

## **MASTER THESIS**

# **SPORTSWASHING AND TRANSPARENCY**

# in the football industry

MSc in Business Administration and Organizational Communication
Copenhagen Business School

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**Submitted:** 15/05/2023

125620 characters / 54 pages

## **RESUME**

Denne opgave ønsker at undersøge begrebet **sportswashing** og begrebet **gennemsigtighed** i fodboldindustrien. Som kontekst vil opgaven referere til sidste års FIFA World Cup, der blev afholdt i Qatar fra 20. november til 18. december 2022. Opgaven vil indledningsvis introducere relevante begreber og teori, som skal danne ramme for de analyserende processer i opgaven. Opgavens problemformulering omhandler hvordan de to førnævnte begreber påvirker hinanden og problemformuleringen lyder således:

Hvordan kan gennemsigtighed påvirke hvordan sportswashing kan bruges til at præge omdømme, ry og image i fodboldindustrien.

Opgaven vil bruge forskellige analyseformer herunder tematisk analyse til at afdække problemformuleringen og for at kunne diskutere og perspektivere analysernes resultater. På baggrund af analyseresultaterne vil opgaven dernæst foreslå en modificeret definition af sportswashing, hvor niveauet af gennemsigtighed er et delelement i selve definitionen. Ergo, er niveauet af gennemsigtighed afgørende for helhedsvurderingen af handlinger mistænkt eller identificeret som sportswashing. Med den modificeret definition kan interesserede parter analysere sager mistænkt som sportswashing på en måde, hvor aktørens gennemsigtighed tages i betragtning fra begyndelsen. Indsigt i aktørens niveau af gennemsigtighed vil oftest også indikere intentioner og evt. bagtanker, som måtte ligge bag deres handlinger. Opgaven vil afslutningsvis diskutere sportwashings egentlige effekt på forskellige modtagere samt diskutere hvilket ansvar FIFA har for at forhindre, at aktører, der ikke sørger for ordentlig menneskerettigheder eller er korrupte, ikke får muligheden får f.eks at afholde en World Cup, uanset hvor mange penge de er villig at betale.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Almost everyone is interested in some type of sport or discipline. Maybe they follow certain athletes, maybe they follow a club team or cheer for a national team. Of course there are people who aren't the least bit interested in sports and couldn't care less, but even then it is quite difficult finding a person who hasn't heard about sports or had their life affected in some way. Because sports has an impact on so many lives, it also has an impact on society, culture, norms, which means sports is more than 'just' sports.

The sport industry has a significant impact on several fundamental pillars of modern society such as the economy, health trends, media, culture and so on. No matter the type of sport, they all have some sort of profound impact on the culture by shaping values, beliefs, and traditions. Sports have a big influence on its surroundings and can serve as a common language and bond for people of different backgrounds and bring them together for a shared experience, ultimately creating a sense of community and identity. This could happen if you meet or see a person wearing team merchandise for 'your' team in a foreign city - then you feel an instant connection, even though you don't know anything about the other person besides that they might like the same team, or just like the design of the shirt.

Sport can reflect and reinforce cultural norms and values, whether it is related to gender, ethnicity, nationality or age. Sport is also a popular source of entertainment and creates many opportunities for social interaction and community building. The sport industry can also play a significant role in promoting physical and mental health, as well as supporting other healthy lifestyle choices. Sport can teach people about discipline, hard work and the importance of prioritizing, and usually has many hidden lessons for actions and behavior both on and off the pitch. Sports also have an impact on the economy, both locally and globally. The sport industry is a major source of employment, generating jobs in areas such as event management, broadcasting, merchandising and sponsorship. Sport events and facilities can also drive tourism and stimulate the economy in local communities, leading to an increase in business for hotels, restaurants, and other local establishments. Additionally, the sport industry generates significant revenue through ticket sales, merchandise, broadcasting rights and sponsorships, making it a major contributor to the global economy.

However, the sport industry can also have a negative impact on the economy, particularly in cases where public funds are used to build sports facilities or host major events. There is also the issue of athletes earning high salaries and creating income inequality, which can have broader implications for the economy.

Although the sport industry affects modern society in many ways, sport marketing remains a smaller field of study within the 'regular' marketing industry and in academia compared to other sub-genres in marketing. A concept within sport marketing that has increasingly received more and more attention is the phenomenon of *sportswashing*. Sportswashing has become widely discussed in the media since December 2010, where Russia and Qatar were simultaneously announced as the hosts of the 2018 and 2022 World Cup (FIFA, 2010). The term sportswashing is quite new, but the fundamental strategy behind the concept has been around since the 1930's with mega events like Berlin Olympic Games in 1936, where Nazi Germany used the Olympics to benefit their image and used the sport event to do so (Fruh et al., 2022; Gordon, 2022; USHMM, 2023). Some argue that society saw the first versions of sportswashing at the 1978 FIFA World Cup, which was hosted by Argentina under the rule and dictatorship of General Videla (Fruh et al., 2022; Gordon, 2022; Molinaro, 2009).

## 1.1. MOTIVATION

In the preliminary research I found papers about the potential consequences of sportswashing, and other papers about how transparency can minimize potential damage on an image or maybe even prevent the situation potentially damaging the image. But there were little to no papers or other material, where the research was focused upon the connection between transparency and sportswashing or how these two phenomena might affect each other when 'combined'. This thesis will try to minimize the particular knowledge gap.

This thesis will use football as the primary source of examples and context, thus making the use of examples from other sports limited. This choice is in no way an indication that sportswashing only takes place in the football industry, but rather a choice made to ensure that this thesis will deliver a thorough and detailed analysis and conclusion. Furthermore, since football is the most popular sport in the world (Sawe, 2018), then

the sport offers a big platform with a big reach for any marketing effort. Sportswashing performed within the football industry will most likely have the biggest impact or results, which makes it even more interesting to investigate.

"Out of all the unimportant things in life, football is the most important" (Steinberg, 2014).

"... that if you are on the team that wins the Irish championship in Gaelic football, you will never have to pay for a pint in your village pub again" (Eriksen, 2007).

These two examples are just two among many and speak to tell the fact that football has a big meaning for many people. No matter where in the world you may be, you can with almost certainty find someone who also is a football fan without much effort. The teams that people cheer for might change - but the love of the sport is global.

## 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## **Problem statement:**

How could transparency influence how sportswashing can be used to impact reputation and image within the football industry?

## **Research questions:**

Is it possible to determine a level of transparency surrounding Qatar, in relation to the 2022 FIFA World Cup?

Is it possible to deduce some conclusions about the connection between the level of transparency and the possibility for sportswashing happening?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical material used in this thesis was primarily found searching in the online CBS library. To find relevant material I used keywords like 'sportswashing', 'sportswashing world cup', 'sportswashing mega events', 'transparency sport', 'corruption sport', 'sport governance', 'soft power', 'sport mega events', 'sports branding', 'fifa sportswashing', 'fifa transparency', 'qatar world cup' and 'fifa world cup'. I then used the method explained in a 2016 paper by Coutinho, Mesquita and Fonseca and saved every result that might be of any interest for the subject of this thesis (Coutinho et al., 2016). I then read through all the titles and removed the results that didn't fit the research field after all. Then I read the summaries of the remaining results and again removed those that weren't relevant. Then I read the introductions and the conclusions of the remaining results, and again removed the findings that weren't relevant for this thesis. And then, I finally read the full text of the remaining results and removed those who proved irrelevant after reading the whole text.

## 2.1 GOVERNANCE IN SPORT

The notion of Corporate Governance has merged with the world of sport and birthed the concept of sport governance, that have attracted researchers since the 1990's (Hoye, 2017). Sport Governance covers the phenomenon of applying and developing corporate standards for those leading sport organizations (Ibid.). Examples of sport actors acting in governing capacity could be international and national federations, state and local governing bodies, professional leagues and government-owned sport media (Ibid.). Hoye reports that global sport organizations usually will act in one of three governance purposes and these three purposes are:

- (1) governance of sport e.g. FIFA and FIFA's confederations
- (2) governance of a sport event like the International Olympic Committee (IOC)
- (3) governance of special operations like anti-doping regulators like World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) (Ibid).

Sport governance is usually, but not exclusively, performed in the following activities: (1) creating and maintaining laws and rules, (2) development of the sport, (3) the development and management of athletes, (4) resolution of issues within the sport, (5)

arranging and holding sport events, and (6) maintaining relationships with governments, authorities, associations, commercial entities and other stakeholders (Ibid.). In the previous section this paper stated that transparency was a big part of sport going forward and obtaining credibility, and to achieve this the governing bodies must themselves be transparent and set the right examples for other parts of the sport. In chapter 4 by in 'The Sage Handbook of Sport Management' O'Brian and Gowthorp include a citation from a 2011 by Crawford and Carter:

"A good governance structure doesn't guarantee success because there are too many other factors ... But poor governance structure will greatly diminish the prospects of success because it wastes energy, allocates resources to the wrong places and creates the wrong incentives and conflict" (O'Brian & Gowthorp, 2017).

It is widely recognized by many institutions that sport organizations require some variation of an internal democracy to fight potential corruption and people promoting personal agendas (Di Marco, 2019). Di Marco reports that in order to oversee and ensure that sport organizations abide by a democratic protocol a supervisory mechanism should be inserted to balance the power of presidents, directors and top leaders (Di Marco, 2019). The IOC recommends a four-year term for all positions in the executive board. Although sport organizations abide by the recommendation of four year terms, it is not a guarantee for fading off corruption or the promotion of personal agenda's, which seems to be the case with FIFA.

Di Marco also reports that there should be an external control present to inspect sport organizations and ensure they uphold the law and agreements, and also sees to it that they experience appropriate consequences if they don't (Di Marco, 2019). According to Di marco, this controlling authority is necessary for ensuring transparency, and because sport has great significance to the majority of the public, it should be a priority for everyone to secure its authenticity. A paper by Geeraert and Drieskens also mentions external control over sport organizations. They argue that the European Union (EU) exerts significant control over sport organizations like FIFA and UEFA, and that this control can be beneficial for promoting good governance in these organizations (Geeraert & Drieskens, 2015).

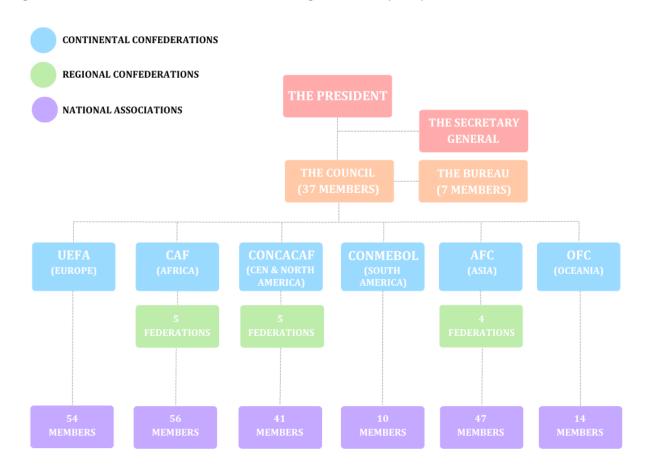
A key takeaway from papers by Di Marco, Geeraert and Drieskens, and Shilbury and Ferkins is that transparency should be a priority in the governance structure and culture, if the sport organizations are to influence the society and industry in a positive way rather than exploiting the sport for their own benefit and profit (Di Marco, 2019; Geeraert & Drieskens, 2015; Shilbury & Ferkins 2015).

Because this thesis is using football as a context, the governance body most interesting to mention is FIFA. FIFA has been a big part of the debate surrounding the sportswashing accusation against Qatar's, as FIFA was and is responsible for awarding Qatar the 2022 World Cup. Therefore, this thesis will give a short description of FIFA and its structure in the following section. The information about FIFA's structure will become useful when this thesis later addresses some of the consequences of corruption in sport.

## 2.1.1. FIFA

FIFA or The Fédération Internationale de Football Association is the international football federation responsible for governing and developing the game of football around the world, and for organizing the coveted World Cup (FIFA, 2023a). FIFA was formed in 1904 by seven European football associations where everyone involved was amateur and there was no money involved whatsoever (Gordon, 2022). Although the game of football grew all over the world in the following decades, FIFA remained a small-scale and amateurish organization until 1974, when brazilian João Havelange became president (Ibid.). The president prior to João Havelange was the British football administrator Stanley Raus, who had become rather unpopular as he showed tolerance for the apartheid South Africa and their membership of FIFA. João Havelange was aware of Stanley Raus' unpopularity and promised to ban South Africa from FIFA as long as apartheid existed, if he was elected as the FIFA president (Ibid.). João Havelange was, according to accounts, bribing several members of the congress for their votes by giving them brown paper bags with cash in a hotel in Frankfurt the days before the election took place (Ibid.). This approach would more or less dictate how FIFA would be run after the 1974 election.

FIFA has a hierarchical organizational structure that is composed of several levels and committees. The Congress is the supreme and legislative body, and is officially at the top of this hierarchy and they are also the body who elects the president of FIFA at the gathering of congress which takes place every fourth year, where the congress meet and elect the president for the next four years (FIFA, 2023b; Gordon, 2022). The FIFA Congress consists of representatives from all member associations (FIFA, 2023b). The Council, or formerly known as the executive committee, is the strategic and directory body of FIFA and is composed of the president, eight vice presidents and 28 elected members of the member associations each for terms of four years and a maximum of three terms total (FIFA, 2023b). Within the Council is a smaller group called the Bureau of the council and they deal with matters that fall between two council meetings and can't wait to be handled (Ibid.). The Bureau consists of seven members including the president and the six other confederation presidents (Ibid.).



(Sargeant, 2015: Gordon, 2022: FIFA, 2023b).

The Council has several committees to help them do their jobs like *The Development Committee, The Football Stakeholders Committee, The Medical Committee, The Finance Committee, The Referees Committee, The Organizing Committee for FIFA Competitions and The Member Association Committee (FIFA, 2023f).* In addition to the seven standing committees that specifically assist and aid *The Council, FIFA also has four independent committees like The Ethics Committee, The Disciplinary Committee and The Review Committee alongside The Governance, Audit and Compliance Committee (Ibid.).* 

Back in 2011 FIFA changed their protocol for voting and making decisions from being decided by the executive committee to being decided by the whole FIFA Congress (Junghagen & Aurcandil, 2020; Gordon, 2022). This change was made to minimize the chance of corruption happening, and the argument was that no one would or could bribe the majority of congress, but the 'new' protocol has not minimized the organizations susceptibility to corruption and in some ways the Council has become even more powerful (Ibid.). In a paper by Junghagen and Aurvandil from 2020, several key players and sub-groups within the organization are identified, such as the Council, the 6 Confederations, and the World Cup Organizing Committee (Ibid.). The two authors argue that the hierarchical structure of FIFA, with power concentrated in a small number of individuals and committees, has contributed to the organization's susceptibility to corruption (Ibid.). Hoye also stated that the election of directors, presidents and other types of leaders may be football's biggest weakness when it comes to transparency (Hoye, 2017).

## 2.2. SPORTSWASHING

The term and phenomena *sportswashing* has appeared more and more in professional journalism, research and on social media platforms the past few years (Skye, 2022). The phenomena has become a popular subject when the discussion concerns cases where *someone* is using sports to boost their image or to manage negative attention. Thus, in the year leading up to the 2022 World Cup, sportswashing became the topic of choice for many news stations, freelance journalists, bloggers and so on (Fruh et al., 2022). Some of the reports and stories focussed their criticism on the environmental issues with hosting an outdoor mega event in a climate like Qatar (Boykoff & Zirin, 2022; De Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Latta, 2022; Raji, 2022; Syal, 2022, Lahm, 2022). Other storylines

focussed on the debates related to human and LGBTQ+ rights, just like the conditions for the migrant worker also received a lot of criticism (Boykoff & Zirin, 2022; Lahm, 2022). Other stories criticized how it appeared fans were being bought due to viral videos featuring large crowds of people of Pakistani or Indian origin wearing football kits from Germany, England, Argentina and so on (Weber, 2022; Ronay, 2022: Lahm, 2022). Many also criticized the fact that Qatar didn't have a culture or tradition for football compared to many of the European countries, who also had bid on the 2022 World Cup (Lahm, 2022; Gordon, 2022). Even though these subjects are all valid and necessary discussions to have when debating if Qatar was an appropriate host or FIFA acted in a proper way, very few stories or reports concerned itself with how the term 'sportswashing' was and is being used, what it entails or more importantly how it can or can't be used to aid when analyzing various situations in sports (Skye, 2022). This thesis argues that if we don't investigate how a term can be used to increase our knowledge or expose new subjects in need for additional research, then what actual value does it carry in an academic context? Skye has written about the lack of academic material regarding the term and with inspiration from Skye and other scholars, this section of the thesis will explain sportswashing and reflect on its abilities and limitations by using work from academic scholars as stepping blocks.

## 2.2.1. UNDERSTANDING SPORTSWASHING

The notion of sportswashing has a connection to other types of 'washing' like green or whitewashing (Skye 2022; Fruh et al., 2022). The idea of using the word 'washing' is quite literal, meaning that the actor looks to wash something, perceived as bad or dirty, clean by being involved with something, that is perceived as positive or good like a popular sport such as football (Skye, 2022; Fruh et al., 2022). Sportswashing is a way for the actor in question to glamorize themselves and cleanse or launder their image through association with sports (Gordon, 2022). In Skye's paper about sportswashing, he compares the term to other image and reputation enhancing strategies such as **diplomacy, soft power, place branding** and **propaganda**. Place branding refers to the branding of cities, countries, states and such. Soft power is when an actor influences and shapes preferences through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or brute force which is referred to as 'hard power'. Diplomacy refers to the interaction and communication between people representing the interests of a state or nation. Skye

suggests looking at sportswashing as a new way of talking about propaganda in the digital era (Skye, 2022). Propaganda is most often mentioned when talking about historical events, and most famously a strategy used by Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. Propaganda is not a strategy limited to warfare, and according to a known political scholar called Philip Taylor, the term can be applied to:

"any information, ideas, doctrine or special appeals, disseminated to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes or behavior of any special group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly" (Skye, 2022).

Diplomacy, soft power and place branding can, according to Skye, be used to manage and eliminate potential issues through engagement and attraction rather than by deception, which is the case with propaganda and sportswashing (Skye, 2022). Fruh, Archer, and Wojtowicz argues that sportswashing is different from diplomacy or soft power because it is used to repair, distrate or minimize reputational damage usually created by violating moral norms, laws or international agreements (Fruh et al., 2022). Harmonious with Skye's observation, Fruh, Archer, and Wojtowicz also note how soft power and diplomacy are perceived as tools available to all states or organizations, while sportswashing is perceived as a strategy for regaining control and proving of image and reputation by association to sport (Skye, 2022; Fruh et al., 2022). Skye argues that sportswashing is in the eye of the beholder, meaning that how sportswashing is seen varies depending on who is discussing it and which point of view that person or source has (Skye, 2022). Skye has furthermore observed that western sources and societies are more inclined to label and pass judgment on non-western efforts to promote and support sport-related activities as sportswashing (Skye, 2022). While the paper by Fruh, Archer, and Wojtowicz argues that the countries accused of sportswashing are rightfully accused, due to their moral violations and use of sport to minimize the damage to their image, popularity and reputation, Skye has a different reasoning and assessment. Skye abstain from commenting on or having an opinion about who is performing sportswashing and if they are rightfully accused, but instead focus his arguments on the fact that it could become a future issue if the concept sportswashing was exclusively used to describe cases in non-western countries, because it would limit the analytical ability and usefulness of the concept (Skye, 2022).

Fruh, Archer, and Wojtowicz discuss how sportswashing corrupts the athletes and other otherwise innocent parts of the sport, when *someone* performs sportswashing (Fruh et al., 2022). The author trio discuss how fans are not directly complicit to for instance a club owner's sportswashing, but they can become indirectly complicit, because when rooting for a club you often condone their actions as well (Ibid.). Of course fans can cheer for a club and simultaneously disapprove of club owners using the club as a personal 'washing machine' for cleaning their image. But if the attempt to perform sportswashing is successful and the owners manage to keep the negative attention at bay, then the fans cheering for the club 'help' the owner create a positive story to cover the negative one (Fruh et al., 2022).

One way to wash an image clean with sport is by hosting mega events like the World Cup in football and the Olympic Games (Fruh et al., 2022; Loepkey & Ellis, 2019). Both events are of international reach and influence and will generate great opportunities to improve reputation, engage new audiences, build soft power or carry out diplomatic work while benefiting from being associated with a popular sport or event (Skye, 2022; Fruh et al., 2022; Loepkey & Ellis, 2019). Using sport events as diplomatic or branding tools can catch the attention of the media and having the media's attention is essential when looking to change one's perception - if the actor can control the message being delivered by the media, that is (Skye, 2022). Diplomacy can be perceived as a way of obtaining goals and benefits through the international and strategic relationships that are formed across states, actors and unions. These relationships have traditionally been seen to by government officials, public servants and such, but increasingly high-profile people and cultural icons have been getting more and more involved in diplomatic work. Examples of this could be how french prime minister Emanual Macron regularly is publicly seen in the company of the french football player Kylian Mbappe or how the Qatari owners of PSG seize almost every chance to be photographed or seen with the most famous and loved players from PSG, with the intention of the popularity and love for the players will spread to the actors. Both soft power, diplomacy and branding are seen as legitimate goals and strategies for all countries and states, where sportswashing rarely is mentioned about western activities (Skye, 2022).

## 2.2.2. THE 2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

One of the most known cases of sportswashing is Qatar as hosts for the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Fruh et al., 2022). As mentioned in the introduction, the 2022 World Cup was awarded simultaneously as the 2018 World Cup back in December 2010, where the 2018 World Cup was awarded to Russia and the 2022 World Cup was awarded to Qatar (FIFA, 2010). The President of FIFA at the time was Sepp Blatter who mentioned the reason that the World Cup had never been to either Eastern Europe or the Middle East as the main reason for choosing Russia and Qatar as hosts from a field of countries such as England, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Portugal for the 2018 bid and Australia, Korea Republic, Japan and USA for the 2022 bid (Ibid.). The structure of FIFA is of significant value when wanting to understanding why Russia and Qatar was awarded the World Cup bids for 2018 and 2022 is told, and why FIFA awarded both World Cup on the same time, which in itself also went against several traditions compared to how it have been done before (Gordon, 2022; Lahm, 2022; Boykoff & Zirin, 2022).

Another focus point in the mini-series, which features interviews with several of the people actually involved with the World Cup bids in 2010, is the corruptive nature of FIFA (Gordon, 2022). The Qatari government has been accused of bribing several FIFA members and officials to vote in favor of their bid for the World Cup (Ibid.). Another accusation is how FIFA officials since João Havelange presidency have been paid and received kickbacks to choose certain sponsors or sell television rights to certain companies (Ibid.). The reason for mentioning this particular story about FIFA is to highlight that the circumstances surrounding the 2018 and 2022 World Cups are very complex and very non-transparent compared to other similar mega events. Another example of organizations choosing quite controversial hosts for mega sport events is when the Winter Olympic Games in 2022 was awarded to China, Beijing - which for many seemed an odd choice since Beijing's climate usually doesn't suit winter sports and China also have had many issues with human rights (Borden, 2022).

A significant fact to keep in mind when addressing these historical examples is that both the World Cup in 1978 and the 1936 Olympic Games were awarded to the respective states before they were dictatorships. FIFA awarded the 1978 World Cup to Argentina in 1966 when Joan Perón was president, but in 1976 Joan's widow Isabel Perón was

overthrown by Jorge Videla in the military coup (Kihl et al., 2022; Wikipedia, 2023; Gordon, 2022). The military Junta wanted to show Argentina as a stable and safe country after they came to power and used the 1978 World Cup as a tool for bringing Argentina together again, heavily aided by Argentina winning the final against the Netherlands 3-1 (Kihl et al., 2022; Wikipedia, 2023; Gordon, 2022). The reason the 1978 World Cup can be discussed as a case of sportswashing, even though the Junta didn't bid or campaign for the event, is because the dictatorship saw the 1978 World Cup as an opportunity to draw attention away from the violent way the Junta took the power and instead become associated with a victorious Argentina (Kihl et al., 2022; Gordon, 2022). Similar was the situation leading up to the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany. Germany was awarded the Olympic Games in 1931 as a signal of Germany returning to the world after their defeat in World War I (USHMM, 2023). But in 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany and turned Germany into a dictatorship, where Jewish people were being brutally targeted (USHMM, 2023; Gordon, 2022). Similarly Nazi Germany didn't specifically campaign for the Olympic Games, but they welcomed the opportunity and attempted to turn the event into an exhibition of how great Germany was (USHMM, 2023; Gordon, 2022). But just like the case with the 1978 World Cup, the 1936 Olympic Games is still discussed as a case of sportswashing, since Germany very deliberately used the Olympic Games as an advertisement display for 'everything good' about Germany and to distract the masses from the awful treatment of innocent people (USHMM, 2023; Gordon, 2022).

## 2.2.3. RECOGNIZING SPORTSWASHING

According to Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz one way of performing sportswashing consists of **distracting** attention away from the moral violations such as poor human rights (Fruh et al., 2022). If the first few pages on google after searching 'Qatar' is related to the World Cup rather than their issues with human rights, then fewer people might discover these human rights violations and therefore fewer people will be critical towards Qatar (Ibid.). Another way mentioned is **minimizing**, which is to make the moral violation seem less important than the sport event happening or defer the issue to another time or place and thus attempting to block the association between the violation and the sport event, by changing the context of which the violation is seen (Fruh et al., 2022). Another way of doing sportswashing is by **normalizing** the violations in question (Fruh

et al., 2022). The authors suggest that this can be obtained by tapping into the positive association with the mega event and then hoping this association is so strong that it will affect the fans to think the same about the host of the event or to the owners of beloved sport clubs (Fruh et al., 2022). Therefore the *'sportswasher'* will attempt to make the positive association as strong as possible, knowing that it might enhance the chances of it 'spilling over' and thus also apply to the *sportswasher*.

Sportswashing, and other branding activities, is usually considered to be most effective when applied to communities or very influential people with a lot of influence over other people (Fruh et al., 2022). Using celebrities or other people acting as role models can be seen as a way of reaching larger groups of people or communities, because these role models or celebrities will have fans following and copying their actions without asking many questions. To continue the example of Qatar, they used several famous and beloved football stars, such as Xavi, Ronald de Boer and Cafu as official ambassadors for the World Cup in Qatar (Qatar 2022, 2023b). Former English player David Beckham also did some PR and ambassador activities, and like many other sports stars from different nations, he also attended the World Cup in person (Labo, 2022; Ipsen, 2022).

Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz propose three 'conditions' for how we might what they call Paradigm Cases of Sportswashing:

- (1) the moral violation is serious and widespread rather than trivial and isolated
- (2) the agent in question is a state or regime
- (3) sports are deliberately, strategically used through hosting events and owning clubs to mitigate the undesirable reputational effect of the moral violation

Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz suggest we define cases of sportswashing after their seriousness where the paradigmatic cases are the one of the most serious character, where the moral violation is widespread rather than being local or limited to a smaller scale (Fruh et al., 2022). Sportswashing can also be carried out by other actors than states, regimes or nations, such as organizations and other private actors.

It is not always easy to be certain of when sportswashing is happening or not, if it's a paradigmatic case or not or even investigating a potential case of sportswashing when you are a third party in the case (Fruh et al., 2022). The actors doing sportswashing is not often transparent or open about what they wish to obtain by for instance sponsoring a new stadium for a beloved club, and sport clubs or athletes usually also stay pretty silent. This thesis will argue that the challenge related to either defining a case as sportswashing or not is due to the uncertainty surrounding the intention of the actor in question. For instance, the western news stations can't know for sure if Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar has a big passion for sport and if it is that passion that has fuelled the Qatari World Cup pursuit rather than the possibilities for covering up the moral violations, making a profit, getting exposure and so on. The reasoning and motivation behind Qatar's World Cup bid is most likely far more complex than one of these simplified reasons - but still this thesis calls for high self-awareness and realism regarding one's own accessibility to information and insight, when one wishes to report on someone practicing sportswashing. The element of the actor's intention with the activities can be difficult to address as an outsider and therefore some arguments tend to be rooted in speculation rather than solid information. This thesis will later suggest how the transparency perspective might help minimize the gap of uncertainty and make it possible to better divide cases of paradigmatic sportswashing and 'regular' branding through sports by being able to close in on the actor's intention behind their actions.

## 2.3. THE POWER OF IMAGE

This section will give a brief description of why image matters so much and why organizations are willing to corrupt themselves to keep up a certain image and appearance. For many stakeholders, whether it is fans, sponsors, players, trainers and so on, image and reputation is very important for both themselves and those they associate themselves with (Szymanski & Wolfe, 2017). Most non-corrupt organizations and people will be reluctant to work with corrupt or deceptive organizations or people because, in a world like ours where social media has a big influence on the public perception, most actors can not afford being associated with someone with a bad image. Thanks to the 'canceling culture' the society and media has very little tolerance for,

usually, people in powerful positions taking advantage or acting in offensive ways and will as a response cancel them or it, which will not only hurt their image later on, but maybe affect their sale or profit. When someone is canceled it is essentially a boycott of that person, organization, group and so on and because social media has so much power - the ramification can be quite severe for a celebrity or a company, if they get canceled (Romano, 2020).

Another reason why image matters, especially in a popular and highly commercialized sport like football, is because the football players often become idols and role models for children and young people all over the world (Szymanski & Wolfe, 2017). Having the ability to influence others with your own actions and decisions is very powerful and valuable in the marketing and PR industry. This very reason is why the influencer-industry has become so big and why so many otherwise 'normal' people are able to share their life and the things they use as a fulltime job, where companies will pay these people to feature their products or services on their social media as a form of product placement which is a well-used strategy in many industries beside sport like television and movies, artist and so on. So having a good reputation and image will make an athlete, a club or an organization more attractive to sponsors, investors and so on which can lead to more income, a larger reach and more popularity. You can see it as a circle, if the image is good and you attract the right sponsors and investors, you will go into a positive circle, where it will make itself better and better. But if the image is bad, it can become a negative circle, which would make it even more difficult to become popular and attract spectators and so on.

## 2.4. TRANSPARENCY IN SPORT

Transparency is a well-known concept in sport management and refers to the openness and accessibility of information related to the finances, operations, governance, structures, decision-making processes, anti-doping policies, athlete management, fan engagement, event management and such (Cifuentes-Faura, 2021; Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Henne, 2015).

Král and Cuskelly use the definition of Transparency given by *Transparency International*:

"...shedding light on rules, plans, processes and actions. It is knowing why, how, what, and how much. Transparency ensures that public officials, civil servants, managers, board members and businessmen act visibly and understandably, and report on their activities. And it means that the general public can hold them to account." (Král & Cuskelly, 2017).

The concept of transparency is essential in order to uphold good governance and for the sport organizations to be held accountable for their actions and for establishing trust between the organization and different stakeholders (Cifuentes-Faura, 2021; Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Henne, 2015). Therefore, transparency should be a fundamental part of all sports organizations and their governance systems (Ibid). Transparency is usually maintained through open data policies, clear communication channels, and stakeholder engagement (Ibid.). Transparency is also a key element for combating corruption and ensuring the credibility and effectiveness of procedures to handle matters of dishonest nature such as the use of performance enhancing drugs, match-fixing, bribing and other potential threats to integrity and trust in the sport industry (Ibid.). According to Král and Cuskelly little transparency will usually be due to differences in the development of appropriate corporate governance protocols and the lack of needed prerequisites like legal structures and financial institutions (Král & Cuskelly, 2017).

Sports organizations should prioritize building trusting and good relationships to the sponsors, fans and other invested stakeholders, so if an issue or negative situation occurred there would be some reputational and social credit to decrease the potential consequences (Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Manoli et al., 2022). In order to build trust and credibility it is suggested that sports organizations provide sponsors with detailed information about their operations, including financial information, governance structures and procedures to fight threats like anti-doping (ibid.).

According to several scholars, sports organizations must prioritize transparency more intensely going forward to ensure they are held accountable for their actions, so that

they can build trust with their different stakeholders, promote fair play and develop the game of football all around the world (Cifuentes-Faura, 2021; Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Henne, 2015; Nunkoo et al., 2018; Zitzewitz, 2014). Stakeholders and the public are increasingly demanding more transparency from the organizations, and since the sport industry has seen several corruption scandals already, it is understandable that sponsors and stakeholders actively try to prevent any additional breeding ground for corruption, dishonesty or the abuse of self-governance (Ibid.).

When wishing to analyze the level of transparency in sport, a scholar might look at various indicators such as the availability and completeness of financial reports, the presence of whistleblower protections, the extent of public participation in decision-making processes, and the level of media scrutiny and reporting. The level of transparency can be determined in many ways ranging from subjective measurement from stakeholders to statistical calculations (Král & Cuskelly, 2017). Each method will have its own benefits and limitations, but ultimately Král and Cuskelly recommend a researcher to choose one or several methods that suit the research they are doing and the data the best. Although one 'requirement' is that the researchers are aware and transparent about the benefits and limitations related to the chosen method (Ibid.). This thesis will take a mostly subjective approach and dive into sources from the actor themself and their stakeholders, to then match and compare this data with the articles and reports about Qatar and their level of transparency.

## 2.4.1. CORRUPTION IN SPORT

Corruption in sport can, like corruption in any other industry, occur at any level of the hierarchy. In the sporting hierarchy there are many stakeholders where corruption could be rooted such as the international and national governing bodies, individual teams, players, coaches and so on. The consequences of corruption in sport can be significant and far-reaching, ranging from financial losses to reputational damage and loss of public trust. Corruption can also lead to a decline in social capital, which is the trust and cooperation between individuals and groups in a society (Manoli et al., 2022). Due to the growing commercialization of sport and the many different sport-related sources of income, it becomes harder and harder for the industry to counteract corruption or *someone* taking advantage of the sport.

According to the netflix documentary it was the then President João Havelange and Horst Dassler, who was the owner of Adidas and son of the Adidas founder Adolf Dassler, that gave corruption in FIFA a kickstart (Gordon, 2022). Dassler provided Havelange with a personal bonus, which essentially was a bribe, for letting Adidas buy the majority of marketing rights for the 1982 World Cup held in Spain and because the deal provided FIFA with a big sum of money, no one really questioned the reasons for selling to majority to Adidas (Ibid.). In May 2015 FIFA became the main character in a very public scandal, where several members of the executive committee, which is now called the council, and a number of senior officials were arrested on suspicion of corruption and later charged with accounts of corruption, wire fraud, racketeering and money laundering (Gordon, 2022; BBC, 2015; Andersen, 2023). The investigation looked into the whole process involving the bidding process for the World Cup, the presidential election and the administrations of funds and resources (Ibid.). Eventually this scandal pushed the previous FIFA president Sepp Blatter and the former UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) president Michel Platini out of power after they were banned from any football-related activities for 8 years after they were charged with abusing their executive positions (BBC, 2015). In the following presidential elections Gianni Infantino replaced Sepp Blatter as FIFA president (FIFA, 2023d) and Aleksander Čeferin took over the UEFA presidency from Michel Platini (UEFA, 2023a).

Corruption in sport reaches further than FIFA, but the fact that the biggest governing body in football is connected with corruption in so many ways and for so many years, is quite telling about how deep the traditions for corruption run and how difficult it will be to break them, despite several attempts. A significant person who tried to improve FIFA was the then UEFA president Lennart Johansson, who tried for the FIFA presidency in 1998, which was also where João Havelange would leave his presidency (Gordon, 2022). Lennart Johansson was, beside being responsible for the successful UEFA Champions League, very passionate about promoting transparency and openness and saving the sport from corruption, which already had a tight grasp on FIFA (Gordon, 2022; UEFA, 2023b). Lennart Johansson lost the 1998 election to Sepp Blatter, who was president until the 2015 scandal (Gordon, 2022; FIFA, 2023e). Sepp Blatter secured the

presidency in 1998 by promising a World Cup to South Africa, and with the help of Mohammed Bin Hammam from Qatar, who was a member of the executive committee and very resourceful, made other important deals for securing the needed votes (Gordon, 2022; The Guardian, 2015). Several former FIFA executives have also confirmed that they saw brown paper bags being exchanged at the FIFA hotel before the election, just like when João Havelange won his first election in 1974 (Ibid.).

The repercussions of corruption are widespread, regardless of the industry. And because football is loved by so many people around the world, coming from different countries and cultures, there is an endless stream of opinions and views on how football should be managed or how to save the integrity of the game going forward. Like other similar things like art or music, sport has the ability to consume people and make them forget about all their problems or worries for a moment and just enjoy this particular entertainment, regardless if they are also playing, cheering from the stands or watching on the tv at home. For many people, sport represents their dreams and a more 'idealistic' and pure world. Sport has the ability to make dreams come true, and we look to sport when we wish to focus on the good things in our world like the benefits of globalization and the growing diversity and representation of different cultures and ethnicities. This is why it can be so damaging for the sport industry if corruption takes over and the sport becomes completely motivated by big ressources. This thesis argues that the most damaging effect of corruption in sport, is that it makes it difficult to trust certain people or certain processes, that it has the ability to damage the image of the sport and image of the people associated with the sport and that set an example for the rest of the world and spread to other aspect of the society.

The whistleblower and previous global media director in FIFA Guido Tognoni once said "... if we don't fight corruption in sport, we should not fight corruption at all" (Gordon, 2022).

## 3. RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to answer my problem statement in the most meticulous way possible, I formulated some research questions to help guide the whole investigative and researching process. The first research question is about determining the level of transparency surrounding everything related to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The next research question is formulated to help steer the analysis efforts towards uncovering a correlation between the level of transparency and the possibility of performing sportswashing. I wish to investigate this exact theme because I am curious if knowledge and awareness about the level of transparency could help obtain the following objectives:

Help the sport industry to get a better understanding of how and why sportswashing happens

Help organizations, nations or states incept situations, where sportswashing is likely to happen

Help actors act accordingly to minimize the potential implication of the sport and its followers

In order to analyze the connection between the level of transparency and sportswashing, I will use articles and other secondary data and through thematic analysis search for recurring themes and problems discussed in the data. This thesis will not conclude on the opinion of a few, but look for recurring themes and arguments across many articles.

Both of these research questions are included to ultimately help answer the overall problem statement of this thesis, whose goal is to investigate how transparency can influence how organizations, club owners, nations and such use sportswashing to affect their image and reputation. The prediction and hope is that this thesis can propose an extended 'definition' or guideline for using sportswashing and transparency together, because including transparency in the definition will make it possible to better determine which intentions the actors have.

## 3.1. A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

A constructivist approach emphasizes the subjective and context-dependent nature of knowledge creation (Reincker and Jørgensen, 2020; Moses and Knudsen, 2012). The constructivist approach to research is a way of understanding social phenomena by exploring the perspectives and interpretations of individuals and groups involved in a particular situation (Ibid.). The constructivist approach recognizes that knowledge and sense-making is actively constructed by individuals through their experiences and interactions with the world around them. Therefore, different people may have different interpretations of the same situation or event and the researcher's role is not to discover universal truths about the world or the situation, but rather to understand how individuals and groups make sense of their experiences and construct their own realities, and how these impact a subject. The context is also of great importance according to the constructive approach, and the same experience may be interpreted differently in different contexts (Ibid.). Constructivists seek to understand actions within their unique contexts rather than relying on a universal truth to explain every scenario (Ibid.). As a result, truth is seen as the best attempt at generating meaning within a given context and is dependent on the observer rather than being applicable to every situation.

Overall, a constructivist approach to research recognizes the subjective and context-dependent nature of knowledge creation, and emphasizes the importance of understanding the perspectives and experiences of individuals and groups in order to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena (Reincker & Jørgensen, 2020; Moses & Knudsen, 2012).

In terms of research methodology, a constructivist approach often involves qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, text analysis and observations (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020; Moses & Knutsen, 2012). These methods allow researchers to explore the perspectives of individuals and groups, and to understand the processes by which they construct knowledge and meaning (Ibid.). This paper will primarily analyze secondary data, which will provide data on individual opinions and viewpoints, but also increase the researcher's insight about the context.

## 3.1.1. QUALITATIVE METHOD

Qualitative methods can be described as a way of studying social phenomena in their natural settings, aiming to understand the meaning and interpretation of these phenomena by the people involved (Rienecker and Jørgensen, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017; Guest et al., 2012). Rienecker and Jørgensen emphasize that qualitative methods are often used when the research question is exploratory and not well-defined, as they allow for an in-depth exploration of the research topic (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020). Rienecker and Jørgensen also discuss the importance of data analysis in qualitative research (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020). They note that analysis of data involves identifying patterns and themes in the data, as well as examining the context and meaning of these patterns (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020). They emphasize that the researcher's own interpretation and subjectivity play a role in the analysis, and that it is important to remain open to unexpected findings and to revise the research question as needed (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020).

The thesis aims to explore the way sportswashing up until now has been used and how it might be possible to expand the possibilities for using the concept in a more analytical or curious way. A constructivist approach combined with the qualitative methods allow the researcher to take several individual experiences and opinions into consideration in the analysis, which will then be used to discover and find recurring themes and arguments in the empirical material. The knowledge constructed by research and conclusions in this thesis will be shaped by the context and the person performing the research - this is something to take into consideration when others are reading and looking to use this thesis as a stepping stone in future studies and coming research.

## 3.2. DATA COLLECTION

When looking for data and empirical material for this thesis, many interesting articles, reports, studies, literature and such were discovered in the preliminary research and therefore this thesis will not be using primary data in the form of interviews, surveys or such, but exclusively use secondary data. This decision was made on the basis that using secondary data could grant more or less the same analytical opportunities as if this thesis also used primary data collected from interviews or surveys.

## 3.2.1. SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data refers to data that has been collected by others and is available for use in research (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020; Moses & Knudsen, 2012). Secondary data can be a valuable resource for researchers, as it can provide a wealth of information that would be difficult or time-consuming to collect on their own (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020). Secondary data can also be used to support or refute research hypotheses, or to provide context and background information for a research topic (Ibid.). However there are potential pitfalls to using secondary data, as the quality of the data can vary, and the fact that it may not be tailored to the specific research question being addressed (Rienecker & Jørgensen, 2020). Also, secondary data may not be completely up-to-date, and the researcher may not have access to all of the information needed to fully understand the context in which the data was collected (Ibid.). This thesis will strive to use the most reliable sources while also trying to gather data from sources with different backgrounds in regards to politics, culture, nationality and so on.

#### 3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

This thesis will conduct a thematic analysis on the sampled secondary data. The primary goal of the thematic analysis executed in this thesis will be to understand and interpret how people feel, think and behave and then use this understanding to help answer the research question, that is interested in investigating sportswashing and transparency next to each other and determine of there is a theoretical and analytical connection between the two concepts and how it could be used going forward.

## 3.3.1. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis will allow for sensemaking of a socially constructed world and context (Guest et al., 2012; Nowell et al., 2017). The approach will mostly be explanatory, which is a content-driven method where the framed research question will dedicate the data sampling and the data analysis (Ibid.). Another reason why the approach is an explanatory one, is related to the purpose of this thesis. The motivation behind writing about this particular subject and doing this particular research, is to contribute in closing or minimizing the discovered knowledge gap. This approach differentiates itself from typical explanatory approaches, because it is based on existing data instead of producing or generating the data (Guest et al., 2012).

The thematic analysis is somewhat of a 'clip and paste'-method, meaning that it's composed of bits and pieces from several other approaches and methods, and is then combined into a methodical framework for analyzing qualitative data (Guest et al., 2012). The method is most commonly used for analyzing in-depth interviews, focus groups and qualitative field notes, but can be used to analyze various types of qualitative data (Ibid.) and in this thesis, that qualitative data will be textual secondary data which primarily will be journalistic and newspaper articles.

The objective behind a thematic analysis is to identify themes within the data, where codes then will be developed to represent these themes (Guest et al., 2012). Guest, MacQueen and Namey define codes as: "A textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme" and coding as: "The process by which a qualitative analyst links specific codes to specific data segments" (Guest et al., 2012). While themes come in all sizes and shapes, the most common way of identifying them is through repetitive systems.

Like any other methods, thematic analysis has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, some of the biggest advantages are related to the 'clip and paste' as the lack of a strict theoretical framework means that the analyst can use thematic analysis in many different ways, on different data and in combination with other methods of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). The method doesn't require lots of predefined theory and can be used quite painlessly compared to other more complicated methods (Ibid.). The method is well-suited for both being used by individual analysts as well as groups of analysts working together (Ibid.). A weakness in thematic analysis is related to the reliability, since this type of analysis depends on the researchers own interpretation of the data, and researchers should therefore be aware of the possibility of their own unconscious bias affecting their results in some way (Guest et al., 2012). The flexibility previously addressed as an advantage can also turn out as a disadvantage as the results of the analysis may become inconsistent and harder to apply or translate to a conclusion (Nowell et al., 2017).

## 4. ANALYSIS

## 4.1. DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF TRANSPARENCY

The main issue most people have with Qatar being the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup is their poor human rights and conditions for migrant workers, and most criticism relates to the fact that such behavior and actions by the host of a global mega event should not be accepted under any circumstances. Besides this issue, which will be discussed later on, another big concern was the environmental impact the preparations and the actual event would have. The environmental impact can be seen as the processes related to the event that affect the environment in a negative way, where some of the most discussed examples are (1) building of transportation infrastructure, (2) building and optimization of stadiums, venues, accommodations, and (3) the air-conditioning of stadiums.

When looking to determine and figure out the level of transparency that the Qatari government and their delegation responsible for arranging the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the first step to investigate the accessibility to various information provided by Qatar themselves. Therefore, will the analysis begin by going through parts of the official website for the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Qatar2022, 2023a). Later the accessibility of information will be investigated through a credibility perspective in the attempt to determine how reliable the information actually is.

## 4.1.1 ACCESSIBILITY

There is quite a lot of information available through the official website for Qatar2022 and FIFA's website (Qatar2022, 2023a; FIFA, 2023g). At the Qatar2022 website the frontpage includes brief information about the World Cup champions Argentina and the final, information about the official soundtrack for the 2022 World Cup, the official event mascot *La'eeb* and information about the stadiums (Qatar2022, 2023a). When clicking around on the website you can find a lot of information intended for attendees and visitors and concerns everything from information about the city, the stadiums, the fan areas outside the stadium, transportation, accommodation and such (Ibid.). You can also find a variety of different reports like the Qatar National Vision 2023 (Qatar Government, 2008), different sustainability reports and a sustainability strategy, an executive summary and a report on the sustainability of the eight stadiums (Qatar2022,

2023d). On one hand it seems that there is a big accessibility when looking at the website and finding information through open sources, but most of the information available seems a little 'too perfect' and well adapted to the ideal of modern society. There is mostly information relevant for the visitors and spectators or about the sustainability and processes behind the building and infrastructure projects, which of course is good (Qatar2022, 2023a; Qatar2022, 2023c; Qatar2022, 2023d). But the difficulty of finding information addressing the human rights problems or challenges related to some of the cultural differences, does give the impression that Qatar is not particularly forthcoming about sharing information about these subjects.

## 4.1.2 CREDIBILITY

There have been rumors about how Qatar has been manipulating numbers, falsifying facts and paid journalists to write positive articles about the event (Zirin & Boykoff, 2022). In 2014 Channel 4 discovered that Qatar had hired a global PR agency to spin the World Cup by posting content on a manufactured blog (Ganji, 2022; Trenwith, 2014). The blog was used to share negative content about critics of Qatar hosting the World Cup and thus trying to silence or discredit their opinion (Ibid.). According to Qatari sources football fans were thrilled to attend the World Cup in Qatar, but this perception didn't match well with the evidence about Qatar paying for plane tickets, tickets to the matches, accommodation and other living expenses for several international football fans, which could suggest that football fans weren't as eager as Qatar had expressed (MacInnes, 2022; Trenwith, 2014: Weber, 2022: Ronay, 2022). Some of the most prominent public 'supporters' of the hosting the World Cup in Qatar, were in fact being paid large amounts of money to be ambassadors for the event, and essentially validating Qatar's actions by 'looking the other way' in regards to the human rights issues (Ganji, 2022; Lobo, 2022; Trenwith, 2014; Hughes, 2021; Ronay, 2022). When such significant ambassadors like David Backham are paid for supporting Qatar2022, then how credible and sincere are the statements and support actually (Ibid.). It was also revealed that the Qatari government has given members of the UK parliament luxurious and valuable gifts including stays at luxury hotels, expensive dinners with Qatar World Cup officials, business class travel on Qatar Airways and by coincidence many of the same members of parliament later publicly supported Qatar hosting the World Cup (Ronay, 2022).

Would David Beckham have supported Qatar2022, if he was not paid 150 million to do so (Hughes, 2021)? Only David Beckham can answer for certain, but it does seem unlikely.

Another debate surrounding the credibility of the information provided by Qatar2022 is related to the environmental impact and the estimated emissions. According to Qatar they have done an outstanding job of reducing emissions, but experts and journalists disagree (Zirin & Boykoff, 2022; Trenwith, 2022; Lockwood & Warwick, 2022; Moore, 2021; De Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Latta, 2022). FIFA and Qatar claimed that Qatar2022 would be the first carbon-neutral World Cup and the pubic and the media were not impressed with that statement:

"The environmental group Carbon Market Watch responded that only "creative accounting" that ignored massive sources of carbon—like the energy required to cool the stadiums—could lead to that misleading conclusion." (Zirin & Boykoff, 2022).

"... FIFA's sustainability strategy for the Qatar World Cup rests on flawed carbon calculations, questionable offsetting practices, and shifting the responsibility onto fans rather than shouldering it themselves". (De Oliveira & Smith, 2022).

Several sources are critical towards FIFA and Qatar's statement about Qatar2022 being completely carbon-neutral, as several experts expect the carbon-footprint of the 2022 World Cup to be up to three times higher than Qatar and FIFA has estimated and announced (Lockwood & Warwick, 2022; Moore, 2021; De Oliveira & Smith, 2022). Beside the unethical element of not being truthful, a bigger carbon-footprint of this scale will also have significant consequences for the entire planet and the atmosphere (Lockwood & Warwick, 2022; Moore, 2021; De Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Zirin & Boykoff, 2022). The notion of 'Carbon-neutral' is a concept that most scientists and experts refrain from as it can be quite misleading. Usually countries or organizations will carbon-compensate for their emission, by using so-called offsetting practices, that often is purchasing or investing in solutions that will remove carbon from the atmosphere, and therefore compensation for the emissions created by the organization (Ibid.)

On their website Qatar2022 is proud to declare that several of their stadiums have been awarded with 4 and 5-star GSAS certification, but what is a GSAS certification? The GSAS certification is a Global Sustainability Assessment System and is awarded and overseen by the Gulf Organisation for research and development (GORD) (GSAS, 2023; GORD, 2023). Although it can't be proved that GORD isn't a reliable system, it does seem a little suspicious that Qatar directs so much value and on a national certification. A major concern regarding the stadiums, is all the resources it will take to keep the temperature at an acceptable level, which will be obtained by using air-conditioning (Moore, 2021; De Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Latta, 2022).

The little information available related to culture provided by Qatar mentions some of the differences between cultures (Qatar2022, 2023c; Qatar2022, 2023e). They describe themselves as a "...conservative country, but extremely welcoming" (Qatar 2022, 2023e). As the 2022 World Cup was the first World Cup held in the Middle East, it makes sense to address some of the differences that participants and attendees could experience upon arrival and during the event. A reason why Qatar has not addressed the cultural differences more than a few places, is maybe because they don't want to seem too strict or unwelcoming to people of different cultures or beliefs. The website mentions some of the traditions and norms about clothing, which include covering up shoulders and knees in public places and wearing swimsuits without an appropriate cover-up that is only done at hotel beaches or pool areas (Qatar 2022, 2023e). International visitors and residents have more freedom in their clothing choices, and Qatari citizens usually wear traditional attire (Ibid.). The website also points out the fact that alcohol is not part of the local culture, and will only be served at licensed restaurants, bars or hotels, and that consumption of alcohol outside certain designated areas is illegal, like it is also illegal to bring your own alcoholic products into the state (Ibid.). Another thing that is not part of the local culture is public displays of affection between men and women (Ibid.). It is illegal for homosexuals to display their affection in any way. These rules and customs are some of the more controversial, as they don't fit well into the western or international type of society.

## 4.1.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Being accountable is a part of transparency (Cifuentes-Faura, 2021; Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Henne, 2015). Qatar's accountability will in this section be related to their handling and reaction to their problems with human rights especially for the many migrants working in Qatar. The treatment of these migrant workers are documented by various sources (Human Rights Watch, 2020; BBC, 2023; Ganji, 2022; Wearing, 2022; Labo, 2022; Lahm, 2022; Zirin & Boykoff, 2022; Ipsen, 2022, Weber, 2022; Ronay; 2022, Pattisson et al., 2021; Amnesty, 2019). In 2013 The Guardian reported that 44 nepali workers had died in two months (Amnesty, 2019), and in the beginning of 2021 it was estimated that more than 2600 migrant workers had died in Qatar after they won the 2022 bid back in 2010 (Pattison et al., 2021).

The Kafala System has been essential to the labor abuse and poor human rights in Qatar, because it ensures the employers have all the control and power over the migrant workers (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Amnesty, 2019). Because of the 'Kafala' System it has been difficult for the migrant workers to change their circumstances themselves, as they have almost no rights. Amnesty made an outline of the kafala system (Amnesty, 2019), which has been re-created:



In November 2017 Qatar signed an agreement with the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Qatari government has since then passed several reforms to benefit the workers: a temporary minimum wage and suspend the exit permits for 'most workers' (Amnesty, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2020). Qatar ratified two of the more significant human rights treaties, but they also entered several reservations limiting the de facto effect of the ratification (Ibid.). The Qatari government has pointed out that only Qatari nationals are allowed to form trade unions and associations, essentially preventing any collective negotiation or bargaining on behalf of migrant workers, who make up 95% of the labor force in Qatar (Ibid.). Furthermore, Qatar is still refusing equal rights for women, they will continue to punish according to the islamic sharia and won't remove the death penalty (Ibid.).

## 4.1.4. SUB CONCLUSION I

The accessibility to information surrounding the 2022 World Cup in Qatar seemed good, but it was a little difficult navigating between genuine useful information and the self-promotion and manipulated information. Therefore, the conclusion of this exact analysis, must be that the accessibility to some information was relatively good, but the information provided was not reliable, credible or legitimate, essentially diminishing the majority of the accessibility, because falsified or manipulated data aren't of any use or value, if you want to be seen as transparent. Refusing to make some of the necessary changes to improve the circumstances and conditions for Qatari women or workers leads this thesis to the assumption that the Qatari government doesn't see a need for changing the way they approach human rights and they only passed the reforms to look better in the eyes of the public, despite not having the intention of changing anything significant enough to shift the power balance. It can be difficult for the public to hold a country like Qatar accountable for their actions, but it becomes even harder when FIFA decides to award them a World Cup, even though they already had issues with human rights in 2010, which should have excluded them from the bidding process. Therefore will this thesis conclude that the level of transparency surrounding Qatar and the 2022 World Cup is low, because the information available can't be trusted and Qatar keeps finding loopholes around actually fulfilling the promises they keep making.

## 4.2. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SPORTSWASHING AND TRANSPARENCY

The second research question of this thesis is 'Is it possible to deduce some general conclusions about the connection between the level of transparency and the possibility for sportswashing happening?'. In order to answer this, this section will look at several articles from newspapers, blogs and other journalistic sources with the intent of identifying recurring themes and arguments to help reveal if and how transparency and sportswashing are connected.

## 4.2.1. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This thesis will utilize thematic analysis and coding to identify any themes, compare them and then phrase a sub conclusion about the connection between transparency and sportswashing. The thematic analysis will use qualitative secondary data, in the form of articles from many different writers with different biases and origin. Each article has been read, and re-read many times to ensure that the themes and codes identified were in fact present and discussed in the articles. As the subject and context of the articles are very similar and alike, the themes and therefore also most of the codes are being repeated in almost every article. Thus could on one hand result in a quite uniform analysis, but on the other other hand it also confirms that these themes are indeed of current interest and reflective of what the media think and feel about the subjects.

## **4.2.1.1 CODEBOOK**

This section will outline the codebook and all the codes identified in the sampled data.

Code A.1: Qatar's sportswashing.

**Brief definition:** Qatar using sports to 'clean up' their image and reputation tarnished by wrongdoings.

**Full definition:** A marketing strategy, used by Qatar, that utilizes sports to distract an audience from their wrongdoings. The most common ways of performing sportswashing is by either owning or sponsoring a team, hosting or sponsoring a mega sport event or sponsoring a popular athlete.

When to use: This code can be applied to actions made by Qatar in order to draw attention away from their wrongdoings or violations, as well as for comparison reasons e.g. comparing with other nations performing sportswashing.

When not to use: Do not use this code for cases of sportswashing that is not performed by Qatar or has a comparative cause.

# Code B.1: Transparency.

Brief definition: Openness and accessibility of information.

**Full definition:** Transparency is essential for ensuring accountability and for establishing trust between an actor and their audience.

When to use: This code can be applied to all matters where the sharing of information will increase trust and improve the relationship among actors.

When not to use: Do not use this code if the actor is withholding information in order to protect any rights, identity, key business details or to ensure safety.

# **Code C.1:** Corruption in FIFA.

**Brief definition:** FIFA's abuse of entrusted power or resources for personal gain **Full definition:** The unethical and usually illegal premeditated actions within and around FIFA, that crush trust and weaken the democratic process, thus resulting in World Cup's being awarded to appropriate hosts, unethical sponsorships and partners, secret deals, bribes, and cheating the system.

When to use: This code can be used in situations related to FIFA, where there is proof that proper protocols have not been followed or the decisions have been inspected either by internal or external audit bodies.

When not to use: Do not use this code for cases regarding corruption, but with no connection to FIFA or members acting on behalf of FIFA or cases related to FIFA, but with evidence inspected and proved without a doubt to be in order.

# Code D.1: Mega sport events.

**Brief definition:** The biggest sporting events such as The World Cup, The Olympic Games and other significant events.

**Full definition:** Mega sport events are usually important competitions, which usually determine who is the best in the field. Most mega events take place every second or fourth year, and usually attract a large number of visitors and the majority of the international media. These events are often quite costly to host

and sponsor, but can often boost anything from income, reach and image - which is why there is such a strong competition for hosting and sponsoring them.

When to use: This code can be applied to large sporting events both in size and impact, the events most commonly referred to are Olympic Games, world championships and European championships.

When not to use: Do not use this code for national or smaller regional sporting events or events that take place frequently.

# **Code E.1:** Human rights.

**Brief definition:** The entitled rights any human on the earth has no matter their gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, opinions and so on.

**Full definition:** Moral or ethical principles or norms about the minimum treatment every human deserves, no matter their gender, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs and so on. Human rights are usually secured pursuant to law and treaties in many countries. Some countries, like Qatar, don't have laws to secure proper human rights, just like they have almost no women rights.

When to use: This code can be applied to any debate about whether or not a population is given proper rights and possible consequences.

When not to use: Since human rights are relevant for so many aspects, no debate is irrelevant for this code, as discussion also can have a positive position.

### Code F.1: Fans.

**Brief definition:** Someone who is interested in a particular subject and follows key actors within that subject.

Full definition: Fans will usually be highly invested in the subject they are interested in and will maybe spend time and money experiencing the subject in person or wish to meet some key actors. Celebrities usually have many fans, just like athletes and popular teams. Influencers and other people who have reached fame through social media can also have fans as these people are getting increasingly popular.

When to use: This code can be applied to any person or group that are very interested in something and are invested in some way.

When not to use: Do not use this code for people getting paid to support or be interested in certain subjects, although fandom can develop from something that began as a job. Do not use code for people who hate or strongly despise a subject, or people who are neutral towards the subject.

**Code G.1:** Carbon-footprint

**Brief definition:** The total sum of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission associated with all the activity of an actor

**Full definition:** The Carbon-footprint is a way to measure, compare and adjust the emissions emitted by for example a person. A person's carbon-footprint is the total sum of the products and services they use, their transportation, their vacations and so on. Usually wealthier societies have a bigger carbon-footprint, as they tend to fly more often, drive bigger cars, consume and throw out more food and such.

When to use: This code can be applied to a debate about emission or impact of certain choices, as long as the user is aware that carbon-footprint is difficult to calculate and the potential weaknesses of the concept.

When not to use: This code should not be used in situations where the user lacks the necessary information to use the code responsible.

### 4.2.1.2. DATA

Most of the empirical material is either related to debates about Sportswashing, Human Rights, FIFA and Environment, which I have created an outline underneath here. Many of the articles mention several of these overall subjects., but the divide has been based on what most of the content is interested in. Each article is also tagged with the codes identified in each article or source of data.

# **Sportswashing**

Article: The Guardian: Michaelson, 2021. Saudi Arabia has spent at least \$1.5bn on 'sportswashing', the report reveals. (A.1, B.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)

Article: The Guardian: Waering, 2022. A game of two halves: how 'sportswashing' benefits Qatar and the west. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)

- Article: The Guardian: Lahm, 2022. Holding the World Cup in Qatar has damaged football and I will not be going. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)
- Article: The Guardian: MacInnes, 2022. England and Wales fans being paid to promote World Cup from Qatar. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)
- Article: The Guardian: Ronay, 2022. Paid fans and England band show everyone is for sale at Qatar World Cup. (A.1, B.1, D.1, F.1)
- Article: Journal of Democracy: Ganji, 2022. How Qatar Became a World Leader in Sportswashing. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: Arabian Business: Trenwith, 2014. Qatar creates football blog to attack World Cup critics. (A.1, B.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: Bola VIP: Lobo, 2022. Qatar 2022: All celebrities spotted at the World Cup. (A.1, B.1, E.1, F.1)
- Article: The Nation: Zirin and Boykoff, 2022. The Tragic Absurdity of Qatar's World Cup Sportswashing. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: TV2: Ipsen, 2022. Nadia Nadim forsvarer sit ambassadørskab for VM i Qatar [Nadia Nadim defends her ambassadorship for The World Cup in Qatar]. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)
- Article: DW: Weber, 2022. Fact check: Did Qatar 'buy' World Cup fans? (A.1, B.1, F.1)
- Website: Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2022. Sportswashing what is it and why should you care? (B.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)
- Article: CBC: Molinaro, 2009. 1934 World Cup: Italy wins for Il Duce. (B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1)
- Article: The Conversation: Manoli, 2022. World Cup 2022: Qatar is accused of 'sportswashing' but do the fans really care? (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: Evening Standard: Hughes, 2021. David Beckham signs £150m deal to be an ambassador for Qatar (A.1, B.1, D.1, F.1)
- Article: Play the Game: Olsen, 2022. A global map of Qatar's sponsorships in sports.

  (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: Play the Game: Boykoff, 2022: A sportswashing Qatarstrophe. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
- Article: BBC, 2020. Spanish Super Cup: We are in Saudi Arabia because of money, Barcelona-boss Valverde says. (D.1, E.1,G.1)

# **Human Rights**

Website: United Nation, 2023. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (E.1)

Campaign: Amnesty, 2019. Reality Check: Migrant Workers rights with four years to the Qatar 2022 World Cup. (A.1, B.1, E.1)

Article: The Guardian: Pattison et al., 2021. Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1)

Article: BBC, 2023: Premier League tightens ownership rules to stop human rights abusers running a club. (A.1, E.1)

Article: ESPN: Borden, 2022. Olympics 2022 -- How we ended up with a Winter Games amid China's human rights crisis. (B.1, D.1, E.1, G.1)

Report: Human Rights Watch, 2020. Qatar: Events of 2019. (A.1, B.1, D.1, E.1, F.1.)

# **FIFA**

Article: BBC, 2014. Sepp Blatter: Russia will host 2018 World Cup despite Crimea. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1)

Article: BBC, 2015. Fifa corruption crisis: Key questions answered. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1)

Article: BBC: Wilson, 2015. Fifa scandal 'a disaster' for sponsors. (B.1, C.1, D.1, F.1)

Article: BBC: Sargeant, 2015. How Fifa makes and spends its money. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1)

Article: Reuters: Shields, 2022: Swiss appeals court convicts ex-FIFA official Valcke of accepting bribes. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1)

Article: The Guardian, 2015. Sepp Blatter: how the machiavellian master of Fifa power politics fell. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1)

Article: The Guardian: Rushden, 2022. There may be no clear conscience with this World Cup but we can focus on Fifa. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Article: Play the Game: Andersen, 2020. FBI vs. FIFA: How deep of an impact? (B.1, C.1)

Article: Play the Game: Andersen, 2022. Football may unite the world but FIFA works to divide it. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1)

Press release: FIFA, 2010. Russia and Qatar were awarded the 2018 and 2022 FIFA World Cups.

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(A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)
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Article: International Review for the Sociology of Sport: Jennings, 2011. Investigating corruption in corporate sport: The IOC and FIFA. (B.1, C.1)

# **Environment**

Article: The Guardian: Syal, 2022. 10,000 litres a day for each pitch: water strain in the Gulf and the Qatar World Cup. (B.1, D.1, G.1)

Article: The Guardian: Moore, 2022. Qatar World Cup stadiums: pitch fever at any price.
(A.1, B.1, C.1. D.1, F.1, G.1)

Article: Earth.org: Raji, 2022. Qatar 2022: The Environmental Cost of the FIFA World Cup. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, G.1)

Article: Le Monde: Latta, 2022. World Cup 2022: The true cost of Qatar's air-conditioned stadiums. (A.1, B.1, D.1, G.1)

Article: NBC: De Oliveira and Smith, 2022. Qatar World Cup lays bare the huge environmental cost of tournament. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Website: Qatar 2022, 2023. Sustainability. (A.1, B.1, D.1, G.1)

Article: Greenpeace: Purcell, 2023. What is sportswashing and why is it such a big problem? (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Article: BBC: Lockwood and Warwick, 2022. Qatar World Cup: Fifa's carbon neutrality claim 'misleading and incredibly dangerous'. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, G.1)

Report: FIFA, 2023. FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: Sustainability progress report (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Article: National Geographic: Mulvaney, 2022. What is a carbon footprint—and how to measure yours (B.1, F.1, G.1)

### **Other**

Report: Qatar Government, 2023. Qatar National Vision 2030. (A.1, B.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Website: Qatar 2022, 2023. News Hub. (A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1, E.1, F.1, G.1)

Article: Vox: Romano, 2020. Why we can't stop fighting about cancel culture, Vox. (A.1, B.1, F.1)

Articles: World Atlas: Sawe, 2018. The Most Popular Sports In The World. (F.1)

Article: The Guardian: Steinberg, 2014. The Joy of Six: football quotes. (F.1)

#### 4.2.1.3. RESULTS

The thematic analyzed 45 articles and data sources divided into the four overall topics, and 5 of undefined overall topics. The 50 article total were analyzed using the 7 different codes to help identify recurring themes and topics across all sources.

Code A.1: Qatar's sportswashing was identified 39 times, Code B.1: Transparency was identified as at theme 45 times, Code C.1: Corruption in FIFA was identified 29 times, Code D.1: Mega Sport Events was identified 38 times, Code E.1: Human Rights was identified 29 times, Code F.1: Fans was identified 31 times and Code G.1: Carbon-footprint was identified 22 times.

Transparency (B.1) was the most recurring theme and was featured in almost every article or source, which could indicate that transparency is a necessary factor to consider, when the topic is FIFA, sportswashing or environmental calculations for mega sport events. The articles looking closer into the environmental effect from hosting the World Cup in Qatar, are negatively biased towards Qatar and FIFA's, as their calculations and statements were misleading compared to the reality. In order to match the results Qatar and FIFA presented, you would have to exclude several big contributors to the overall emission (De Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Latta, 2022; Purcell, 2023; Raji, 2023; Syal, 2022; Zirin & Boykoff, 2022; Trenwith, 2022; Lockwood & Warwick, 2022; Moore, 2021). The fact that Qatar and FIFA insisted their assessment was true, despite several scientist, researcher and investigative journalists disagreeing, support the assumption that Qatar and FIFA were withholding information or deliberately misleading the public (Ibid.). Thus, confirming both actors were not being transparent about the carbon-footprint the 2022 World Cup was expected to really leave.

When FIFA and Qatar don't acknowledge that their statement and estimation were false, it's likely because they wish to keep up the appearance of having everything under control. FIFA has seen a lot of resistance and doubt about hosting the World Cup in Qatar, and they might feel like they need to prove the critics wrong and show that Qatar was a respectable and good host after all (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

Most of the sampled and analyzed data don't outright discuss a connection between transparency and sportswashing, but instead many articles discuss both of the codes, in some variation or constellation. A way to prove that transparency and sportswashing are in fact connected is through the theoretical definition. In the theoretical framework it was determined that sportswashing requires the actor to **commit a moral violation**, that **the actor is either resourceful or powerful**, and **sports are used to strategically direct attention away from the moral violation**.

The actor uses sport as a diversion with the intention and hope that the popularity of the sport will 'spread' to the actor, and then minimize the potential reputational damage from the violation (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). The actor can also minimize the potential damage by trying to hide the moral violation and act evenmore non-transparent and thus refusing being held accountable for their wrongdoings. A moral violation can be many things such as human rights issues, criminal actions in different severity, being associated with others doing criminal activity, representatives accused of e.g. domestic violence, representatives saying controversial things or essentially any action that would harm the reputation or perception of the actor. Many of these violations are dependent on or a result of a corruptive/manipulative environment, which validates the knowledge we already have about sportswashing being connected to corruption. When an actor is corruptive or closely associated with someone corruptive, it's not possible for them to also be completely transparent, unless they accept that their corruption practices will be exposed. This shows that sportswashing and transparency are, at least theoretically, connected. Transparency was also defined in the theoretical framework, and is a concept referring to the accessibility, credibility and accountability which should be present in all areas of an actor's behavior, actions and structure. Signs of high transparency are usually the presence of protocols and policies to prevent exploitation of a system's weaknesses, a safe environment for whistleblowing or reporting undesired behavior, taking responsibility for mistakes or wrongdoings if they do happen and the presence of a good and trust-based relationship between the actor and its stakeholders. A high level of transparency will minimize the chance of these moral violations happening and thus will transparency minimize the chance of sportswashing happening. The fact that transparency is an essential theme when different sources of data discuss sportswashing, would strongly indicate that the

connection between transparency and sportswashing is not only theoretical, but also present in the data, which is representative of the general discourse.

### 4.2.2. SUB CONCLUSION II

The confirmation of a connection between the two concepts makes it possible to answer the research question looking to determine if it's possible to lay out some general terms for the level of transparency and the likelihood of sportswashing happening. Since corruption or criminal activities often are involved when an actor is performing sportswashing, and the presence of corruption usually means little to low transparency, then it can be concluded that: If the level of transparency is low, then the susceptibility for sportswashing is high, and if the level of transparency is high, then the susceptibility for sportswashing is low.

### 4.3. A MODIFIED DEFINITION OF SPORTSWASHING

How could transparency influence how sportswashing can be used to impact perception and image within the football industry?

This section of the analysis will be a continuation of some of the arguments mentioned in the theoretical framework by Skye and Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz. Since there isn't any material on how the transparency concept affect the sportswashing concept, then this thesis intends to adjust the definition introduced by Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz taking inspiration from Skye and other scholars, who discuss transparency and propose a definition that contains both these concept, giving the definition another level of analyzing. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz laid out three 'requirements' or 'claims' for defining situations as what they call 'paradigm cases of sportswashing', which are just examples of sportwashing. (Fruh er al, 2022).

The first requirement relates to the severity of moral violation, which the actor wishes to either minimize, hide or distract from the public by using sports. Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz states it must be a serious and widespread violation to be considered a paradigm case of sportswashing, but to offer a more nuanced usage, this thesis will adapt this definition, so the moral violation doesn't need to be a specific severity, but rather can be used as a measuring factor. Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz do mention how

the severity can range from being an isolated or local incident to something widespread and premeditated, which supports how this thesis suggests measuring the severity of the moral violation for a more nuanced outcome.

The second requirement is related to actors, which according to Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz, must be a state or regime, to qualify as a paradigm case of sportswashing. This thesis proposes tweaking this requirement so that the second requirement is measured on how powerful or resourceful, the actor in question is. This adaptation will prevent private companies and actors from 'escaping' the diagnosis of sportswashing. If there is a loophole in the system, eventually someone will find it and abuse it. Therefore, the sportswashing definition should also cover any private actor with the power and resources needed to perform any kind of sportswashing.

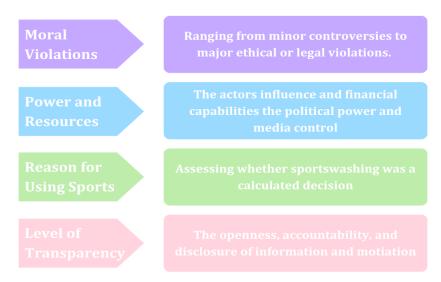
The last requirement set by Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz is that sports are deliberately used to 'wash' the reputation or image clean, and this requirement will not be adjusted.

This thesis will propose, including a fourth 'requirement', which is to determine or assess the level of transparency of an actor. Determining the level of transparency will allow the researcher more insight into the actors intentions and motivation, which would increase the researcher's understanding and aid them in helping choose the best course of action. As determined in the theoretical framework, a high level of transparency is a sign of a trusting relationship to the stakeholders and a good reputational and social capital. Enforcing a high transparency could save actors from the majority of criticism, if they also take responsibility and allow the public to hold them accountable. There are of course some violations that are too severe to 'save' even with a high level of transparency.

When transparency is prioritized within the football industry, it becomes more challenging for actors to perform sportswashing tactics effectively, because the stakeholders, due to an increased transparency, would be informed about certain matters and put the actors under enhanced scrutiny, if they attempted sportswashing. When stakeholders have access to information about ownership, financial transactions, or sponsorships, they can better analyze the relationships between the actors involved

and identify potential conflicts of interest or attempts to manipulate public perception. A higher level of transparency in the sports industry would decrease the amount of people being distracted or having their minds changed by sportswashing, thus making it harder for the actors to 'clean' their image by being associated with sports.

Overall, transparency acts as a counterbalance to sportswashing within the football industry. By promoting openness, accountability, and information sharing, transparency will reduce the effectiveness of sportswashing tactics, encourage critical analysis, and promote a more authentic and trustworthy image of the sport. By introducing the concept of transparency to the sportswashing definition, it becomes possible to measure the two concepts against each other, thus creating the framework for a well-balanced analysis where several factors are deciding for determining the severity of sportswashing by looking at both the wrongdoing, the actor's power or resources, the premeditated nature of using sports and the level of transparency.



The figure above is a visual presentation of how to use this modified definition of sportswashing as an analyzing tool to determine cases of possible sportwashing.

# **Moral Violation**

The extent and impact of the negative actions or behaviors that an actor is attempting to divert attention away from through association to sports. This factor assesses the gravity of the underlying issue being concealed, such as human rights violations, corruption, or political repression. The severity can range from minor controversies to major ethical or legal violations.

#### **Power and Resources**

The level of power and resources available to the actor engaging in sportswashing plays a crucial role in its effectiveness. Powerful individuals, organizations, or even countries with significant financial resources, political influence, or media control have more means to shape narratives and control the messaging around their sportswashing efforts.

# **Reason for Using Sports**

This factor examines whether the decision to utilize sport as a means of diversion was a deliberate and calculated choice. It involves assessing the intent behind the sportswashing tactic and whether it was a strategic decision to manipulate public perception, improve reputation, or distract from negative attention. Deliberate sportswashing implies a premeditated effort rather than a coincidental association with sports.

### **Level of Transparency**

Transparency relates to the openness, accountability, and disclosure of information regarding the actor's actions, motivations, and associations. This factor considers the extent to which the actor is transparent about its involvement in sportswashing, financial transactions, partnerships, or other relevant aspects. Higher levels of transparency make it more difficult for sportswashing attempts to go unnoticed or unchallenged.

By considering these factors, it would be possible to examine the nature and impact of sportswashing attempts more comprehensively, while also taking the level of transparency into account. Each factor provides insights into the motivations, resources, and context surrounding the sportswashing attempt, enabling a deeper analysis of its effectiveness and implications. The results of the analyses in this thesis would strongly indicate that transparency and accountability are essential in minimizing corruption and sportswashing in the sport industry. Although the public usually will try and keep the sport organizations accountable if they commit any wrongdoing, there also needs to be a trusted, honest and fair governing body to oversee that the sports organization are being transparent, and issue appropriate punishment, if someone does not comply.

#### 5. DISCUSSION

### **5.1. DOES SPORTSWASHING WORK**

Sportswashing has, as mentioned before, gained significant attention in recent years as nations and state-owned companies have invested heavily in European football. In this thesis it has not been investigated whether or not sportswashing actually has the ability to help clean an image and reputation by becoming involved with the world of sports. This discussion will explore this topic further by looking at Qatar's sportswashing attempts and try to determine if they had the desired effect.

During the last 20 years Qatar has made itself one of the biggest investors in football with two of the biggest 'deals' in football history: The purchase of the French top-club Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup (Olsen, 2022; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). The motivation behind these strategic investments in the sport industry is seen as a deliberate strategy to develop diplomatic relations and create international networks (Ibid.). According to senior analyst at Play the Game, Stanis Elsborg, this strategy is also a key in the image laundering, that is used to distract the public from the controversial rules and protocols that currently shut down attempts at reforming and improving rights for domestic and migrant worker, giving women equal rights and allowing LGBT+ the same rights as heterosexuals (Olsen, 2022). Qatar themselves has called this 'sportswashing' strategy for Qatar National Vision 2030, which includes several state-owned companies like Qatar Airway, Qatar National Bank acting as supporting entities that deliver sponsoring for teams and clubs (Qatar Government, 2008; Olsen, 2022). Qatar Airways sponsors many teams both locally, but especially on the international stage such as Bayern Munich, PSG, FC Barcelona, A.S. Roma and the NBA team Brooklyn Nets to name a few (Olsen, 2022). PSG is as mentioned before owned by Qatar, but more precisely they are owned by the company Qatar Sport Investment (QSI) founded in 2004, which also owns S.C Braga from Portugal (Ibid.)

Although there are few outright supporters of sportswashing, there are of course people who also see the possibilities with sportswashing or related branding activities such as soft power. Supporters may argue that Qatar's sponsorships have provided positive

exposure, increased visibility, and influence for the country in the global sports landscape. Critics of sportswashing, like the Liverpool FC Manager Jürgen Klopp, of sportswashing, emphasize that the ethical concerns and negative repercussions of all actors and the sports industry as a whole outweigh any perceived benefits of either big lucrative sponsor agreements or gaining new markets (Boykoff, 2022: Olsen, 2022, Lahm, 2022). Jürgen Klopp was asked about football-players responsibility the debate regarding countries with human rights hosting big mega events like the World Cup.

"... it isn't a footballer's responsibility to be a human rights activist, but footballers are humans too. They live in the world. They have the power to do more than just say: I'm a football person, I can only talk about football." (Rushden, 2022).

The level of transparency surrounding Qatar's sportswashing efforts plays a significant role in determining if the sportswashing strategy has paid off, and as there is a lack of transparency, it becomes harder to gauge the true intentions behind sportswashing and evaluate its impact accurately (Ibid.). When Gianni Infantino became FIFA president in 2016, he could have made suggestions to audit the bidding-process, set certain demands for Qatar if they wanted to continue as hosts, instead he moved to Qatar and looked to be enjoying his new job and the belonging perks (Boykoff, 2022).

In an article from Argyro Elisavet Manoli, it is investigated whether or not fans actually care about their favorite team being involved with sportswashing. The main argument put forward in this article is that despite allegations of sportswashing and the associated ethical controversies, the majority of football fans do not seem to be deeply concerned (Manoli, 2022). There could be several reasons for the lack of response from the passionate fans. The first possibility is the amount of love the fans have for the game, sometimes fans' enthusiasm for the game will overshadow the ethical concerns surrounding the event. Their primary interest lies in supporting their favorite teams and experiencing the excitement of the World Cup, regardless of the controversies surrounding the host country. Another reason could be the fans recognize that their opinion won't change anything and therefore might feel unmotivated to challenge or question the decisions made by governing bodies like FIFA, as FIFA seems to possess the ability to bounce back any kind of scandal almost like nothing controversial has

happened (Ibid.). Fans may view the World Cup as a massive event with traditions of corruption and secrecy so deep that it would be impossible for their individual voices to be heard and recognized among celebrities, athletes, coaches, governments officials and sponsor representatives (Ibid.). Consequently, they might choose to focus on the enjoyment and spectacle of the tournament rather than engaging in activism or boycotts. The article furthermore suggests that media coverage and public relations efforts by Qatar and FIFA could have influenced fans' perceptions to be more tolerant towards FIFA and Qatar. Positive narratives and promotional campaigns may downplay or overshadow the ethical concerns, potentially swaying fans' opinions and reducing their awareness or willingness to engage critically with the sportswashing allegations. This is something that Qatar2022 was 'guilty' of. They promoted every half-positive perspective and shared all these positive articles in their News Hub before, during and after the 2022 World Cup (Qatar 2022, 2023c). Most of these articles are about the good experiences all the volunteers had being a part of Qatar2022 or about Qatar environmental development (Ibid.) Although it is possible that many fans don't care about sportswashing, it seems like many of these reasons are based on a lack of transparency and accountability from both Qatar and FIFA. If these fans were to have access to the information they needed to investigate, then this thesis would believe that most people interested in the sport would find the concept of sportswashing quite dangerous in terms of the integrity of the sport.

Winning the 2022 World Cup bid changed things for Qatar in regards to the massive attention they received from the global media, but is all this new attention benefitting Qatar, like they hoped? Hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup didn't create the genuine and positive attention that Qatar had hoped, since they found it necessary to hire popular football legends like David Beckham as Qatar2022 ambassadors, pay for tickets, accommodation and living expenses for several fans, manipulating content on a blog to counteract the public criticism and just general challenges with controlling the media. All this negative attention resulted in Qatar becoming the face of sportswashing, compared to before winning the World Cup bid, when they weren't on the public's radar (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022: Boykoff, 2022).

"... it appears that Qatar's World cup may be triggering what political scientist Victor Cha calls the **Olympic catch-22**, wherein sporting events like the Olympics spotlight the unflattering side of closed societies. Sportswashing, in other words, is not necessarily the boon it is made out to be." (Ganji, 2022).

On the other hand Qatar did succeed in putting on an extraordinary event and it's this thesis assumption that many fans and stakeholders were in fact being distracted as a result of their sportswashing. A distraction that properly could have been counteracted with setting higher demands for Qatar and what it takes to be a World Cup host in this modern society. The fact that FIFA didn't demand any significant improvement from Qatar in the 12 years of preparations, shows the double-standard and corruption within FIFA (Andersen, , 2022; Rushden, 2022).

### **5.2. FIFA'S RESPONSIBILITY**

In most of the material about sportswashing, the term is used primarily as a pointing finger, but where is this finger being pointed and where should it point?

The fact that several key persons from the FIFA hierarchy and the infamous executive committee, were being charged with serious accounts of corruption, fraud and similar violations proved that FIFA was essentially build around corruption (Gordon, 2022; Sargeant, 2015; Lahm, 2022; Shield, 2022: Bodewig et al., 2018). Many articles address how it was wrong of FIFA to award Qatar with the World Cup, but that it is even more alarming that FIFA didn't do more to correct the mistake after clearing house and reinstating a new president, who said he would prioritize transparency highly. The lack of response or accountability from FIFA supports the assumption that the untransparent and secretive nature of FIFA is making it acceptable and clearing a pathway for these actors to perform their sportswashing strategies by accepting they withhold information and allowing them to sweep their corruptive or moral violations under the rug rather than of demanding openness and accountability (Andersen, , 2022; Rushden, 2022). Therefore, it might be assumed that FIFA acts both as a governing body but also as an example of which actions and wrongdoings to get away with, if you are willing to pay up. Compared to Qatar, FIFA is more accustomed to the attention most of their actions and dealings attract from the media, fans and sponsors. The discussion about FIFA's integrity is not a new topic in the media, and it was the FIFA scandal in 2015, that really exposed just how much corruption actually existed within FIFA (Král & Cuskelly, 2017; Sargeant, 2015: Rushden, 2022; Andersen, 2020; Andersen, 2022; Lahm, 2022; Gordon, 2022; Zirin and Boykoff, 2022; Shield, 2022). Most of the articles analyzed about FIFA and their tendency for corruption either discuss the former executive committee with Sepp Blatter in charge and the bidding-process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup or FIFA's management of the sportswashings allegations in light of Qatar2022. The current FIFA president gave a very controversial speech as an attempt to once and for all kill the topic of FIFA and Qatar's sportswashing.

"Today I feel Qatari. Today I feel Arab. Today I feel African. Today I feel gay. Today I feel disabled. Today I feel a migrant worker," (Andersen, 2020).

In his speech the FIFA president, more or less, accused western critics of Qatar2022 of being racist and said that Europe should consider their own history before passing judgment on Qatar.

"For what we Europeans have been doing around the world in the last 3,000 years we should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years before starting to give moral lessons to people," (Andersen, 2020).

FIFA actually has several measurements in place to ensure the conduct of FIFA is transparent (Andersen, 2020; FIFA; 2023b; FIFA, 2023f). Although FIFA on paper has introduced all the necessary steps, the majority of the power remains within a narrow group of senior officials, making these measurements and committees less efficient in reality (Junghagen & Aurvandil, 2020). FIFA needs to demonstrate its commitment to responsible governance, transparency, and ethical conduct. These steps would help mitigate the risks of sportswashing and foster a more credible and trustworthy image for FIFA and the sport of football. FIFA has a responsibility to the whole football community, which requires them to perform their governing job with the utmost seriousness and accountability, in order to save the integrity and keep the core values of football intact.

Showing different cultures through sport is one of sports finests tasks. The fact that the World Cup's are held on different continents, in countries all with different cultures, traditions and history. Thus, hosting a World Cup in the Middle East is isolated a a good decision because there are Middle Eastern countries with a rich football culture and history, and also countries who aren't violating human rights in the process (Lahm, 2022). But there should be some kind of minimum requirement for any potential hosts to for instance uphold decent human rights - no matter how much the potential hosts are willing to pay both over and under the table

#### 5.3. FURTHER RESEARCH

For future research within the topics presented, analyzed and discussed in this thesis, an interesting continuation would be to test the conclusions or hypothesis made on a bigger scale. It would be interesting to dive into the transparency of Qatar, but not only look at the 2022 World Cup, but also access the level of transparency in other sportswashing activities they are accused of engaging in such as the purchase of PSG, the large sponsor deals present across several teams and different types and disciplines of sports.

To continue the research surrounding the connection between transparency and sportswashing, it would be interesting to test the thresholds for the balance. How high would the transparency have to be to 'save' the image of an actor, or how severe can a moral violation be. It would be interesting to do multiple case studies comparing the levels of transparency and the severity of the sportswashing across different cases that either are suspected or proved of performing sportswashing and then compare their balances between transparency and sportswashing. The reason this thesis has not allocated more time to testing the thesis on more cases, is due to the lack of accessibility. Most of these cases don't make the needed information available and the analysis and comparisons would not be entirely representative of the real status for these actors.

The tradition and culture for secrecy regarding these topics has proven to be a bigger challenge than first imagined. The lack of available and credible information can however confirm many of the conclusions from the thesis that calls for higher transparency within the sport industry both to counteract strategies like sportswashing but also to help educate the fans and stakeholders about transparency and therefore enhancing the possibility of these actors being held accountable in the future.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

While there is nothing illegal or wrong in nations, states or organizations spending sums of money on sports and promoting their nations in the sports world, many articles report on the troubling trend of especially middle eastern nations buying every sport-related thing, they can like sport clubs, teams, sponsorships, athletes, stadiums and events (Michaelson, 2021; Ganji, 2022). This trend is perceived as troubling because having semi-hidden owners makes it harder to be transparent, and low transparency is breeding ground for corruption, exploitation and other wrongdoings. Transparency is, as established throughout the entire thesis, completely essential to combating corruption, deception and exploitation of the sports industry. One increasingly popular way to exploit the world of sport is by using sports as a tool for cleaning an image or reputation, hence the term: Sportwashing.

This thesis's first analytical task was to determine the level of transparency surrounding Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World cup. It was concluded that Qatar was not showing a very high level of transparency regarding the entire process surrounding the 2022 FIFA World Cup. There has been a significant lack of credibility and reliability to the information provided by Qatar, and FIFA, from the very beginning with the bidding-process to the execution of the World Cup last year. Critics argue that greater transparency and accountability are necessary to address concerns regarding corruption, sportswashing and the future integrity of the sport effectively.

The next task was to determine whether there was a connection between transparency and sportswashing and if we could construct some general condition for how each concept affected the other. The conclusion was pretty clear: there is a solid connection between the two concepts and it could also be concluded that the higher the transparency, the lower the risk of deceptive strategies like sportswashing happening. And vice versa, the lower the level of transparency, the higher susceptibility for sportswashing, corruption and other kinds of deception.

The last and final task for this thesis was to define some definition framework or model that would aid future research in accessing cases that are either suspected or proved as for sportwashing. The model proposed in section 4.3 has taken inspiration in the

definition from Fruh, Archer and Wojtowicz and introduced the assessment of the transparency into the model, thus creating a well-rounded framework that can be further developed or be used as it is. The framework consists of defining the severity of the moral violation committed, access the actor's power and resources, determine if sports was used to deliberately 'wash' the image clean again and lastly, determine the level of transparency in the situation.



Lastly, this thesis would like to briefly conclude on the responsibilities of FIFA. FIFA is the protector, developer and governing body of the most popular sport in the world (Sawe, 2018), which makes FIFA one of the most powerful organizations in the entire world. This power comes with a great responsibility to secure positive development within the sport, protect the integrity and core values of football and unite people across boundaries in the name of football.

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