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## An Analysis of Multimodal Representations of the LGBTQIA+ Community During the Qatar World Cup 2022

### ABSTRACT

Throughout history, the LGBTQ+ community has been subjected to prejudice and marginalization in the sports industry. To increase global awareness and visibility of their cause, they can use sports events, such as the Qatar World Cup 2022, as a platform. This study explores the promotion of homosexuality through the World Cup, focusing on the method followed by the German national team and its fans in Qatar. The article focuses on interactive meanings by employing Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) model and analytic framework, and the discussion focuses on the interactive process. The findings of the study show sports events also provide an opportunity for the LGBTQ+ community to showcase their talents and challenge stereotypes. Overall, promoting LGBTQ+ visibility and inclusion in sports is an important step towards achieving equality and acceptance for the community.

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## التمثيل المتعدد الوسائط لمجتمع المثليين خلال بطولة كأس العالم في قطر 2022

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الخلاصة:

على مر التاريخ، تعرض مجتمع المثليين للتهميش في مجال الرياضة ولزيادة الوعي العالمي والظهور المرئي لقضيتهم، يمكنهم استخدام فعاليات رياضية مثل كأس العالم قطر 2022 كمنصة. تستكشف هذه الدراسة تعزيز المثلية عبر كأس العالم، مع التركيز على الطريقة التي اتبعتها المنتخب الألماني وجماهيره في قطر. يركز المقال على المعاني التفاعلية من خلال استخدام نموذج وإطار تحليلي من قبل كريس وفان ليوين (2006)، تُظهر نتائج الدراسة أيضاً أن الفعاليات الرياضية توفر فرصة لمجتمع المثليين لعرض مواهبهم وتحدي الصور النمطية.

وقائع المؤتمر العلمي السابع تحت شعار (العلوم الانسانية بين التحديات الراهنة والافاق المستقبلية) الذي اقامته كلية الآداب في جامعة واسط بتاريخ 2023/7/1  
الكلمات المهمة: مجتمع+LGBTQ ؛ وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، المثلية، الأيديولوجية، التواصل غير اللفظي.

## 1. Introduction

According to Peltz-Steele and Benavides (2015), the Olympics and the World Cup of men's association football (soccer) are watched by billions of viewers worldwide. Additionally, Ho (2014) suggests that these events provide a platform for discussions around global cultural conflicts over LGBT rights. In the United States, marriage equality has been gradually advancing through state courts and legislatures, while the term homosexuality describes individuals who are emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Germany's legislation protects members of the LGBTQIA+ community, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, and asexual, allowing them to express their sexual or gender identity as they see fit (Germany, 2022).

Thus the role of non-verbal resources, like sound, images, and colours is not limited to entertaining and clarifying but somewhat it goes beyond that to play a significant role in sending different social, educational, economic, and even political messages (Liu, 2013). Nonverbal communication is expressed through nonlinguistic means. It is the actions or attributes of humans, including their appearance, use of objects, sound, time, smell, and space, that have socially shared significance and stimulate meaning in others. It includes visual/kinesic cues such as facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, and body orientation; vocal/paralinguistic cues such as volume, pitch, rate, and inflection; proxemic cues such as space and distance; olfactory or smell cues; cues provided via artifactual communication and appearance; cues sent via colour; and chronemic or time cues (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998).

Social media has emerged as a significant platform for the members of the LGBT community to connect and communicate with each other by using hashtags. It enables them to coordinate movements and actions aligned with their goals. However, in Malaysia, the LGBT community faces rejection, and many members are compelled to live a concealed life to evade mistreatment and prejudice. Despite facing opposition from certain individuals who believe that the ban violates essential human rights, Malaysia has implemented severe regulations to curb the spread of LGBT (Muhammed & Amuda, 2018).

Sexual behaviours and identities receive significant scrutiny in Malaysia, with conservative societal norms placing expectations on sexually normative behaviour in line with regional Asian values (Felix, 2014). As a result, social media has emerged as a platform for the LGBT community to connect with like-minded individuals. Despite facing limitations in the form of small movements, the LGBT community remains active on social media (bin Mokhtar et al., 2019).

During the 2022 World Cup tournament, Qatar was under intense global scrutiny not just for the sporting event, but also for its legal system which incorporates both civil and Islamic law. Amnesty International reports that foreign nationals in Qatar have been subjected to flogging as punishment for alcohol consumption and "illicit sexual relations," while male homosexuality can lead to imprisonment, flogging, deportation, and even death (Peltz-Steele & Benavides, 2015). During the 2022 World Cup tournament in Qatar, the country was under close observation not only for the sporting event but also for its strict civil and Islamic laws. According to Amnesty International, foreign nationals have been punished for drinking alcohol and engaging in "illicit sexual relations," while male homosexuality

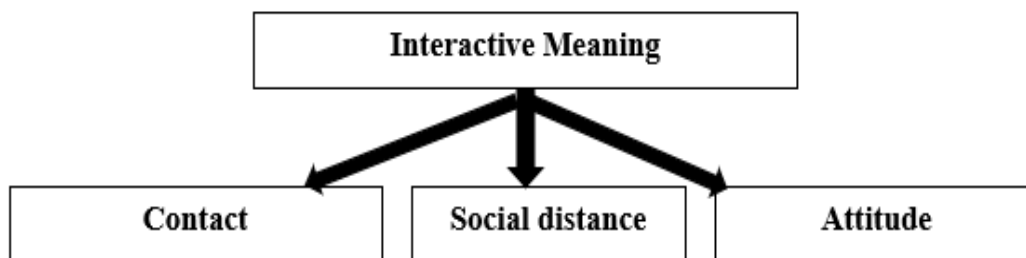
is punishable by imprisonment, flogging, deportation, and even death. Despite homosexuality being considered taboo in Qatar due to its adherence to Islamic practices and laws, some LGBTQ+ individuals are using social media to raise awareness about their sexual orientation and gain acceptance. However, there is little research on the specific motivations and benefits of social media participation for LGBTQ+ youth in Qatar. The study aims to explore how social media is being used to promote the LGBT movement in a country where homosexuality is prohibited.

## **2. The Objectives of the Current Study are:**

1. To investigate the interactive meanings of German football team players' and fans' images posted on Facebook through the Multimodal discourse analysis approach (MDA).
2. To analyze the ideologies of the LGBTQ+ community portrayed through selected images.

## **3. Interactive Meaning**

Figure 1 illustrates the three main elements of the interactive meaning namely contact, social distance, and attitude. The contact deals with whether the image carries a demand or an offer. Social distance focuses on the distance of the presenter from the viewer whether it is intimate, social, or impersonal. Conversely, the attitude signifies detachment or involvement, equality, and power relation between the presenter and viewer.



**Figure 1.** The Interactive meaning elements

If the represented participant establishes eye contact with the viewer, the viewer is being addressed as 'you'. In contrast, if the represented participant avoids eye contact, the viewer is indirectly engaged. If there is no eye contact between the viewer and the represented participant, the image is an offer of information without any specific call to action. The second aspect is determining the image act, which refers to the intended effect of the image on the viewer. The gaze of the represented participant is a crucial factor in this determination, as it can indicate whether the image is intended as a demand or an offer. When the represented participant establishes direct eye contact with the viewer, a demand is made for the viewer to take action (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 117).

The relation between the participants like the IS fighters, targets, and viewers on FACEBOOK can be established through their represented shots. According to the social distance, the viewer can be placed at a different level of closeness to the represented participants (G. R. Kress & T. Van Leeuwen, 2006). For the long add medium-long shot, the relationships were found in the data analysis where all types of relationships are discussed in turn. As for the social distance, according to the position of taking the photos of the represented participants, it contained two parts wherein the first part involved the far and near shots. The proximal or close-up shot usually showed the subject's head and shoulders and the extreme close-up as well as large close-up shot, it was anything less than that. The medium close shot eliminated

the subject approximately at the waist, whereas the medium shots were presented approximately at the knee levels. The medium-long shot showed the full image. In the long shot, the human image occupied about half of the frame's height, and in the very long shot, it was anything wider than that (G. R. Kress & T. Van Leeuwen, 2006). In the long shot, the whole figure was used to establish a social distance where it is revealed completely with its environment. In brief, diverse photography styles carried the meaning of creating an impersonal relation between the represented participant and viewer. Also, it sometimes showed the viewer and the environment around the represented participants to have a full image of the activity and the surrounding of the involved presented participant (G. R. Kress & T. Van Leeuwen, 2006).

It is important to discuss the attitude as last the interactive element. It can be further divided into several classes including involvement, detachment, viewer power, equality, representation power, and so on. G. Kress and T. Van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 133-143) stated that the participants can be depicted from various angles, indicating a different relation. For example, the horizontal angle can be frontal which indicates the involvement or oblique as detachment. As for the vertical angle, this can be high which assigns power to the interactive participants or low which makes the represented participants more powerful or at eye level that maintains equal relations.

#### **4. Ideology and Language**

Ideology and language are two interrelated concepts that are fundamental to understanding how individuals and groups construct and communicate their beliefs and values. Ideology can be defined as a system of beliefs or values that shapes the

way individuals and groups understand and interact with the world around them. It can be expressed through a variety of mediums, including language, art, and culture. According to Fairclough (2013, p. 1), ideology is "a socially constructed way of understanding the world and ourselves, and of ordering our actions and beliefs". Language, on the other hand, is a means of communication that is used to convey meaning and information. It is a complex system that includes both verbal and nonverbal elements and is shaped by a variety of factors, including culture, history, and social norms. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) notes, language "is not only a tool for communication, but also a site of social, cultural, and political struggle" (p. 21). The relationship between ideology and language is complex and multifaceted. Language can be used to express and reinforce ideological beliefs, as well as to challenge and critique them. For example, political speeches, propaganda, and advertising all use language to promote particular worldviews and values. Similarly, individuals and groups can use language to resist dominant ideologies and to promote alternative perspectives. Overall, the relationship between ideology and language is shaped by a wide range of social, cultural, and historical factors. As Fairclough (2013, p. 2) notes, "Ideology and language are mutually constitutive: language is a crucial means of constructing and disseminating ideology, while ideology shapes the use and meaning of language".

## **5. Ideology and Images**

One way in which ideology can be represented through images is through the use of visual symbols and iconography that convey specific meanings and values. According to Stuart Hall, visual images are "condensed codes" that communicate complex messages and ideas in a simplified form (Hall, 1980). These codes are often linked to cultural and social values that reflect broader ideological beliefs and

assumptions. For example, a study by (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) found that images of women in advertising often use specific poses, facial expressions, and clothing to convey messages about gender roles and societal expectations. Similarly, images of political leaders often use specific visual cues such as flags, gestures, and clothing to convey messages about national identity and values. Another way in which ideology can be represented through images is through the use of framing and composition. By selecting specific images and arranging them in a particular way, photographers and designers can create narratives that reflect their own ideological beliefs and perspectives. This can be seen, for example, in the way that news media frames stories and events through the use of images and headlines that highlight specific aspects of the story while downplaying others. Overall, the representation of ideology through images is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the use of various visual codes and conventions to communicate values, beliefs, and assumptions.

The representation of ideology through images and visual symbols is a complex and multi-faceted process that has been the subject of much academic inquiry. In recent years, scholars have explored how images can convey and reinforce ideological beliefs and values. One way in which ideology can be represented through images is through the use of visual symbols. According to (Kress, 2021, p. 3), visual symbols "carry cultural and ideological meanings, and are used to establish and reinforce social identities and relations". For example, national flags and religious icons are commonly used visual symbols that convey particular ideological messages. Visual symbols can also be used to create and reinforce social norms and expectations. In their study of gender representations in advertising, Sterk (2021) found that visual symbols such as makeup, high heels, and dresses were often used to reinforce traditional gender roles and expectations. Moreover, visual



symbols can be used to challenge dominant ideologies and promote alternative perspectives. For example, political posters and street art often use visual symbols to challenge established power structures and promote social justice causes. Overall, the representation of ideology through images and visual symbols is a complex and dynamic process that is shaped by a wide range of social, cultural, and historical factors.

## **6. Methodology**

For this study, data was collected from Facebook posts and analyzed using the multimodal discourse approach (MDA) developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen. The images analyzed included Annette Widmann-Mauz and the President of FIFA, the German national football team, and a group of LGBTQIA+ fans, each representing a distinct issue. The study had two primary objectives: first, to examine how homosexuality was portrayed in the images, and second, to determine the ideology of German Football. The methodology involved using interactive representation as the analytical framework, with the researchers identifying the participants in the images based on factors such as contact, social distance, and attitude. They then determined the actors and objectives and used the depiction of the participants to create meaning. By analyzing the representation of participation, the researchers were able to illustrate the ideology of the German Football team. Overall, the study relied on a qualitative approach, with visual analysis of images and the application of the MDA framework to interpret meaning. Facebook was used as the data source to access a large number of images, while the focus on the German Football team allowed for an in-depth examination of a specific case study.

## 7. Findings



**Figure 2.** Minister of Interior and the President of FIFA

During the opening ceremony of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, the German Minister of Interior, Annette Widmann-Mauz, and the President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, were present, as shown in Figure 1. Notably, this marked the first time the World Cup was held in the Middle East, a region where LGBTQIA+ rights

may not always be upheld. This image's demonstration of support for the LGBTQIA+ community carries considerable significance as it challenges the prevailing culture of discrimination and marginalization that many LGBTQIA+ people in the Middle East experience. It also represents a step forward towards greater recognition and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals in international sporting events. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this display of support was not devoid of controversy. Qatar's record on LGBTQIA+ rights is inconsistent, and there were apprehensions about the safety and welfare of LGBTQIA+ athletes and supporters during the World Cup. Furthermore, the German Minister of Interior received criticism from some members of her party for her stance on LGBTQIA+ rights. Despite this, Figure 1's image endures as a potent emblem of backing and inclusivity for the LGBTQIA+ community. It is also a reminder that there is still much work to be done to guarantee that their rights are observed and defended worldwide.

The two RP, standing together, most likely in a VIP area. The German Minister of Interior is wearing a rainbow-coloured flag or other LGBTQIA+ pride symbols on her left arm, showing her support for the community. The two of them are beaming with smiles and pointing towards the audience, which sends a clear message of inclusivity and backing for LGBTQIA+ individuals. What's cool is that they both seem to be looking directly at the viewers" direct eye contact - demand", as if they are speaking to us as "YOU". They are addressing us, encouraging us to do more to support and accept the LGBTQIA+ community during events like this. All in all, this image is a powerful reminder that we all have a part to play in making sure that everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, feels safe, welcomed, and celebrated. Accordingly, the social distance shows the image frame size was focused in the close-up shot, leading to a close social distancing and

involvement of the RPs in the informal relationships characteristic among friends. The attitude between the viewers and RP is frontal, where slight eye-level with a horizontal angle viewer can experience an increased involvement and equality with the represented participants since the image was taken from a medium close shot. It's worth mentioning that the RP in the image has power over the viewer since the image was taken from below to the top.



**Figure 3.** German Football Team

As shown in Figure.3 the German national football team put their hands on their mouths during the playing of the national anthem in Qatar 2022 as a way to show solidarity with LGBTQ+ people in countries where they face persecution and discrimination. On another side, it was a gesture that was initiated by the captain of the team, Joshua Kimmich and was done in response to Qatar's strict laws against homosexuality. The team's action was widely praised by LGBTQ+ activists and supporters as a powerful symbol of support for the community. However, it also

generated some controversy, with some criticizing it as a political statement that was inappropriate for a sporting event. According to the interactive meaning categories like contacts, there is direct eye contact between the RP and the viewers which in turn represents a demand from the German football team to the viewer to engage with them to support the LGBTQ+ community. Similarly, the image represents an intimate social distance since the image was taken from a frontal horizontal angle which indicates the involvement of both the RP and the viewers. The attitude between the viewers and RP is frontal, where slight eye-level with a horizontal angle viewer can experience an increased involvement and equality with the represented participants since the image was taken from a medium close shot. It's worth mentioning that the RP in the image has power over the viewer since the image was taken from below to the top.



**Figure 4.** LGBTQ+ Fans

In **Figure 4**, a crowd of fans gathered inside the stadium in Qatar, all wearing brightly coloured outfits that reflect the colours of the rainbow flag. Many fans are holding rainbow flags and banners, some of which bear messages of support for LGBTQ+ rights. The fans are diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity, but they all share a sense of joy and pride as they come together to celebrate both their love of soccer and their identities as LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite the challenges and obstacles faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in Qatar and other parts of the world, this image represents a powerful display of solidarity and resilience. It is a reminder that, even in the face of adversity, people can come together to celebrate their differences and show that love knows no boundaries. There is direct eye contact between the RP and the viewers which indicates a demand from the LGBTQ+ crowd to engage with them. Accordingly, the social distance shows that the image was taken from a close-up shot which indicates involvement between the RP and the viewers. The attitude between the viewers and RP is frontal, where slight eye-level with a horizontal angle viewer can experience an increased involvement and equality with the represented participants since the image was taken from a medium close shot. It's worth mentioning that the RP in the image has power over the viewer since the image was taken from below to the top.

## **8. Discussion**

Public support from officials and figures was seen as a significant step forward for LGBTQ+ rights in Qatar, where homosexuality is illegal and LGBTQ+ individuals face widespread discrimination and harassment. The World Cup provided a unique opportunity to raise awareness and promote acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in the country and around the world. A study by Parmenter et al. (2020) showed some political figures, including government officials and representatives from LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, publicly called on many countries

to improve their human rights record and to ensure the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals during the World Cup.

The images were most likely chosen for their positive and inclusive depiction of the LGBTQ+ community, as they feature individuals and groups from various backgrounds and with various identities. The participants in the images conveyed a sense of warmth and openness by gazing directly at the viewer and smiling, inviting the viewer to engage with and support the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, the use of smiley faces conveyed a sense of pleasure and celebration, emphasizing the positive aspects of LGBTQ+ culture and identity. The images may have been used in social media campaigns, public advertisements, or educational materials to increase awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals and issues. The purpose of using these images was likely to encourage viewers to become allies and advocates for the LGBTQ+ community by instilling empathy and understanding. A study by Cunningham and Nite (2020) the study identified several community characteristics that were associated with greater success, including strong leadership, clear mission and values, and a sense of community and belonging among members.

There have been studies on the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in media and sports more broadly. For example, a study by Anderson and McCormack (2018) analyzed the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in mainstream sports media in the UK and found that while there has been some progress in recent years, there is still a lack of visibility and representation for LGBTQIA+ athletes and fans. Another study by Brown and colleagues (2018) explored the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in digital media, including social media platforms. The study found that social media can provide a space for LGBTQIA+ individuals to create and share their representations and narratives, which can challenge dominant stereotypes and contribute to a more diverse and inclusive media landscape.

Beyond individual athletes and organizations, LGBTQIA+ fans have also been increasingly visible at international sports events. In recent years, LGBTQIA+ fan groups have formed around various sports, including soccer, rugby, and tennis. These groups often use sports events and various forms of representation, such as rainbow flags, apparel, and slogans as opportunities to raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues and advocate for greater acceptance and inclusion in sports. The study by Toffoletti (2021) examines the use of sporting artefacts, such as rainbow caps and rainbow laces, to promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports. The authors explore the effectiveness of these artefacts in raising awareness and promoting acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community within sports culture.

It is also possible that LGBTQIA+ representation in the Qatar World Cup could take the form of social media campaigns, public statements, or other forms of advocacy. However, given the legal and cultural context of Qatar, where homosexuality is criminalized and stigmatized, it is also possible that the LGBTQIA+ community may face significant challenges in advocating for their rights and visibility during the World Cup. The research of Denison et al. (2021) has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals face discrimination and exclusion in the world of sports. This can manifest in various forms such as verbal abuse, physical violence, and exclusion from teams and events. The lack of representation and visibility of LGBTQ+ athletes in sports can also contribute to the normalization of discrimination and exclusion. Efforts are being made to address these issues and create more inclusive and welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ individuals in sports.



## 9. Conclusion

The decision to hold the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been met with opposition for some different reasons, including the country's laws and practices regarding homosexuality. At the moment, Qatar makes homosexual activities a crime and does not acknowledge or permit marriages or relationships between people of the same sexual orientation. There have been requests for FIFA and Qatar to safeguard the safety of LGBTQ fans and athletes and to include them in all aspects of the competition. Some people have stated that corporate sponsors should put pressure on FIFA and Qatar over this problem and the inclusion of LGBTQ supporters as part of their marketing and branding surrounding the World Cup. Specifically, this topic focuses on the inclusion of LGBTQ fans as part of the World Cup. On the other hand, it is currently unknown what actions might be made and how this problem might finally be resolved in the years leading up to and during the 2022 World Cup.

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