
DEGREES OF FREEDOM AND MONEY: FRAMING THE SOCIAL ISSUES SURROUNDING THE 2022 WORLD CUP IN QATAR WITHIN NEWS OUTLETS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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Synopsis:

This study examines and compares traditional media framing in sport media, and bottom-up framing on social media pertaining to social issues and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Abstract:

FIFA, the governing body of world football has grown in influence due to the financial power of its major sporting tournament - the World Cup. With an estimated operating budget for the 2018 World Cup cycle of \$4.42 billion, funds are distributed throughout the 209 member countries, providing smaller national football associations with their largest source of income.

In December 2010, FIFA awarded the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. In addition to concerns regarding temperatures in excess of 104 degrees Fahrenheit during the tournament months of June and July, Qatar has been subject of investigations regarding human rights violations relating to living conditions, and the safety of migrant workers (Roan, 2015). On February 24, 2015, FIFA announced that the World Cup in Qatar would be held in November and December to address the concerns regarding on-field temperatures, while concerns regarding the social issues remain. The purpose of this study is to examine traditional, bottom-up and networked framing in a sport environment, specifically analyzing the differences in framing regarding social issues surrounding the 2022 World Cup.

Traditional news framing has been found to influence audience opinions on various issues. This framing process has been employed in communications research to illustrate how issues can be made more salient to audiences through the selection and emphasis of information (Entman, 1993). Nisbet (2010) called for increased examination of bottom-up framing on social media, which was defined as framing by individuals who are consistent producers of

content, as the increased utilization of online media facilitates this type of content production. This examination of framing from a bottom-up perspective has been found to provide increased awareness for social issues and opposition opinions (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012). In addition, the employment of the bottom-up framing process combined with sub-sectional longitudinal analysis can illustrate how certain frames rise to prominence through crowdsourcing practices, and are reframed to remain relevant in the minds of the audience, a process defined by Meraz and Papcharissi (2013) as networked framing.

While the concepts of bottom-up framing and networked framing have been utilized to examine social issues in political communication research, there is a lack of research that has examined these concepts as they pertain to social issues in sport. Employing the methodological process used by Hamdy and Gomaa (2012), this study will examine news media framing from a traditional, top-down perspective, as well as social media framing from a bottom-up perspective to determine if differences exist in the type of frames produced, which will investigate the ability of social media to increase awareness of social issues.

To facilitate this purpose, a content analysis methodology was employed. Using February 24 as a catalyst for traditional news and social media dialogue, a purposive, consecutive day timeframe from February 23 to March 2 was selected. Data collection and preliminary analysis was performed using the software tools Sysomos and Leximancer.

Sysomos is a media analysis platform that enables users to construct real-time or historical datasets comprised from blogs, Twitter, social networks, message boards, and traditional news articles. Word clouds identify key terms, while influence analysis tracks the dispersion of information through a network over time. Employing the search terms "World Cup" and Qatar in Sysomos and filtering for the timeframe specified above yielded 29,963 tweets ($n = 29,963$), 5,240 news stories ($n = 5,240$), 1,186 forum posts ($n = 1,186$), and 848 blog posts ($n = 848$) for a total dataset of 37,237 ($N = 37,237$) items. This dataset was imported into Leximancer, a software that conducts conceptual (i.e., thematic) and relational (i.e., semantic) textual analysis on content. Leximancer generates a conceptual map that identifies the dominant themes within the text, with conceptual importance determined upon frequency and relational analysis.

Preliminary data analysis revealed February 24 and 25 as the days with the highest media activity with 58.86% of tweets, 59.31% of news stories, 55.06% of forum posts, and 64.85% of blog posts occurring during these two days. An example of content with high influence in terms of network shares that highlighted social issues included: "Qatar is a country of 1.8m people, mostly expats. Oppressive labour laws. Totally unsuitable World Cup host. Timing shouldn't be the issue." Comprehensive analysis of the dataset will be completed prior to the 2015 EASM Conference. Theoretical implications regarding bottom-up framing and audience sentiments pertaining to social issues surrounding Qatar, as well as practical implications for sport organizations in relation to message control and sport consumer perceptions will be discussed should the abstract be accepted for presentation.

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