues receiving significantly less funding and support compared to men’s, which is evident in sports such as Australian rules football and rugby union. Nonetheless, high TV audience and public support for women’s sports indicate a strong appetite for female athletics in Australia. The article argues that continued investment and advocacy are essential to sustain this momentum and ensure that women’s sports keep thriving and receiving the recognition and resources they deserve (Vinall, 2023).

The article “Spain’s tumultuous road to the World Cup final, explained” provides a detailed chronology of events encompassing Spain’s turbulent journey to the final, bringing to light the team’s internal conflicts and external drawbacks. It begins with star midfielder Alexia Putellas’ critique of the Spanish women’s national team’s treatment in April 2022 and resulting in the squad’s path to the World Cup final in August 2023. Through this timeline, the author highlights key moments of tension and upheaval within the team, such as Putellas’ comments on gender disparities and the confrontations

between the team and coach Vilda regarding his management style, considered as overly controlling, in August 2022. The author meticulously traces Spain's path, including weighty victories and setbacks. Furthermore, the article contextualizes Spain's World Cup run within unequal support under the RFEF. Specific dates, such as the win against the United States in October 2022 and their progression to the final, serves as milestones in the team's complicated journey (Bonesteel, 2023).

The 2023 Women's World Cup, as highlighted in "This is the gayest World Cup ever (and no one's batting an eyelid)", emerges as a landmark event not just for its attendance and excitement but also for its important LGBTQ+ representation, potentially making it the most openly queer sporting event to date. With approximately 100 blatantly LGBTQ+ players and coaches across the competition's 32 teams, the impact on the community globally cannot be overstated. The author underscores the importance of players such as Sam Kerr, Megan Rapinoe, and Marta, who have not only become football icons but also LGBTQ+ role models. In stark contrast to the recent men's World Cup, the women's tournament stands out for its embrace of inclusivity. The piece highlights the natural pairing of the sport and minority groups representation, showcasing how it defies traditional gender norms and provides a platform for queer people to authentically express themselves, whether being players, coaches or fans (Vinall, 2023).

Finally, the piece "Once deemed unladylike, women's soccer grabs center stage in England" highlights the noteworthy transformation of women's football in England, illustrating its evolution from being deemed unsuitable for females to becoming a national phenomenon. The author states that despite historical barriers imposed by FIFA, the recent success of the Lionesses has sparked worldwide enthusiasm and inspired young girls across the nation to pursue their football dreams. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the Lionesses' dispute with the Football Association over bonus payments as a focal point, indicating the need for fair compensation and recognition in women's football (Adam, 2023).

3.7 Thematic Analysis – A Comparison of the Findings

In the coverage of the Qatar World Cup, media outlets extensively reported on allegations and evidence of human rights violations to the tournament. Reports highlighted issues such as restrictions on freedom of expression, discrimination, and violations of basic civil liberties. There was significant focus on the treatment of migrant

workers, including instances of forced labour, exploitation, poverty wages, and poor living conditions. The media scrutiny intensified as the tournament approached, with investigative reports shedding light on systemic abuses and failures in worker's rights protections.

On the other hand, in the coverage of the Women's World Cup, whilst the theme of Human Rights Violations was still addressed, the focus shifted to different aspects compared to the Qatar World Cup. The articles highlighted issues such as gender-based discrimination, unequal opportunities, and challenges faced by female athletes in the sporting industry. There was less emphasis on human rights abuses and more attention on advocating for gender parity and inclusivity within the sport. Media coverage often spotlighted success stories of female players overcoming barriers and breaking stereotypes.

Mainstream news media thoroughly investigated accusations and conflicts about FIFA corruption and Qatar's governance when covering the FIFA World Cup in the country, with particular focus on issues including bribery, financial transparency, and management practices. Investigations uncovered extensive misconducts within the organisation, illuminating issues with the bidding procedure and the allocation of hosting rights. The coverage highlighted widespread concerns about ethical practices, accountability, and the integrity of the tournament, prompting calls for reform within FIFA and the sports governance landscape. Conversely, in the portrayal of the Women's World Cup 2023, media reports prioritized discussions around gender equality, inclusivity, and fair treatment within football and organising bodies.

Although allegations of corruption and bribery were less prominent, there was increased attention on promoting equitable opportunities for female athletes and advocating for inclusive and transparent leadership structures. This comparison underscores the distinct emphasis and focus of Corruption and Governance theme in the portrayal of the two tournaments. Both events brought governance dynamics under closer examination, with the coverage of the World Cup in Qatar concentrated more on financial transparency, bidding processes, and systemic corruption inside FIFA. Alternatively, talks on gender parity, equal treatment within football federations, and diversity in sports management were given priority throughout the coverage of the Women's World Cup.

About Workers' Rights and Labour Conditions, media attention in the coverage of Qatar 2022 predominantly revolved around the challenges faced by migrant workers involved in infrastructure projects and stadium construction. Reports highlighted serious

problems including terrible working environment, lack of safety regulations, inadequate wages, and instances of exploitation. The focus was especially intense on the plight of migrant workers, given their significant presence in Qatar's workforce and the issues they encountered in a foreign land. Inversely, the portrayal of the Women's World Cup showcased issues including equality in payment, treatment, and overall working circumstances. Therefore, it is notable that the theme was more pervasive and emphasized migrant workers' difficulties with clear indignation, disgust and sometimes anger on the part of journalists and opinion columns during the Qatar World Cup coverage, whereas in the Women's tournament, it took on a different dimension, raising awareness of the audience about equal rights in the sporting realm.

The portrayal of Women and LGBTQ+ Rights in the context of the World Cup Qatar 2022 was often spotlighted within the framework of critiquing the host country's restrictive laws and societal and cultural norms. The articles frequently highlighted the challenges that minorities have faced in Qatar, where homosexuality is illegal, and expressions of LGBTQ+ identity are heavily regulated. News media shed light on the paradox of hosting a global sporting event in a country with deeply entrenched gender and sexual discrimination, sparking conversations around tolerance and human rights.

However, in a different perspective, Women's and LGBTQ+ Rights coverage celebrated female empowerment and LGBTQ+ inclusivity within football, driven by landmark moments including the Luis Rubiales's scandal, where he kissed Spanish player Jennifer Hermoso on the lips during the medal ceremony. This incident culminated in discussions around consent, boundaries, power dynamics, and the representation of women in the sport, amplifying calls for gender equality and respect within football. Additionally, the immense television audience following the road of the Australian national team – the Matildas – further fuelled debates on women's sports visibility and the importance of equivalent recognition and support for female athletes.

In the coverage of the World Cup in Qatar, media scrutiny centred the Ethical Dilemmas and Complicity theme surrounding the event's organisation and execution. The reports frequently emphasized allegations of corruption and bribery issues plaguing FIFA and the Qatari government, comprehensively covering controversies encompassing bidding processes, financial transparency, and human rights abuses, as addressed in the other themes. This environment prompted discussions on the ethical implications of supporting or participating in an event marred by systemic corruption and exploitation. The complicity of various stakeholders, including sponsors, individuals, media

organisations, and governing bodies, in overlooking or enabling unethical practices for financial gain or prestige was a recurring theme, offering reflections about social responsibility in mega-sporting events.

In contrast, the portrayal of the Women's World Cup shifted the theme's focus to different arenas. Although issues of corruption remained relevant, discussions also encompassed ethical quandaries related to minority representation and equality in treatment, especially regarding Luis Rubiales's outrageous behaviour as the head of the RFEF. While both tournaments grappled with ethical considerations and moral complexities, the framing and emphasis varied, capturing the unique sociopolitical contexts and narratives on accountability, equity, and integrity.

The theme Global Critique and Public Opinion emerged as one of the most prevalent and dynamic aspects in the coverage of both World Cup tournaments. The media discourse extensively examined and reflected on the global reception of the competition, eliciting a wide array of opinions, reactions, and criticisms from various stakeholders worldwide. Social media platforms served as significant arenas for public debate, where activists, journalists, and fans alike voiced their discontent and mobilized campaigns to raise awareness about the tournament's ethical and moral implications. In the case of the Qatar World Cup, media coverage often highlighted widespread condemnation and calls for boycotts due to concerns over human rights violations, corruption allegations, and labour exploitation.

Articles and opinion pieces frequently questioned the suitability of Qatar as a host nation, criticized FIFA's decision-making processes, and advocated for accountability and reform within the governing body. Conversely, the Women's World Cup portrayal witnessed a different set of worldwide critiques and public sentiments, albeit with similar intensity and resonance. Although the competition garnered a lot of praise for boosting women's football and improving gender parity in sports, media accounts also emphasized the continued difficulties and injustices experienced by female competitors. Overall, the Global Critique and Public Opinion theme underscored the pivotal role of media activism in shaping perceptions, driving social change, and holding sporting institutions accountable for their actions and decisions.

Lastly, the theme of Impact on Host Country delves into the multifaceted repercussions and legacies of hosting mega-sporting events on the respective nations. About Qatar, the media coverage explored mostly the transformative effects of the tournament on the country's socioeconomic landscape, urban development, and national

identity. The analysis examined the massive infrastructure projects, stadium building, and tourism initiatives undertaken in preparation for the event. The World Cup brought unprecedented international attention and prestige to Qatar, but also laid bare underlying issues such as migrant work exploration, urban gentrification, and environmental sustainability concerns.

On the other hand, the portrayal of Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand celebrated the tournament as a catalyst for promoting women's football, fostering community engagement, and enhancing national pride and unity. The tournament's positive legacy was reflected in increased participation levels, infrastructure investments, and cultural exchanges, contributing to the long-term growth and development of women's sports in the region. Furthermore, the event provided an opportunity for Australia and New Zealand to showcase their progressive values and diverse cultural heritage on the global stage. However, despite these positive outcomes, media coverage also shed light on lingering tensions surrounding the Women's World Cup, such as issues of accessibility, resource allocation, and social inclusion. The reports highlighted disparities in funding and support for women's football compared to the men's game.

In summary, while both FIFA World Cups left indelible marks on their respective host nations, the nature and implications of their impacts differed significantly. Qatar's experience underscored the complex interactions between global spectacle, national development, and social justice, whilst Australia and New Zealand's hosting of the Women's World Cup showcased the transformative power of sports in advancing gender equality, social inclusion, and national pride. Through critical analysis, the media coverage played a crucial role in documenting, contextualizing, and interrogating the legacies and implications of these historic sporting events.

Discussion

The analysis of media coverage surrounding the Qatar World Cup and the Women's World Cup has revealed noteworthy differences in thematic emphasis, framing, and tone across the selected media outlets. These variations underscore the nuanced sociopolitical contexts and narratives that shape media representation of major sporting events. The divergent outcomes observed in the portrayal of these tournaments can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including the sociopolitical landscape of the host countries, the nature of the events themselves, the priorities of governing bodies and sports organisations, and the role of media activism and advocacy.

The sociopolitical environment of the host countries exerted a significant influence on media coverage. Qatar's controversial hosting of the World Cup elicited international condemnation due to its human rights violations and stringent laws, prompting heightened scrutiny from journalists and activists. The Gulf nation's restrictive legal framework, particularly concerning LGBTQ+ rights and freedom of expression, created a severe backdrop against which the tournament unfolded. The majority of reports of migrant worker exploitation, poor labour conditions, and human rights abuses further intensified public outcry, leading to extensive coverage of these issues in the lead-up to the event. Consequently, media coverage of the Qatar World Cup was characterized by a critical tone, with journalists leveraging the platform to expose and denounce systemic injustices.

In contrast, Australia and New Zealand, the hosts of the Women's World Cup, are perceived as more progressive and egalitarian societies. The coverage exhibited a more celebratory and empowering tone, with media outlets highlighting topics such as inclusivity, female representation, and gender equality in sports. The cultural and political landscapes of these countries fostered an environment conducive to discussions around women's empowerment and LGBTQ+ rights, especially in light of the Rubiales scandal and the historic performance of the Australian national team, representing the co-host country. Media coverage of the Women's World Cup thus emphasized achievements related to sports in gender parity, female representation, and the celebration of diverse identities within football. Although challenges such as funding disparities and accessibility issues were acknowledged, the overall narrative centred on the positive impact on the positive impact of the tournament in advancing gender equality and social

inclusion. Consequently, news media adopted a more celebratory and supportive tone, reflecting the progressive values espoused by the host nations and the tournament itself.

The Qatar World Cup was marred by labour exploitation and FIFA's contentious decision to stage the tournament in a country with a questionable human rights record. The magnitude of the competition, combined with the extensive infrastructure projects required to host it, brought attention to labour conditions and human rights violations in Qatar. As media outlets uncovered stories of migrant worker mistreatment and substandard housing, the narrative around the World Cup became increasingly critical and focused on issues of social justice and ethical responsibility. Inevitably, FIFA's involvement in awarding the tournament to Qatar further fuelled media attention and public outrage.

In turn, the Women's World Cup represented a turning point for women's sports, offering an opportunity for news media to champion its achievements. The tournament showcased the talent and athleticism of female on a global stage, confronting traditional notions of sportsmanship and athleticism. The media coverage of the Women's World Cup thus aimed on narratives of empowerment, emphasizing the triumphs of women in football and defending greater representation and recognition in the sport. The visibility of LGBTQ+ athletes, coupled with discussions around issues of consent provided news outlets with avenues to promote progressive values and drive social change.

Furthermore, differences in the priorities of governing bodies and sports organisations also contributed to the disparate portrayal of the events. In the case of the Qatar World Cup, media coverage focused on FIFA's governance issues and Qatar's human rights record. Therefore, FIFA's decision to award the tournament to the country despite the overall concerns underscored broader problems of accountability and transparency within the world of international sports governance. News outlets seized upon these controversies to hold FIFA accountable for its decision-making processes and to demand greater moral standards in the selection process of host countries for future tournaments.

Conversely, the Women's competition accentuated efforts by football federations to promote gender equality, signalling a commitment to redressing longstanding disparities in the game. National football associations and governing bodies prioritized initiatives aimed at increasing female participation, investment in women's football programs, and addressing gender-based discrimination within the sport. Therefore, media portrayal reflected a shift in focus towards positive developments and progress in

women's sports, highlighting the strides made by football federations to create more equitable and inclusive environments, which thus amplifies the voices of women in football.

Lastly, the differing outcomes in the portrayal of the Qatar World Cup and the Women's World Cup underscore the interaction of sociopolitical dynamics, media priorities, and organisational focus. Although both events brought problems with authority and moral conundrums, the findings showcase distinct themes and narratives that emerged in media representation, emphasizing the necessity for nuanced approaches to comprehend and address challenges within the sports realm. Additionally, the findings illustrate the importance of fostering dialogue, collaboration, and partnership between stakeholders, including governments, civil society organisations, sports federations, and the media, to address systemic challenges and promote societal transformation.

Nevertheless, it proves essential to acknowledge the limitations and biases inherent in media coverage, alongside with the need for a more comprehensive analysis of major sports events. Western mainstream media failed to address critical issues, such as the 'rampant exploitation' of women workers in FIFA apparel supply chains, remains a glaring oversight. The human and labour rights organisation Equidem report sheds light on distressing testimonies from women working in factories in Bangladesh that produce official merchandise for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, revealing a reality of workers earning well below living wages, forced into unpaid overtime, and threatened with job loss for pregnancy. These workers face disproportionate levels of verbal abuse and illegal denial of worksite childcare and maternity leave, highlighting gender discrimination and exploitation within the supply chains (Equidem, 2023). The blatant absence of mainstream media on these violations starkly exposes the hypocrisy within Western media, which erected social causes such as workers and women's rights throughout their whole World Cup coverage.

This disregard for such important topics underscores the urgent need for a more critical examination of the media's position in shaping public opinions and priorities regarding sports events, questioning the prevailing narratives and holding powerful institutions accountable. Moving forward, future research should seek to build upon these findings by exploring alternative media narratives, perspectives, and voices, as well as investigating the long-term impacts and legacies of major tournaments on host communities, marginalized groups, and global society. Moreover, scholars and practitioners should continue to advocate for ethical, transparent, and accountable

practices in sports governance and development, and work towards creating more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable sporting environments for all.

This study provides valuable insights on how the Qatar World Cup and the Women's World Cup were covered by mainstream media outlets, but not without limitations. One potential limitation is the scope of the research, which focused primarily on content and thematic analysis of media coverage. Future research could employ more diverse methodologies, such as discourse analysis or interviews with journalists, to gain a deeper understanding of media representations and narratives. Moreover, the study primarily examined English-language news coverage, which may limit the applicability of the findings to regions that do not speak English. Further research could explore media framing and coverage in other languages to provide a more comprehensive analysis of global perceptions and discourses surrounding mega-sporting events. Future studies could also delve more into how media representations of a prestigious and acclaimed tournament such as the World Cup influence public perceptions and behaviours. In general, this study the groundwork for upcoming studies aimed at elucidating the complexities of media portrayals in the context of major sports competitions and their consequences for public policy, social justice, and governance.

Conclusion

The exploration of Western Media activism as observed in the coverage of the World Cup Qatar 2022 and its influence on the framing of the Women's World Cup 2023 has provided insightful information into the role of media in shaping public discourse and the societal perceptions. According to Goffman (1974), frames are cognitive structures that shape how individuals perceive and interpret reality, influencing the construction of news narratives and the framing of events in media coverage. In this context, media activism serves as a mechanism for challenging dominant frames and fighting for alternative perspectives, thereby influencing the framing of major sports events.

The analysis revealed that Western media activism played a significant role in shaping the framing of both tournaments, albeit in distinct ways. Entman (1993) argues that framing involves selecting and emphasizing some aspects of an issue but dismissing others, hence influencing on how audiences perceive the event. In the coverage of the Qatar World Cup, media activism manifested through critical analysis of FIFA's decision to host the tournament in Qatar, given the country's problems with human rights' aspects in general. Journalists used their positions to expose structural inequalities and promote moral principles in the management of international sports. Consequently, the media covered the event with a more critical and investigative framing, emphasizing the ethical dilemmas and complicity involved.

On the other hand, the media activism in the portrayal of the Women's World Cup took on a more celebratory and supportive tone, upholding the progress made in women's sports and advocating for gender equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion in football. Scheufele (1999) discusses aspects that might modify a journalist's approach to a subject, such as social norms, organisational pressures, and ideological considerations. These factors illuminate the different influences changing media narratives and agendas. Therefore, journalists played an important role in shaping public opinion around women's sports, highlighting success stories of female characters.

Although direct connections between the coverage of the Qatar World Cup and the Women's World Cup may be limited, there are indications of how Western media activism observed in the former could have influenced aspects of the latter. The critical approach surrounding issues such as human rights violations, governance dynamics, and LGBTQ+ treatment in Qatar created a backdrop against which the Women's World Cup coverage unfolded, potentially influencing the themes, narratives, and tone adopted by

media channels. While the extent of this influence may vary and cannot be definitively established, it suggests a broader dialogue within Western media discourse around major sports events. Despite potential limitations in mainstream media coverage, the thematic continuity in addressing issues such as human rights, corruption and governance, and minorities' rights and inclusion underscores the ongoing influence of Western media activism in public opinion.

The absence of mainstream media coverage on human rights violations, such as the exploitation of women workers in FIFA apparel supply chains highlighted by the Equidem report, underlines the gap between media rhetoric regarding social causes and the actual coverage of human rights abuses, disclosing potential biases or inconsistencies within Western mainstream media. Through a careful examination of the portrayal of the two World Cups, this research has contributed to a deeper understanding of how mainstream media activity influences public perceptions and narratives around major sporting events. As such, future studies should continue to explore the complexities of media representation and activism in the field of sports events, shedding light on overlooked issues and promoting greater accountability and transparency in media discourse.

Summary

Práce zkoumá mediální aktivismus objevující se v mediálním pokrytí Mistrovství světa ve fotbale v Kataru konaném v listopadu a prosinci 2022 Západními mainstreamovými médii. Tato práce, využívající teorii rámcování, analyzuje mediální výstupy a rámcování pořadatelství akce v Kataru z politické perspektivy. Dále je zkoumáno, zda mediální aktivismus dále přetrvává nebo nikoliv, a to na příkladu Mistrovství světa žen ve fotbale konaném v roce 2023. Práce analyzuje a srovnává mediální pokrytí těchto dvou událostí vybranými Západními médii. Výsledky výzkumu naznačují posuny v mediálních narativích a rámcích mezi těmito dvěma turnaji. Ambicí práce je komplexní pochopení dynamiky médií a jejich dopadu na veřejné vnímání na významných mezinárodních sportovních událostí, přičemž je zdůrazněna role médií při utváření narativů a ovlivňování veřejného diskurzu.

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