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A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC STUDY OF IMAGES IN FOOTBALL GAMES

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the realm of funny posters and images displayed by fans during the World Cup and Gulf Cup games, employing a social semiotic approach to interpret and understand their content, imagery, and cultural significance. The investigation focuses on how these images function as communicative tools that not only entertain but also convey deeper social and cultural messages to a global audience.

The findings underscore the significance of visual literacy in contemporary media and offer a new perspective on the social dynamics of major sporting events. This research contributes to the fields of visual communication, cultural studies, and sports sociology by highlighting how seemingly trivial elements like fan posters can have profound social implications.

KEYWORDS

Social semiotic, images, football games, world cup, gulf cup.

INTRODUCTION

The images will be examined using a social semiotic framework, and the funniness found in the posters will be investigated in terms of its intended meaning, the strategies and tactics used to encode this meaning, and audio-visual and/or linguistic resources which contribute to the reception of this intended meaning. The aim is to understand the nature of this humor and its relationship to issues in the societies from which the posters emanate (Halliday, 1978).

This can be related to wider debates about different cultural forms of 'post-modernity' and the social psychology of ridicule and laughter. High-level insights may eventually be uncovered about sociocultural issues and events in the two regions.

This study investigates the nature of fans of national football teams during two international football competitions. The games chosen for examination are from two different societies; the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, and the Gulf Cup held in Iraq during January 2023. The countries represented in the World Cup are at different stages of development, but they are all industrialized. The Gulf States are Arab countries located in the Gulf region of the Middle East (Hofstede, 1980). These countries are known to have strong collectivistic values, and the social and political situation in this region has been undergoing rapid and significant change.

The World Cup started in 1930 with the Jules Rimet trophy and was played every four years (with the exception of 1942 and 1946 due to World War II) until 2002 when it was decided that the tournament would be held every five years, with FIFA's president Joseph Blatter claiming it should be in Africa. The tournament involves a qualification phase (except for the tournament's host nation) preceding the final event which involves thirty-two countries. The nature of the World Cup is such that it is the biggest single sporting event in the world involving nations from all continents and generating an enormous following with all sorts of social events, displays, and the creation and exchange of an equally enormous variety of signs related to both football and the tournament.

The Gulf Cup has been held every two years since 1970. All of the members of the current Gulf Cup Football Federation have taken part in these competitions, with Iraq winning the most times (three). The idea of a tournament for the Gulf states was first suggested by the Iraq FA boss, Mohammed Al-Rawi. The Saudis put the idea to the Arab countries of the Gulf and the first Arabian Gulf Championship was in 1970. The Gulf Cup has been played every 2 years, apart from in 2003 when it was cancelled due to the Iraq War, when all members agreed not to compete.

METHODOLOGY

Van Leeuwen (2005:1) defines social semiotics as a novel and separate approach to the practice and philosophy of semiotics. Social semiotics is a theoretical framework that elucidates the impact of social and cultural elements on texts and the meanings transmitted through multimodal visual storytelling. The integration of multimodality with social semiotics improves our understanding of diverse forms of communication (Huang, 2009:2, and Kress, 2010:16).

In their 2006 publication "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" (first published in 1996), Gunther Kress and van Leeuwen presented a unique method for analyzing visual semiotics using the framework of social semiotics, considering it as a type of "grammar". The total interplay among the several modes undermines the intended result. Their approach is labeled as a 'grammar' to highlight the existence of "culturally derived regularity".

Kress and van Leeuwen's theory is rooted in Halliday's social semiotic approach, which focuses on three fundamental aspects of language: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual. They employ novel terminology to delineate these metafunctions. Kress and van Leeuwen propose using the term 'representational' instead of 'ideational', 'interactive' instead of 'interpersonal', and 'compositional' instead of 'textual' (Jewitt and van Leeuwen, 2001:138).

The Model of Analysis

3.3.1. Image

The image utilizes a social semiotic approach to communicate meaning through visual representation. The majority of works on visual semiotics have mostly concentrated on what may be seen as the equivalent of 'words' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2005: 1). The image has the following components:

1- Sign placement: This term pertains to the arrangement of portrayed humans inside a visual area, with the intention of transmitting certain information. Therefore, the placement of participants, whether it is on the left, right, center, margin, top, or bottom, strongly influences the interpretation assigned to them. Kress (2010: 33) states that the placement of a sign is the primary factor in effectively delivering the most important "informational load" of the image.

2-Given and New: The Given and New frameworks prioritize the formation of horizontal partnerships and are widespread in Western society. Culture refers to the beliefs, customs, practices, and behaviors that are shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation.

3-Visual modality: as explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 89), can exhibit different degrees of modality, comparable to verbal modality. They can exhibit either a great degree of certainty or a low degree of certainty. High modality in visuals refers to the extent to which things or individuals accurately

depict their real-life look. Low modality refers to a condition in which things or individuals seem unrealistic.

4-Framing: Framing is a technique that has the power to shape the understanding of the recipients. It is utilized when there is a requirement to denote the division or association between elements or clusters within a design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996: 214). Several methods can be utilized to accomplish framing, such as incorporating frame lines, introducing color or shape discontinuities, or intentionally omitting color.

5-Power and Angle: A low angle in photos demonstrates the superior position of the individuals depicted compared to the viewers. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006, 140), low angles are commonly associated with feelings of superiority, exaltation, and triumph. Conversely, high perspectives have a tendency to diminish the individual, morally devalue them by bringing them down to ground level, and depict them as being stuck in an overwhelming sense of predestined fate.

3.3.2. Aword

Words function as a means of visual communication and are intricately linked to the signifier of a sign. Hodge and Kress (1988: 8) contend that the process of choosing word classes and phrase structures in language can be likened to the process of selecting

color or compositional structures in visual communication.

1- Language Selection

The choice of language might be either official or informal. Marketing messages utilize non-traditional grammar in formal language to communicate meaning. Precise wording and complex sentence constructions are used to communicate importance.

2-Color

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 229), color is mostly linked to emotions. The use of color can have a substantial impact on the efficacy of advertisements. Colors function as non-verbal cues and frequently attract the instant attention of the recipients. Color is used to represent individuals, places, items, as well as groups of individuals, places, objects, and bigger concepts.

Data of Analysis

3.4.1 Images from World Cup 2022

Image No(1)



This image contains realistic photos of human image and people. Hence, they have high modality in terms of using images.

4. Framing

There is no significant disconnection observed between the demonstrated people . There is no separation between these two players and the hand man who is standing beside them. This indicates that people are so attached the reason behind their demonstration.

5. Power and Angle

Human image have no symbolic power over receivers. Because the picture is at eye level, then the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved. Therefore, this image has high angle without exercising power over receivers.

6. Words(Formal and Informal Language)

This image has a written text which reflects the formal language because it contains full word which represents the name of the country. There are specific technical terms like the number 8, it used to communicate meaning. It represents the number of the player himself.

7. Color

1. Placement of Signs

This image is taken for Brazil term while they go out of the competition of world cup 2022 in Qatar. Twitter users and activists responded to Brazil's elimination from the World Cup by the Croatian team, expressing their sorrow and disillusionment with the departure of the Brazilian team, and the situation escalated to the extent of sharing videos of people crying and lamenting over Brazil's exit from the tournament. This image is in the middle and it taken by zoom. It focuses only on these two players who hung each other while their leader is crying.

2 Given and New

The image of the people is Given because they are real people. The New, on the other hand, is represented visually by their shirts and the word brazil which is written on and the number 8 which is on the shirt.

3 Visual Modality

The country's raw richness is symbolized by the yellow color, while the blue color stands for the globe and the white stars of Rio de Janeiro night.

it also employs a white hair of the player to symbolize innocence and purity, while the use of green for the written text signifies hope.

Image No.2



1. Placement of Signs

This image is taken for Argentina's term while they win the final of the competition of world cup 2022 in Qatar. This image is taken from the middle. It shows the full body of the players while they are shouting and celebrating their winning. Messi is in the middle of the picture and he holds the cup up. They are jumping up and down.

2 Given and New

The image of the people is Given because they are real people. The New, on the other hand, is represented visually by the cup of the world which is shown for the first time and their gold medals.

3 Visual Modality

This image contains realistic photos of human image and people. Hence, they have high modality in terms of using images.

4. Framing

There is no significant disconnection observed between the demonstrated people . There is no separation among players and all of them hung each other and stand beside each other. This indicates that people are so attached the reason behind their demonstration.

5. Power and Angle

Human image have symbolic power over receivers. Because the picture is taken from below level, then the point of view is one of being unequal and there is power difference involved. Therefore, this image has low angle that indicates that Argentina term are the superiors of the world

6. Words(Formal and Informal Language)

This image has a written text which reflects the formal language in Arabic because it contains nominal sentence which represents the nickname of Messi by

Arabs. It is in the middle of the image. It gets the emphasis.

7. Color

Argentina was once recognized worldwide for its white shirts adorned with blue stripes, which symbolize the colors of the national flag. These iconic jerseys were worn by numerous renowned players and legends who represented the Argentine national team in various international events.

The blue hue in the flag symbolizes the celestial sky, epitomizing the lofty and boundless aspirations of the nation, its populace, and its team, who consistently strive for victory and dominance. The flag features a central white stripe upon which the sun emblem is positioned, symbolizing the dawn of a new era following Argentina's liberation from Spanish rule in the aftermath of the conflict.

Image No. 3`



1. Placement of Signs

This image represents the logo of Arab Gulf 25 that occurs in Iraq in Basra. This image contains a character who is Sindbad the sailor who is standing in the left beside the Gulf cup that is designed for the winner team, he puts his foot on the ball to indicate the beginning of the competitions. There are flags of Arabic countries from two sides. Above, there is the name of Basra and the logo of balm which represents the highest status of the country. The background there is a stadium.

2 Given and New

The image of flags are Given because they are the flags of Arabic countries. The New, on the other hand, is represented visually by the cup of the Arab Gulf 25 which is shown for the first time and with Sinbad sailor.

3 Visual Modality

This image contains non-realistic photos of image and Sinbad character. Hence, they have low modality in terms of using images.

4. Framing

There is no significant disconnection observed among Sinbad, flags, and the written texts, and the symbol of the balm. There is no separation among them and all of them complete each other.

5. Power and Angle

This image have symbolic power over receivers. Because the picture is taken from below level, then the point of view is one of being unequal and there is power difference involved. Therefore, this image has low angle that indicates that Iraq team are the superiors on Arabs.

6. Words(Formal and Informal Language)

This image has a written text which reflects the formal language in Arabic because it contains word of Basra and Gulf 25. It is in the right and above sides of the image. It gets the emphasis.

7. Color

The outfit of Sinbad as if he wears it in the cartoon. He loves sailing and adventures. His stories tell of the difficulties he faces and overcomes.

The meaning of the colors of the flags of Gulf countries:

1- Qatar The national flag of the State of Qatar consists of a burgundy background with a white horizontal stripe crossing it, accompanied by nine white stars. The hue white represents serenity, while the burgundy color indicates either the spilled blood or the coagulated blood. The presence of nine heads symbolizes that the State of Qatar is the ninth member of the Emirates.

2- The second country on the list is the United Arab Emirates. Prior to their unification, the flags of the

Emirates were comprised of the colors red and white. However, subsequent to the union, the colors black and green were incorporated, resulting in the flag now bearing the traditional colors commonly found in Arab flags.

3- The number 3 corresponds to the name Jordan. The flag of Jordan is composed of the colors black, representing the banner of the Abbasid state, and white, representing the flag of the Umayyad state. The green flag represents the Fatimid realm, the crimson flag represents the Hashemite dynasty, and the white seven-pointed star depicts the Seven Psalms, which is Surah Al-Fatihah in the Holy Quran.

4- Saudi Arabia is symbolized by the green hue and Arabic calligraphy, which are typically associated with Islam. The presence of a sword represents the strong enforcement of justice, and the inclusion of the two testimonies signifies the adherence to Islamic law in governing the state.

5- Kuwait is ranked 14th. The Kuwaiti flag was hoisted on November 24, 1961, marking the nation's inaugural display of sovereignty following its declaration of independence. The flag is composed of four distinct colors: green symbolizes the land, white represents the nation's accomplishments, red signifies the shedding of enemies' blood, and black symbolizes the darkness of the battlefields.

Image No. 4



1.Placement of Signs

This image represents the fans of Arab Gulf 25 that are present in side the stadium in one of Iraq football games in Basra. This image contains so many people who come to support the Iraqi team with a large flag of Iraq, also there are small flags.

2 .Given and New

The image of supporters is Given because they are real fans of Iraq.. The New, on the other hand, is represented visually by the big and small flags of Iraq in the Arab Gulf 25 which is shown for the first time.

3. Visual Modality

This image contains realistic photos of image and real people who hold flags. Hence, they have high modality in terms of using images.

4. Framing

There is no significant framing observed among fans, flags, and the written texts. There is no separation among them.

5. Power and Angle

This image have no symbolic power over receivers. Because the picture is taken from high level, then the point of view is one of being unequal and there is power difference involved. Therefore, this image has high angle that indicates that Iraq fans are the superiors.

6. Words(Formal and Informal Language)

This image has a written text which reflects the formal language in Arabic because it contains word of "Allahu Akbar" It is in the middle of flag and in the middle of the picture and above sides of the image.

7. Color

Iraq, a country in the Middle East, is identified by the number 17. The Iraqi flag comprises three colors: red denotes bravery, white symbolizes benevolence, and green represents Islamic symbolism. The three stars reflect a previously suggested union of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The word "Allahu Akbar" was subsequently added during the Gulf War.

CONCLUSION

Contributions to social semiotic research discuss how this visual material is an effective tool of

communication on a large scale, paralleling the very same thing advertising, and can perhaps be linked to visual comedic strategies used in TV sitcoms, etc...

The author of this study claims that images in sports events provide an insight into social and cultural behavior of the intended message senders and addressees. He has done two case studies on posters in World Cup2022 and Gulf Cup2023 games. The research makes application of Kress and van Leeuwen's model 2006 on images and studies to what extent it is culturally specific in relation to languages used inside the images. The study makes qualitative research and uses a survey in one of the case studies. Formal languages are used in both, high angle is used heavily in taking photos, colors of flags are used heavily, and nominal sentences are used in the middle of the photos.

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