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Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup: Exploring ‘Sportswashing’ through Topic Modelling

The 2022 FIFA World Cup was the 22nd edition of the FIFA World Cup, the world’s premier national football competition. The quadrennial tournament was held in Qatar from the 20th of November to the 18th of December 2022, following the country’s successful bid for hosting rights in 2010. Since the announcement of their successful bid, Qatar has faced sustained criticism regarding corruption in the bidding process, concerns over human and LGBTQ+ rights, scheduling and fixture congestion, access to alcohol, and paid fans (Hough, 2022; Dart, 2022; Allegretti, 2022; Molango, 2022; Panja, 2022; Hamilton, 2022). FIFA too has faced sustained criticism for serious allegations of corruption as well as the infamous “today I feel” speech by FIFA president Gianni Infantino (Philippou, 2022; McDaniel, 2022). Such extensive and sustained criticism has culminated in accusations that Qatar has used the World Cup to launder its international image, a practice known as ‘sportswashing’ (Manoli, 2022; Wearing, 2022; Snell, 2022; Ganji, 2022). This term has, over the last five years, become increasingly noticeable in English-language media, particularly in the context of the English Premier League, with two teams – Manchester City Football Club and Newcastle United Football Club – now owned by the sovereign wealth funds of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia respectively (Doward, 2018; Skey, 2022; Jackson, 2023). Both nations have been accused of using their participation in football to distract attention away from alleged human rights abuses (Hattenstone, 2018; Ingle, 2021). Qatar has its own stake in domestic club football owning Paris Saint-Germain Football Club through its sovereign wealth fund and is looking to expand its portfolio with the potential acquisition of Manchester United Football Club (Ford, 2021; Panja, 2023). As an academic and analytical concept however sportswashing remains comparatively understudied and underutilised due to its nascent conceptualisation (Skey, 2022). Instead sportswashing is rather understood or

analysed through other concepts that are situated in the fields of political communications, international relations, or branding and marketing studies (Skey, 2022; Murray, 2018; Murray & Pigman, 2014; Krzyaniak, 2018, Dinnie, 2015). However, its use as an analytic concept is growing, particularly in the context of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021; Skey, 2022; Boykoff, 2022; Fruh et al., 2023).

The growth and ever-presence of social media and other digital channels has created a myriad of new virtual spaces where football fans can interact with one another (Fenton et al., 2023). Reddit – a social news aggregation, content rating, and discussion forum – is host to one of the largest football discussion spaces in the world; this ‘subreddit’ known as /r/soccer, has over 4.3 million subscribers (Reddit.com, 2023). These communities and how they communicate has therefore become of interest to scholars from a range of disciplines (Proferes et al., 2021). To date, most computational studies about user engagement during the World Cup have focused on twitter (Godfrey et al., 2014; Yu & Wang, 2015; Rodriguez, 2017; Fan et al., 2020; Meier et al., 2021). However there has been comparatively little focus on reddit (Gallagher et al., 2021; Avdić & Bagić-Babac, 2021). Given the significant social, cultural, and economic capital that sports hold within society, it’s use as a political tool for state promotion has become of particular interest to scholars (Qingmin, 2013; Skey, 2022). This study is subsequently guided by two overarching research questions: are the controversies surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar topics of discussion within the /r/soccer community, and how prevalent are they? This study therefore seeks to contribute to not only the growing body of scholarship on sportswashing but also the wider body of communication and sport.

Literature Review

In recent years ‘sportswashing’ as a term has come increasingly prominent in English-language media, with 550 mentions in 2019 and over 800 in 2021 (Skey, 2022). A neologism, the term first emerged in connection to the decision to host the 2015 European Games – an

athletics event – in Azerbaijan, a country criticised for alleged human rights abuses (Akhundova, 2015; Skey, 2022). Despite its increasing utilisation among the media and public there has been little academic interest in the term, largely because of its conceptual overlap with soft power or sports diplomacy (Skey, 2022). However, some scholars such as Simon Chadwick have attempted to define the concept of sportswashing as a “way for a country to divert the audience’s attention from unfavourable perceptions of the country by investing in sports programs” (2022:12). Other scholars such as Boykoff have defined it as the process of “using sports mega-events to enhance a country’s reputation on the global stage” (Francis, 2022). Because of its conceptual relation to other forms of ‘washing’, this literature review will look at concepts which ‘deal with’ sportswashing, such as sports diplomacy, green washing, and place branding, before looking at sportswashing as an academic concept itself.

Sports Diplomacy

Diplomacy and soft power are often portrayed as ‘positive’ features of international relations, which focus on the way in which state actors and state institutions look to manage potential or actualised conflicts and to build relationships through engagement and attraction rather than deception or physical force (Murray, 2018). Whilst the use of sport as a propaganda tool is commonly criticised, sports diplomacy is largely characterised as a means of promoting international understanding, dispelling prejudice, and fostering friendship (Murray, 2018; Murray & Pigman, 2014). Stuart Murray’s book ‘Sports Diplomacy: Origins, Theory, and Practice’ provides a comprehensive definition and understanding of sports diplomacy. According to Murray, sports diplomacy is not a new practice, but rather a new term that defines the use of sports to achieve various state goals, promote goodwill, and to bring people from diverse cultural, linguistic, religious, or ethnic backgrounds together (Murray 2018). More specifically it involves a deliberate and strategic approach by actors to

utilise sporting events to engage, inform, and create a positive perception among foreign publics (Murray, 2018).

The primary focus on academic research on sports diplomacy has revolved around so-called ‘mega-events’, like the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup. Scholars have found that hosting such events provides two main advantages in terms of soft power. Firstly, it increases the visibility and recognition of the host country on the global stage, allowing them the opportunity to positively influence their international image (Brannagan, 2015; Kobierecki & Strożek, 2021). Secondly, by performing well in these events, whether by winning medals, claiming an upset against a major opponent, playing or competing attractively, or successfully hosting the event itself, the nation may improve its international standing (Kobierecki & Strożek, 2017). Even negative foreign media coverage throughout the event can lead to increased international visibility and its associated benefits (Buarque, 2015). However, despite the potential positive impact for the country hosting such events, negative stereotypes about the host nation may persist, and public opinion may only slightly improve (Gries et al. 2010; Syed, 2010). As such sport’s significant cultural and social capital make it a potent diplomatic tool to access influential state actors (Qingmin, 2013), engage with hard-to-reach groups (Chehabi, 2001), and connect with global media audience (Murray, 2012). Therefore, global sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup – which attract significant levels of global viewership – make them a highly desirable platform for public diplomacy (Skey, 2022).

Greenwashing

Greenwashing refers to the deceptive use of marketing or public relations to portray an organisations, products, goals, or policies as environmentally friendly (Marquis et al., 2016; De Freitas Netto et al., 2020; Pizzetti et al., 2021). These advertising or marketing practices aim to persuade consumers or the public that the company or organisation is

committed to environmental sustainability and are deliberately misleading (Pizzetti et al., 2021). The literature on greenwashing distinguishes between two typologies: corporate or product-level greenwashing (Marquis et al., 2016). Various forms of greenwashing have been identified by researchers, including, selective disclosure, empty claims or policies, dubious certification, ‘green’ labels or partnerships, misleading narratives, imagery, or deceptive manipulation (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015; Siano et al., 2017). With the advent of web 2.0 and social media, companies have invested significantly in online green marketing communications, with such mediums redefining interactions and communications between companies and consumers (Fieseler et al., 2010; De Freitas Netto et al., 2020). In doing so, companies hope to be perceived as having certain values and beliefs to achieve their desired brand perception and consumer purchase intentions (Nyilasy et al., 2014). Due to the growth of green marketing and subsequently greenwashing, consumers are faced with a growing trust deficit (Nyilasy et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2014). Since greenwashing is conceptually focused on ‘laundering’ one’s image, it is a notional antecedent of sportswashing. Indeed, other forms of greenwashing are even more so conceptually in line with sportswashing, through the generation of associations with desired activities, which instead covering up something, are meant as a distraction (Skey, 2022).

Nation or Place Branding

Nation or place branding is an extension of the ‘logic’ of branding which encompasses a country’s image or ‘brand’ across cultural, social, and political dimensions (Fan, 2010; Askegaard, 2006). Nation branding seeks to create positive attitudes towards a nation’s economic aspects (Anholt, 2007; Bell, 2005; Dinnie, 2015), making consumers prefer or desire their products, ranging from food to cities (Gnoth, 2002). Through this branding nations can create favourable attitudes towards tourism, foreign direct investment, culture, heritage, sport, or governing system (Anholt, 2007). The use of sport, especially the

hosting of ‘mega-events’, has been considered a primary method through which countries may brand themselves regionally or globally by promoting select attributes (Knott et al., 2015). Much of the literature related to the use of sports as a nation branding ‘vehicle’ has focused on non-Western countries, which seek to enhance their image globally (Grix & Lee, 2013; Rein & Shield, 2007).

Sportswashing

Sportswashing is in essence a more critical interpretation of sports and public diplomacy. This ‘critical’ dimension sees sportswashing as a method through which a nation with a questionable human rights record ‘launders’ its image through sports (Kobierecki & Strožek, 2021; Francis, 2022). It is therefore an analogue – much like greenwashing – of whitewashing. Sportswashing therefore leverages victories, sports development aid, team sponsor- or ownership, or hosting events like the World Cup or Olympics (Kobierecki & Strožek, 2021). Scholars such as Kobierecki and Strožek (2021) conceptualise sportswashing as a negative form of public diplomacy which involves the use of sporting mega-events to improve a country’s perception and global reputation. They argue that such ‘tactics’ are often employed by countries with a perceived or actual negative human rights record (Kobierecki & Strožek, 2021). The significant cultural and social capital of sports lies in its ability to capture the attention of varied groups of people globally, which both includes and cuts across national, class-based, gender, and age-based groups, among others (Wong & Meng-Lewis, 2022). Furthermore, in a media landscape that is increasingly fragmented, sports remain one of the few forms of content capable of drawing in large audiences (Skey, 2022). As a result, sports are attractive to various stakeholders, including media companies, sponsors, governments, and states. Sports is therefore one ‘piece’ of the puzzle in a wider soft power projection attempt by Qatar (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015; Brannagan & Rookwood, 2016; Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2018). Due to people’s significant social and emotional attachment

to sports, scholars argue that these attachments can ‘override’ or minimize their concerns about particular controversies (Manoli, 2022; Kim & Manoli, 2022; Kim & Manoli, 2023). As Skey (2022) argues, sportswashing conceptually separates itself from other forms of ‘washing’ because it moves away from notions of concealment or cover up, but rather creates a process of consociation and deflection. Meaning that, if Qatar is related to a well-run, high-profile football tournament – irrespective of controversies that exist inside of it – then it isn’t *only* being associated with those controversies. This leads us back to our guiding research questions, are the controversies surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar topics of discussion within the /r/soccer community, and how prevalent are they?

Controversies surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup

Corruption

Allegations of bribery and corruption amongst members of the FIFA Executive Committee - now known as the FIFA Council - marred the 2022 FIFA World Cup host selection process (Henderson, 2014). In the years since 2010, 16 of the 22 voting FIFA Executive Committee members have been linked to or investigated for potential involvement in alleged corruption or unethical conduct (Ronay, 2022). In 2011 the Sunday Times printed allegations that Mohamed Bin Hammam had transferred US\$5 million through 10 undisclosed bank accounts to influential individuals in national football associations to support Qatar’s bid (AFP, 2014). Bin Hammam was then a member of the FIFA executive and the former president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFP, 2014). Allegations of corruption persist against former French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Michel Platini (Ronay, 2022). Platini who was then president of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is alleged to have ‘switched his vote’ to Qatar after meeting with Sarkozy and the Emir of Qatar (Ronay, 2022). Subsequently, The Qatari government, through its sovereign wealth fund, purchased French club Paris-Saint-Germain, expanded its

ownership share in a French media conglomerate, and secured exclusive broadcasting rights to French football (Ronay, 2022).

Two separate investigations, conducted by Swiss prosecutors and the US Department of Justice (DoJ) respectively, probed into allegations of racketeering, wire fraud, and money laundering involving individuals associated with FIFA (Hough, 2022). The Swiss investigations focused on uncovering fraud, mismanagement, and misappropriation of FIFA funds involving senior FIFA officials (Hough, 2022). Several individuals have been convicted yet many cases are still ongoing (Eiholzer, 2023). Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter and vice-president Michael Platini were acquitted after serving an eight-year ban from all football related activities (Gibson, 2015; Ingle, 2022). Nasser Al-Khelaïfi the Qatari football executive, government minister, and president of Paris-Saint-Germain, was acquitted in the Swiss corruption trial (Hough, 2022). Al-Khelaïfi is also chairman of the beIN Media Group and is a member of UEFA's Executive Committee (Hough, 2022). The US Department of Justice's investigation primarily centred on allegations of bribery, money laundering, and the distribution of media rights (Department of Justice, 2022). Over 50 individuals and corporations have faced criminal charges, with many accused of participating in bribery schemes and laundering illicit payments; four corporations and 27 individuals have so-far pleaded guilty to various charges related to bribery and money laundering (Hough, 2022). Many cases are still ongoing, mainly by individuals contesting extradition to the United States (Guyana Chronicle, 2022). As a result of the investigation, the DoJ has seized over US\$ 201 million from the accounts of former officials (Reuters, 2021). The money has since been returned to FIFA (Reuters, 2021).

Human Rights

The organization and hosting of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar has faced widespread criticisms and controversies over alleged human rights violations (McTague,

2022; Begum 2022; Boehm, 2022). One of the major concerns related to Qatar's hosting of the World Cup is the treatment of migrant workers who have been brought in to construct the necessary infrastructure. Migrant workers make up most of the labour force in all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, comprising around 70% of the regional labour market; in Qatar this share is as high as 96% (Babar, 2014; De Bel-Air, 2015). The residency and employment rights of migrant workers are governed by a sponsorship system known as 'kafala', which can be described as an expansive and institutionalised guest-worker program (Damir-Geilsdorf & Pelican, 2019). Under the kafala system, regulations tightly bind temporary contract laborers to their local employers, who have legal and economic responsibility for them throughout their stay; this often results in employers exerting control over their mobility and ability to switch employers (Damir-Geilsdorf & Pelican, 2019). Due to the substantial power imbalance between the worker being sponsored and their employer, the kafala system has received consistent criticism for allowing potential exploitation of low-skilled and low-income migrants (Gardner, 2010; Longva, 1999; 2019).

An investigation conducted by *The Guardian* newspaper in 2013 alleged that migrant workers were routinely deprived of adequate food and water, had their identity papers confiscated, were coerced into forced labour, and that they did not receive their salaries either on time or at all (Gibson, 2014). Investigations by *Amnesty International* in 2013 and 2016 alleged that migrant workers were "seriously exploited" and subject to expensive recruitment fees, unsafe living conditions, false salary claims, delayed salaries, and threatened if they complained about their work or living conditions (Amnesty International, 2013; 2016). It was further alleged that workers were coerced into signing false declarations that they had been paid to have their passports returned (Amnesty International, 2013).

Perhaps the most damning claim came from *The Guardian* who reported that since the FIFA World Cup was awarded to Qatar, 6,751 migrant workers have died in Qatar (Pattisson

et al., 2021). Later analysis revealed that the article had become the most shared English-language article on Twitter regarding the 2022 World Cup, and that as of October 2022, the alleged number of deaths had been mentioned in connection with the term “Qatar” over 400,000 times on Twitter (Ford, 2022). The analysis further revealed that within 24 hours of publication the alleged number of deaths had been misinterpreted and widely reported in English, Spanish, French and Dutch media as fatalities on “World Cup construction sites” (Ford, 2022).

It is important to note that the kafala system underwent two significant liberalisations in 2020 (Pattisson, 2020). Such revisions to the country's labour system have seen the abolition of the ‘No Objection Certificate’ (NOC) and the virtual removal of ‘exit permits’ for employees (Pattisson, 2020). Historically employees must have received a NOC from their previous employer before entering an employment agreement with a new employer (Pattisson, 2020). Under the previous ‘exit permit’ system migrant workers required the permission of their employer to leave Qatar and faced widespread criticism (Pattisson, 2020; Krauss, 2020).

Scheduling

The FIFA World Cup is traditionally held during the northern hemisphere summer because of two factors. Firstly, most European domestic and intercontinental competitions are over by the end of May. Secondly, most players who play for qualified nations play in Europe; of the 830 players who participated in the 2022 World Cup, 73% of them played for European clubs (Al Jazeera, 2022). However, hosting the World Cup during this time would prove unfeasible for Qatar due to the climate and its potential effects on players and fans (Adair, 2022). A decision by a FIFA taskforce which recommended that the tournament be played in winter – due to the climate – caused further criticism of the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar (Chadwick, 2015). Shortly after the decision was announced the

Association of European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) criticised the proposed schedule as it meant that European domestic leagues would be interrupted (Hall, 2015). The Football Federation of Australia (FFA) also criticised the decision due to similar concerns over scheduling (Lutz, 2013). The African Cup of Nations (AFCON) - the continents premier national cup competition – postponed the 2023 edition of the cup from January 2023 to June 2023 even though the monsoonal rainy season in the host nation of Guinea normally begins in June (BBC Sport, 2015).

Alcohol Consumption

Whilst the consumption of alcohol is not illegal in Qatar, it is heavily regulated. The purchase of alcohol is nominally available to expatriates through a permit system, and only certain businesses are licensed to sell alcohol and public drinking is not permitted (Whitaker, 2010). When Qatar was awarded the World Cup it initially had agreed to relax rules surrounding the availability and sale of alcohol, largely pressured by FIFA due to its long-running association with prominent sponsor Budweiser (Syed, 2022; Baxter, 2022). Initially the Qatari government announced that it would permit fans to purchase beer at World Cup stadia three hours before kick-off and for one hour after the final whistle, but not during the match (Church, 2022; Dunbar, 2022). Eight days before the opening ceremony, Budweiser was ordered to move its service points at stadium concourses to more discreet locations, allegedly at the behest of the brother of Qatar's Emir (Syed, 2022). Then two days before the opening match, FIFA confirmed that no alcohol was to be sold at any stadium, and instead only in designated 'fan parks' around Doha (Church, 2022; Dunbar, 2022). The decision proved to be controversial largely because match-goers who purchased hospitality suites (at a cost upwards of US\$22,500) still had access to alcohol but also because FIFA had pressured prior hosts Brazil and Russia to overturn pre-existing bans on drinking in stadiums in previous editions of the World Cup (Syed, 2022).

Paid Fans

In the lead up to the tournament Qatar established the ‘Fan Leader Network’ a group which promised to pay for flights, accommodation, tickets to World Cup matches, as well as a daily stipend (MacInnes, 2022). Fans engaged in the program were required to sing and chant upon request, post positive social media messages about the World Cup, and were obligated to report social media posts that criticised Qatar (Panja, 2022). Fans participating in the program were informed that the Supreme Committee would also monitor their posts (Weber, 2022). However shortly before the tournament began fans alleged that the Network had cancelled their per diem payment for food and drink – which some fans were dependent upon – because of negative media coverage of the scheme (MacInnes, 2022). Qatar faced widespread accusations of ‘sportswashing’ by allegedly paying people to act as supporters during the tournament to help promote the country (McEachen, 2022; Braddick, 2022; Ingle, 2022; Hamilton, 2022). Whilst only 1,600 fans were part of the scheme, allegations persisted that many fans – mainly from India – were paid to ‘pretend’ to be fans of participating nations like England, Brazil, or Argentina (Weber, 2022). Such confusion about the scheme fuelled these rumours despite many of them being genuine fans even though they were not nationals of the country they were supporting (Weber, 2022). However, 1,500 fans of the Qatar national team, were actually ‘ultras’ – the most dedicated supporters – of Lebanese club Nejme SC (Montague, 2022). The fans were offered an all-expenses-paid trip to the World Cup provided they sang the Qatari national anthem and approved chants and create the ‘ultras’ atmosphere typical of club football (Montague, 2022).

LGBTQ+ Rights in Qatar

Homosexuality is criminalised under Qatari law and attracts heavy penalties (Scharfenort, 2012). Potential discrimination against LGBTQ+ fans was a persistent source of criticism towards the decision to host the World Cup in Qatar (Jones, 2022; Ingle, 2022;

Thomas, 2022; Allegratti, 2022; Rawlinson, 2022; MacInnes, 2022). In 2013, Hassan al-Thawadi the Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy – the organisation responsible for managing the World Cup – stated that whilst everyone was invited, public displays of affection were not in line with the country’s culture or tradition (BBC Sport, 2013). Football Associations from European countries had been assured by the Qatari organising committee that LGBTQ+ couples would not face arrest whilst holding hands or kissing in public (Gardner, 2022).

Days before the tournament began, Khalid Salman, a former member of the Qatari national football team and World Cup ambassador, sparked controversy by referring to homosexuality as a “damage in the mind” with German broadcaster ZDF, the comments received criticism, including from the German government (MacInnes 2022; Euronews, 2022). Members of the organisation committee pledged multiple times to adhere to FIFA’s values on human rights and anti-discrimination, which state that any form of discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation is considered “strictly prohibited” (King-Hill, 2022; Harris, 2020). Nasser Al-Khater who served as the Chief Executive Officer for the Qatar World Cup, publicly provided reassurance that the display of LGBTQ+ imagery or symbols (such as rainbow flags) would not be restricted during World Cup Matches (Harris, 2020). Months before the World Cup began however, Major General Abdulaziz Abdullah al-Ansari – the official in charge of World Cup security - stated that flags or other symbols may be removed from match-goers “for their own protection” (Ziegler, 2022). American football journalist Grant Wahl was detained by security staff for wearing a rainbow shirt whilst attempting to enter the USA’s World Cup opener against Wales (The Guardian, 2022). Welsh football fans had rainbow themed bucket-hats confiscated during the same match (Fisher, 2022).

Perhaps most controversial was the decision by FIFA to threaten sanctions against players who wore rainbow themed “OneLove” armbands at the World Cup (Grierson, 2022). Several European nations had written to FIFA requesting permission to wear the logo as it was in breach of FIFA regulations which stipulate that the captain’s armband is provided by FIFA itself (Al Jazeera, 2022). The nations had announced that they would be prepared to pay fines which are the usual punishment for breaching kit regulations (Al Jazeera, 2022). FIFA threatened – on the day the tournament officially began – that any player who wore the OneLove armband would instead receive a yellow card, which exposed players to potential match suspension or ejection (Al Jazeera, 2022). In the following days several nations embroiled in the OneLove armband controversy confirmed that they had been in talks regarding a complete withdrawal from FIFA and would not support Infantino’s bid for re-election as FIFA president (Buckingham & Whitehead, 2022).

“Focus on the Football” and “Today I Feel”

In November during the lead up to the tournament Infantino became involved in a series of controversies related to a letter sent out to all participating nations as well as an hour-long press conference. On the 5th of November Infantino and Fatma Samoura – the first female Secretary General of FIFA – implored participating nations to “Please, let’s now focus on the football!” (Crafton, 2022). The letter requested participating nations to stop and refrain from any further discussions related to Qatar’s poor human rights record and to “not allow football to be dragged into every ideological or political battle that exists” (Crafton, 2022). Members of the UEFA Working Group a pressure group focused on improving the conditions of migrant workers, women, and LGBTQ+ people in Qatar, alleged that they were specifically targeted by the letter, and openly criticised it “history has shown us that the pursuit of such a strategy [focus on the football] will be self-defeating and only further erodes football’s social license to operate” (Whitehead, 2022).

Perhaps most bizarrely was Infantino's hour-long address to the media in which he defended FIFA's hosting of the tournament in Qatar which began with Infantino suggesting that his background as the son of Italian immigrants in Switzerland gave him a deep understanding of the issues faced by migrant workers and minority groups in Qatar (Ingle, 2022). The speech which was widely condemned saw Infantino claim "Today I feel Qatari. Today I feel Arabic. Today I feel African. Today I feel gay. Today I feel disabled. Today I feel a migrant worker" before adding "Because I know what it means to be discriminated [against] . . . As a child I was bullied because I had red hair and freckles, plus I was Italian, so imagine" (Ingle, 2022). When it was later noted that he had left out half of the world's population, Infantino exclaimed "I feel like a woman too!" (Ingle, 2022). During the speech Infantino claimed criticisms of Qatar were hypocritical because of Europe's history of colonialism (Olley, 2022). The last-minute decision by Qatari authorities to severely limit the sale of alcohol saw Infantino insist that it was a joint decision before claiming that FIFA was still in "200% control" (Panja, 2022). The speech was widely criticised as bizarre, incendiary, and an "extraordinary diatribe" that engaged in whataboutism and deflected or ignored legitimate concerns regarding Qatar's human rights record and added to the growing allegations that FIFA was complicit in 'sportswashing' Qatar's image (Dunbar, 2022; Ingle, 2022; Panja, 2022; McDaniel, 2022; Ronay, 2022).

Reddit as a Platform

Reddit is one of the most popular social media platforms on the internet with roughly 52 million daily active users (Reddit.com, 2020). The forum-like discussion board is composed of over 138,000 subreddits which are both user-created and user-moderated (Proferes et al., 2021; Marotti, 2018). As such, subreddits are based on a nearly limitless variety of topics such as sport, fashion, news, politics, arts, and culture (Proferes et al., 2021). Within these subreddits users may post text-posts or hyperlinks to other websites on the

internet. Users can then upvote or downvote the submitted post which affects the posts position on each subreddit. Within these submitted posts users can reply to the original post or to each other and can also upvote or downvote each comment. Discussions on reddit are mainly public meaning that anyone – whether a user or not – can access them, unless the subreddit is set to private. As such reddit has been the epicentre of numerous controversies, including attempts to identify the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, an archive of hacked nude photos of female celebrities, coordinated attempts to influence stock markets, as well as racist, sexist, and toxic political discourse (Starbird et al., 2014; Marwick, 2017; Roose, 2021; Mittos et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2019, Mills, 2018). Because of its size, impact, and at times, notoriety, reddit has become an important platform for scholars across all disciplines (Proferes et al., 2021).

Topic Modelling

Topic models are a series of machine learning techniques that identify ‘topics’ in within a given body of text – known as a corpus – which can identify hidden or latent thematic structures (Blei, 2012). Topic modelling has been applied to a wide range of disciplines such as political science (Grimmer, 2010), literary studies (Jockers and Mimno, 2013), sociology (DiMaggio et al., 2013), and journalism and communications (van Atteveldt et al., 2016; van Atteveldt, 2018; Chen et al., 2023). Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is among the most frequently employed topic models but other algorithms like BERTopic, and **top2vec** are also utilised (Blei et al., 2003; Murakami et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2023). Simply, topic models seek to assign word types in texts to a topic-list with a text consisting of multiple topics (Murakami et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2023). Topics are constructed by a probability distribution over a fixed vocabulary, meaning that particular words (e.g., *football*) are more probable to occur or appear within a specific topic (e.g., ‘goal’) compared to another topic (e.g., ‘Eurovision’) (Murakami et al., 2017). These words within topics are therefore

seen as keywords of a particular topic and by extension the texts with a high probability of a topic are seen as key texts of that topic (Brett, 2012; Murakami et al., 2017). At its simplest form, a topic is a repeated and consistent arrangement of words in a pattern of word co-occurrence (Brett, 2012). Topic modelling has subsequently established itself as one of the most influential research methods in the social sciences (Chen et al., 2023). Topic modelling allows researchers to get a quick overview of potentially massive volumes of text data (DiMaggio et al., 2013; Nelson, 2020). In doing so topic modelling provides a new avenue for researchers to identify patterns within a corpus that may otherwise be difficult to discern through traditional manual coding (DiMaggio et al., 2013). Topic modelling supports researchers in being able to extract meanings from textual data, given that many theoretical constructs within social science are not directly measurable (DiMaggio et al., 2013; Grimmer and Stewart, 2013; Ying et al., 2021). Topic modelling therefore allows researchers to quantify abstract concepts (Ying et al., 2021). Reddit has subsequently emerged as a key platform for researchers interested in utilising topic modelling techniques due to its size, accessibility, and variety (Stine & Agarwal, 2020; Curiskis et al., 2020; Sepahpour-Fard & Quayle, 2022).

Methodology

Data Collection

/r/soccer is perhaps the largest dedicated football discussion ‘space’ on the internet with nearly 4.4 million subscribers (Reddit.com, 2023). Users of the /r/soccer subreddit can submit what are known as “Match Threads” which serve as a discussion hub for that match but are most often submitted by a bot known as MatchThreader (Reddit.com, 2023). This bot generates a thread which contains information about the match such as the score, line-ups, and match events. Users can also create separate threads for highlights, goals, news articles, stats, or any other football related content, provided it meets the Community Rules

(Reddit.com, 2023). Users can also ‘flair-up’ and display their favourite club or national teams badge next to their username. Data was collected using the ‘RedditExtractoR’ package, an R package which allows you to find subreddits based on a search query, find a user and their Reddit posting history, or find URLs to threads of interest and to retrieve the comments out of these threads (Rivera, 2023). The package is licensed under GNU General Public License (GPL) 3 (Rivera, 2023). Data was collected on the 18th of March 2023. The initial dataset was composed of 243 threads from the last year that contained the keywords, “World Cup”, “Qatar”, or “FIFA”. Due to how search functions operate on Reddit a custom time-period cannot be set but only one of: last hour, today, this week, this month, this year, or all time. Therefore, the threads were filtered using the ‘lubridate’ package so that they fell within the selected time-period, this period includes a one-month window before and after the World Cup – 20.10.2022 – 18.01.2023 – because of the controversy in the lead up to the tournament. Post filtering the dataset was composed of 214 threads. These threads were then parsed by the RedditextractoR package function ‘**get_thread_content**’ and a total of 99839 comments were extracted.

Top2vec

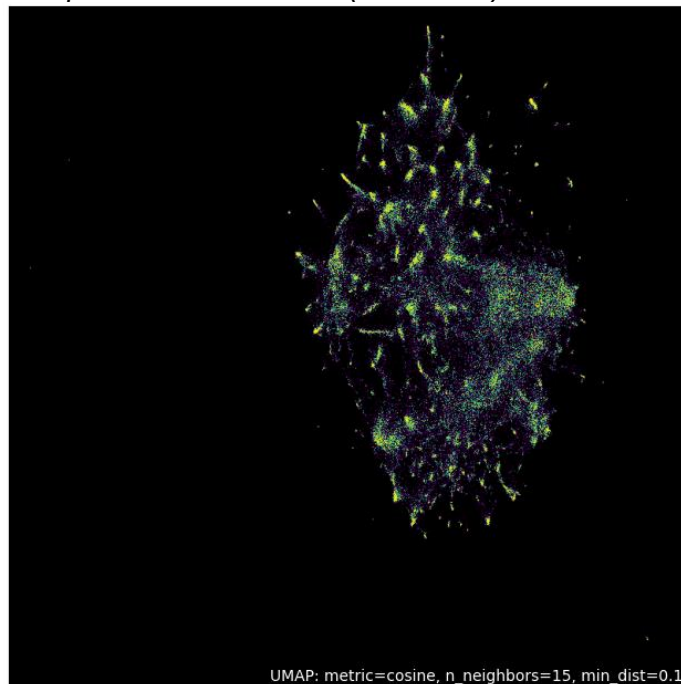
Top2vec is an algorithm for unsupervised learning that identifies topic vectors in a semantic space where document and word vectors are jointly embedded (Angelov, 2020).

Top2vec offers several advantages over traditional topic modelling techniques such as LDA by being able to automatically determine the number of topics and identify topics that are more informative and representative of the corpus (Angelov, 2020). Another advantage of this model is that it does not require stop-word lists, stemming, or lemmatization (Angelov, 2020). The **top2vec** algorithm employs a four-stage process. Firstly, **top2vec** employs the doc2vec model which converts textual documents (such as reddit comments) into numerical representations, otherwise known as document embedding. Document embedding aims to

position semantically similar documents closer to one another whilst ‘pushing’ dissimilar documents farther apart (Angelov, 2020). Secondly, the dimensions of the document embeddings are reduced through Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP). This is important because reducing the size of word embeddings benefits computational efficiency and cluster accuracy (McInnes et al., 2020). Thirdly, dense areas of document vectors are identified by utilising Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise (HDBSCAN) (Pei et al., 2013). Dense clusters of document vectors are labelled and document vectors which do not belong to a dense cluster are labelled as noise. The example below visualises this process, as document vectors in high dimensional space exhibit significant sparsity, making it challenging to identify dense regions; the process of dimension reduction assists in locating concentrated clusters. Each individual point within this space corresponds to a unique document vector. Please note the below visualisation is representative of the corpus post-pre-processing.

Figure 1

UMAP plot of /r/soccer documents (comments).



Finally, the last stage involves the semantic space being scanned to identify word vectors that are closest to topic vectors (Angelov, 2020). Each point in the semantic space corresponds to a topic that is best represented semantically by its nearest word vectors (Angelov, 2020). The proximity of each word vector to the topic vector indicates the degree of semantic similarity between the word and the topic (Angelov, 2020). The words that are closest to the topic vector are considered the most representative of it semantically, and can be viewed as the words that are most similar to all documents in the dense region since the topic vector is the centroid of that region.

Data pre-processing

Unlike other topic modelling algorithms **top2vec** requires comparatively little pre-processing like stop-words removal, stemming, or lemmatization. However, for the purposes of this study we undertook several steps of pre-processing. Firstly, by utilising the ‘pandas’ package we renamed the comment column to ‘text’, secondly, we created a separate column so that each comment had a unique id (McKinney, 2010). Thirdly, we dropped any potential duplicate cases, before finally removing any comments that were less than 5 tokens. The final number of comments to be analysed was 78995.

Results

Evaluating the Topic Model

From our corpus after extracting embeddings and reducing their dimensionality via UMAP and HDBSCAN, 353 different topics were identified with each’s topic size in descending order (see Appendix A). Simply, topic 0 has more documents than topic 1 and so on. The top ten topics was composed of 13503 documents (comments) which accounted for 17.09% of the total corpus. The top ten topics included: swear words like ‘fuck’, ‘shit’, ‘bullshit’, or ‘asshole’, initialisms like ‘lmfao’, ‘lmao’, ‘tbh’, ‘lol’, ‘smh’, names of competing nations like ‘Argentina’, ‘Morocco’, ‘Brazil’, ‘Spain’, or ‘Portugal’, names of

football associations or domestic or continental competitions such as ‘Conmebol’, ‘Concacaf’, ‘Bundesliga’, ‘Libertadores’, names of competing or retired players like ‘Grealish’, ‘Ronaldo’, ‘Aguero’, or ‘Messi’, references to tournament structure or match outcome like ‘semifinal’, ‘defeat’, ‘winning’, ‘losing’, ‘upsets’ or to specific match events like ‘offside’, ‘goal’, ‘outplayed’ or ‘shootout’. However, **top2vec** allows us to search the corpus for topics based upon user-designated keywords.

FIFA and Corruption

Allegations of corruption have surrounded previous FIFA president Sepp Blatter and FIFA’s decision to award the 2022 FIFA World Cup hosting rights to Qatar since 2010 (Panja & Draper, 2020; Ronay, 2022; Philippou, 2022; Hough, 2022). By utilising the search functions within **top2vec** we can explore the corpus for topics most like certain keywords, such as “FIFA”. The model returns topic 50 as the most similar topic to this word with a cosine similarity of 0.587. Cosine similarity is a commonly used metric in natural language processing (NLP) to measure how similar documents are (Rahutomo et al., 2012; Crijns et al., 2023). Since text documents are vectorized, the similarity between the two documents’ vectors can be calculated, which ranges from -1 (no similarity) to 1 (identical) (Rahutomo et al., 2012). A value of 0.587 suggests that there is a moderate degree of similarity between topic 50 and the word “FIFA”. The top 50 words from this topic can be seen below.

Figure 2

Top 50 words of topic 50.

```
array(['fifa', 'blatter', 'concacaf', 'conmebol', 'uefa', 'qatari',
      'qatar', 'corruption', 'footballing', 'futbol', 'usmnt', 'qataris',
      'neymar', 'bundesliga', 'maradona', 'soccer', 'ronaldinho',
      'libertadores', 'xavi', 'footballers', 'messi', 'corrupt',
      'mundial', 'zidane', 'offsides', 'pogba', 'thuram', 'offside',
      'weah', 'bayern', 'modric', 'footballer', 'dybala', 'griezmann',
      'uruguay', 'barca', 'referees', 'psg', 'ronaldo', 'neuer', 'klose',
      'iniesta', 'griesmann', 'gotze', 'refereeing', 'liga', 'higuain',
      'zlatan', 'lewandowski', 'football'])
```


similarity with the words 'fifa' (0.569), Qatar (0.566) and bribe (0.547). Additional search functions were executed for the term 'fifa' as seen below (topic 205, cosine similarity 0.735).

Figure 4

Top 50 words of topic 205.

```
[array(['blatter', 'fifa', 'maradona', 'xavi', 'ronaldinho', 'messi',
       'thuram', 'qatar', 'neymar', 'zidane', 'qatari', 'corruption',
       'ronaldo', 'uefa', 'klose', 'concacaf', 'conmebol', 'weah',
       'iniesta', 'cristiano', 'qataris', 'corrupt', 'zlatan', 'neuer',
       'pogba', 'pele', 'footballer', 'modric', 'lewandowski', 'gotze',
       'muller', 'pulisic', 'kante', 'higuain', 'cavani', 'casemiro',
       'gaal', 'rooney', 'ramos', 'suarez', 'varane', 'lvg', 'infantino',
       'grealish', 'futbol', 'footballing', 'lukaku', 'aguero', 'hummels',
       'dybala'], dtype='<U15')
```

Workers' Rights and Qatar

The working conditions for contract laborers in Qatar have been a persistent source of criticism particularly in the lead up to the World Cup (Gibson, 2014; Damir-Geilsdorf & Pelican, 2019; Longva, 2019; Pattison, 2021). Investigations by both *The Guardian* and *Amnesty International* exposed systematic abuse of migrant workers through deprivation of identity papers, coercion into forced labour, non-payment of salaries, and dangerous working conditions (Gibson, 2014; Amnesty International, 2013; 2016). Through interrogating the corpus in a similar manner as above with the search function (keyword = slavery) the authors identified an additional topic (topic 78) of interest despite the lower level of positive cosine similarity (0.311) with the topics' top words. This topic was then further visualised with a word cloud.

Figure 5

Top 50 words of topic 78.

```
array(['qatar', 'slavery', 'slaves', 'wage', 'workers', 'qatari',
       'thailand', 'slave', 'worker', 'qataris', 'migrant', 'labour',
       'saudis', 'uae', 'labor', 'saudi', 'ghana', 'jobs', 'immigrants',
       'footballers', 'nigeria', 'africans', 'brasil', 'ksa',
       'corruption', 'brazil', 'blatter', 'china', 'working',
       'whataboutism', 'boycott', 'atrocities', 'ecuador', 'brazilians',
       'work', 'poor', 'conmebol', 'economy', 'mexicans', 'cheap',
       'arabs', 'senegal', 'tunisia', 'portugal', 'korea', 'peru',
```


Figure 7*Top 50 words of topic 153.*

```
array(['stadiums', 'budweiser', 'beer', 'stadium', 'alcohol', 'drinking',
      'drink', 'blatter', 'uefa', 'concacaf', 'fifa', 'qatar', 'qataris',
      'bar', 'footballers', 'footballing', 'futbol', 'usmnt', 'mls',
      'nfl', 'xavi', 'cups', 'supporters', 'qatari', 'tournaments',
      'bundesliga', 'banning', 'conmebol', 'rugby', 'clubs', 'ban',
      'crowd', 'football', 'mundial', 'soccer', 'sporting', 'referees',
      'libertadores', 'cup', 'bud', 'arsenal', 'piss', 'drunk',
      'cricket', 'boycott', 'cunts', 'danjuma', 'maradona', 'hockey',
      'dortmund'])
```

This topic, when parsed through the search documents by topic function, revealed comments (see Appendix D) which highlighted the hypocrisy of a stadium alcohol ban that did not include corporate areas, the stadium alcohol ban more broadly, existing bans or limitations in other jurisdictions, and allegations of corruption, “Those in corporate areas of stadiums at the tournament will still be able to purchase alcohol. As ever, money talks”, “Where has alcohol been banned before in at the entire World Cup? The whole point is the beer sales, no way they are paying \$75M for some billboards”, “Booze consumption is limited in stadiums in England too”, Stadium bans for alcohol are fine . . . doing it two days before the tournament after advertising it beforehand is not OK.”

The ban on selling alcohol within stadia was one of the most controversial aspects of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The now infamous “awkward” tweet by Budweiser – a key sponsor of the World Cup – led to Budweiser being the most talked about brand at the World Cup, largely due to its campaign to gift inventory to whichever nation won the tournament (Gharat, 2023). Budweiser ran a campaign within Argentina – the eventual winners – which saw fans able to receive three cans of beer per day during a week-long event held throughout the country (MARCA, 2022). However, the restrictions on alcohol consumption proved popular with some female fans who reported feeling safer due to less drunkenness amongst other attendees (Brown, 2022).

Figure 8*Top 50 words of topic 153 as word cloud.*

LGBT rights I find it idiotic how everyone is expected to publicly express their support or opposition to whatever the public decides is the current hot issue”.

Critics have argued that Western media attention towards potential discrimination towards LGBTQ+ persons in Qatar was too heavily focused on those from the Global North and did not pay enough attention to the experience of either LGBTQ+ Qataris or LGBTQ+ migrant workers (Crafton, 2022). Others have argued that such extensive Western media coverage may have instead ‘backfired’ and lead to greater persecution towards the LGBTQ+ community not only in Qatar but across the Gulf and Middle East (Schaer, 2022; Todman, 2022). Topic 265 appears to be about the extensive OneLove armband controversy (keyword = armband, cosine similarity = 0.344). When analysed with the search documents by topic function, the model reveals discussions surrounding the right for players to wear or not wear the armband and criticism of these decisions (see Appendix F).

Figure 3

Top 50 words of topic 265 as a word cloud.

Topic 265



Scheduling, Sportswashing, and Paid Fans

The model did not create any topics relating to the scheduling controversy, or explicit documents referring to sportswashing, or ‘paid fans’. This is particularly interesting as accusations of sportswashing was one of the key criticisms of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar (Wearing, 2022). A study by Kim & Manoli (2023) determined that despite allegations

of sportswashing, most fans of teams do not really care about such accusations due to have strong personal associations with both the team and their fellow fans. They further determined that fans will actively avoid criticising their team because of their identification (Kim & Manoli, 2023). Another study from the same authors determined that fans' perceptions of a sports teams' brand found that there was no link between a club's corporate social responsibility and the value of the club brand (Kim & Manoli, 2022). Despite the model identifying topics which represented nearly every controversy, it was not able to identify 'sportswashing', perhaps because promises to boycott the tournament due to these controversies never materialised (Snell, 2022). Additionally the relatively low count of the term itself (35 instances within the dataset before applying **top2vec**) may have seen it get assigned to another topic simply as 'sport'. Any topics relating to scheduling controversy most likely did not materialise because the schedule change was announced in 2015, and the semantic similarity of the term to other terms related to tournament structure (Borden, 2015). Topics relating to alleged paid or 'fake fans' were not identified we believe because of the incredibly low instances (6 in the initial dataset before applying **top2vec**) of the term and due to its semantic similarity to supporters.

Reducing the Topic Model

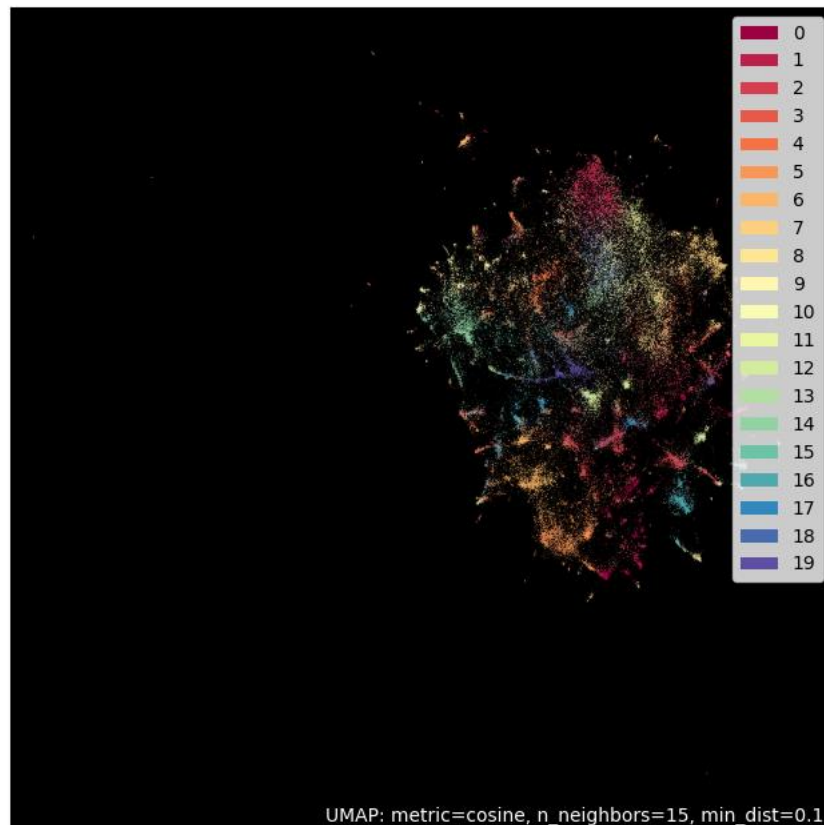
Within **top2vec** topic vectors can be subjected to topic reduction, which is a technique that facilitates hierarchical grouping of similar topics and ultimately reduces the number of topics that are identified (Angelov, 2020). To achieve the desired number of topics, an iterative process occurs where the smallest topic is merged into its semantically closet topic (Angelov, 2020). This involves taking a weighted average of the small topic's vector and that of its nearest topic, each weighted by their respective topic sizes; topic sizes are then recalculated after each merge (Angelov, 2020). This is useful when a large number of topics are quite similar to each other. Many topics within this model are extremely similar to other

topics largely because many topics are composed of current or retired football players names.

These reduced topics can be plotted through UMAP much in the same way the initial model creation took place. However, we can also label the topics, illustrating the topic clusters.

Figure 4

UMAP plot of reduced /r/soccer comments.



Evaluating the Reduced Model

Of interest is topic 14 which appears to be about Qatar (for the reduced topic sizes as well as the top 50 words in each topic refer to Appendix G). Searching the reduced topics via the keyword ‘Qatar’ revealed the following:

Figure 5

Top 50 words of topic 14 (reduced).

```
[array(['qatar', 'qatari', 'qataris', 'saudis', 'ksa', 'conmebol', 'saudi',
       'blatter', 'uae', 'fifa', 'concacaf', 'arabia', 'ghana', 'psg',
       'uefa', 'algeria', 'iran', 'yemen', 'arabs', 'tunisia', 'xavi',
       'usmnt', 'tunisian', 'uruguay', 'afcon', 'mundial', 'neymar',
```


the topic. Through reducing the topics the limitations of the study and methodology become clearer.

Discussion

This paper investigated the discourse surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar on /r/soccer. Touted as the most ‘contentious’ World Cup in history, Qatar’s alleged human rights abuses, ill-treatment of LGBTQ+ persons, migrant workers, and women, and allegations of corruption, were put into the spotlight (Ward, 2022; Braidwood, 2022). However, most of this pre-tournament criticism came from Western media outlets and governments, with talks of boycotts and withdrawals remaining unfulfilled (Snell, 2022). The final between Argentina and France, which has been described as potentially the best in the history of the World Cup, has done much to ameliorate many people’s concerns; particularly as it saw Lionel Messi ‘cap’ his career with a long-coveted World Cup. (Spaeth, 2022; Morse, 2022; Phillips, 2022). This leads us back to our central research questions: are the controversies surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar topics of discussion within the /r/soccer community, and how prevalent are they?

The model in its expanded configuration was able to identify most controversies in question – except most importantly for sportswashing - but revealed that their importance to the discussion on /r/soccer was minimal, with most comments focused on the on-the-pitch entertainment rather than the off-the-pitch debates. Despite the myriad of controversies and their extensive coverage, our analysis reveals that they were not as important as previously envisioned, with no particular controversy capturing most of /r/soccer’s attention. Such findings are in line with studies on twitter – which utilised sentiment analysis – which found the majority of the discourse surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup was positive (Nuñez Franco, 2023; Dewi & Arianto, 2023). Despite this however allegations of corruption within FIFA and the bidding process proved to be the highest valued topic. However, there are a

number of limitations to this study which need to be highlighted. Firstly, the majority of topics in both the full and reduced models were of no particular interest to the study. For example, topic 0 in the full model and topic 1 in the reduced model were either internet initialisms (e.g., lol) or the names of players (e.g., Messi). Ideally future models would include a list of custom stop-words for internet initialisms, as they generally add little to no value. Furthermore, because the model identifies so many topics, it is particularly labour intensive as each topic needs to be inspected in order to extract the full value. Additionally, since players names were mentioned so often and in so many differing contexts, they became the majority of topics in both the full and reduced models. Similar issues occurred with other swear words or match commentary, effectively creating a lot of noise. Future research could look at the possibility of removing named entities, however this creates an additional complication as one will lose important actors such as Qatar or FIFA. An additional limitation of the study is the utilisation of **top2vec** itself, since it is both a relatively new package and has a smaller community compared to the most established **BERTopic** there are a limited number of functions, particularly in time-based visualisation. Another limitation of **top2vec** is that it does not generate topic distributions but rather each document is assigned to a single topic. Despite these limitations however this study offers a contribution to the fields of natural language processing and topic modelling, perceived ‘sportswashing’, and reddit as a research platform.

Conclusion

This study employed the **top2vec** topic modelling algorithm to analyse a dataset of comments extracted from one of the world’s largest football discussion spaces, /r/soccer. By utilising **top2vec** to analyse 78995 comments we were able to identify underlying semantic patterns and contextualise them in relation to controversies surrounding the World Cup. In particular, the study focused on the concept of sportswashing, which refers to the use of

sports events or teams to improve the public image of countries or corporations with a poor human rights record or controversial reputation (Skey, 2022; Fruh et al., 2023; Boykoff, 2023). By analyzing the comments from /r/soccer using **top2vec**, we were able to identify topics and themes that were relevant to the issues of corruption, human and LGBTQ+ rights, as well as the controversial restrictions on alcohol consumption, and uncover insights into how people were discussing and perceiving these phenomena. Despite the controversies being identified, they were not key topics being discussed, potentially meaning that most fans are largely unconcerned. These findings are in line with previous studies that allegations of sportswashing or other questionable behaviour by a sporting entity do not significantly affect fan identification or behavioural intentions (Kim & Manoli, 2022, 2023; Manoli, 2022). Interestingly the controversies surrounding ‘paid fans’, scheduling, or sportswashing (directly as a concept) were not identified by the model. This raises important questions surrounding the viability of utilising sporting mega-events as a political tool. If the majority of discourse is not centred on related controversies, the use mega-events as tools becomes apparent, even more so when the memory of the 2022 FIFA World Cup is dominated by what fans and media have called ‘the greatest World Cup final ever’ (Morse, 2022; Spaeth, 2022; DeCourcy, 2022). Media coverage post-tournament has largely focused on how Qatar ‘delivered’ a World Cup that ‘defied expectations’ (Euronews, 2022; Herman, 2022; Panja, 2022). In sum, this study highlights the potential of using advanced machine learning techniques, such as **top2vec**, to gain a deeper understanding of complex and nuanced topics in large datasets of text. By leveraging these tools, we can uncover insights and patterns that might otherwise be difficult or impossible to discern, and use these findings to cut through the noise.

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[journalist-grant-wahl-says-he-was-detained-in-qatar-for-rainbow-shirt](https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/21/us-journalist-grant-wahl-says-he-was-detained-in-qatar-for-rainbow-shirt)

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Appendix A

Topic sizes and topic numbers (descending order).

[	2625	1703	1638	1537	1462	1422	1113	1011	992	973	935	890	846	768				
	768	746	735	684	648	646	636	629	624	612	586	578	557	554				
	553	550	545	535	510	494	487	486	480	460	460	454	453	452				
	452	427	419	415	407	407	404	404	400	392	383	383	378	378				
	370	364	358	342	342	334	329	329	327	322	317	316	315	312				
	307	304	303	303	291	284	283	273	270	264	261	260	259	253				
	251	251	249	247	246	244	244	240	239	239	232	229	226	226				
	225	220	218	217	216	212	212	210	209	209	207	206	205	205				
	203	200	197	197	197	196	195	194	191	191	191	191	191	188				
	183	180	178	177	175	175	175	175	174	174	172	169	168	168				
	167	164	163	162	161	161	161	160	160	157	157	157	151	149				
	147	147	146	144	144	144	144	142	142	141	141	141	140	140				
	139	139	138	138	137	135	133	132	131	131	130	128	127	127				
	125	125	125	124	124	124	123	123	122	122	121	120	119	118				
	118	117	116	114	113	112	112	112	112	111	111	109	109	108				
	107	107	107	107	106	105	105	105	105	105	105	104	104	104				
	104	104	103	103	103	102	100	99	99	98	97	96	96	95				
	94	93	91	91	90	89	88	88	88	87	87	86	86	86				
	85	85	85	84	83	83	83	82	80	80	80	79	79	79				
	78	78	78	78	76	76	76	75	73	71	70	70	68	68				
	67	67	67	67	66	66	66	66	65	65	64	64	64	64				
	63	63	63	62	62	61	61	61	60	60	59	59	59	57				
	57	56	56	56	55	54	53	53	52	52	51	50	50	50				
	49	49	49	48	48	47	47	47	46	46	45	44	44	44				
	41	40	40	39	39	38	35	35	34	34	33	32	29	27				
	26	22	20]															
[	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53
	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71
	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107
	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125
	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143
	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161
	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179
	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197
	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215
	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233
	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250	251
	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269
	270	271	272	273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287
	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304	305
	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323
	324	325	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341
	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350	351	352]							

Appendix B

Documents (comments) most highly related to topic number 205.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 33784, Score: 0.8564057350158691

Who would have guessed that Fifa is corrupt?

Document: 54151, Score: 0.8029089570045471

If FIFA wasnt insanely corrupt, greedy and evil then maybe this statement would have some credibility.

Document: 33304, Score: 0.8015066981315613

atleast FIFA will never repeat after this debacle

Document: 1227, Score: 0.7862786054611206

Oh ffs. Way to ruin a sport. Well done fifa

Document: 41999, Score: 0.7857096195220947

100% will happen. Because they will pay, FIFA execs are corrupt, and whos going to stop them?

Document: 44322, Score: 0.7814501523971558

Oh so that's why FIFA still taking bribes...

They need money to pay for the fine

Document: 18398, Score: 0.7809518575668335

Awful organisation that needs to be dissolved with immediate effect. FIFA have created this situation and are now crying because of all the negative attention it is getting. Bunch of corrupt mofos.

Document: 53070, Score: 0.7803082466125488

I think FIFA is way too deep into this shit to ever get out.

Document: 96042, Score: 0.7788982391357422

Nice to see FIFA getting a bit of comeuppance to be honest.

Document: 24076, Score: 0.7770101428031921

Football needs to abandon FIFA and create an alternative less corrupt organization as an alternative.

Document: 33773, Score: 0.77004474401474

Remember when FIFA investigated FIFA for corruption and they deemed they were not corrupt? Good times.

Document: 80377, Score: 0.7693582773208618

to the world ? to FIFA ? like, really we are tired everyone knows how corrupt FIFA is yet nobody is moving a hand

Document: 58380, Score: 0.7611916065216064

FIFA corrupt as hell but put on the best sporting event on the planet

Document: 44445, Score: 0.7546635866165161

Yes!!! I love this!!!

#GET FUCKED FIFA!!!

Document: 44235, Score: 0.7471451163291931

FIFA is just a lapdog of the Host country

Document: 27300, Score: 0.745506227016449

good

was a total corrupt bid, FIFA scum and shouldn't even be happening

Document: 417, Score: 0.7438563108444214

Look at you thinking that Conmebol is less corrupt than FIFA.

Document: 18358, Score: 0.7419225573539734

The more I read about fifa the more I feel its just some glorified cartel thats allowed to do business

Document: 41810, Score: 0.7417107820510864

It's 100% FIFA. Rotten to the core.

Document: 44395, Score: 0.7383322715759277

Please sue FIFA for everything they have&

Appendix C

Documents (comments) most highly related to topic number 153.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 53622, Score: 0.7415006160736084

> The argument is that they shouldn't mistreat them just because they are contract laborers.

Yeah, I don't recall seeing any complaints about the wages. It's the mistreatment and number of deaths (I know the actual totals are in dispute, but that has been one of the main talking points). Maybe people are complaining about wages in Qatar, but they're probably misinformed and don't understand cost of living variances around the world (just like this article).

Document: 53600, Score: 0.7411765456199646

By that logic, migrant workers are earning far more in Qatar than they would in their home country. Also 1 pound an hour is just about minimum wage in Thailand.

Document: 53497, Score: 0.737462043762207

The UAE gets slated ad infinitum over migrant worker pay by people who don't even know what the labour laws there state, with claims of exploitation/slavery when the vast majority of migrant workers are there out of pure choice. It's really not even as exploitative as people working in sweatshops in Thailand or Chinese factory conditions. One's just an easier target because we don't conspicuously consume products from there.

Document: 53620, Score: 0.7120568752288818

Thats the same argument people use on labor in Qatar though? Theyre paid in Qatar 3-5 times the minimum wage in their own countries.

Document: 53423, Score: 0.7107239961624146

Look, the factory is in Thailand but the workers are definitely migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar who are being exploited by Thai employers.

The biggest problem is the markup of the shirt to 115 pounds.

Document: 53616, Score: 0.705388069152832

This thread is funny than I expected tbh

It like people suddenly discover that there are a lot third world country exists and the living cost here is much much cheaper so of course salary will be much lower (aka "cheap" labor), I know because i also from a 3rd country

Before someone drag Qatar into this argument, i'm not saying the cheap salary is acceptable, I just found out people reaction here is hilarious. Plus, Qatar worker main problem is about safety work environment when so many peoples died when build those stadium, not salary.

Document: 53617, Score: 0.693730354309082

>Before someone drag Qatar into this argument, i'm not saying the cheap salary is acceptable, I just found out people reaction here is hilarious. Plus, Qatar worker main problem is about safety work environment when so many peoples died when build those stadium, not salary.

Even that's goalpost-moving. The UAE hasn't had workers die building stadiums but they're routinely assumed to be slave drivers here because of low wages and limited worker rights, how is that any different from indentured servitude in Thailand or Vietnam or China exactly? Oh right, we wear kits and buy phones from those places.

Document: 53402, Score: 0.6870448589324951

Also poor labor standards and terrible working conditions. It's also strange to me that when it happens in Qatar, the country is criticized, but when it happens in Thailand, it's the foreign companies rather than the government who could regulate them.

Document: 53496, Score: 0.6820326447486877

That's a bit of exaggeration. Working for cheap is not slave labor. The issue is mostly about worker safety not pay in 3rd world countries.

Document: 53351, Score: 0.6752709150314331

Which is why a lot of other countries think us complaining about Qatar is a tad hypocritical. 99% of the shit in our homes is made by people with poor labour conditions in other countries

Document: 53588, Score: 0.6749275326728821

I didn't read thaaat much about it, but from what i've seen related to Qatar, seems like the issue with the workers was more about labor safety and how the companies/government was holding their passports, so they couldn't leave and do a lot of stuff. (terrible)

My point in the comment above was more about salary perception being skewed because of different currencies and cost of living.

Document: 53645, Score: 0.674152135848999

Pretty funny how no one is outraged by it isn't it? When it's Qatar treating workers badly people lose their fucking heads but when their clothes are made by child labour they conveniently forget about it the next day.

Document: 53394, Score: 0.6740795373916626

 The difference is Qatar does pay them well, not like this. One of the reasons many immigrants go to the middle east for work especially from Asia.

Document: 53784, Score: 0.6701387166976929

I mean, in Portugal migrants sign contracts because they come here and don't really have another choice. The working conditions aren't as bad as Qatar's for the simple fact that it's just not as hot of a weather, the rest is pretty much the same. Plus, most of our welfare comes from cheap labor in poor countries

Document: 41808, Score: 0.663749635219574

Do they die because of the horrible working and living conditions or because it is an inherently dangerous job. The deaths are not the same. There were deaths in Qatar to migrant workers because of the inhumane working and living conditions.

Document: 53621, Score: 0.6603893041610718

I mean that is a good argument. Qatar and the ME are helping those poorer laborers in some ways. The argument is that they shouldn't mistreat them just because they are contract laborers.

The slave thing is definitely overblown, but it's a good talking point. Even if it's only a small percentage of cases Qatar doesn't seem to care at all to help those people.

Document: 53578, Score: 0.6565205454826355

1 pound per hour at a standard 8 hour shift is 8 pounds per hour or 9.51 usd, which is the Thai minimum wage. For an unskilled job, that is what you'd expect to earn?

The markup on it is bull shit because if they can afford to retain their profits and distribute it, the workers who made it should be getting a share of it too. The west brought the labour to the East, but not the benefits.

Document: 53648, Score: 0.6506161093711853

Qatar can use that argument as well for underpaying migrant workers

Document: 53565, Score: 0.65059494972229

When I worked in Thailand I was paid approx £1000 a month to work 6 days a week. The thing is, you live like a king for that much money. Meals were about £1-£2 a day for something basic (that's eating out as well) and beer was dirt cheap too. My rent was about £200 a month for something half decent.

Also Thai factories are sort of modern and workers have decent rights. Compare that to Bangladesh (where a lot of teams have their kits made, including England until the last backlash) where you can find locked fire

exits, 21p per hour and horrible working conditions. I know all Nike shirts were made there, not sure if they moved production elsewhere because of outcry (most shirt makers conveniently don't mention where shirts are actually made).

Document: 53614, Score: 0.6494174003601074

This is faux outrage. Minimum wage in Thailand is 328 Baht per day. Thats around £7.70 so in a 7.5 hour day, thats around £1.

Stuff, particularly food, is significantly cheaper in Thailand compared to the UK. Getting a main meal at a market is less than £1 and in a restaurant its around £2.

The fact shirts are marked up to £115 is a much bigger deal than people getting paid minimum wage.

Appendix D

Documents (comments) most highly related to topic number 153.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 32956, Score: 0.798061192035675

'Those in corporate areas of stadiums at the tournament will still be able to purchase alcohol.'

As ever, money talks.

Document: 95729, Score: 0.7883929014205933

I don't that. Where has alcohol been banned before at an entire world cup? The whole point is the beer sales, no way are they paying \$75M for some billboards

Document: 13177, Score: 0.7847559452056885

Booze consumption is limited inside stadiums in England too, albeit not fully banned. It doesnt stop fans getting pissed up on match days though. Banning sales in stadiums when you can drink on the trains and there are pubs right outside the gates is hardly going to make a massive difference.

Document: 33297, Score: 0.7776685953140259

Stadium bans for alcohol are fine, especially when it's freely available elsewhere (and not literally one stand in the fan zone).

Doing it two days before the tournament after advertising it beforehand is not OK.

Document: 96046, Score: 0.7704384326934814

Fans not being able to drink beer in stadiums should be the least concern people have on the world cup

Document: 87571, Score: 0.7572190761566162

Its really not just in the stadiums that you can't buy it. It was banned in the stadiums because it's generally banned in the country. It is possible to obtain beer, but only in hotel bars and normally at quite inflated prices.

Document: 96085, Score: 0.7546876668930054

The fact that you can still buy alcohol in the corporate areas of the stadium is the icing on the cake.

This is corruptions final form. An absolute disgrace.

Document: 32939, Score: 0.7437183260917664

 Fucking ridiculous. BBC are reporting that corporate areas of stadiums will still be able to purchase alcohol, though thats not mentioned in the statement.

Document: 12876, Score: 0.725822389125824

 Look at this- advocating for a billion dollar multinational beer company that doesn't pay its taxes. Cause drinking for 3 hours was restricted.

I attended 7 games in person. All the families sitting in the Serbia vs Switzerland game were happy they could attend a night match without worry.

Document: 13308, Score: 0.718349814414978

 I'd be intrigued to see the response to plans to forbid beer at every single pub in the country on match days.

Document: 33236, Score: 0.7128989100456238

 What could possibly go wrong with fans deciding to get tanked up at hotels and other designated drinking areas away from the stadium.

I doubt Budweiser care too much, they'll still be able to advertise as before.

Document: 13310, Score: 0.7123212814331055

 I hope they just do that. Alcohol is just the fuel of violent hooligans. Also that would make the stadiums, cities and towns safer and everyone could go watch a game with its family in peace.

Moreover if you need to drink to enjoy a game, you actually dont like the game.

Document: 24613, Score: 0.7093165516853333

 I thought alcohol was banned near the stadiums

Document: 13283, Score: 0.6988173723220825

 I wonder if this will make future world cup hosts consider banning alcohol in stadiums too. That was probably a huge factor, as well as maybe the hooligans (who are *always* racist Brexiteer types) didn't want to travel to a Middle Eastern country because "ew, Muslims" or some shit.

Document: 13304, Score: 0.6955012083053589

 This is a good argument to forbid beer in the premier league

Document: 13256, Score: 0.6940038800239563

No alcohol sold in stadiums, and now the mad lads remained reasonably civil. Seems like a correlation here.

Document: 96067, Score: 0.6904246807098389

Alcohol sellers should boycott selling in the corporate sections too to show solidarity with the fans but doubt it'll happen

Document: 96061, Score: 0.6843883991241455

Not allowing beer sales in stadiums is nothing compared to the absolute shitshow that has preceded this whole situation. Its a disgrace for football and an all time time low for sports events around the world. Im not going to watch this parody, its not the football I love.

Document: 33194, Score: 0.6800149083137512

Can't wait to see how some fans will smuggle in alcohol in and create havoc over there.

Like they can ban alcohol. But realistically won't be able to ensure no one takes it in.

Document: 95722, Score: 0.6795834302902222

Apperently the sponsorship deal covers sale points *or* advertising space, so as long as they are compensated with billboards and posters they don't have a legal leg to stand on.

Because banning alcohol sales in the stadium has happened before (for special circumstances during finals), for security reasons. So there are now provisions in the sponsorship contracts.

Appendix E

Documents (comments) most highly related to topic number 185.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 5464, Score: 0.7551398277282715

Homophobes are running fucking *rampant* here

Document: 52865, Score: 0.7340108156204224

These are the type of people who claim homosexuality is a choice and anyone
lgbt existing being part of an "agenda". Who would have thought they were
assholes

Document: 68961, Score: 0.7222620844841003

Disgusting how that brought all the homophobes out of the woodwork smh.
Very revealing of how far we still have to go as a people.

Document: 5379, Score: 0.6747041940689087

So? I'm no ally of the LGBT community, nor am i against it. Like i said,
people can do what they want. You guys take the all or nothing approach
like the other user said. Relax and let people choose what to support or
not support without getting your panties in a bunch.

Document: 5507, Score: 0.6693761348724365

Even as someone who supports LGBT rights I find it idiotic how everyone is
expected to publicly express their support or opposition to whatever the
public decides is the current hot issue.

Document: 5390, Score: 0.6525449156761169

Everyone has the right to not support it in the public but you should
tolerate the lgbtq community

Document: 58510, Score: 0.6478515863418579

You can't even make your point and you're accusing people you don't know of
homophobia.

You sound tortured.

Document: 57358, Score: 0.6475095748901367

fuck off you homophobic piece of shit

Document: 5706, Score: 0.6407355070114136

 If someone is not homophobe and wont call for violence against LGBTQ communities but dont want to participate in their agenda, then why so much witch hunt against them. Its like either you with us or against us there is no middle ground or neutral opinion. This shit push neutral people towards hatred and extreme view. Media and Reddit is notorious for this witch hunt and they are creating way more homophobic sentiment then they are convincing people to join them.

Document: 5356, Score: 0.6356434226036072

 Religious homophobia is still homophobia, idk what makes you think it isn't. It's the most common form of homophobia and therefore the most accepted form but that doesn't mean it's not homophobia

Document: 5576, Score: 0.6338855028152466

 Unless you think a vast majority of world has widespread homophobia...

Document: 5300, Score: 0.632251501083374

 For someone who seems to hate the gays you sure love talking about sucking cock. Fuck off you POS

Document: 5378, Score: 0.6302965879440308

 People can do whatever they want, you have no opinion on the people refusing to show support for human rights but when it comes to calling someone homophobic? That is a step too far. People who fight against bigotry are the real bigots.

Please. Your views are clear. People who are worried about immigrants "muddling" Danish culture and who are offended at the singular "they" are no allies of the LGBT community.

Document: 10348, Score: 0.6288796067237854

 I always suspect that people who think it's a choice may actually be experiencing sexual feelings towards the same sex, which is a shame as without bigotry they might be much happier people.

Document: 5361, Score: 0.628755509853363

 "You are homophobic unless you give me agency over your body" okay lol

Document: 62561, Score: 0.6232911944389343

 Sense a tad of homophobia & are you ok?

Document: 10306, Score: 0.6224504709243774

 This is such a dumb argument

Yes Palestine is extremely homophobic

That doesnt mean I think its right or just when the IDF launches a strike on a city block in Gaza and blows up peoples homes and causes death

Two things can be true

Document: 5700, Score: 0.6222118139266968

So all people should love gays? I am not allowed to dislike them?

Document: 5395, Score: 0.6211555004119873

Idk about this. In a perfect society everybody supports LGBTQ community.

Well I guess on that note, in a perfect society they don't need support anymore

Document: 5707, Score: 0.6195501089096069

Is acceptance and normalization that gay people exist and want rights "gay agenda" now?

Appendix F

Documents (comments) most highly related to topic number 265.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 5530, Score: 0.7822676301002502

He IS choosing not to wear it though.

Document: 5363, Score: 0.7720464468002319

he has every right to not wear it, does that mean hes also completely
immune to be called out for why he doesnt tho?

Document: 5683, Score: 0.762066125869751

Dont care about things like this. If he dont wana wear it or if he wants to
wear it. Idc

Document: 5593, Score: 0.7552662491798401

Kind of sad how people enforce an opinion on him. Hes a grown up man, he is
free to choose whether he wants to wear it or not.

Document: 5711, Score: 0.7327862977981567

Why would they force players to wear it?

Document: 5589, Score: 0.7237846851348877

So what? What are they going to do to him if he wears it?

He's a coward.

Document: 5692, Score: 0.6946161985397339

Its ok if you want to wear it, it's ok if you dont that what freedom of
speech is about isnt it?

Document: 5471, Score: 0.6833734512329102

What if they don't want to? What if they want to wear something else?

What do you think "being forced to do something" means, exactly?

Document: 5240, Score: 0.6790763139724731

Wearing it is the political stance.

Document: 5241, Score: 0.6746021509170532

Not wearing it is a political stance.

Document: 5421, Score: 0.6665830612182617

hes probably being pressured by the fa to not wear it and this will be his last world cup, he doesnt personally disagree with it. on the other hand kokcu is personally against it, I dont see why this is controversial

Document: 5582, Score: 0.6595591306686401

Why would you be against wearing it?

Document: 5473, Score: 0.6527930498123169

Answer the question. What if they want to wear something else?

> Why are you making big deal out of this?

I care about human rights. Why does that offend you?

Document: 5488, Score: 0.6412876844406128

It is. If hes worn it multiple times already we know its not a personal decision

Document: 5588, Score: 0.6380155682563782

Literally the French Federation of Football told him to not wear it

Document: 5353, Score: 0.6273791790008545

No. I'm not even sure what batshit insane logic you used to come up with that.

I said if they say they choose not to wear it for the reasoning of "my religion says they are bad," then they are saying very explicitly that they are against what I believe in. If they say they aren't wearing it because of political and economic pressures, or because they are afraid of the backlash against them, then that doesn't mean they are against me it just means they aren't choosing the admittedly difficult path of standing up for what they say they believe in.

Document: 5586, Score: 0.6171215772628784

Yes, I know he's in a little bit of tricky spot but he should do the right thing. Not bow to the rich and powerful but support those who need our support. For me, it's an unforgivable act if he doesn't wear it.

Document: 5331, Score: 0.615493893623352

Do they? We absolutely should harass however doesn't want to wear them /s

Document: 18176, Score: 0.6135569214820862

Exactly. They knew what they were doing when they asked him to wear it

Document: 5475, Score: 0.6091305017471313

Lol it's such an empty gesture anyways. But I kinda want to have him wear
it just to piss of the French FA.

Appendix G

Reduced topic sizes and topic numbers (descending order).

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Top 50 words in each reduced topic (descending order).

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Appendix H

Documents (comments) most highly related to reduced topic number 14.

Document: ID, Score: cosine similarity

Document: 27214, Score: 0.8056180477142334

Honestly the Qatar game was such an embarrassing display of futbol, Qatar has no business in the WC

Document: 53123, Score: 0.8028174638748169

Eh, this World Cup will just show why that part of the world should never hold an international event, and how close minded and bigoted they really are. Whatever team plays Qatar is the team Im rooting for. Calling it now though, theyll make it to the knock out round. Money talks.

Document: 33335, Score: 0.8006084561347961

Qatar doing everything they can to ensure this is remembered as the worst world cup ever

Document: 52868, Score: 0.7985108494758606

Yeah you don't understand, they bought the world cup so they could just show the good things about Qatar, like erm...

Document: 96099, Score: 0.7964192628860474

Lol. Qatar ensuring the bragging rights of being the first and last Middle Eastern country to hold a WC.

Document: 19556, Score: 0.7934799194335938

It's obvious Qatar just doesn't care about football, which is fine - not every country has to like the game, but don't host the world cup if you don't care about the game.

Their fans didn't even stay till the end of the match. Its the first time their country is in the world cup and they walked out, its insane.

Document: 73456, Score: 0.7931971549987793

God damn you Qatar for actually having a really good world cup. no one is going to remember being outraged are they

Document: 33269, Score: 0.7921525239944458

And Qatar thought this World Cup would be good PR for their country, wtf?

I dislike Qatar more and more. At least in Abu Dhabi & Dubai you would be able to drink and be in a cool city.

All that being said, not having an Aussie or English WC for this one is insane and Fifa needs to be held accountable for their incredible corruption.

Document: 44316, Score: 0.7895427942276001

My guess is that Qatar threw up such a stink that FIFA only okd the decision by getting Qatar to indemnify them against Budweiser. Qatar will pay the fine for fifa.

Document: 31995, Score: 0.7890945672988892

Ok let's just forget that it's Qatar and look at the bid the proposed in a vacuum. Can anyone really say that this country was equipped to host a world cup? All of the other controversies aside, you're still left with the fact that Qatar was woefully unequipped to host this world cup, and as a result had to resort to terrible things to be able to make it happen. I don't think that Qatar is a worse country than China, Russia, the US, etc, but looking specifically through the lens of the world cup, they are a terrible choice to host.

Document: 95969, Score: 0.7886557579040527

What is a little funny to me is that Qatar 'received' this World Cup back in 2010, so well over a decade ago.

And yet...and still...even with expectations already very low...they somehow manage to make it worse and worse and worse lmao.

They manage to fuck this up so bad. They can't even do the sportswashing right, they're too petty and authoritarian for that.

It's honestly *impressive* just how fucking *incompetent* they are.

Document: 17954, Score: 0.7860374450683594

That's why they did it. Gotta make it all about Qatar.

Document: 41692, Score: 0.7849072217941284

Going against the grain but the Saudis do have something Qatar utterly lacked; pre-existing football pedigree.

I know, I know, they aren't exactly titans of world football, but they have been present at several world cups, reached the second round at them, their league has been of decent quality for a long while...it'd be less shameless than the Qatar bid.

'Course it'd still be a typical sportswashing tournament (and against Fifa's own rules given Asia having had a world cup in 2022) but, yno.

And Uruguay should really have the final in 2030.

Document: 52842, Score: 0.7844718098640442

100%.

At this point, Qatar can fuck itself; royally even.

Document: 42018, Score: 0.7817434072494507

With all due disrespect to Qatar, Qatar is no Saudi.

Document: 23041, Score: 0.7817116975784302

I'll be the first to criticize Saudi Arabia on virtually any issue, but the Saudis actually have much more of a football culture than Qatar. Both historically and currently. It's also a much larger country in terms of population, and isn't just basically *one* urban center surrounded by desert. I think that in terms of crowds, a World Cup in Saudi Arabia would be a million times better than this shitshow in Qatar. But fuck me, I hope they don't get it in 2030 ...

Document: 19226, Score: 0.7816513776779175

Qatar didn't play well, but even if they did, the performance of the players has nothing to do with why Qatar and this WC being in Qatar sucks. Honestly, feeling a little bad for the Qatar players, lots of pressure on them and everyone besides Qataris wants them to lose.

Document: 86588, Score: 0.7809370756149292

All the nonsense about Qatar aside, glad the Qatar team finished with a goal at least. At least they got to experience that high.

Document: 52824, Score: 0.7790776491165161

Not gonna lie I put \$50 on Qatar to win one game and another \$15 on them to advance out of their group.

If Im gonna watch horseshit and bribery, I may as well cash in on horseshit and bribery

Document: 32915, Score: 0.7790266275405884

Why would Qatar care about any of this? They're going to sue in Qatar? Guess what the result will be.

It's too late to take away the WC, so fifa has no leverage anymore.

Abstract

The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar saw court an unprecedented amount of criticism in the lead up to the tournament. Controversies surrounding corruption, human rights abuses, the rights of women and LGBTQ+ persons, perceived ‘sportswashing’, and the availability of alcohol, were commonplace discussions. Reddit – a social news website and forum – hosts the single largest dedicated football discussion form on the internet known as /r/soccer. Machine learning techniques such as topic modelling allow us to automatically analyse text data to discover whether these controversies occur as topics and their prevalence. Comments made before, during, and after the World Cup were extracted from /r/soccer and fed into ‘top2vec’ an algorithm for topic modelling and semantic search. Through our analysis, we successfully identified pertinent topics and themes related to corruption, human and LGBTQ+ rights, and controversial restrictions on alcohol consumption. However, we could not identify explicit topics related to ‘sportswashing’, ‘scheduling controversy’, or ‘paid fans’. This study emphasizes the potential of employing such techniques to develop a more profound comprehension of intricate and subtle subject matters in extensive text datasets.

Keywords: FIFA, World Cup, Qatar, Sportswashing, reddit, Natural Language Processing, Topic Modelling, top2vec

Zusammenfassung

Die FIFA Fussball-Weltmeisterschaft 2022 in Katar wurde im Vorfeld des Turniers in einem noch nie dagewesenen Ausmaß kritisiert. Kontroversen über Korruption, Menschenrechtsverletzungen, die Rechte von Frauen und LGBTQ+ Personen, vermeintliches "Sportswashing" und die Verfügbarkeit von Alkohol wurden zu alltäglichen Diskussionen. Reddit - eine soziale Nachrichten-Website und Forum - beherbergt das größte Fußball-Diskussionsforum im Internet, bekannt als /r/soccer. Mithilfe von Techniken des maschinellen Lernens wie der Themenmodellierung können wir Textdaten automatisch analysieren, um herauszufinden, ob diese Kontroversen als Themen auftreten und wie weit sie verbreitet sind. Hierzu wurden Kommentare, die vor, während und nach der Fußballweltmeisterschaft auf /r/soccer veröffentlicht wurden, gesammelt und in "top2vec", einen Algorithmus zur Themenmodellierung und semantischen Suche, eingegeben. Durch unsere Analysen konnten wir einschlägige Themen im Zusammenhang mit Korruption, Menschenrechten und Rechten von LGBTQ+ Personen, sowie umstrittenen Einschränkungen des Alkoholkonsums identifizieren. Wir konnten jedoch keine expliziten Themen im Zusammenhang mit "Sportswashing", "Terminkontroversen" oder "bezahlten Fans" identifizieren. Diese Studie unterstreicht das Potenzial solcher Techniken, um ein tieferes Verständnis komplizierter und subtiler Themen in umfangreichen Textdatensätzen zu entwickeln.

Stichworte: FIFA, Weltmeisterschaft, Katar, Sportswashing, reddit, natürliche Sprachverarbeitung, Themenmodellierung, top2vec