

# **Critical Discourse Analysis on Sportswashing: Conceptualisation, Motives, and Consequences**

ALEXANDER KALLEVÅG TENDEN  
LUDVIG BODAL

AMANDEEP DHIR

**University of Agder, 2023**  
School of Business and Law  
Economic and Finance, study programme International Business

## Abstract

University of Agder

School of Business and Law

Economic and Finance, study programme International Business

Alexander Kallevåg Tenden & Ludvig Bodal

Critical Discourse Analysis on Sportswashing: Conceptualisations, Motives, and Consequences

Master Thesis

Year 2023

123 pages, 3 Figures, 3 Tables and 2 Appendix

**Examiners:** Professor Amandeep Dhir

**Keywords:** Sportswashing, Media, Conceptualisation, Motives, Consequences

Sportswashing, the practise of using sport as a tool to improve a country or organisations reputation has been a topic of interest in recent years. This thesis aims to explore how popular media conceptualises sportswashing, the motives for engaging in this practise, and the consequences of this engagement by applying soft power as a theoretical framework. To achieve the research objective of this thesis, which are to address the limited scrutiny on the complex phenomenon Sportswashing. A critical analysis of relevant literature was conducted to identify the key themes and sub-topics surrounding sportswashing. The study then analysed media's coverage of events/ examples of sportswashing, such as Qatar World cup held in 2022 and Saudi Arabian involvement into sports, to understand how the media frames the phenomenon.

Critical Discourse Analysis was then adopted to develop themes and sub-themes for this thesis of sportswashing. Qualitative data was collected through analysing content based on articles and videos gathered on Google and YouTube. The results indicated that popular media conceptualises sportswashing as a strategic tool used by individuals, corporations & governments to improve their image by engaging in highly unethical issues regarding this practise. The motives of engaging in sportswashing vary, including attracting tourism and investment, deflecting attraction from negative issues by creating an alternative narrative, whitewashing an impression & reputation management. However, the consequences are complex, ranging from human rights abuses to degradation of the sports values by harming the environment.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of sportswashing by providing a critical analysis of how popular media conceptualises sportswashing and the following consequences by engaging in this practise. The study concludes that the phenomenon of sportswashing is complex and controversial issue that require greater scrutiny from media, governments, and the public.

## **Acknowledgments**

It has been an exciting journey to write this Master thesis together and got a new common experience. Without the support of several important people. We would not have achieved this.

We want to appreciate thanks from other students, family, and friends who have supported us not only during the thesis process, but throughout the studies. Thanks to the encouragement, faith, and support. We are grateful for having this amazing support.

We want to thank our professor Amandeep Dhir for continued support, even when we experienced doubt in the project. This process has taught us lessons that we can continue to use to achieve our career goals. Further, we would like to thank all the professors at UIA and University at South Australia (UniSA) for the lessons and guidance towards achieving our career goals.

Alexander Kallevåg Tenden

Ludvig Bodal

June 2023.

## Table of Content

Table of Content .....	3
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1 Background .....	7
1.2 Research questions .....	8
1.3 Preliminary literature review.....	9
1.4 Theoretical framework .....	10
1.5 Delimitations .....	12
1.6 Structure of the study .....	13
2. Literature review .....	15
2.1 Sportswashing .....	15
2.1.1 Definition.....	15
2.1.2 Evolution of sportswashing .....	17
2.1.3 Types of sportswashing .....	19
2.2 Stakeholders .....	22
2.2.1 Accountability of stakeholders .....	22
2.2.2 Governing bodies.....	22
2.2.3 Sponsors.....	25
2.2.4 Fans.....	27
2.2.5 Athletes/sportspersons .....	28
2.2.6 Activists .....	29
2.2.7 Media .....	30
2.2.8 Sportswasher.....	32
2.3 Motives.....	35
2.3.1 Impression management .....	36
2.3.2 Reputation management .....	37
2.4 Consequences .....	38
3 Research design and method.....	40
3.1 Research context .....	42
3.2. Research design.....	43
3.3 Data collection.....	43
3.4 Data analysis .....	44
3.5 Reliability and Validity .....	45

4. Findings.....	47
4.1. Conceptualisation of sportswashing.....	47
4.1.1 Definitions of sportswashing.....	51
4.1.2 Sportswasher.....	53
4.1.3 Examples of sportswashing.....	54
4.1.4 Similar concepts.....	55
4.1.5 Events.....	57
4.2 Motives for engaging in sportswashing.....	61
4.2.1 Self presentation.....	65
4.2.2 Economic reasons.....	67
4.2.3 Whitewashing.....	67
4.2.4 Different motives for different stakeholders.....	68
4.2.5 Different motives for different events.....	68
4.3 Consequences of sportswashing.....	69
4.3.1 Positive consequences.....	69
4.3.2 Negative consequences.....	72
5. Discussion and Conclusions.....	77
5.1 Summary.....	77
5.2 Theoretical implications.....	80
5.3 Practical implications.....	81
5.4 Limitations and future research.....	82
References.....	84
Discussion paper.....	96
Discussion paper.....	101
Appendix 1. Video material.....	108
Appendix 2. Article material.....	110

<b>Figure 1:</b> Proposed theoretical framework.....	12
<b>Figure 2:</b> Timeline of sportswashing .....	19
<b>Figure 3:</b> The level of sportswashing an targeted audience.....	35
<b>Figure 4:</b> Conceptualisation of sportswashing.....	52
<b>Figure 5:</b> Motive for engaging in sportswashing .....	69
<b>Figure 6:</b> Consequences of sportswashing.....	72
<b>Table 1:</b> Conceptualisation of sportswashing .....	47
<b>Table 2:</b> Motives for engaging in sportswashing .....	61
<b>Table 3:</b> Consequences of sportswashing .....	70

## **Abbreviations**

<b>AD</b>	Anno Domini
<b>BCE</b>	Before the Common Era
<b>CDA</b>	Critical Discourse Analysis
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>FA</b>	The Football Association
<b>FIFA</b>	Fédération Internationale De Football Association
<b>FIA</b>	Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile
<b>IGF</b>	International Golf Federation
<b>IM</b>	Impression Management
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic committee
<b>LBTQ</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
<b>IM</b>	Impression Management
<b>NBA</b>	National Basketball Association
<b>PGA</b>	Professional Golfers Association
<b>PIF</b>	Public Investment Fund
<b>PL</b>	Premier League
<b>PR</b>	Public Relation
<b>RIM</b>	Role Ideal Model
<b>RM</b>	Reputation Management
<b>SME-</b>	Sports Mega events
<b>UAE</b>	United Arabian Emirates
<b>UN</b>	United Nation
<b>WTA</b>	Women's Tennis Association
<b>WWE</b>	World Wrestling Entertainment

## 1. Introduction

This chapter will present the background, research questions and objectives, preliminary literature review, theoretical framework, delimitations, and structure of the study.

### 1.1 Background

Sport is a global phenomenon that ensures the attention of millions of people worldwide (Wearing, 2022). In recent years, sports teams and organisations have increasingly been involved in activities that extend beyond the traditional purpose of sport that is to ensure entertainment and competitions for the millions of fans over the world (Bokat-Lindell, 2022). However, contradictory to the key purposes behind any sports there are institutions who would like to use sports as a tool to build their reputations or create a self-image to deflect from controversial issues (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2023; Unnithan, 2023). Additionally, sportswashing is used to describe the phenomenon whereby a sports team, athlete, sponsored tournament, or host country is used to distract attention from negative issues by presenting sport at an international stage to create a positive image about self (Fruh, et al., 2022); (Skey, 2022); (Lynch, 2023); (Elsborg,2022). Moreover, the practice is often associated with countries or organisations that are accused of human rights violations or other controversial issues such as environmental damage on the planet and at the same time sponsoring or supporting in sports (Stephard, 2022; Hopkinson, 2023).

However, there seems to be confusion among scholars, practitioners, and activists regarding an understanding of sportswashing and what it involves, which implies several definitions and aspects based on previous research on this phenomenon. To illustrate this argument the Norwegian organisation Språkrådet defines sportswashing to occur "*when governments in authoritarian countries use major sporting events to put themselves in a better light or seek to achieve the same by buying up or sponsoring popular sports clubs*" (Rødningen, 2022). This definition lacked in capturing several aspects of sportswashing according to other scholars and practitioners by including a too narrowly focus on authoritarian countries, that is why this study is focusing on including several definitions of sportswashing in this study to get a more nuanced perspective of the practice (Boycoff, 2022a). As an example, another scholar added some aspects to his definition by arguing that the phenomenon deflected audience's attention away from less favourable perception of a country by either hosting a sports event or making further investments in clubs or athletes (Skey, 2022). Moreover, a scholar argues that sports and politics are increasingly associated, which may have led to financial opportunities and political image as desired outcomes for the sportswasher by buying sporting events and engaging in sportswashing (Boycoff, 2022).



Sportswashing as a phenomenon suffers from definitional issues and to portray this issue further, practitioners argue that most governments may be representative in sportswashing (Fruh, et al., 2022). Moreover, scholars explained an issue raised by sportswashing from the Qatar world cup 2022 event: it's the Kafala labour system that appears to have been based on innovations from the previous British colonial (Fruh, et al., 2022). On the other hand, scholars argue that sports events such as the world cup in Qatar gathered international athletes and supporters to create sporting moments that delighted millions of fans worldwide (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Moreover, practitioners argue that a main problem to solve the issues of sportswashing can be explained by critics who imply that human rights abuses occur, and these events can be considered as highly unethical (Simpson, 2021). Even global brands and market leaders collaborate with the hosts of these events to improve their image (FIFA, 2022). However, there can be negative risks for these sponsors to be associated with authoritarian regimes such as Qatar (Stavrum, 2021). There is now more focus on human rights violations from practitioners, which these brands need to consider (Stavrum, 2021).

In the past decade there has been observed increasing trust in popular media to portray various issues on sportswashing to shape public perception of the phenomena. Our review of the prior literature suggests several gaps: (a) academic studies with an broadly view on sportswashing are limited; (b) lack in empirical studies on conceptualisation and strategies to prevent sportswashing, (c) event based with too many events covered due to the lack of comprehensive pictures of sportswashing, and (d) definition, types, motives and outcomes are not clear. To address these gaps, this study has performed a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2012) that undertakes debates and discussions in popular media, online media content which includes YouTube interviews, videos, and any publicly available content on sportswashing on the internet.

Considering the visible open research gaps in the prior extended literature, this study seeks to explore how popular media conceptualises sportswashing and the motives and consequences by engaging in this practice. At last, by understanding the motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing, the findings can be used to shed light on the negative surroundings of sportswashing and to prevent it in the future by encouraging sponsors, governing bodies, and governments to develop strategies to prevent sportswashing.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The aim of this research is to contribute towards obtaining a better understanding of what sportswashing does and then motives and outcomes of the practice. To do this the study

has used CDA on debates and discussions in popular media on sportswashing. Additionally, the debates and discussions in popular media explains stakeholders in sports to include individuals, corporations, and governments' motive for engaging in sportswashing and the following consequences of their actions for groups such as public audience, fans, sponsors, athletes/ sportspersons, activists, media, governing bodies, international and domestic audiences. This study focuses on the conceptualisation and definitions of sportswashing in popular media and understanding different motives due to which institutions, individuals, governments, and corporations engage in sportswashing. Furthermore, it also examined the different positive and negative consequences of engaging in sportswashing.

**RQ 1:** How does popular media conceptualise sportswashing?

**RQ 2:** What are the motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing?

### **1.3 Preliminary literature review**

Sportswashing as a topic has gotten increased attention in popular media in recent years mainly affected by the Mega Events (MEs) hosted by countries accused of engaging in sportswashing (Wearing, 2022; Bokar-Lindell, 2022, Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al.,2022). On one hand there has been increasing discussion and coverage on sportswashing but on the other hand prior research examining definitions, motives and outcomes are scanty. At present we do not have a widely accepted definition on sportswashing. It generally refers to the use of sports events or activities hosted by government or corporations to improve their image on an international stage (Leeks, 2023; Ogilvie,2022). In this situation popular media has played an instrumental role in influencing public perception of sportswashing since they have created various discussions and debates on sportswashing from various aspects from time to time.

Moreover, some practitioners in mainstream media have explained sportswashing as a form of propaganda, by focusing on the ways government or corporations use sport as a tool to deflect attention away from controversial issues such as human rights abuses or environmental degradation (Unnithan, 2023; Fruh, et al., 2022; Hopkinson, 2023; Portus, 2023). Other practitioners have emphasised the role of sportswashing as a tool to promote a positive image of countries or corporations, arguing that sportswashing can have beneficial effects on economic development and tourism (Hathotuwa, 2022; Towriss,n.d). However, there has been criticism of the notion that sportswashing is as simple as misleading. Some scholars argue that the concept fails to cover several complex aspects of global image management strategies (Boycoff, 2022a; Skey, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to examine popular media-based discussions and debates on how they have

conceptualised sportswashing and what it entails and what are the different motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing.

The limited literature has shared some insights on different motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing. One of the main motives for engaging in sportswashing is to improve a country or corporations' global image on an international stage and this can have several benefits including increased tourism, enhanced investment, and increased political influence (Brannagan & Grix, 2016; Vuving, 2009; Skey, 2022). In terms of motives, there are three widely accepted motives for engaging in sportswashing. These are: improving the global image, deflecting attention away from serious issues, and the sportswashers often believe that through sportswashing they can normalise unethical practices such as corruption and bribery (Stephard, 2022; Hopkinson, 2023; Unnithan, 2023; Gordon & Coleman, 2022a).

One potential negative consequence of sportswashing is the impacts on athletes and fans. For example, according to scholars, hosted events in countries with a questionable human rights record can create ethical concerns for athletes who may be forced to compete in oppressive conditions (Sinnot- Armstrong, 2009). Similarly, fans may be involved in sportswashing indirectly when their favourite team or country is associated with unethical practices or regimes (Fruh, et al., 2023).

Overall, there is a need for research on motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing, especially regarding the different stakeholders such as athletes, fans and governing bodies.

#### **1.4 Theoretical framework**

The thesis has identified three different theoretical frameworks based on the extended review of prior literature; Soft power (Davis, et al., 2023), Agenda-Setting (McCombs, et al., 2014) and social identity theory on Sportswashing (Hogg, 2016). Soft power is explained by scholars in international relations as ability to achieve their goals through attraction instead of coercion, soft power is linked to public diplomacy and image management strategies (Davis, et al., 2023). The concept of soft power has been applied by scholars to explain how governments such as Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany used the Mega events 1934 World cup in Football and 1936 Olympic to promote fascism (Davis, et al., 2023). Other scholars explain the concept of soft power as a tool to "*getting others to want the outcomes that you want*" by using sport as the main driver for these intentions (Houlihan, et al., 2009). Some scholars argue that public diplomacy and tourism are key components of nation branding and by hosting sporting events it allows governments to achieve their political goals (Abdi, et al., 2022). Additionally, these scholars provide the government of China's hosted

Olympic in 2008 as an example of a Mega Event that utilises them to achieve diplomatic goals to an international audience (Abdi, et. al., 2022). In other words, soft power is often achieved through cultural diplomacy, such as promoting a country`s sports and can then be applied to understand how popular media conceptualises sportswashing (see Figure 2) and what motivates actors to engage in the concept (Skey, 2022; Boycoff, 2022a; Zamorano, 2016).

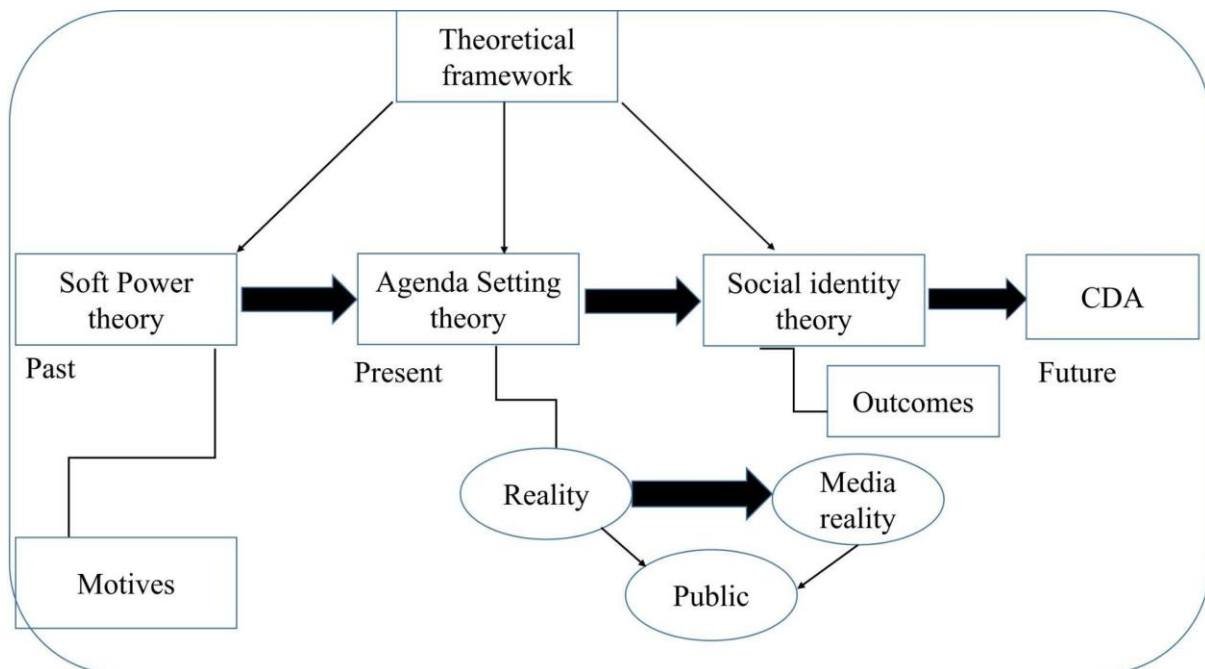
However, the extended review of prior literature argues that; (a) Soft Power lacks to describe how actors acquires for achieve soft power; (b) Nye`s reliance on discussions too often focused on Western-centric orientations; (c) lack in mentioning pitfalls for a government that attempts to acquire soft power (Grix & Brennagan, 2014; Davis, et al., 2023). Additionally, other scholars raise questions about soft power to only be useful if the culture of the country accused of sportswashing is attractive for the international audience, they argue political values should be considered legitimated domestically and abroad (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). As an example, they provide the government of Qatar and how this country by hosting the World cup 2022 used more than only the sport itself for achieving desired reputation (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

Agenda Setting Theory is applied in this study (see Figure 2) to explain media's attention to a specific topic on sportswashing i.e., Qatar World cup 2022 and the accusations against the government about human rights abuses and how the specific topic influences the general public perception (Brown & Deegan, 1998). Additionally, other scholars argue that agenda setting theory influences what the public perceives as important by its focus to cover a specific topic (McCombs, et al., 2014; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Moreover, since this study is relying on qualitative data for the analysing of contents collected, the agenda setting theory sets the agenda for how popular media presents certain subtopics on sportswashing and their influence on public audiences` perception. As a result of the implementation of this theoretical framework, this study has focused on several actors, countries, corporations, and governments involvement in sportswashing for the purpose of covering a broader view of the phenomenon rather than most papers provided in popular media (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

Hereafter, Social Identity theory (see Figure 1) is applied in the thesis to be useful to understand fans, athletes/sportspersons, and public audience indirect role in sportswashing and are explained by scholars to explain the way people's identity is based on their membership in social groups such as sports teams (Leaper, 2011). Additionally, other scholars argue that social identity theory is a theory from social psychology that explains “*most people have a fundamental evolutionary-based need for interpersonal relationships*”

(Hogg, 2016). These social connections can promote ties that connect their identification with various social groups such as fans groups for a sports team (Leaper, 2011; Fruh, et al., 2023). In other words, this theory can then be applied to sportswashing in exploring the concept by examining how it affects the social groups involved; fans, public audience, and athletes/ sportspersons.

On the other hand, scholars argue that people’s knowledge and emotional attachment to their group membership have implications for their wellbeing and behaviour (Hogg, 2016). As an example, scholars argue that fans and athletes may indirectly become complicit in social injustice by supporting clubs or teams involved in the negative issues created by sportswashing (Fruh, et al., 2023). In other words, this theory contributes to understanding how these stakeholders are affected negatively by the outcome of sportswashing made by the sportswasher. Finally, social identity theory is applied in the extended prior literature of this study to analyse how the intentions from governments, corporations and individuals affects social groups such as fans, athletes/ sportspersons, and public audience by the outcomes of their engagement in sportswashing (Huddy, 2001).



**Figure 1:** Proposed theoretical framework

### 1.5 Delimitations

In this study there are presented various limitations and boundaries that are carefully selected to answer the research questions. (a) The research design is based on CDA of scanty data in popular media; (b) Three types of data collected: popular media, online content, and

publicly available content; (c) All types of content were included but mainly in English; (d) The searching of the material was conducted in two different periods, first from January-February and then from April-May 2023.

This study applied Method Triangulation (Bougie, and Sekaran, 2020; Golafshani, 2003) as mentioned above. Further, method triangulation is a useful approach for this study, due to the fact of limitations in previously literature of sportswashing. Additionally, the theory of soft power and this study research questions required a qualitative approach to the research in order to explore an unfamiliar phenomenon to gather more knowledge and to address the sub themes of this topic more specifically. After the two researchers' knowledge there have been no major academic studies of sportswashing by addressing the perception from popular media or by addressing and deeper understanding of the intentions and consequences of engaging in this practice. This research is chosen to gather data on several secondary sources such as news content and video interviews conducted by other practitioners to get a more comprehensive understanding. The research conducted is inductive by nature, theories were then applied based on collected and analysed data to draw conclusions. As a result, the purpose is to create an explanation about the phenomenon by popular media. By nature, the theories applied such as soft power addressed a more general and explorative relationship between the actors of sportswashing and their desired results by involving in this practice. Moreover, to explore motives and consequences by engaging in sportswashing and popular media's conceptualisation of the topic, CDA will be conducted by collecting content from Google and YouTube and then coding of the material to develop themes and subthemes. Additionally, by interpreting journals made by scholars to develop some preliminary themes and subthemes was applied during the analysis of the data. The coding was then conducted individually to reduce bias and then merged together based on the most important content. In this case, one aspect worth noting is that a few news articles turned out to be restricted by paywalls or disappear after the analysis was finalised, which may have caused bias in the results and negatively affected the reliability and validity of the findings. The data collected from Google and YouTube was implemented into the software Excel for the analysis and then the results were illustrated through figures based on GOIA during (see Section 4).

## **1.6 Structure of the study**

This study is structured in five main chapters. First the introduction where we give a brief overview about the study, research background, research questions, preliminary literature review, key concept and definitions, theoretical framework, delimitations, research

methodology are all being introduced in this chapter. Then Literature review where the existing literature is being discussed, how the literature includes gaps and highlighting key themes and discussions. The third chapter research methodology is where this study explains research context, how we collected data, our analysis method and reliability and validity. The fourth chapter is where this study's findings are presented. The fifth and final chapter is where we discuss and conclude our findings related to the literature review and research questions, study implication and limitations are also being discussed in this chapter.

## **2. Literature review**

The focus in this chapter is to present a detailed overview of prior relevant literature. This section presents the sportswashing definition, the evolution of the phenomena, and events and strategies. Hereafter, this study presents accountability of stakeholders by presenting a discussion of the stakeholders' role in sports. Then, the sportswasher and the potential level of sportswashing is introduced. Finally, the motives and consequences are presented.

### **2.1 Sportswashing**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

The review of the prior literature suggests diversity when it comes to definitions of sportswashing and different scholars, practitioners and activists have used several definitions to define sportswashing. Our review of the extended literature indicates that there are three major areas to discuss when defining sportswashing.

One of the most used definitions of sportswashing in the prior literature among scholars is that the concept can be defined when “*sports are used by oppressive regimes or leaders to legitimise their regimes domestically & internationally by distracting from human rights abuses* (Davis, et al., 2023; Ganji, 2023; Skey, 2022). Additionally, scholars argue further that oppressive regimes can achieve legitimation through sponsorships of popular teams or hosting of prestigious sporting events and provided the Saudi Arabian governments hosting of Formula annually since 2021 and sponsorship of LIV Golf as examples of how this concept is applied in practice (Davies, et al., 2023).

On the other hand, another definition used by scholars, seeks to introduce more aspects to understand sportswashing as an phenomena by introducing that this concept is used by other democratic countries in the West which are known for good track record:

“*Sportswashing as an phenomena whereby political leaders use sports to appear important or legitimated on the world stage by deflecting attention from social issues such as human rights by hosting mega events in authoritarian and political spaces*” (Boycoff, 2022a). As examples of hosting mega events in other political spaces rather than not only authoritarian countries, the debates and discussion provided the Olympics held in 2012 and 2002 by UK and USA (Boycoff, 2022a).

Lastly, some scholars focused on other aspects of sportswashing to be designed to show how “*Authoritarian states try to launder and whitewash their global reputation by covering up the human rights record through the glamour of sports*” ( Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). As an example, to illustrate their argument they provided how the Qatari government



engaged in sportswashing by adding a third aspect called direct ownership, and Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) ownership in French club PSG (Søyland & Morriconi, 2022). However, the scholars present the issue of why this phenomenon is understudied by arguing that the sports strategy applied by the Qatari government goes beyond sport diplomacy (Søyland & Morriconi, 2022). As an example, they argued how active participation of foreign institutions such as clubs, and sports stars have been crucial to legitimise Qatar at a global stage (Søyland & Morriconi, 2022).

Due to limited literature the review of practitioners' definitions of sportswashing has been included and indicates diversity, but also confounds understanding the phenomena and how the sportswasher operates (Søyland & Morriconi, 2022). Further, the most common definition of sportswashing by practitioners «an *Authoritarian regime uses sports to deflect attention away from human rights issues*” (Leeks, 2023; Ogilvie, 2022). In other words, there is some agreement in the debates and discussions about sportswashing and what it involves (Elfsborg, 2022). As an example of sportswashing Saudi Arabian governments is mentioned in the debates and discussions by practitioners to deflect attention away from human rights issues; by hosting events Formula One and Liv Golf, sponsoring teams and athletes Cristiano Ronaldo transfer to Al Nasr, and ownership of English sports club Newcastle (Degrushe, 2023; Tedder, 2023; IndianExpress, 2023; Leeks, 2023). In addition, to the previous definition on sportswashing by focusing on authoritarian regimes other practitioners have included more details on how does sportswashing appraised as " an *attempt to distract from, minimise, or normalise wrongdoing through engagement in sport*". “*Sportswashers want other people to care less about their wrongdoing without having to address that wrongdoing through reform and reparation*”(Fruh, et al., 2022; Bruck, 2022). The practitioners then provided an example on how the previous Argentinian government hosted the World cup in 1978 to normalise the military regime's mass execution of citizens during the championship (Fruh, et al., 2022).

After that practitioners argue that sportswashing is explained to not only include governments, but individuals, corporations, groups which do engage in sportswashing to improve its negative image (Unnithan, 2023). One example can then be explained as the private company INEOS and how they may contribute to sportswashing “*INEOS take attention away from the damage on the planet by pouring hundreds of millions of pounds into sports sponsorships in an attempt to sportswash their role in the climate crisis*” (Hopkinson, 2023; Taylor, 2021). Additionally, activists share common aspects of sportswashing by defining the concept as an act of sponsoring a sports team or event to distract from serious

issues and is often applied in practice by governments and companies with poor environmental or human rights records (Purchell, 2023). INEOS a private company is then further explained to have invested high amounts of money into sports such as Formula One, cycling and now wants to get an ownership into English club Manchester United (Hopkinson, 2023; Taylor, 2021; Purchell, 2023).

Prior research has explained how Qatar was using sports strategies such as hosting football world cup 2022 to change the global reputation of the country regarding fans, media, journalists, and athletes (Skey, 2022). Countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been accused of engaging in sportswashing, but there is visible evidence that the UK government has engaged in sportswashing and that there are other Western countries that have done this to some extent (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2022). As a result, definitions on sportswashing must be extended to include more than only authoritarian and democratic countries (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2022).

### **2.1.2 Evolution of sportswashing**

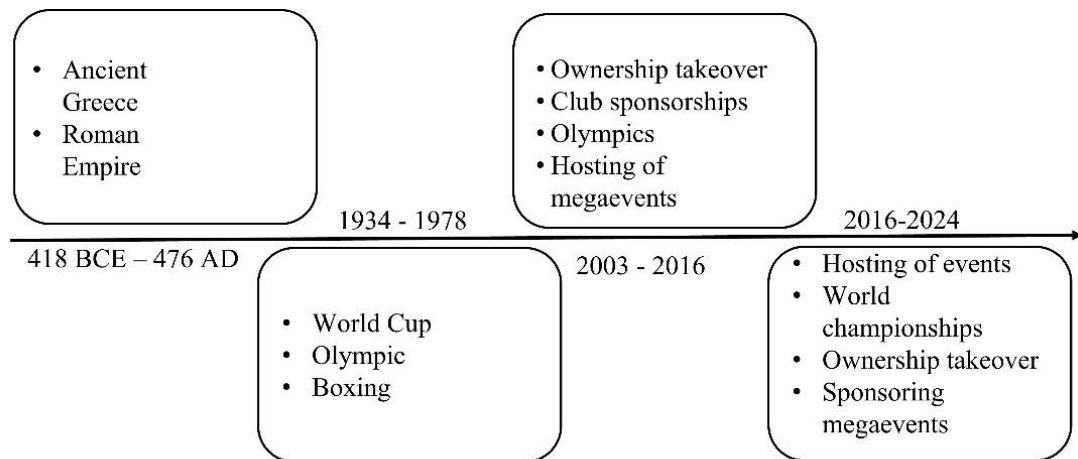
The evolution of sportswashing trace back to ancient Greece, when in 416 BCE, in the wars between Athens and Sparta. The city Athens entered multiple teams into the ancient Olympics which resulted in them achieve success. Athen's success in the Olympics was used to distract the citizens from the fact that they were losing the war against Sparta. In 415 BCE a politician from Athene used the cited success in the Olympics as a proof for power and used it to invade Sicily (Boycoff, 2022). The 1934 World Cup in Italy facilitated sportswashing, where Mussolini used the victory to show how strong Italy was (Fruh, et, al., 2022). In the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Adolf Hitler invented a new tradition. The Olympic Torch relay was a tradition that started under the Nazi Olympics. The relay was officially approved in 1934 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The Torch journeyed from ancient ruins of Olympia to Berlin carried out by more than 3000 runners. This event was aligned with Nazi propaganda which identified German Aryans as worthy heirs to the ancient Greeks. It travelled 7 countries in 12 days and enabled Hitler to spread Nazi propaganda through central and south-eastern Europe (Boycoff, 2022).

In the 70s, boxing events took place in Zaire and Manilla. Where both leaders of these countries were brutal dictators, two world boxing titles took place in Zaire and Manilla (Simpson, 2021). "*The Rumble in The Jungle*" between George Foreman and Muhammed Ali and the other was labelled as Thrilla in Manilla between Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier (Simpson, 2021). Two years after a military coup in Argentina, the country hosted the 1978 World Cup. Argentina was awarded the world cup in 1966, at a time the military dictator

Junta was not in charge. However, he was still using the world cup to sportswash, showing that Argentina was a safe place to visit (Fruh, et al., 2023).

In the 21st century, sportswashing changed. Before it was about mega events and showing the country to the world that it's a great place to live and now it's much more complex. In 2003 Roman Abramovich bought Chelsea, a takeover gets you closer to the community and the sportswasher makes use of the club's profile and values to association (Fruh, et al., 2023). State-owned sponsors use sport to launder the reputation on behalf of the government (Krzyzaniak, 2018). The UAE state owned company Emirates Airways has sponsored some of the European biggest clubs for the past two decades. Chelsea, Arsenal, Real Madrid, Hamburger SV, Benfica, and PSG have all at one point been sponsored by Emirates Airways, even the Qatari owned Paris SG. These sponsorships were an attempt to gain soft power, the decision to sponsor European football was part commercial and part foreign policy (Krzyzaniak, 2018). A younger company called Etihad Airways sponsors Manchester City (Krzyzaniak, 2018).

The owner of Manchester City is the Abu Dhabi royal family, through the ownership and commercial deals with international sport the small state UAE have managed to establish a presence in the sporting infrastructure, the UAE also have been hosting events in Formula One (Houlihan & Zheng, 2015). For the case of Qatar, they have also been sponsoring the biggest clubs in football, for starters they broke an over 100-year-old long tradition of FC Barcelona to be first corporate kit sponsorship. Qatar Airways was on Barcelona's kits in 2013, the company is 100% owned by the Qatari state. When Qatar was bidding for the 2022 world cup, they paid former French international midfielder Zinedine Zidane to be the ambassador of the world cup. In 2011 the Qatari state followed their Gulf States rivals in buying a football club, they bought a controlling stake in Paris SG and eventually became the sole owner of one of the most iconic French teams (Krzyzaniak, 2018).



**Figure 2:** Timeline of sportswashing

China was the host of both Winter Olympics 2022 and Summer Olympics 2008. In 2008 the head of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee said hosting the Olympics would “*not only promote our economy but also enhance all social conditions, including education, health and human rights*” (Boykoff, 2022). Regarding the Human Rights enhancement in China, it did not happen and when they were elected the host of 2022 Olympics matters became worse. Beijing was chosen as host even though previous promises did not follow through. Human rights situation in China developed in the wrong direction, there was examples of abuse against various groups such as Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang Province, Tibet individuals, and Hong Kong democracy activists (Boykoff, 2022). The Russian Olympics in 2014, showed that hosting the games unified national pride. Russia also hosted the world cup in 2018 and in four years they held two sportswashing mega events (Boykoff, 2022). Saudi Arabia, another kingdom in the Gulf area with increasing human rights issues, have copied the strategies of their behaviour. For instance, in 2021 they bought the English Premier League Club Newcastle through their investment fund PIF. The leader of the fund PIF, is Mohammed Bin Salman. US pointed fingers at bin Salman in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Saudi Arabia has also been hosting events in motorsports, boxing, football, and tennis (Boykoff, 2022).

### 2.1.3 Types of sportswashing

There are three different types of sportswashing. The review of the extended literature suggests there are three different types of sportswashing which is; (a) the use of mega-events; (b) ownership in clubs and teams; (c) sponsorships of athletes and sports clubs.

Scholars explain that the use of Mega events is the most used tool for sportswashing, a practice that began 416 BCE in ancient Greece (Boykoff, 2022). Beijing was Olympic host

in 2008 and 2022, despite increasing criticism for domestic problems and human rights criticism especially their treatment of Uyghur Muslim, Tibet or activists in Hong Kong was criticised in the build-up for both Olympics. In 2002 Olympics, the US used the Olympic Games to promote that it was a safe place to visit one year after the 2001 and 9/11 attacks. The British government made promises that hosting the Olympics would inspire youths' engagement in sport (Boykoff, 2022).

Further examples of Olympics connections to sportswashing are Sochi Olympics in 2014, where Putin was able to use the games to distract from his persecution of LGBT people (Boykoff, 2022). In 2010 when Vancouver had the Olympics, there was discussion and debates about how it would improve its situation for Indigenous people in relation to work. Los Angeles will be host for 2028 Olympics, the governor is making a case that hosting the Olympics will be a solution to their homelessness problems (Boykoff, 2022).

Qatar was criticised for domestic human rights abuse following build-up to their world cup, the criticism included thousands of migrant workers death (Skey, 2022). Qatar has also been hosting other events such as handball, track, swimming, and volleyball world championships (Krzyzaniak, 2018). Saudi Arabia has been hosting different events past years; boxing, soccer, and tennis all took place in the Arabian kingdom as part of a deliberate sportswashing strategy (Boykoff, 2022). Criticism surrounding Azerbaijan when they hosted the European Games back in 2015 (Krzyzaniak, 2018), other events they have been hosting is e.g., Men's U17 World Cup and regular Formula One Grand Prix races (Krzyzaniak, 2018). Another scholar explains Israel to also have used sport to sportswash its reputation through hosting a race in the Giro D'Italia (Skey, 2022).

The second type of sportswashing has been increasingly discussed and debated in recent years, which is ownership in clubs (Fruh, et al., 2023). Additionally, according to the discussions and debates in popular media this happens at three different levels: individual, governmental, and corporate levels (Fruh, et al., 2023). Corporate level is explained as the rarest form for engaging in sportswashing, here we have a French Football club OGC Nice as example, the listed owner of Nice is INEOS, which is a petrochemical company. Deliberately using football to sportswash its reputation, which has been criticised for their business operations and the following consequences of these operations for the planet (Mabon, 2022). State ownership is discussed as more common, with three notable examples presented from the Gulf area. The French club Paris SG was taken over by the Qatari government in 2011, where it gave Qatar the chance to integrate themselves into the French capital (Fruh, et al., 2022). Another example is the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), they

20

acquired Manchester City in 2009, and by winning almost every trophy they created a different story for the authoritarian regime (Skey, 2022). The third example is the English club Newcastle, which was acquired by a different Gulf state, Saudi Arabia in 2021. The regime bought the club through the Public Investment Fund (PIF), where the chairman is the Saudi Arabian crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Lastly, in the individual level of club ownership, the discussions and debates in popular media mentioned Roman Abramovich, a Russian Oligarch. A close friend of Putin who bought Chelsea FC in 2003 and was the sole owner until he was sanctioned amid the Ukraine war and was forced to sell the club (Fruh, et al., 2022).

Finally, a very subtle form of sportswashing discussed and debated in popular media is sponsorship of events, athletes, or clubs (Kryzaniak, 2018). Additionally, this form of sportswashing is used by state owned corporations to sponsor events and clubs. For example, when Qatar was bidding for the 2022 world cup, they paid former high profile French midfielder Zinedine Zidane and made him ambassador of the world cup (Kryzaniak, 2018). Qatar also ended over a 100-year-old tradition at FC Barcelona for not having an official shirt sponsor when they first sponsored through Qatar foundation but later it was changed to Qatar Airways (Kryzaniak, 2018). The Doha state sponsored broadcasting company Al Jazeera bought the broadcasting rights of the French football league, Ligue 1 (Kryzaniak, 2018). By considering the Saudi Arabian government as an example, they have created a new event called LIV International Golf League where the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund PIF is the main sponsor, they also paid a significant amount of money to profiled athletes such as Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson to join the series (Boykoff, 2022). Furthermore, according to the debates and discussions in popular media the Gulf states, which may be most successful by using sport to wash their reputation, is UAE, since the beginning of 2000s they have been sponsoring multiple clubs and competition through their airline companies Emirates Airways and Etihad Airways (Kryzaniak, 2018). Emirates Airways is explained to have been sponsoring football clubs such as Hamburger SV, AC Milan, FC Benfica, Arsenal, Real Madrid, Chelsea, New York Cosmos and Paris SG, which are owned by their Gulf rivals Qatar. In addition, Emirates Airways has also been sponsoring events, like US Tennis and Formula Grand Prix (Kryzaniak, 2018). Another example from UAE is Etihad Airways, they are shirt sponsors of Manchester City and New York Cosmos, also explained to have sponsored events like Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and English Cricket (Kryzaniak, 2018). The Gulf states are not the only countries using sponsorship as a strategy with sportswashing, Azerbaijan sponsors Atletico Madrid through Azerbaijan Land of Fire. Later they've been

sponsoring fewer known clubs such as French football clubs RC Lens and English club Sheffield Wednesday (Krzyszaniak, 2018). Russian state-owned oil and gas company Gazprom was sponsoring UEFA Champions League for many years while Toyota has sponsored Nagoya Grampus to wash their reputation (Mabon, 2022). Lastly, the debates and discussions in popular media regarding sportswashing provided by private corporations such as Toyota and INEOS as examples, which uses sport to launder their image because of their climate wrecking business practices (Mabon, 2022).

## **2.2 Stakeholders**

This section will present literature made by scholars and practitioners on the stakeholders in sports and their possible involvement in sportswashing by applying five minor theoretical frameworks in this study: Moral Obligations, RIM, Social Identity, CSR, and Agenda-Setting theory and explain its impact on the stakeholders in sports involvement in sportswashing.

### **2.2.1 Accountability of stakeholders**

This chapter will focus on the social injustices that sportswashers are trying to minimise, distract or normalise regarding the stakeholders. Sportswashing is creating two specific issues of wrongdoing. It corrupts sports societies and institutions, and it makes all those involved as mentioned in the previous part based on who the sportswasher may pretend to represent complicit in social injustice. Moreover, this chapter will focus on the specific wrongdoing of sportswashing rather than the social injustices affected by the acts of sportswashing. This is due to the social injustices that may happen regardless of the involvements of a state/ individual or corporations in sports. Stakeholders regarding sports involvement which will be focused on are, governing bodies in sports, sponsors, fans, athletes/ sportspersons, activists, media, and public audience.

### **2.2.2 Governing bodies**

This section's purpose is to extend the prior literature on sportswashing by discussing governing bodies in supporting sportswashing. These bodies often align themselves with government, corporations, & individuals accused of engaging in the concept. Additionally, the prior literature highlights the significant impact of governing bodies in enabling sportswashing, with notable examples including; (a) FIFA; (b) IOC; (c) FIA; (d) and other miscellaneous governing bodies (Boycoff, 2022a; Shelly, 2022; Næss, 2017).

FIFA, namely the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, serves as the world governing body for football and is classified as a non-profit organisation with headquarters in Switzerland (Bean, 2019). Scholars argue that FIFA supports sportswashing

by facilitating corruption in football (Boycoff, 2022a; Bean, 2019). As an example, FIFA was implicated in retrieving 22 million US dollars from the previous authoritarian Argentinian regime for hosting the World cup held in 1978 (Stephard, 2022). The resignation of the former Swiss president due to allegations of corruption also highlights FIFA`s association with moral violations (Boycoff, 2022a; Gordon & Coleman, 2022a). Practitioners & scholars argue that corruption is a negative outcome of sportswashing and are affecting fans, athletes, coaches, and others to become complicit in moral violation by deflecting attention away from the negative issue (Fruh, et al., 2022; Boycoff, 2022a).

Hereafter, scholars argue further that corruption as part of sportswashing can be categorised on different levels; (a) on a small level where the between or against decisions results in success; (b) large scale corruption which is happening in institutions such as FIFA (Boycoff, 2022a). Other practitioners & scholars discuss the term namely systematic bribes as a concept involved in sports aimed at individuals & organisations where the outcomes may include sanctions, financial costs, and increased monitoring (Maening, 2005; Kihl et al., 2017; Arabnews, 2019).

Another scholar`s research conducted through a survey measured to identify the trust in FIFA from 2017 showed that 46% did not view FIFA to fight against corruption and 53% lacked trust (Bean, 2019). Other practitioners provided insights into the debates in popular media about lack of trust to FIFA; their results explain that the Qatari World Cup committee leader ensured the world cup through bribes to officials within FIFA (Guardian, 2014).

Similarly, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has faced criticism for supporting sportswashers, for example through their approval of mega events in countries like Russia and China (Boycoff, 2022a; Shelly, 2022). Founded in 1894, the IOC operates as an independent international non-profit organisation with 205 National Olympic Committees and headquarters in Switzerland (IOC, n.d). While the IOC claims to be “*apolitical*”, the association to Beijing Olympics and failure to address human rights concerns have raised ethical questions (Shelly, 2022; Francis, 2022). Exemplified by practitioners` where the Russian athletes were kicked out of all sporting events due to the ongoing war with Ukraine, but the Olympics held in China was held as scheduled. (Shelly,2022). Additionally, sportswashers such as the Chinese government by hosting the Olympics in 2008 & 2022 is attempting to deflect attention away of their corrupt society by the persecution of Uyghur Muslims and disappearance of democracy activists that clashes with the spirit of the Olympic charter (Francis, 2022; Martina, 2021; Neate, 2021). Furthermore, the Olympic charter is



following the idea of preserving dignity for everyone, in that circumstances the Beijing Olympic should never have been granted as a host (Francis, 2022).

Moreover, IOC's tight connections to countries accused of sportswashing has been there since 1934 where the Nazi- Germany regime wanted to host the Olympic in 1936 as a tool to achieve political power from a global audience (Boycoff, 2022a). On the other hand, IOC's combination of politics and sports is explained by scholars to have positive outcomes regarding moral violations. In 2014, where Olympic was held in Russia, the IOC committed in Russia's breach of human rights prior to the event. By approaching the government to investigate claims of non-payment of wages to workers who contributed to the build-up of Olympic venues and infrastructure (Næss, 2017).

Another governing body implicated in supporting sportswashing is the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), responsible for Formula One World championship, Rally World championships, Endurance, and energy championships (Næss, 2017; FIA, 2023a). As a non-profit association, FIA brings together international motoring and sporting organisations from around the world (FIA, 2023b). Furthermore, a declaration was signed in 2013 by ministers and high-ranking politicians from several parts of the world. The purpose was to raise awareness on international human rights regarding sports events. These are political issues that concern all the stakeholders involved with sports, no country can't handle this without help (Næss, 2017).

However, criticism has emerged regarding FIA's update to the international sporting code related to neutrality to countries accused of sportswashing such as Bahrain & Saudi Arabia, which restricts drivers from making statements without written permission (Mineret, 2023; Collantine, 2023). This implies that Formula One drivers such as Hamilton cannot make political statements against the host countries of scheduled events without obtaining a written permission from the governing body FIA (Pitpass, 2022). The new international sporting code regarding neutrality are discussed by scholars & practitioners to promote an idea that sport is built on principles of fair play rather than an arena for promotion (Næss, 2017; Pitpass, 2022).

However, as mentioned above sporting events are considered as competitions between nations this implies that the idea behind neutrality is considered useful, but difficult to implement in practice (Næss, 2017; Pitpass,2022). Then, according to scholars, countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, Azerbaijan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia where Formula One races are held use global media attention to “*whitewash their international image*” in various ways (Næss, 2017, p.536).

Moreover, to evaluate FIA's role as a sports governing body of motorsport regarding moral violations we need to view their previous history to get a perspective of how they are highly connected to countries accused of sportswashing. Hereafter, these organisations FIFA, IOC and FIA was established in Switzerland, this is considered military neutral since 1815 to seek shelter from external audits (Næss,2017). Switzerland has special laws, which enables any potential organisation to register, and lowers the requirement for transparency and disclosure. Another benefit is discussed to ensure these countries benefits on tax regulations. Their political autonomy was further, according to scholars, challenged on three fronts. (a), since these organisations are non- profit organisations their aim is to benefit its members, which requires redistribution of money (Næss,2017); (b) FIA has important partnerships with commercial stakeholders including FIFA and Adidas that is explained to contribute to improve the financial system since the status as non-profit becomes questionable (Næss, 2017). While FIFA, IOC, and FIA have attracted significant attention in the literature regarding accountability scholars agree that not much has changed throughout history to the better for those affected negatively by sportswashing (Næss, 2017; Katwala, 2000; Boycoff, 2022a; Francis, 2022).

Finally, there are other governing bodies such as golf (IGF), English football (FA), European football (UEFA), Wrestling (WWE) may also bear responsibility in combating sportswashing, although their mention in scholarly circles remains limited and will therefore not get an own section in this part of this study.

### **2.2.3 Sponsors**

Sponsors play a crucial role in various sports involvements and are accountable for their actions. When practitioners discussed and debated the world cup 2022 held in Qatar, they argue that sponsors like McDonalds, Coca Cola, and others played a significant role in supporting sportswasher, leading to profits for these western businesses (Bokat-Lindell, 2022; Martina, 2021). When analysing sponsors' involvement in sportswashing the theoretical framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can provide valuable insights (Tai & Chuang, 2014). Scholars define CSR as a framework of corporate measurable policies and procedures that corporations should follow in their operations (Tai & Chuang, 2014). For example, Coca Cola partnership with FIFA since 1950 is considered as the longest standing corporate partnership (FIFA, 2022), has faced criticism for assessing profits over allegations of human rights violations (Martina, 2021).

Contradicting its own human rights principle that strives to respect and promote human rights in line with UN principles on Business and Human Rights (Coca Cola, 2023),

the company's sponsorship of the Qatar world cup 2022 raises questions about its alignment with CSR (Bokat-Lindell,2022). By placing their logo at football stadiums, Coca Cola aims to strategically communicate their brand identity to a global audience in an attempt to build a positive brand image (Holt, 2016).

Moreover, practitioners use a term called Orientalist notions of modernisation vs. tradition to better understand the sponsor's role in supporting the sportswasher, in this example Qatar (Bokat-Lindell,2022). This notion, as analysed by scholars, involves “*the representation of other cultures, societies, histories and the relationship between power and knowledge*” (Said,1985, p.89). It can be applied as the start of contemporary postcolonial theory, combining political commitment and ideological criticism of anti-colonialism with poststructuralist theory (Said, 1985). Another perspective suggests that colonialism, imperialism, and barriers need to be critically examined (McEwan, 2018, pp.75-76). Orientalism, within the context of postcolonial theory, highlights the discursive aspects of colonialism, using knowledge about the Middle East during a colonial era to continue dominant colonial power (McEwan, 2018, p.76). Scholars argue that Orientalism is not primarily about Orientalist or non- western culture, but rather about how they have been presented in the west (McEwan, 2018, p.76; Said, 1985). Furthermore, it is noted that practitioners representing Western societies often created the “*other*” or “*them*” when discussing countries accused of sportswashing, further reinforcing the problem with orientalism (McEwan, 2018, p.76; Bokat-Lindell, 2022). Consequently, there appears to be insufficient emphasis on the sponsor's accountability for their involvement in supporting actors accused of sportswashing (Bokat-Lindell, 2022; McEwan, 2018, p.76).

Another example provided by practitioners applies to the European sponsor Gazprom, a Russian oil and gas company, which has been explored due to its impact on accountability in sportswashing (Ronay,2022; Jochem, 2022,17:22). Gazprom, partly owned by the Russian government had an ownership in Russian football club Zenit Saint Petersburg since 2005, and previously sponsorship deals with clubs around Europe such as German club Schalke, lastly sponsorship deal with the governing body of European football Union of European Football Association (UEFA) (Ronay, 2022; Jochem, 2022,17:22). This sponsorship deal has faced criticism from practitioners due to the contribution for Gazprom to be the major force energy market in Europe. This implies that most European countries became dependent on this gas import with 40% coming from Russia in 2021. According to practitioners this was a successful sponsorship if we evaluate it based on accountability

because it directly financed a Russian Army that Putin uses in his ongoing war with Ukraine (Ronay, 2022; Jochem,2022,17:22).

On the other hand, according to practitioners and Activist group Human Rights Watch (HWR) major sponsors of the winter Olympic 2022 hosted in China were facing criticism through a letter from HWR for its “*squandered opportunity to pressure China on human rights record*” (Neate,2021). These sponsors include for example: Coca Cola, Airbnb, Procter and Gamble, Intel and Visa. Furthermore, this example can be evaluated regarding accountability as lack of consideration to human rights since according to the discussion and debates by popular media there was only one sponsor Allianz that replied to the letter sent from HWR (Neate, 2021).

#### **2.2.4 Fans**

Fans are becoming complicit in an owner's wrongdoing according to the discussions and debates by popular media, which contributes for institutions and societies to be corrupted (Fruh, et al.,2022). Issues related to complicity and corruption are discussed by practitioners & scholars and need to be explained for understanding the intentions from the sportswasher (Fruh, et al., 2022; Boycoff, 2022a). Theories related to; (a) moral responsibility (Simpson, 2021; Smiley, 2022); (b) RIM (Zheng, 2018); and (c) social Identity theory (Hogg, 2016) can contribute to address these issues. Fans can be considered as stakeholders of sports and an important part by their engagement in sports. Sportswashing is not considered to be illegal, but highly unethical (Simpson, 2021). Furthermore, in terms of sportswashing it is important to address who should be held responsible, this is explained by practitioners with the notion namely accountability (Smiley, 2022). Accountability is further explained by practitioners as a social or legal practice to establish responsibility measured through fairness (Smiley, 2022). Then, whom should be held responsible regarding the issues related to sportswashing; (a) practitioners; (b) scholars; (c) and activists’ groups argues that sportswashers are responsible for social injustices such as violations of human rights (Fruh, et al., 2022; Boycoff, 2022a; Purchell, 2023).

However, are fans accountable for these moral wrongs (Spiegelman, 2023, p.14). Furthermore, according to the debates and discussions fans cannot be held accountable for moral wrongdoings, since these had most likely occurred due to the sponsors and governing bodies connections with these sportswashers (Fruh, et al.,2022; Boycoff, 2022a). On the other hand, since supporters are visiting events i.e., World Cup or Olympic these wrongdoings are attributable to fans this means there may be a direct association with the sportswasher.

Although fans might be victims of sportswashing. This does not explain they are responsible for the outcomes. Practitioners argue that countries such as Qatar have made reforms to deflect political pressure away (Wearing, 2022). This argument is argued by another practitioner with that responsibility for situations of injustice and unfreedom should not be raised to fans, but to the way they choose to respond. (Knowles, 2021). Another argument by activists in popular media are that fans may not be responsible for the social injustices built by the Qatari government during the hosted World Cup 2022 i.e., treatment of migrant workers (Amnesty, 2020). Supporters are responsible according to scholars in their response to the hosted mega events, sponsored profiles, or ownership of their clubs (Boycoff, 2022a). As an outcome this raises the question in the debates and discussions by popular media, what should be considered as an appropriate response from fans (Zheng, 2018). A scholar & practitioner argues that the Role Ideal Model (RIM) should be useful to apply since fans' role in the society affects their individual response to sportswashing (Zheng, 2018; Martina, 2021).

Moreover, the main point from RIM on elements is supported by another scholar Walter Sinnott-Armstrong who argues that moral theories need to explain the extent of significance (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2009). Furthermore, a moral obligation is affected by the alternative situation which may occur if the moral obligation becomes violated (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2009). However, this theory is discussed with a forward-looking approach rather than backward looking which imply that the relationship is less significant (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2009). In other words, most sportswashers would probably not change their behaviour without any pressure from fans (Boycott, 2022).

The theoretical framework RIM explains how fans in the sports society may utilise opportunities as a response to sportswashing and is aligned with another theory provided by scholars namely social identity theory (Hogg, 2016). Further, explained by scholars that fans are part of a social group with other supporters of the same sports team this may imply if boycotting is their only option to prevent sportswashing, the individual fan may not likely engage in boycott if there are no other in this fan network or on a global level (Hogg, 2016; Leaper; 2011; Fruh, et al., 2023). In other words, explained by scholars the moral obligation is not strong enough for boycotting (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2009; Zheng, 2018; Boycoff, 2022a).

### **2.2.5 Athletes/sportspersons**

This section explores the role of athletes and coaches in sportswashing, by focusing on their moral responsibility. Practitioners: (a) argue that high-profile drivers such as

Hamilton and Vettel in Formula One are using their platform to speak out against social injustice (Mineret, 2023; Kev, 2023). These drivers, like Hamilton and Vettel, raise awareness about human rights issues in countries like Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, and Hungary, where multiple grand prix races are held (Mineret, 2023; Fruh, et al., 2022; Kev, 2023).

(b) Another debated example discussed by popular media is the Saudi Arabian kingdom acquisition of the Premier League football club Newcastle, which raises questions about sportswashing (Fruh, et al., 2022; Murray, 2023; Delaney, 2022). Critics argue that the head coach of the team avoids answering questions about the owners questionable human rights practises, thus creating a distance between the owners and the team (Fruh, et al., 2022; Murray, 2023; Delaney; 2022).

(c) In another sport, cycling, there is a common occurrence that oil and gas companies to sponsor events such as the Tour Down Under (Portus, 2023). Activists protested against Santos, a sponsor, which received support from one pro cyclist who hoped the race would draw attention to the related issues (Portus, 2023).

(d) Saudi Arabia's hosting of Wrestling events and World Wrestling Entertainments (WWE`s) partnership with the kingdom have raised concerns (Wertheim, 2023; Degrushe, 2023). WWE has a sizable roster with several athletes representing the LGBTQ community. Wrestlers, including John Cena, refuse to participate in these events due to controversies surrounding the kingdom (Zidane, 2023).

(e) Athletes can openly criticise the host or owners. For instance, the Norwegian national football team protested against the Qatari world cup by using t-shirts with following statement, "*Human rights-on and off the pitch*" (Fruh, et al., 2022). Additionally, other practitioners argue further how players have a role that is making difference when responding to situations of complicity. They provide an example by discussing how players from the Iranian national team refused to sing during the national anthem, highlighting government wrongdoing (McGinley, 2010; Hearst, 2023). In responding to situations of complicity, players can make a difference rather than resorting to boycotts (Fruh, et al., 2022).

### **2.2.6 Activists**

Activists have played a significant role in highlighting sportswashing practises. (a) In golf, members of the 9/11 justice organisation demonstrated at the LIV Golf event in Miami. The organisation's President emphasised the Saudi Arabian kingdom's use of the event for sportswashing, evading responsibility for their actions (Margol, 2022; Krehbiel, 2023; Heath, 2023).

(b) During the Tour Down Under, members of the Extinction Rebellions group protested against Santos, an oil and gas company sponsoring the event to sportswash their environmental impact (Portus, 2023). Similarly, the French group Dernière Rénovation demonstrated during the Tour de France, criticising the exploitation of cycling's environmentally friendly image by high-polluting companies (Portus, 2023).

(c) Amnesty International has drawn attention to sportswashing issues, such as the Qatari government's treatment of migrant workers in Qatar in the lead-up to the 2022 world cup (Amnesty, 2020a). Amnesty exposed the abuses under the Kafala system, which subjected migrant workers to restrictions and abuse, preventing them from leaving the country or quitting their jobs (Amnesty, 2020b). As a result, from pressure from Amnesty, the Emir of Qatar abolished certain restrictions and implemented a monthly minimum wage (Amnesty, 2020c). Amnesty has also criticised Qatar owned and Saudi Arabia regarding a football match between Paris SG and Saudi All-Star XI. The organisation stated that the match may be a reminder of Saudi Arabia's ongoing sportswashing efforts (Craven Herald & Pioneer, 2023). Cristiano Ronaldo, recently transferred to Al Nassr and Lionel Messi ambassador for Saudi Arabia, both involved in the game, were urged by Amnesty to use their profiles as resistance against sportswashing purposes and to speak out against serious issues in Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Craven Herald & Pioneer, 2023).

### **2.2.7 Media**

Previous research on the media's role in sportswashing and sports involvement is limited. However, there is extensive research on the media's general role in society. One relevant study discusses the media's responsibility in reporting and explores media morality and compassion for "*Faraway others*" (Thomas, 2011, p.295). For instance, the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) decision not to broadcast a request for humanitarian aid to Gaza raised questions about the media's responsibility and target audience (Thomas, 2011, p.295).

Practitioners argue that the war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, which the Saudi Arabian regime aims to deflect attention from, may have successfully done so (Wilson, 2022; Pemberton, 2022). On the other hand, another practitioner argues that the Saudi Arabians acquisition in sports is not based on sportswashing purposes, but business interests to diversify its oil and gas sector (Smithfield, 2023). Further scholars believe the media has a responsibility to build a connection between "*West*" and "*others*" by reporting news and creating awareness of important global issues (Thomas, 2011, p.295).

However, in the case of the war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the media's coverage of sportswashing related to the Russia World cup 2022 received more attention due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and its global implications (Wilson, 2022; Pemberton, 2022).

Previous research has examined the negative attention and criticism directed at countries like Qatar for their involvement in sports and the issue of human rights violations (Amnesty, 2020a). Scholars have also analysed Russia's violations such as laws against LGBTQ people and individuals, and lack of political rights, during and after the 2018 World Cup (Jimenez-Martinez & Skey, 2018; Skey, 2022). These examples show how the media portrays countries and from which countries and perspectives it took place.

Al Jazeera has been criticised for the way they present information and news surrounding Qatar world cup hosted in 2022 considering its sponsorship by the Qatari state (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2018).

However, it is also important to examine why certain countries' sports involvements receive more highlighted coverage than others (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2018). Scholars have identified the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a country that has successfully utilised sportswashing as a soft power benefit (Kryzaniak, 2018). Their involvement in Football Kit sponsorship, such as Emirates Airways (Abu Dhabi) when sponsoring Chelsea in 2004, exemplifies this (Kryzaniak, 2018). The extensive sponsorship portfolio of clubs such as Arsenal through Emirates Airways and Manchester City connected to Etihad Airways (Dubai), including teams in all major European football leagues, demonstrated successful sportswashing efforts (Kryzaniak, 2018, p.508).

Scholars have also discussed the media's ability to influence social power structures and shape the reputation of countries (Gurevitch, et. al., 2005). They argue that the media should fulfil the cultural function of selecting and constructing social knowledge and creating social images (Gurevitch, et. al., 2005). This included the portrayals of "*others*" and their "*lived realities*". An orientalist discourse has been observed in British media reporting of the world cup 2022, reflecting on colonial values and reproducing knowledge and power structures that enabled former colonial dominance (Griffin, 2017, pp.171-173). This does not imply that ethics are produced about Qatar, but that the country is presented in order to fit a more complex narrative that evaluates non- western power as a subordinate. Similarly, studies have examined how British media portrayed Russia during the 2018 World cup, highlighting the need for investigation into media reporting and countries' involvement in sports (Mannin & Ozornina, 2022).



In analysing the media's perception of sportswashing as a distraction from controversial issues, the agenda-setting theory is relevant (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). This theory explains the media's role as the power to influence the public opinion by selecting and emphasising certain issues while ignoring others through accessibility and applicability (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). Additionally, scholars argue that negative information has greater influence in shaping the media's agenda to the public (Wu & Coleman, 2009). Scholars then define agenda-setting theory to be created by mainstream media to select certain issues and illustrate them frequently for example accusations of human rights related to Qatar hosted World cup 2022, which leads people to perceive these issues as more important (Wu & Coleman, 2009). By investigating how the concept is described and understood, as well as how it can possibly be explained with help of theories applied. This is carried out further by the help of qualitative content analysis of British media, Norwegian, and newspapers related to the concept of sportswashing.

### **2.2.8 Sportswasher**

Previous studies have predominantly focused on sportswashing from a governmental perspective. However, this study aims to explore sportswashing at two additional levels; (a) individual; (b) and corporate. This section introduces the influence of sportswashing on the individuals, corporate and; (c) governmental level (See Figure 3 below).

For example, Alisher Usmanov, a Russian Oligarch who held the position of International Fencing Federation (FIE) president, faced EU sanction when the Ukraine invasion started. In response, Usmanov voluntarily suspended himself from his position (Burke, 2023). He was targeted by the EU due to his close ties to Putin and his involvement in the Olympic movement, receiving congratulations from IOC president Thomas Bach upon his re-election (Burke, 2023). Usmanov previously had a stake in Arsenal until 2018, and his holding companies, USM holding and Megafon, entered a strategic partnership with Everton, an association that was later severed due to the war in Ukraine. During a premier league game between Everton and Manchester City, the presence of Everton sponsor USM Holding and Megafon, owned by a sanctioned Russian oligarch, was evident in the background while two players hugged each other, showcasing the complexity of sportswashing (Wilson, 2022).

Similarly, Roman Abramovich, another Russian Oligarch, had his assets, including Chelsea FC, frozen by the European Union and British parliament. This resulted in various limitations for the club, such as the inability to sell tickets, expenditure restriction for away games, closure to the club's megastore, inability to buy players or offer new contracts, and the loss of broadcasting and merit payments. Abramovich involvement in the club was seen

as an attempt to improve his reputation (Burke, 2023). Chelsea fans, however, felt the impact of these restrictions, feeling punished for a conflict in which they were not directly involved, highlighting the involvement of an obscure background in sports ownership (Storey, 2022). On the other hand, some Chelsea fans chanted his name during moments of silence for victims of the Ukrainian war (Fruh, et, al.,2022).

Corporate level means that sports entities also can engage in sportswashing practices (Unnithan, 2023). For example, Santos, an oil and gas company, sponsors cycling despite its contradiction with the low carbon nature of the sports itself (Portus, 2022). INEOS-Grenadiers, owned by Sir Jim Ratcliffe, prominent lifelong supporters, and owner of one of the world's largest petrochemical companies, is a notable team in the industry. Greenpeace claims that Ratcliffe utilises sportswashing to divert attention away from his company damaging environmental practices, and they criticise Manchester United potential association with INEOS (Hopkinson, 2023; Schofield, 2023; Gelmini, 2022). Currently, INEOS portfolio already includes football owning OGC Nice. INEOS have also invested their money in rugby union, cycling, Formula One and sailing (Hopkinson, 2023; Schofield, 2023; Gelmini, 2022). Russian state-owned company Gazprom is the main sponsor of the Russian club Zenit St. Petersburg, and was also previously one of the main sponsors of UEFA Champions League (Simpson, 2021). Another Russian company Aeroflot was a sponsor of Manchester United until the deal was terminated when the Ukraine invasion started, portraying corporate involvement in sportswashing. (Burke, 2023).

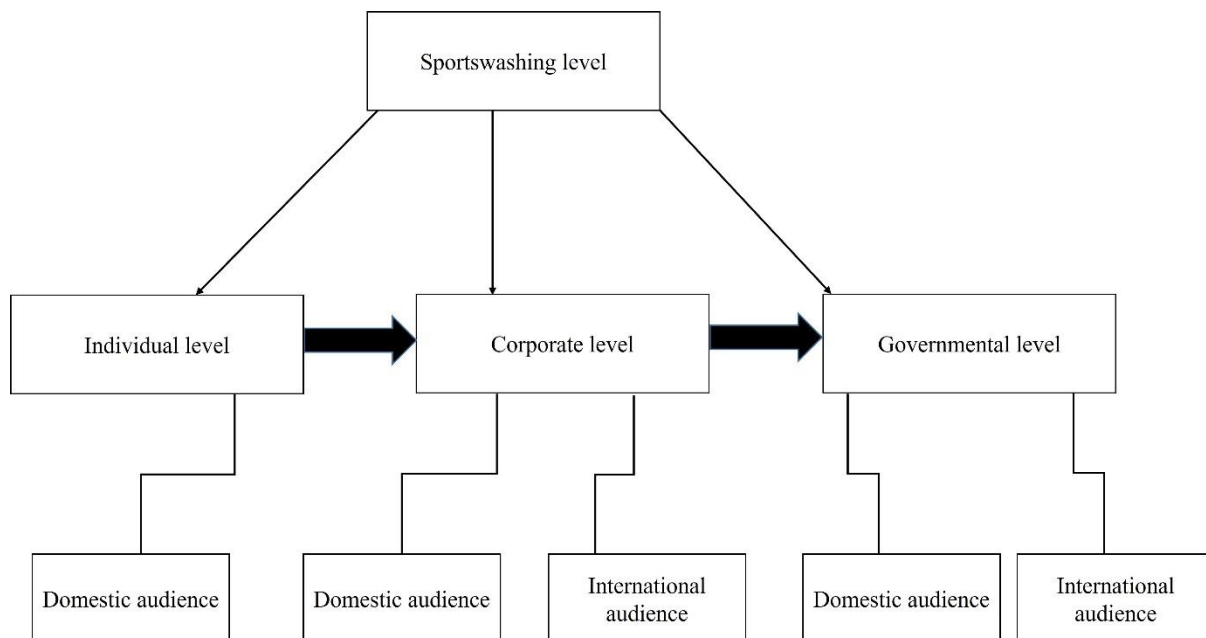
The third level where previous discussions and debates have examined sportswashing is on a governmental level (Boycoff, 2022a; Skey, 2022). Previous discussions and debates have primarily focused on this level, with scholars highlighting the growing involvement of governments, also represented from Europe and USA in sportswashing (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2023). While popular media tends to concentrate on countries like Russia, China, and the Middle East, scholars argue for a broader examination that includes countries like Great Britain (GB), which uses the 2012 Olympic to enhance its international reputation (Boycoff 2022a; Grix & Houlihan 2014). Hosting major sports events has been perceived as a potential avenue for positive impact on a country's image or brand (Grix & Houlihan, 2014).

However, recent discussions have raised concerns about the application and appeal of mega events to all types of states (Elfsborg, 2022). It is important to note that sports are not only used for political purposes by authoritarian regimes; western countries and politicians also recognize the power of sports as a tool in politics (Boycoff, 2022a). Several countries today have established sport as part of its work to promote their international reputation and

increase country prestige (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). For example, the highly political opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games in London aimed to create goodwill and position the nation as a leading sporting nation with the best athletes (Elsborg, 2022).

On the other hand, scholars pointed out that the Winter Olympic games held in 2002 presented an opportunity for politicians and others to promote the USA as a safe space for international audiences following the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Boycoff, 2022a). This highlights the need for a deeper understanding of why nations invest in the sports world and challenges the illusion of sport and politics built by Western countries (Elsborg, 2022). Additionally, scholars explain that countries like Russia and China aim to establish an international reputation based on different types of audiences, international and domestic (Grix & Houlihan, 2014; Boycoff, 2022a). Factors such as prestige, country image, credibility, standing, and economic competitiveness are identified as tools to use power on the international stage (Grix & Houlihan 2014; Boycoff, 2022a). This narrative is further explained to have created a path for the US to invade Iraq in terms of international audiences in mind (Boycoff, 2022a).

Moreover, it is important to recognize that democratic hosts also can engage in sportswashing with domestic audiences in mind. The organisers of the London 2012 Olympic aimed to present the UK as a world leading sporting nation that inspired young people to embrace physical activities (Boycoff, 2022a). However, activist groups such as Amnesty International criticised the UK government for its restrictions on free assembly and its treatment of migrants and refugees, raising questions about how sportswashing should be considered (Fruh, et al., 2022). On one hand, stakeholders, including practitioners, scholars, athletes, and fans should openly acknowledge the potential for sportswashing by governments like UK and US, to avoid the accusations of xenophobia (Fruh, et al., 2022). Additionally, considering the established cultural and financial power of the UK in the world, the true impact of the Olympics on its international reputation remains uncertain (Fruh, et al., 2022). In contrast, scholars argue that Qatar and the Arabian world have such a robust international image, suggesting stronger motives for engaging in sportswashing (Fruh, et al., 2022).



**Figure 3:** The level of sportswashing an targeted audience

### 2.2.9 Public audience

The figure above (See Figure 3) shows how sportswashing concepts are being used for two different audiences, internationally and domestically. The success of sportswashing relies on gaining acceptance from these audiences, which can include global governing bodies such as IOC and FIFA (Næss, 2017; Boycoff, 2022a). On one hand, international audiences, such as those represented by these global governing bodies, play an important role. However, domestic audiences encompass the general population of the host country, and are also important (Boycoff, 2022b). A relevant example is the Russian Olympic in 2014 following the event, Russia invasion of Crimea was perceived unfavourably by the international audience, casting doubt on the country's stability (Boycoff, 2022a). Global media outlets heavily criticised Russia for this action (Boycoff, 2022b). However, for the general citizens within Russia, the Crimea invasion symbolised strength and resilience, portraying Russia as an unstoppable nation on the rise (Boycoff, 2022a). This demonstrates the contrasting perceptions between domestic and international audiences regarding the same event.

### 2.3 Motives

The motives for engaging in sportswashing can explain why individuals, corporations, or governments are interested in using it as a tool to achieve their objectives. Two primary motives for engaging in sportswashing are; (a) Impression Management (IM); (b) and Reputation Management (RM). IM is explained as an attempt to control the impression formed by the public audience, often resulting in positive perception of corporations or

individuals (Spear, 2017). On the other hand, RM is a deliberate strategy aimed at even out the difference between the actual and desired image perception of corporations, individuals, or governments (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012). While IM focuses on short-term goals, RM includes a strategic approach that extends over time.

### **2.3.1 Impression management**

IM is closely related to the concept of soft power. Soft power, originally introduced by Joseph Nye, refers to a state's ability to Co-opt rather than coerce through appeal and attraction (Brannagan and Grix 2016). To better understand sportswashing it is useful to apply the soft power concept introduced by Joseph Nye. According to Nye soft power is a state's ability to co-opt instead of coercing (hard power) using attraction and appeal as powers. (Brannagan & Grix, 2016; Davis, et. al., 2023; Abdi, et. al., 2022). In contrast, hard power involves using material resources i.e., military to manipulate others behaviour (Skey, 2022; Abdi, et.al., 2022). Soft power can be perceived in a broader sense, by including non-military powers like economic strength and cultural influence, or in a narrower sense, focusing specifically on cultural influence (Luke, 2015; Vuving, 2009). Understanding soft power offers a useful and conceptual context that can be used to analyse sportswashing, regarding cultural factors such as sport (Davis, et. al., 2023; Abdi, et. al., 2022; Brannagan & Grix, 2016).

The next part will present soft power and how it is used throughout history. Historically, governments have increasingly employed sports and sports Mega events (SMEs) as diplomatic tools to enhance their international prestige, image improving, and gain acceptance on the world stage (Grix and Brannagan, 2014).

The theory of soft power suggests that successfully hosting SMEs may enhance a country's soft power, allowing it to popularise its political and cultural values compared to others. This can lead to an improved brand image for countries practising sports and position the host country as an important international player (Grix & Brannagan, 2014). To further demonstrate the use of soft power in sport the Winter Olympic hosted in Sochi 2014 can be examined, where Putin's Russia leveraged the event to soften the political landscape and subsequently invaded Crimea (Boycoff, 2022a; Boycoff, 2022b). This demonstrates the connection between sportswashing, soft power, and the often utilisation of hard power through military actions (Boycoff, 2022a).

IM aligns with the concept of soft power. For example, Sheikh Mansour acquisition of Manchester City aimed at not only to gain a foothold in the UK but also to enhance the reputation of the authoritarian UAE regime (Wilson, 2022; Ewoma, 2022; Pranto, 2022).

Similar motives for engaging in sportswashing can be observed in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which have purchased various football clubs such as PSG and Newcastle (Ewoma, 2022; Pranto, 2022; Polley, 2022). These acquisitions serve as vehicles for IM, diverting attention from their human rights abuses and positioning their regimes through the soft power of sports (Wilson, 2022). Saudi Arabia has been aggressively engaging in sportswashing as part of a broader strategy to create political goodwill, build diplomatic relations and gain social and political power on the international stage (Elsborg, 2022; MEM; 2022). An additional case that exemplifies sportswashing is the state of Qatar (Das, 2023; Purchcell, 2023; Simms, 2023; Mata, 2023). In recent years, tensions arose between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, and Bahrain leading to the closure of borders from 2017 and 2021 (Das, 2023). Despite these conflicts, Qatar, which already owns the French club PSG, is actively seeking to acquire a Premier League (PL) club Manchester United (Das, 2023). The royal family of Qatar hopes that owning a PL club will garner support in the event of future conflicts in the Middle East involving these countries (Das, 2023).

Further, the examples mentioned above demonstrate the public launch of soft power strategies, indicating that IM will play an important role. Saudi Arabia's regime perceives sports as a tool to create political goodwill, generate excitement, establish new diplomatic relations, and attract investments (Lawson, 2022; Pavitt, 2023). For several countries sportswashing extends beyond washing by washing away a tarnished image from oppressive regimes; it represents an aspiration to gain social and political power in international relations (Elsborg, 2022).

### **2.3.2 Reputation management**

RM involves a strategic approach adopted by individuals or organisations to bridge the gap between actual and desired image perception of others (Byrkjeflot & Wæraas, 2012). This process typically consists of three steps; (a) strategy formulation; (b) self- presentation; (c) and measurement. These three steps can be perceived as the essential components of an organisational recipe (Byrkjeflot & Wæraas, 2012). Both IM and RM are closely connected to the concept of soft power. In the step strategy formulation phase (a), soft power is a tool to be used in RM. It enables organisations to reflect upon and analyse their core values, identity, and purpose. By engaging in this introspection and identity assessment, organisations can define their vision and perception that aligns with their desired reputation in the future (Byrkjeflot & Wæraas, 2012). The UAE launched a strategy in 2017 with the aim of enhancing its global reputations by highlighting its identity, heritage, culture, and contributions to the world (Elsborg, 2022).

RM can be applied as a motive for actors interested to engage in sportswashing, through the way these actors aim to improve their image through investments in sports and athletes. Saudi Arabia, a kingdom often criticised for its human rights abuses, has initiated funding for the LIV Golf Tour as part of its RM management and sportswashing efforts. The invitational golf tour is backed by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), led by the crown Prince of Saudi Arabia (Morin, n.d; Pavitt; 2023; Holmes, 2023). Another example dates back to the 1936 Olympics hosted by Germany, where a famous black American sprinter triumphed in front of Hitler, challenging German belief in Aryan superiority. In response, German officials claimed that the sprinter was not human, but an animal, a PR tactic that further legitimised the Nazi leaders for an additional three years (Ewoma, 2022). Similarly, during the 1978 Men's football world cup, the Argentine military dictator exploited the event to divert attention from the thousands of people being killed. Some people even suggest that the sounds of the stadium drowned out the screams of prisoners being beaten to death (Ewoma, 2022). In today's world, the influence of Premier League and European football has reached such a scale that even authoritarian regimes can utilise it to improve their image (Ewoma, 2022). Moreover, RM is not limited to the government level, as corporations also employ it as a means of enhancing their image. For example, the Petrochemical company INEOS owns the French team OGC Nice, a team in Rugby union, cycling, sailing, and Mercedes AMG in Formula One. In other words, INEOS strategically engages in sports to divert attention from its environmentally harmful business practices (Hopkinson, 2023; Gelmini, 2022).

## **2.4 Consequences**

Sportswashing refers to the implementation of sports events, teams, or use of athletes to improve the reputation of a government, organisation or individual accountable for creating a poor human rights record or other negative associations as mentioned earlier (Skey, 2022). In that way, it can be understood as a direction of image management with following consequences in a positive or negative way for those affected by the sportswashing. This section will then further explore these consequences of sportswashing and how it may be aligned with the sportswasher. Hereafter, the discussion will include considerations of whether it is morally acceptable for those stakeholders mentioned previously in this study to argue that their actions are insignificant. Moreover, the way that stakeholders who support sportswashing by their engagement will be explained in a critical direction later (see Section 4.3). This section will rather present implications to maintain the bond between stakeholders accused of supporting and the sportswasher.

One crucial consequence of sportswashing is the legitimisation of oppressive regimes or individuals (Maennig, 2005; Boycoff, 2022a; Skey, 2022). The sportswasher achieves the following target by associating themselves with sports events or sports clubs, these regimes or individuals may create an extent of acceptance and legitimacy perceived from the international community. For example, scholars argue that Saudi Arabia's recent investment in Formula One racing even, which has been criticised for helping to distract from the country's human rights abuses (Davis, Plumley, & Wilson, 2023). Similarly, hosting major sports events by countries with poor human rights records, such as Russia and their Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014, can be seen as a form of sportswashing aimed at legitimising the country both domestically and internationally (Boycoff, 2022).

Another consequence of sportswashing is what scholars call the normalisation of human rights abuses (Fruh, et al., 2023; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). By associating themselves with sports clubs or events, regimes, corporations, or individuals can contribute to create a perception that their actions are not negative as it may be considered by scholars, practitioners, and activists. For example, Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World cup has faced criticism for attempting to normalise the country's use of migrant workers who have suffered from abuse and exploitation during the construction of stadiums and infrastructure (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

The exploitation of athletes by sportswashers is another important consequence associated with sportswashing (Fruh, et al., 2023). Consequently, athletes may feel pressured to speak positively about these regimes, corporations, or individuals, even if they do not agree with their actions. Additionally, athletes may find themselves involved in activities aimed for propaganda efforts that contradict their personal values and beliefs (Fruh, et al., 2023).

Scholars also address the diversion of attention and resources from critical issues as a consequence of Sportswashing (Skey, 2022). Sportswashers may achieve this by utilising sports events or teams to distract from their human rights abuses and other negative actions that should have been addressed. For example, the Qatari government's investment in the World cup 2022 has been criticised for helping to distract from the country's poor women's rights records (Fruh, et al., 2023). Finally, these aforementioned consequences will be discussed further during (see Section 4.3) emphasising the need for greater scrutiny of sportswashing for image management purposes.



### 3 Research design and method

This part describes this study's decision regarding research method, selection, and description of empirical material as well as the approach used to collect and analyse the phenomenon of sportswashing. Additionally, there will be a reasoning regarding theoretical framework, collection, reliability, and validity.

This study is based on a qualitative content analysis since there is limited existing literature on this phenomenon. The aim of the study is to investigate how sportswashing is understood as a concept on an international stage by collecting data from debates and discussions in popular media, online media content which includes YouTube interviews, videos, and any publicly available content on sportswashing on the internet. Hereafter, to get an understanding of how sportswashing can be understood regarding the motives and consequences by engaging in sportswashing. In order to achieve the aim, newspapers and YouTube videos reporting sportswashing from different perspectives are collected and merged to scrutinise and analyse the phenomenon.

Moreover, Qualitative content analysis is a method explained by scholars for analysing qualitative data (Elo, et., 2014). Additionally, it is suitable for finding patterns in material such as newspapers and gives the opportunity to get a broad overview (Elo, et, al., 2014). When this study used content analysis, the aim was to build a model to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual form (Elos & Kyngä, 2008). Furthermore, according to scholars, content analysis allows the researchers to enhance the understanding of the data by distilling words into fewer content- related categories (Elos & Kyngä, 2008, p.108). Otherwise, qualitative content analysis was preferable compared to a quantitative research based on the focus of not determining directions of the communications in newspapers (Krackauer, 1953). Further, scholars argue that quantitative content analysis may lead to reduce the accuracy of the analysis due to isolate the process of data collecting by focusing on directions i.e. “*for*”, “*against*”, or “*neutral*” (Krackauer, 1953,p.631).

Since there is limited, existing literature regarding “*sportswashing*” this study can determine future direction to those presented and lead to a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon. A qualitative approach to content analysis is offering an autonomous method that can be used at various levels regarding the interpretation of groups (Graneheim, Lindgren, & Lundman, 2017). Hereafter, the qualitative content analysis as a research method makes the data more replicable and valid to the context of sportswashing, with the purpose of providing knowledge, insights and representation of facts presented by practitioners in newspapers and interviews collected from YouTube (Elo & Kyngäs,2008, p.108).

Furthermore, according to scholars, an interpretivist epistemological approach is commonly used, which emphasises an understanding of social reality based on how participants during a certain context interpret their common reality (Selvi, 2019, pp. 441-442). Additionally, from an ontological standpoint, qualitative studies can be described as constructionists (Selvi, 2019). Furthermore, according to scholars this means that social characteristics and phenomena are results of a social interaction between individuals (Selvi, 2019, 442-443). In a qualitative text analysis, an important focus is to find themes/ sub themes by focusing on the “Why” question embedded within a constructivist view (Selvi,2019, p.442). By identifying the sportswasher as a part either through grouping it as an individual, corporation, or government when coding video interviews and newspapers it was possible to create a picture of the material based on understanding their motive for engaging in sportswashing. Furthermore, when conducting a qualitative content analysis, two types of questions were used, and several systematic and thematically oriented events were highlighted as illustrated (see Section 2.1.2) then categories were implemented based on how popular media conceptualised sportswashing. Additionally, as argued by scholars the coding schemes were built on a conventional analysis, which means coded categories are derived directly from the texted data (Shannon, 2005).

The second question is of different art, where content was addressed more in depth to expose, for example the uncovered motives from the sportswashers in the content for engaging in sportswashing, such as reputation management (Wearing, 2022). Furthermore, the specific context also plays an important role in the quantitative analysis as the purpose of the coding is to rather abstract and interpret information obtained. As suggested by scholars it would have been possible for the study to use another text analytical method, such as discursive analysis (Adolphus, n.d.). When there is a problem, not with the definition but with the concept this method can be applicable (Adolphus,n.d.). Hereafter, according to scholar’s discourse analysis examining the way knowledge is produced within different discourses and the performances relevance when listening to people's own narratives of a situation (Jankowicz, 2005, p.229; Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.200; Adolphus, n.d.). In other words, this method can refer to discursive practices or changes in relation to the concept of sportswashing (Shannon, 2005). Finally, by conducting a qualitative content analysis it gives the research an opportunity for a holistic and systematic assessment of the material’s parts, and its different contexts.

### 3.1 Research context

This study was conducted in a context close to several sports events accused of sportswashing such as Qatar World cup 2022 and Winter Olympic in Beijing. The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of how the popular media is conceptualising sportswashing and their following motives and consequences by their engagement in Sportswashing. In order to achieve this goal, it was beneficial to collect data from several sources such as newspapers and YouTube videos which included interviews with people from several backgrounds. This was chosen rather than a questionnaire for increasing the numbers of sources and broadly viewed in a limited time period for the research. Although, sport has been used as a tool for agenda in politics for decades, it's only in recent years countries have been questioned for it. When the term sportswashing is being used these days, it is in correlation with Qatar world cup, Beijing Olympics, Russia Olympics and world cup, these are all mega events and does not take into the consideration the use of sponsorship, takeovers or any different form of sportswashing. Further, it's the question who does the sportswashing, whether it is states or corporations. Circling back to the use of mega events it is the countries that are under scrutiny. With focusing on countries other forms of sportswashing goes under the radar. Amnesty and other activists' groups had a sportswashing campaign in recent years, criticising Qatar in the build-up to the world cup, which for many are an example of sportswashing. Sportswashing is mostly used in the context when discussing countries with an oppressive regime, but sport has been used for political purposes in non-authoritarian countries too. The number of events/ examples that includes sportswashing in these newspapers and YouTube videos varies from a few to several types of mega-events, sponsored clubs, and ownership. The main purpose for addressing sportswashing in these articles and newspapers seems to get a better understanding of the topic. Additionally, the idea of including several examples of sportswashing is that these vary in content- some examples focusing mostly on the mega events hosted by the Middle East as mentioned above, and others allow for a more broadly discussion about sportwashings role.

Whether anyone supports sportswashing or not is a topic which has limited research. We know that sportswashing has many opponents but the ones who are supporting it have limited attention and you would think it doesn't have any supporters. Sportswashing is a trending topic, with limited research the term is being used in different areas such as included in contexts of whitewashing, greenwashing, and soft power. It's important to increase the research in this field so we have a better understanding. Circling back to Qatar world cup it's

a country with human rights issues relating to migrant workers and LGBTQ+ people. However, when next world cup is in USA, they also have LGBTQ+ discrimination, yet USA as a country don't receive as much criticism as Qatar.

With this study we will contribute to a better understanding of this complex phenomena. In the field of sportswashing where there is very little research and you could make the argument that in this field the research is very one-sided with its view that it's only authoritarian countries, this study will disrupt its way of looking at sportswashing and broaden its view. Figure out whether it is only authoritarian countries that use sport for propaganda purposes or if it should be applied to more democratic nations. Prior research has not considered if individuals or corporations use sport to wash its reputations, which further proves its gaps in research to completely understand the complexity of sportswashing and in which forms its coming.

### **3.2. Research design**

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of sportswashing, qualitative data collection was conducted through a Thematic Narrative Analysis in analysing digital newspapers and interviews made by popular media on YouTube. A thematic narrative analysis can be defined as “*emphasis is on the told events and cognitions to which language refers*” (content of speech) (Ronkainen, Watkins, & Ryba, 2016, p.40). In other words, a thematic approach focuses on the “*whats*” of the stories rather than the structure and seeks to identify common elements (Ronkainen, et al., 2016, p.40). The reason for choosing narrative analysis is because it contains information on sociology, that allows one to read transcripts several times and then with help of inductive coding, develop themes and subthemes to identify elements associated with each theme (Ronkainen, et, al., 2016, p.40).

### **3.3 Data collection**

As mentioned above, qualitative content analysis was used in this study with a triangulation technique therefore quantitative data were not necessary to collect. The qualitative collection is explained below. The current study selected content on sportswashing based on mainstream media by collecting the content from Google search, Google news, and a few articles were retrieved randomly from Norwegian newspapers when discovered. Eighteen newspapers and twelve news magazines were included in this study as the original list of popular media content on sportswashing. Additionally, Google Advanced Search was then used to search content from popular media on sportswashing. A list of key terms like “*Sports washing*”, “*Sportswashing*”, “*washing in sport*”, and “*sports wash*” was applied to search the title of the online news articles. Furthermore, the criteria for our data collection of

articles were based on that it should be in English, but due to limited results we included Norwegian articles to support the findings. The final selection included of 122 news media entities grouped based on where it was retrieved from popular media. The news article collection was conducted in the final list on 1 Mai, 2023. As mentioned above the method of triangulation was applied, which means this study collected content on sportswashing from several sources. In other words, YouTube videos were used as well, the first results of 31 videos were then used. Thirdly, the YouTube videos were transformed to text through a program X to get transcripts for the analyses.

Moreover, videos that included less information about sportswashing during the interviews conducted on YouTube, but more on other sports specific subjects were excluded. There was an applied and similar process during the coding process of the articles that contained sportswashing in the title or keyword, but hereafter not explained in a good way excluded from the data collection. Additionally, articles related to sportswashing named in contexts of “*greenwashing*”, but with no relevant connection were excluded as well. On the other hand, editorial opinions, and previous master thesis on sportswashing was included, due to that previous research has indicated that scholars and practitioners tend to consider sportswashing differently in relation to definitions, examples, motives for getting involved in sportswashing, and consequences of sportswashing for the stakeholders (Firmstone, 2019). As a result, 122 Google articles and 31 YouTube videos were found and used in the analysis.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

This section presents the method used for analysing qualitative data, gathered from content in newspapers and interviews from YouTube videos. To obtain the data for analysis, two researchers coded each news article separately and compared their results during the coding process. Information in the coding process included title of the article, the publisher of the news media, date of publication and authors if available. Similarly, process was followed to obtain data from the YouTube videos. Then sub- groups, such as definitions, who, events, examples, and similar examples were coded to get the first group called (a) “*conceptualisation of sportswashing*”. Stakeholders including opponents (b) and supporters (c) were coded and their motives (d) for engaging in sportswashing. Consequences of sportswashing (e) were coded and grouped into positive and negative based on the outcome of sportswashing for the interest groups in sports. Lastly, strategies (f) developed currently or intended to be implemented in the future to prevent sportswashing was coded.

Moreover, the inductive method of coding in this study has four steps. (a) two researchers selected 122 articles from the sample of news articles on Google Search, and

Google News and coded subgroups and main groups independently. Then, the researchers (b) selected 31 YouTube videos based on interviews conducted from practitioners regarding sportswashing. (c) Further, the two researchers compared the coding results and developed a preliminary coding scheme, the two researchers coded all 122 news articles and 31 videos independently. Additionally, the researchers modified the preliminary list of groups and subgroups when necessary. (d) Lastly, the two researchers compared their coding results and further changed the preliminary list of groups and subgroups. As a result, of the last step it was implemented 6 groups and 12 sub-groups to simplify the complex perception of sportswashing by popular media. Furthermore, in the process of group coding, when a news article and YouTube video had code that fit more than one sub-group, it was categorised to all the relevant groups (Matthes, 2009). Resulting in a total of 634 sub-groups codes in 122 news articles and 171 codes based on the YouTube videos. Although, some categories were excluded, due to a limited time-period for this research and low mentioning of these categories by popular media, which could have implied that it covers more than specifically sportswashing and the support of these categories was weak, and that more information was needed.

### **3.5 Reliability and Validity**

Several obstacles that can affect reliability and validity of a study. This chapter investigates potential impacts on this study's reliability and validity. This study used a thematic narrative method with Triangulation that affect validity in a positive way. According to scholars, reliability can be divided into two perspectives; (a) internal and; (b) external reliability. Internal reliability is explained to ensure consistency during a research project through using more than one researcher to code, analyse and interpret the data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019, p.214).

The internal validity of this study was enhanced by applying a technique called Triangulation which involves collecting of data from several sources, at different time periods, and from multiple researchers (Bougie, and Sekaran, 2020; Golafshani, 2003). The data was then analysed consistently and interpreted based on the sources of information to establish themes and categories throughout the process, since the two authors was the only researchers who processed the data and coded separately before analysing together it reduced bias and increased truthfulness of this study (Golafshani, 2003). Furthermore, external reliability means whether your data collection, techniques or analytic process produces consistent findings if repeated at another time, or replicated by other researchers (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p.214). On the other hand, the reliability of the study may be

threatened by bias at the content in popular media or the researchers, if the findings cannot be replicated (Cypress, 2017). However, scholars have further argued that reliability is misleading to some extent and that qualitative data cannot always be used as a criterion (Cypress, 2017). In this study, researcher bias may have occurred because of the themes and categories found were based on the two authors' perceptions on the content and can then be interpreted differently by others. Additionally, there were restricted paywalls on some news articles and videos made by popular media that may have affected the results. On the other hand, since the data collection was based on thematic narrative analysis, it means there was no subjective interference that may have created bias (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). Anyway, the supervisor reviewed the study which may reduce the risk of any bias.

## 4. Findings

In this section the study will describe each of these aggregate dimensions in detail by discussing the coding and each of the subcategories by focusing on the first order constructs.

### 4.1. Conceptualisation of sportswashing

Conceptualisation of sportswashing reference to understanding all those conceptual aspects from media debates and discussions pertaining to the conceptualisation of sportswashing (see Table 1 and Figure 4). The are as follows; (a) definitions in form of a complete summary that is what is sportswashing, why there has been different focus from several sources, and there is no agreement as such on what is really sportswashing; (b) the qualitative data suggests that the sportswashers are categorised in three types. These are governments, corporations, and individuals; Additionally, the qualitative data collected provided different (c) examples on sportswashing by focusing on levels of ownership, hosted events, and sponsorships; The debates and discussions highlighted (d) greenwashing and whitewashing as similar concepts with an important impact on the conceptualisation of sportswashing; Events which was covered by the media debates and discussions was highly focused on (e) Mega events and smaller events to impact the conceptualisation on sportswashing.

**Table 1:** Conceptualisation of sportswashing

<b>Coding subcategory</b>	<b>First order constructs</b>	<b>Excerpts from transcripts</b>
Definitions	Limited understanding	<p><i>“Although the term “sportswashing” is relatively new, the concept dates back almost a century and possibly beyond. In short, the term is used when an individual, group, corporation, or nation-state uses sport to improve its reputation and public image. At nation-state level, it is generally used to direct attention away from a poor human rights record”. (A4)</i></p> <p><i>“The Saudis in sport: Ambitions much larger than sportswashing” clearly stated, “Firstly, there is no broad agreement on how sportswashing should be defined and what it covers, and therefore it is used quite differently by different media and stakeholders in sport.” “Secondly, the repeated use of the term by journalists, opinion leaders</i></p>



		<p><i>and politicians give the impression that only authoritarian political regimes use sport for political purposes, which is far from the truth”. (A52)</i></p> <p><i>“For Qatar, the money spent on the FIFA World Cup is also a way to redeem itself for the human rights violations that occurred during the preparations for the tournament. This is referred to as sportswashing—wherein sports are used as a way to clean up a bad public image”. (A46)</i></p>
	Differently focused	<p><i>“Polluting industries are pouring hundreds of millions of pounds into sports sponsorship in an attempt to “sports-wash” their role in the climate crisis”. (A42)</i></p> <p><i>“washing, which is using, which is authoritarian regimes, using sports to whitewash their public image around the world”.</i></p> <p><i>“And now we're seeing Saudi Arabia and Newcastle United, the purchase of a football club to whitewash the image of an authoritarian regime”. (B17)</i></p>
	No broad agreement	<p><i>“There is no broad agreement on how sportswashing should be defined and what it covers, and therefore it is used quite differently by different media and stakeholders in sport”. (A32)</i></p>
Sportswasher	Corporations	<p><i>“The Qatari Islamic Bank gets some of its revenues from oil and gas. INEOS is a major producer of plastic, toxic pesticides and fossil fuels, as well as one of the UK’s leading fracking firms. Having already plastered its brand all over cycling, sailing, football, running and rugby, INEOS is the undisputed champion of sportswashing”.(A104)</i></p> <p><i>“INEOS, The company has spent £400 million on sporting enterprises in in well, I guess in the last few years” .(B22)</i></p>
	Governments	<p><i>“Repeated use of the term by journalists, opinion leaders and politicians give the impression that only authoritarian</i></p>

		<p><i>political regimes use sport for political purposes, which is far from the truth. More democratic-minded nations also understand the power of sport”. (A32)</i></p> <p><i>“And you pointed out at the past experience, you mentioned Soviet Union. But we can also recall the experience of Nazi Germany organizing Berlin Olympics in 1936. Dictators always loved sport as a way to promote their agenda and to portray them, you know, just in as as as popular as strong leaders, both for domestic purposes, but also internationally, too, to cleanse their names”. (B3)</i></p>
	Individuals	<p><i>“Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani probably does love Manchester United. Because Qatar is already using football as a tool of foreign policy, it looks unlikely that Jassim could run United independently, not least because Jassim’s father was the architect of Qatar’s unique third way when he served as the country’s prime minister”. (A120)</i></p> <p><i>“Business interests, Russians and Saudi different. Russians oligarchs, they just you know, invest Putins money to promote Putins agenda with no real business behind it”. (B3)</i></p>
Examples	Ownership	<p><i>“The fact that Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich has been sanctioned by the UK government and later disqualified by the Premier League board, because of having a close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, raises a number of questions regarding the club owners in European football. Is Abramovich the only one with dodgy money and background? Or was it unknown to the authority until he offered himself as the peace broker between Ukraine and Russia? Are the other owners all clear in terms of corruption and human rights?</i></p>

		<i>The simple answer to the questions would be, 'NO'". (A45)</i>
	Hosting	<i>"While the term is new, the process is not. Many dictators have used this in the past and continue to do so in modern times. The Soviet Union is one of the most infamous examples of sports washing in the 20th century, is whether it be, you know, chess tournaments, the Olympic Games, football, wrestling. 1936 Olympic in Nazi Germany" (B3).</i>
	Sponsorships	<i>"Messi's engagement by the Saudi authorities as a tourism ambassador are part of Riyadh's aggressive sportswashing programme, with the authorities seeking to exploit the celebrity appeal of elite sport to deflect attention from the country's appalling human rights record. The match has generated a great deal of attention and it has been reported that a Saudi businessman has paid around £2million for an 'Ultimate Pass' for the match which allows him to meet the two global stars". (A19)</i>
Similarities	Greenwashing	<i>"But we're also seeing greenwashing. FIFA claiming that this is a carbon neutral type of event makes a mockery of the concept of sustainability. Carbon Market Watch, a nonprofit group, did an analysis of the stadiums and their carbon footprint in terms of what FIFA said, and they found that FIFA underestimated the carbon footprint of the stadiums by eight fold" (B6)</i>
	Whitewashing	<i>"Is sportswashing illegal? Sportswashing is not illegal but is widely regarded as being unethical. The term</i>

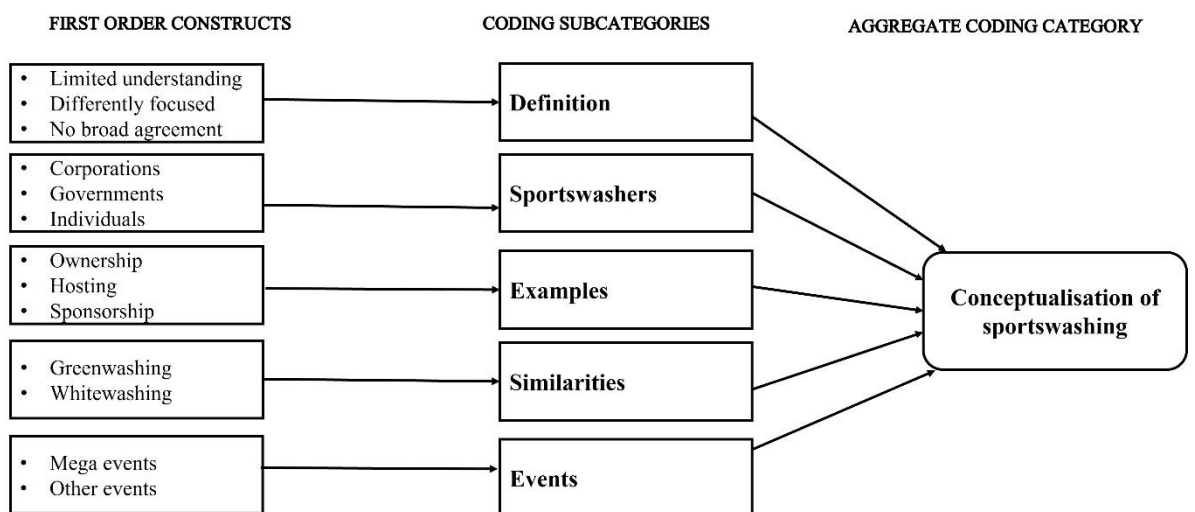
		<i>sportswashing comes from the word “whitewashing”, it is essentially a costly form of propaganda”. (A4)</i>
Events	Mega events	<i>“Since Vladimir Putin took power in 1999, the Russian Federation has invested increasingly in the sports industry exemplified by being host to the 2013 Universiade in Kazan, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and the 2018 FIFA World Cup. These sporting events on national soil are directly linked to the formation of a new Russian national idea and identity under Putin’s rule. They have become an important tool in forming the narrative of the nation and establishing a meaningful relationship between the past, present and future”. (A40)</i>
	Other events	<i>“on live golf. Speaker 3 This is a Saudi investment firm. This is a wealth fund. Maybe it was as good. It is as deep pockets as there is in the world. The Saudi Arabia, what did you have hesitancy about going into business with them? Speaker 4 No, not at all, because golf is a force for good. So to me, if golf is good for the world, golf is good for Saudi. Vince McMahon and the WWE Golf, Chess Boxing, Formula One”. (B19)</i>

#### **4.1.1 Definitions of sportswashing**

Figure (see Figure 4) below shows how popular media are conceptualising sportswashing through the media debates and discussions on definitions of sportswashing. Furthermore, through this study analysis it was identified that popular media coverage of sportswashing tend to be highly critical, with a limited understanding of sportswashing (See Figure 4 & Table 1 below). The concept of sportswashing is not relatively new and dates back to the Roman time period, but due to become a new covered topic by the debates and discussions in media there is lack of comprehensive discussions in media from this time period. Additionally, the opinion leaders and politicians’ debates and discussions on this topic tend to build an impression that sportswashing is only used by authoritarian regimes such as Qatar. This is not the truth and discussions and debates in media provided several examples of countries engaged in this topic.

Another aspect with the discussions and debates in media is that sportswashing is differently covered, which imply difficulties to conceptualise the topic. Some discussions and debates focused on definitions concentrated on polluting industries and their engagement in sportswashing by poor environmental operations. These studies argued that sportswashing is a practice connected to sports sponsorship rather than hosting of events, which contributes to the difficulties of defining sportswashing. Other studies provided another view on defining sportswashing by perceiving sportswashing to be connected to whitewashing through club ownership. For example, through the Saudi Arabian acquisition of Newcastle.

The results of the discussions and debates in media regarding how to define sportswashing is that there is no broad agreement on how to conceptualise the topic. The debates and discussions raised questions about for example Saudi Arabia`s ambitions to be more complicated than sportswashing. Additionally, some discussions questioned the Saudi Arabian ownership in Newcastle as a media created narrative and argues that it should be considered as primarily business interests (Smithfield, 2023). However, there was a common agreement among several definitions by popular media that framed sportswashing as a negative attempt to distract from human rights abuses. Several practitioners and activists argue that sportswashing is a form of propaganda that exploits the positive associations people both on a domestic and international stage may have with sports to deflect their attention away from serious issues such as violations of human rights (Wearing, 2022; Bokati-Lindell, 2022; Pandey, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2022).



**Figure 4:** Conceptualisation of sportswashing

### 4.1.2 Sportswasher

The debates and discussion in media on the conceptualisation of sportswashing presented corporations as a sportswasher through their engagement in the concept, which is aligned with the previous discussion on the different perception on sportswashing. For example, INEOS is often discussed and debated due to their involvement in several sports teams through cycling, Formula One, sailing, running, and football. The company is accused of being a major producer of plastic, toxic, and fossil fuels and the discussion in media argues that their acquisition of sports teams is highly motivated to deflect attention away from their environmental impact. Additionally, some argue that the ongoing process for acquisition of the football club Manchester United where INEOS is highly involved is motivated by this intention.

Sportswashing can be perceived as a concept that normalises wrongdoing without the need for reform or reparation, primarily conducted on at the governmental level (see Figure 4) (Wearing, 2022; Bokar-Lindell, 2022). Furthermore, when the debates and discussions in media addressed the sportswasher on a government level it was commonly applied examples of countries from the Middle East or China. On the other hand, this is not supported by everyone, and other discussions and debates suggests that Western governments is partly involved.

Sportswashing is also defined and considered at an individual level by the discussion and debates in media, arguing that it provides the owners with a loyal group of fans who support them in stadiums and on social media (Wilson, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2023). For example, practitioners mention the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, who acts both on an individual level through his business interests in purchasing Chelsea football club and as part of the Russian governments sportswashing efforts (Wilson, 2022; Storey, 2022). Additionally, it has been raised questions with the Qatari Banker intentions during the ongoing acquisition process for Manchester United that he may not act independently without the Qatari government's interference.

Our analysis suggests that popular media plays an important role in shaping the public perceptions of sportswashing, and that there is an increasing awareness of the negative implications (Wearing, 2022; Bokar-Lindell, 2022). By examining how sportswashing is conceptualised in popular media, this study may contribute to a deeper understanding of why the concept is complex, indicated by practitioners (A32).

### 4.1.3 Examples of sportswashing

In the conceptualisation of sportswashing the debates and discussions in media argues that ownership of sports teams is a prominent example of sportswashing. Roman Abramovich as previously discussed is a previous owner of Chelsea football club, due to his close relationship with the Russian President Putin he became sanctioned and disqualified by the governing body of the English Premier League (FA). On the other hand, Abramovich relationship to the Chelsea fans was debated as popular were fans chanted his name, during the circumstances of a moment of silence for the victims of the war. This imply that ownerships of sports teams may be considered successful as an attempt of sportswashing. However, this example raises questions regarding club ownership in European football, is Abramovich the only owner that should be questioned and are there other ownerships that should be raised increased awareness on. Further, during the ownership of the English club, it was explained according to practitioners as one of the most successful ownerships (Fruh, et al., 2022). The club won everything it could: two Champions League, five Premier League, five FA Cups and three League Cups. So long as the club is successful on the pitch, the fans don't care where the money comes from (Wilson, 2022). The findings reveal that when Abramovich arrived, Chelsea fans welcomed his money, and some threw Russian rubbles onto the pitch. Moreover, according to practitioners the money allowed the club to compete on a level it couldn't compete on before (Storey, 2022).

Another prominent example discussed and debated in media regarding sportswashing is hosting of events. Some argues that sportswashing is a new topic debated by media, this is aligned with previous discussions, however the process is not new and was used by the Authoritarian Nazi Germany in 1936. The previous German leaders' attention are debated as a political ideology to promote his anti-Semitic propaganda. Other argues that the hosting of the mega event benefited the country by ensuring international relations through the country's sharing of its resources for an international audience (B1; A101).

The FIFA 2018 World Cup is another example discussed and debated in media as part of the concept of sportswashing hosted by Russia, it raised questions of bribery during the bidding process, leading to investigations and charges of corruption against numerous officials (B3; A69). Sponsors such as Budweiser, Hisense, McDonald's and Vivo were all sponsors of the Qatar world cup discussed in similar way. In addition, to the official FIFA sponsors: Adidas, Coca-Cola, Wanda Group, Hyundai, Qatar Airways and Visa, along with official FIFA sponsors like Adidas, Coca Cola, Wanda Group, Hyundai and Qatar airways,

and Visa, contribute to the World Cup status as one of the largest sporting events. These sponsors are willing to invest regardless of the hosting country (Stavrum, 2021)

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) claims to act as neutral in politics, but critics argue that the IOC's actions are hypocritical. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the IOC imposed a ban on athletes from Russia and Belarus, but did not prevent these hosted events i.e., 1936 Berlin or Russia World cup 2018 from happening. (Shelley, 2022).

Examples discussed and debated on sponsorships of athletes and teams is the type of sportswashing that is least applied, however famous Football players such as Lionel Messi and his involvement in the concept was covered. Messi is criticised through his role during the World Cup as a tourism ambassador for the Saudi Arabian government and are discussed further as part of Riyadh aggressive sportswashing programme. The programme debated and discussed known as Vision 2030 means that the authorities seek to exploit international football players to deflect attention away from the country's appealing human rights record. For example, by appealing human rights record the discussions is about the Saudi Arabian regime involvement in mass murder of citizen's, murder of a journalist, and repressing of women's rights.

Another example discussed and debated in media and aligned with sponsorships as a concept of sportswashing is Aramco sponsorships of sports. Aramco is the world's biggest oil producer and signed a sponsorship deal with Formula One and racing team Aston Martin in 2020. The sponsorship is criticised due to their connections to the government. The critics support previous discussion that Saudi Arabia is using sports as a strategy to deflect attention away from negative issues. Similarly, Aramco was chosen as the major sponsor of the upcoming Women's World Cup 2023 in Football which will be hosted by Australia and New Zealand. Several players from the American women's team have raised critic against the company involvements.

On the other hand, the Saudi sports minister Prince Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al Faisal are not agree with the allegations of involvement in sportswashing and have publicly announced that sport strategy has tight connection to their governing strategy. Additionally, announced that government soon will launch a national sport strategy which the aim is to empower sports economy and make Saudi athletes to compete at highest possible level (IndianExpress, 2023).

#### **4.1.4 Similar concepts**

While the previous sections have discussed the sportswashing aspects of the conceptualisation, the debates in media highlights Greenwashing to be highly connected to



sportswashing. For example, FIFA the governing body of international football, has claimed the previous hosted world cup in Qatar 2022 to be carbon neutral. This was criticised by an environmentalist group, Carbon Market Watch which has collected evidence that showed FIFA had underestimated the carbon footprint. Others share this view that sportswashing and greenwashing is connected and should be applied in the same context when conceptualising sportswashing. Sportswashing is discussed by these as a set of PR tactics to make companies or countries appear more environmentally friendly without committing to reduce their environmental footprint (Purchell, 2023). INEOS as previously discussed and their interests in the acquisition of Manchester United are debated as an actor in both concepts which may support that there may be similarities (Purchell, 2023; Hopkinson, 2023).

Moreover, the professional cyclist Romain Bardet is an example of an athlete which has raise awareness of companies contributing to both concepts by their sponsorships. By criticising Santos and oil and gas company for their PR tactic to act for legitimising clean energy production. A governing body, Tennis Australia decided to dropped Santos as their sponsor due to these allegations of sportswashing through the practise of greenwashing. However, Tour Down Under decided to keep Santos as their sponsor which contributes to increased attention in the debates and discussions that sportswashing and greenwashing may have similarities (Portus, 2023).

Another concept often discussed and debated in media associated with sportswashing is whitewashing. Some of the discussion's argues that sportswashing as a concept is not illegal, but widely regarded unethical. Whitewashing is then discussed to be connected to sportswashing through the significant amounts of investments used on athletes and sports teams. Additionally, others discuss the connection between these three concepts to be originally based on greenwashing, where targeted large corporations by environmentalists where criticised for projecting on environmentally conscious image while continuing to pollute. Further, greenwashing is based on whitewashing debated as a process of applying a "*cheap white paint to walls*" (Ogilvie, 2022).

The event LIV Golf backed by the Saudi Arabian government is further discussed as an example to portray how these concepts may be related. Furthermore, it is raised an important question against the tournaments funding. Greg Norman, portrayed as LIV Golf CEO have been questioned on the Saudi Arabian regime's involvement in the tournament. The question that should be raised is why a sportsman is being asked about a foreign country's human rights record. This is where the whitewashing aspects has been debated to impact sportswashing.

Similarly, golfers who joined LIV Golf Tour are facing scrutiny regarding their involvement in the Golf league. However, these golfers have chosen to avoid addressing these political questions and rather focused on their game. For example, Phil Mickelson has joined the Saudi- funded Golf league, acknowledging the concerns surrounding the leagues funding.

On the other hand, the governing body PGA has stated that these players who take part in Liv Golf will be cancelled. The cancellations of previous players have been questioned as removing a rival rather than preventing sportswashing. Yet Mickelson, like others, perceived this as an opportunity to challenge the PGA rather than prioritise the human rights abuses associated with Saudi Arabia. Supported by his main focus remains on the sport itself. Moreover, as long as the players and the Governing body PGA lacks in their commitment against the sportswasher, both whitewashing and sportswashing may succeed.

While some other discussions and debates argue that the actions of governments contribute to legitimise whitewashing through sportswashing. For example, the UAE engagement in Business with UK, despite being a country that activists urged to reject. It has also been discovered that governments, including the US, are involved in deals with Saudi Arabia for oil and gas. The US government, for example, publicly expressed gratitude to Bahrain for their partnership, given of a navy base in Bahrain. These connections make it less likely for these governments to address concerns related to sportswashing. It is worth noting that during the 2012 Olympic hosted by the UK, the country was involved in unpopular and illegal wars in Iran and Afghanistan. Similarly, the upcoming 2026 World Cup hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico faces criticism due to the US international and domestic behaviour (Sakajiri, 2023; Elsborg, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2022).

#### **4.1.5 Events**

The discussions and debates in the conceptualisation of sportswashing argues that the concepts can be perceived in two ways, through (a) mega events; (b) and other events. Additionally, these discussions and debates included players, governing bodies, among others perception of sportswashing either as an opponent or supporter. Putin and the Russian government's actions through hosting several mega events the Winter Olympic in 2014 and World cup in 2018 are discussed as prominent examples of events targeted by sportswashers to achieve their intentions (Elsborg, 2018). For example, the Winter Olympic in 2014 was used by Putin to influence the domestic audiences for the further annexation of the Crimea area (Pemberton, 2022). Additionally, some of the discussions debated that a successfully implementation of sportswashing, requires support from the governing bodies responsible for

the events such as FIFA and IOC. Even though, the International Olympic Committee and FIFA, two organisations responsible for the Olympics and World Cup has interfered later, because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, these organisations are criticised for their lack of commitment to prevent this regime for successfully applying sportswashing in the past (Shelley, 2022). (IOC) claims to neutral in politics, but critics argue that the IOC`s actions are hypocritical. Following the Russian invasion, the IOC imposed a ban on athletes from Russia and Belarus (Shelley, 2022).

Additionally, the debates in media discussed China`s hosting of the Winter Olympic as an important mega event criticised for engaging in sportswashing. These debates focused on how several countries, including the United States, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Sweden, and New Zealand, have chosen to diplomatically boycott the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. This boycott is based on concerns about China`s “*re-education camps*” where Uyghur Muslims are detained (Shelley, 2022).

Similarly, the IOC`s lack of actions in preventing sportswashing perceived from the past, discussed how a Chinese Tennis profile disappeared for criticising the governments for their abysmal human rights record during the Winter Olympic hosted in China 2022 (B13). The debates and discussions have then provided different players as opponents against sportswashing. Famous tennis profiles, Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka, among others have all expressing their concerns about the missing profile during the event, along with the ATP (Association of Tennis Profiles). They have emphasised that Tennis players must be prepared to take actions against IOC`s lack of commitment. Additionally, the Women`s Tennis Association (WTA) even sacrificed a significant amount of money to support Peng. In contrast, the IOC remain silent on the case of the missing Tennis player Peng Shuai, while the president Thomas Bach, has emphasised the unity of Olympic athletes. This lack of commitment may explain that IOC prioritises profit over people, unlike the Women`s Tennis Association (WTA) (B12).

Other discussions and debates argued the World Cup held in Qatar 2022 as the most prominent example of mega events criticised for their abysmal human rights records; poor treatment of migrant workers and repressions of LGBTQ people (Bruck, 2022). Several countries including, Netherland, Denmark, Norway, and Australia have taken a stance against sportswashing and criticise the World cup in Qatar. The Netherlands called for compensations for the families of migrant workers, while Denmark announced their intention to wear black kits as a symbol of support for the workers who lost their lives (B31). Denmark also refused sponsorships associated with the World Cup to avoid profiting on the event

(B30). The Norway national team engaged in the discussions about the issues surrounding the 2022 world cup, even though they did not qualify for the tournament (B30). The Australian football team released a video where they criticised Qatar human rights record (B14). While Norway as a smaller country, may have limited impact on international sports events, did not support the decision to let Qatar host the World Cup (Stavrum, 2023).

On the other hand, some articles criticise FIFA for a similar lack of commitment to prevent the sportswasher Qatar in achieving their intentions (Boycoff, 2022b). These debated provided how the European Union Parliament voted in favour of a resolution holding FIFA accountable for the suffering of migrant worker families involved in the preparation for the World Cup. The ruling stated that FIFA must provide compensation to families of injured or deceased migrant workers, while the country winning the World Cup receives a price of \$ 42 million. The resolution addresses the lack of proper compensation for families and seek to improve the situation (B6).

In the discussions and debates on sportswashing by applying other events, the arguments are mainly focused on the Saudi Arabian involvements by their investments in the growing sports portfolio (Wertheim, 2023; Lawson, 2023). Further, the debates surrounding Saudi Arabia discuss the role of athletes and activists as opponents against the regime's investments. Formula One, Liv Golf, and the acquisition of Newcastle is the type of events that have faced most debates in media. Prior to a Formula One event in Saudi Arabia, there was an attack on an oil storage facility nearby caused a delay in the race. After some hours of deliberation and the need to convince hesitant drivers, it was agreed to proceed with the race. Lewis Hamilton expressed concerns about his safety and expressed a desire to leave the country (B20). Hamilton, a prominent Formula One driver, has been vocal about competing in countries like Saudi Arabia and has states his discomfort with being in the Arabian kingdom, emphasising that it was not his choice (A18; A58). However, the FIA governing body of Formula One, appears to prioritise financial interests over drivers concerns (B13; A33).

Lewis Hamilton as one of the leading voices against sportswashing in Formula One. He has consistently raised awareness about the human rights issues associated with certain host countries and using his platform, to advocate for change, while the FIA has remained silent and continued to endorse races in these locations (Collantine, 2023; Lees, 2023).

The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) sent a letter to the FIA, raising questions to the new sporting code that prohibits drivers' drivers from making political speeches without permission (A59; A108). When Russia invaded Ukraine, the FIA

condemned the action and expressed sympathy for Ukrainian victims. This highlights the FIA's hypocrisy, as they restrict drivers' freedom of speech during their apolitical statement while engaging in ongoing politics (A33; A28). The FIA's differential treatment of Russia and Gulf states reveals inconsistency in their approach (Collantine, 2023).

The investment in LIV Golf made by the Saudi Arabian regime has faced similar scrutiny among activists and players in the debates and discussions. During these golf events, families of the 9/11 attack victims held protests outside the LIV Golf tournament. Additionally, US intelligence has revealed that 15 of 19 hijackers, including Osama Bin Laden, were from Saudi Arabia (B31). The Government of Azerbaijan has been involved in the political imprisonment of individuals, notable arrest is Khadija Ismayilova who exposed corruption within the government (B29). Anti-government protesters in Bahrain have also staged several protests against the hosting of the Bahrain Grand Prix (A28; A89; A86). While the event was cancelled in 2011 due to the protests, it returned to the calendar the following year (B29). Saudi Arabia has imprisoned numerous women's rights activists, including those advocating for the right to drive, with some receiving sentences of up to three years (B27; B20). Human Rights organisations have documented the harsh treatment and mistreatment of these women (B17).

Similarly, the LIV Golf backing by the Saudi Arabian regime is prominently discussed and debated. Jack Nicklaus and Rory McIlroy are two golfers who have chosen to remain with the PGA and decline offers from the LIV Golf Tour. Reports suggested that Jack Nicklaus turned down \$100m offer to stay with PGA. Rory McIlroy, a four-time major winner, publicly cautioned participants of the LIV Golf Tour that decisions motivated by money often do not result in positive outcomes (B24). Tiger Woods, another example of a golfer who turned down an offer from LIV, even when they offered him nine figures to join. PGA response to the golfer that joined LIV Golf is they got banned from future majors (B4). Phil Mickelson decision's to join the LIV Golf Tour was met with controversy, leading to his longtime sponsor, KPMG dropped (Gay, 2022).

Tiger Woods, along with other golfers, has criticised their fellow players decision to join the LIV Golf Tour. In an interview, he expressed his disagreement, stating "*I think that what they were done is they tuned back on what has allowed them to get to this position*" are amongst the golfers that have criticised other golfers that made the decision to join the LIV Golf Tour (A110). Billy Horschel, a seven-time PGA Tour winner, has also criticised the golfers who left the PGA, suggesting that they should not be allowed to compete in PGA events unless they eventually leave the LIV Golf tour (Morse, 2022).

There is a common agreement among the discussions and debates in media that the acquisition of Newcastle should be included in a conceptualisation of sportswashing (Burke, 2023; Zidan, 2023; Stephard, 2022). Amnesty International have urged the Premier League to incorporate a human rights assessment when approving club takeovers (A29; A70). The Newcastle United FC takeover by the Saudi Arabian government was approved by Premier League without any human rights regulations in place (B17). Amnesty International have also highlighted the poor living conditions of migrant workers which has moved to Qatar (B9). The organisation has given Saudi Arabia critic, accusing the country of using sports as an tool to gain legitimacy. Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, both involved in Saudi Arabia`s sportswashing efforts, have faced criticism from Amnesty International, with the organisation urging these profiles to speak out against human rights issues in Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Craven Herald and Pioneer, 2023).

On the other hand, the discussions and debates in media includes fans and the managers perceptions of the acquisition. The arguments focused on fans perception to sportswashing as positive, where some may have a desire for success of their club and did not consider the Saudi Arabian government money as negative. These fans will accept anything as long as it gives them success on the pitch, if the new owners deliver success, they won't question their background (B3). Additionally, the head coach is discussed to have a neutral view where he constantly refuses to answer questions about his owners and Saudi Arabia's politics (Fruh., et al., 2022). Others argue that ownerships in team such as Newcastle have not become possible if the governing body of Premier League, (FA) had implemented stricter regulations (B11; B18).

#### 4.2 Motives for engaging in sportswashing

The analyses of the findings from popular media reveals several motives that drive the sportswasher to engage in sportswashing, as illustrated in Figure 5 below (See Figure 5 and Table 2). These motives will be presented; (a) Self presentation; (b) Economic reasons; (c) Whitewashing; (d) Different motives for different stakeholders; (e) Different motives for different events.

**Table 2:** Motives for engaging in sportswashing

<b>Coding sub-category</b>	<b>First order constructs</b>	<b>Excerpts from articles/video transcripts</b>
Self presentation	Impression management	<i>“Just like Qatar, the UAE isn't interested in financial profit. They're after something else. The emirate has virtually zero</i>

		<p><i>democracy and has repressive freedom of speech. Lots. 90% of the population are migrants and the vast majority of them are paid the bare minimum and live in poor conditions. Manchester City success gives Abu Dhabi a chance to offer an alternative story about the country to the rest of the world “. (B10)</i></p>
	Reputation management	<p><i>“So, uh, Abu Dhabi's ownership of Manchester City and City football group, this kind of group of, of clubs around the world that I know because I've spoken to enough people that at least one of the motivating factors was to improve Abu Dhabi's image in the rest of the world by being associated with sport and sports. Watching sports. It's like it's effectively reputation management three sport like likes because because we sports journalists are pretty blinkered. Um, we will focus on all the sporting stuff and kind of ignore the bad stuff in the background if that's the kind of thinking. And it and I know like, you know, city executives with a link to Abu Dhabi, they're kind of delighted, by the way, that Abu Dhabi had been seen for a long time before the whole financial fair play issue started.” (B22)</i></p>
	Brand image	<p><i>“Saudi Arabia's attempts to improve its image through the use of sportswashing is well known, with Ronaldo's move to the country being the latest in those attempts. It is a trend that has been noted and picked up by Human Rights Watch, who believe the Saudi regime is using sporting events as a deliberate strategy to create a better image of itself.” (A57.</i></p>
Economic reasons	Diversification	<p><i>“Over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has spent billions on high-profile international sports and entertainment events. The strategic investment is part of the kingdom’s ‘Vision 2030’ masterplan that aims to reduce Saudi’s economic dependence on oil but it also serves to distract from ongoing human rights abuses committed by the kingdom with</i></p>

		<i>impunity, as well its ongoing war in Yemen that has resulted in a humanitarian crisis among the worst in the world.” (A21)</i>
Whitewashing	Deflect attention from wrongdoings	<i>“Ronaldo’s big-money transfer to Al Nassr and Messi’s engagement by the Saudi authorities as a tourism ambassador are both part of Riyadh’s aggressive sportswashing programme, with the authorities seeking to exploit the celebrity appeal of elite sport to deflect attention from the country’s appalling human rights record” (A19)</i>
	Protect wrongdoings	<i>“Mickelson is under siege and taking time away from golf after a series of remarks about his involvement in efforts to challenge the PGA Tour -- an organization he feels has financially shorted its top players -- by launching a Saudi-financed rival "Super Golf League." In case you missed it: Mickelson was quoted by the longtime golf writer Alan Shipnuck -- who has a book on Mickelson coming soon -- as acknowledging the Saudi regime's "horrible record on human rights," citing its treatment of gay people and its implicated involvement in the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. "Knowing all of this, why would I even consider it?" Shipnuck quoted Mickelson asking. "Because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape how the PGA Tour operates." Mickelson criticized the PGA Tour as a "dictatorship" of its own.” (A3)</i>
Different motives for different stakeholders	Corporations	<i>“Sport has a unique ability to reach billions worldwide on a regular basis and its clubs and tournaments have values, stories, and reputational legacies that brands can easily piggy-back on with minimal public scrutiny. Sport also offers advertisers and sponsors the benefit of being associated with healthy activity, which is especially ironic when the air pollution caused by cars, planes and the</i>



		<i>burning of fossil fuels is so damaging to the health of athletes and fans alike” (A23)</i>
	Government	<i>“Dictators always loved sport as a way to promote their agenda and to portray them, you know, just in as as as popular as strong leaders, both for domestic purposes, but also internationally, too, to cleanse their names. And the Soviet Union extended this this practice. I experienced it. See the International Chess Federation that had been under Soviet control for for ages, still under Russian KGB control today as we speak. But we today, I guess we're covering something else, something it's it's even more sophisticated because it's not about using influence in the international organizations. It's about finding a way by using money from these dictatorship to infiltrate the society in the free countries.” (B3)</i>
	Individual	<i>“Roman Abramovich, one of the closest Putin's allies, many called, you know, one, the Putin's wallet's started it started this program process concept by buying the Chelsea Club. And Chelsea Club was not just a football club. It's a it's a symbol. It's a it's a it's an institution that was there virtually forever is long, as you know. Just it's so we remember we remember soccer and and it had massive following and through Chelsea and through all people connected to Chelsea and through of course, TV and competitions where Chelsea took part, Abramovich managed to incorporate himself and his buddies into the British society.” (B3)</i>
Different motives for different events	Ownership	<i>“Greenpeace have urged Manchester United owners, the Glazers, not to accept any bid from Sir Jim Ratcliffe amid concerns that his chemical company, INEOS, is trying again to sportswash its image. “With interests in oil and gas, plastics and agrichemicals, INEOS has a hat-trick of environmental harms to its name. They are top of the table</i>

		<i>for plastic production in the UK and are one of the loudest voices in favour of fracking.” (A25)</i>
	Sponsorship	<i>“The very I mean, Arsenal aren't owned by a state in that sense, but they do have a sponsorship deal with Emirates Airlines. And people in England talk about going to the Emirates Stadium so freely. So once again, you have an apparatus of a state, Emirates Airlines, becoming just, you know, part of the language of football without people without even thinking of it.” (B9)</i>
	Hosting of events	<i>“There's profit and then there is PR. Let's talk money first. The 2018 World Cup was held in Russia. It raked in \$5.36 billion in revenues, also \$3.5 billion in profits. While FIFA pocketed most of the revenue coming into the host country through spendings at hotels, restaurants and sports, Tourism is undeniable. But this isn't all that's tempting for Qatar, and I will tell you why. Estimates say that the 2022 World Cup will add \$17 billion to the Qatari revenue that the country has already spent. Way more than that, some \$220 billion, like I mentioned, according to one estimate. Bloomberg pegs the number at \$300 billion. Qatar has built seven new stadium, a new metro system linking these stadia, a hundred new hotels, a new airport, hospitality centers, shopping centers and many other facilities. \$300 billion. Why does Qatar need the FIFA World Cup 2022? Well, it hopes the games will modernize the country's image, make it a business destination, bring it at par with the likes of Dubai”. (B9)</i>

#### **4.2.1 Self presentation**

One of the most significant motives, according to practitioners is (a) Self presentation (Bokat-Lindell, 2022; Das, 2023; Wilson, 2022). Self-presentation is split into three groups: Impression Management, Reputation Management and Brand Image.

For impression management the government of Qatar seeks to be perceived as legitimate and trusted in the international community (A2, A30, and A63). The governments of UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia engaged in sportswashing as an attempt to position the image of their country's as "Home of sport" (A63, B4, B17). This study's findings also highlight how the Nazi Germany- hosted Olympics in 1936 can be perceived as a strategy in impression management (B3, A2, and B28). The study also provided examples of impression management as motivation in the context of the USA and Russia (B30). The US government, for example, intends to use the upcoming 2026 world cup to divert attention from away from ongoing domestic corruption issues (B30; A100). At last, Russia's hosted Winter Olympic 2014 in Sochi has been mentioned in popular media motivated by impression management, but more focused on a domestic level as an attempt to boost the domestic citizens perception of the country and to influence support for the annexation of Crimea (Elsborg, 2018). Scholars argue that the US government has employed similar tactics in the past, such as using the Olympics to sportswash terrorists' attacks and showcase technological and security dominance (Boycoff, 2020a). Where practitioners argue that the recent involvement in sports such as the funding of LIV golf has been perceived as an attempt to use the golf sport to "get Americans forget about the murder during 9/11" (Morin, n.d.; Contes, 2023; Elsborg, 2018; Leeks; 2023).

Hereafter, sportswashing used as a political tool to distract attention away from human rights violations or corruption and implemented for the aim of achieving reputation management is explained by scholars to create a cover to obscure their poor human rights record (Boycoff, 2022a; Grix & Brannagan, 2014). This motive for sportswashers such as governments can be explained to be conducted through two ways, the findings provided the example with Qatar and how the government hosted the World cup in 2022 to achieve two purposes (B9). The Qatari government was motivated by public PR with approximately 3,6 Billion views of the previous World cup 2018 held in Russia, the tournament offered a great opportunity (B9). Regarding reputation management the findings reveal UAE also motivated by similar practise, but there were no direct economic goals from the government to engage in sportswashing (B22). For example, where the findings revealed that Saudi Arabia was among the examples of accused countries of sportswashing with most prominent representations (A19;A57). Scholars Grix and Brannagan (2014) noted that sportswashing serves as a tool for enhancing Rwanda's soft power.

The findings identified the previous rivalry between the gulf states as an important factor to explain why these governments may seek to improve brand image on an

international audience by engaging in sportswashing (B22). Practitioners point out that the neighbouring countries of Qatar such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and UAE, had implemented diplomatic measures against Qatar between 2017 and 2021 due to allegations of supporting terrorism and close ties to Iran (Das, 2023). European leagues have huge international audience meaning that nation's do not need to host mega events in order to improve brand image. Manchester City,

#### **4.2.2 Economic reasons**

Our findings suggests that (b) economic reasons is the second motive for engaging in sportswashing. The government of Qatar decided to purchase sports clubs and especially football clubs as an attempt to diversify their revenue streams and reduce dependency on their neighbouring countries. In other words, sportswashing practises associated with this motive aim to generate significant revenue and boost tourism, if the sportswasher is perceived as a government. The findings collected from popular media provide an example of the president of Rwanda`s relationship with English football club, Arsenal, which led to an agreement to promote tourism (B10). This agreement involved Arsenal players visiting training camps in Rwanda, while the Rwandan logo would appear on training pitches (B10). Interestingly, UAE success in sportswashing does not necessarily generating financial profits, but rather positioning itself as a top holiday destination (Kryzaniak, 2018; B10). (b) According to the findings the Qatari government was seeking economic profit by hosting the tournament with estimates of potential \$ 300 billion in profit (B9). Furthermore, according to scholars the Qatari government has invested billions of dollars in hosting major tournaments such as the FIFA World cup 2022 to diversify their economy and enhance the international profile aligned with the findings (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022).

#### **4.2.3 Whitewashing**

Moreover, as illustrated in figure 5 below, the findings of this study reveal that (c) whitewashing is an important motive for sportswashers. Governments, for example may engage, in sportswashing by investing in the sports world to create positive associations with these sporting events (Leeks, 2023). The study`s findings provide an example of Saudi Arabia and their football club Al Nassr purchase of global football player Cristiano Ronaldo (B7; A57). By purchasing prominent athletes, the Saudi Arabian government aims to improve its international image despite accusations of human rights violations, such as imprisoning civil rights activists, mass executions, restrictions on women`s rights, and involvement in illegal airstrikes in Yemen (Leeks, 2023). Examining whitewashing as a motive for sportswashers, this study`s findings also highlight the Chinese government`s use of the 2022

Olympic games to polish their reputation amid criticism of its human rights record (A105; A3; A9). The Chinese government has faced accusations of human rights violations, specifically against the minority groups like Uyghurs, who have been placed in internment camps. By hosting the Olympics, they aimed to create positive international associations despite these violations (Martina, 2021).

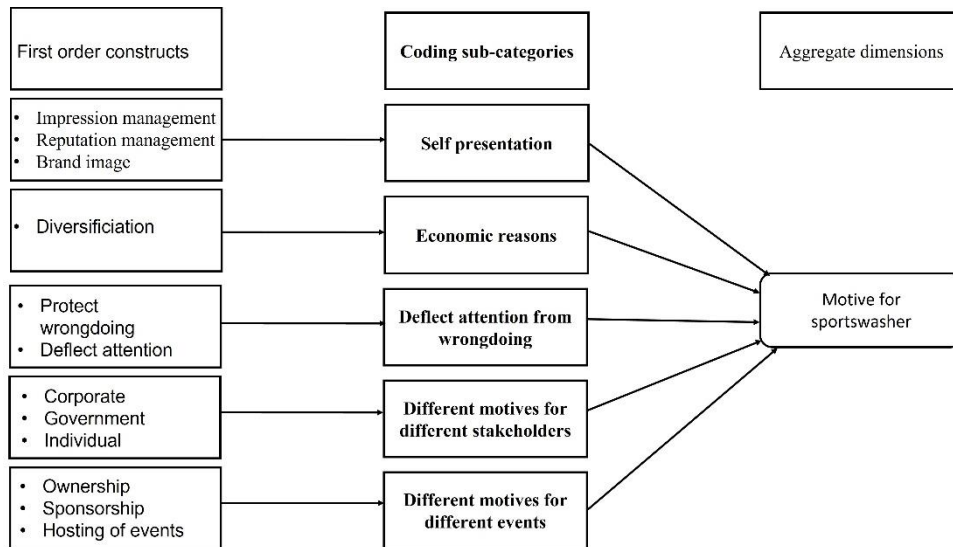
#### **4.2.4 Different motives for different stakeholders**

Our findings suggests that that (d) there are different motives for different stakeholders. The Russian government used the Winter Olympics in 2014, with funds from the event being linked to the invasion of Crimea (B30). While the focus in the findings collected by popular media is largely on authoritarian governments such as Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia, there are also actors of individuals like Abramovich and Ratcliffe engaging in sportswashing (A25;B22). For example, Abramovich purchase`s purchase of Chelsea football clubs is perceived as a way to integrate into British society by associating himself and his business interests with the club, to gaining support (B3). On the other hand, Ratcliffe, described as a sport enthusiast, invested significant amount of money in sports without clear intentions of making a profit (B22). Additionally, Jassim Hammad Al Thani and Banker in Qatar and involved in the ongoing attempt to purchase Ownership in Manchester United against Ratcliffe are described as a sport enthusiast with love for the club (A120). Although it is challenging to consider these two individuals` motives for acquire Manchester United as independently, practitioners suggests that Ratcliffe aims to divert attention away from INEOS environmental degradation by using the company for sportswashing and other that Al Thani probably are connected to the government of Qatar (Hopkinson, 2023; Portus, 2023; Blincoe, 2023). INEOS may engage in sportswashing according to activists such as environmentalists` organisations as a tactic designed to remove attention away from the damage the company's business operations are doing to the planet (Hopkinson, 2023; Portus, 2023).

#### **4.2.5 Different motives for different events**

Our findings also suggests that there is (e) different motives for different events. Similarly, UAE is highlighted as an example collected from popular media of a government use sponsorships to create an alternative narrative through sportswashing. As scholars like Kryzaniak (2018) have noted in this study, UAE sportswashing attempts, through their corporation called Emirates with associations to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, have been perceived as highly successful. For example, the findings reveal that the sponsorship of Arsenal`s home stadium, which is named Emirates has become synonymous with the club in the eyes of the fans (B5 and B10). This success can be attributed to the findings that indicate the sponsorship

by Emirates in Arsenal and the ownership of the football club Manchester City have deflected attention away from domestic issues within the country, such as the lack of democracy, restrictions of freedom and speech, and the poor living conditions of the migrant population (Kryzaniak, 2018; B10).



**Figure 5:** Motive for engaging in sportswashing

### 4.3 Consequences of sportswashing

This study's findings on consequences of sportswashing has identified (a) positive; (b) and negative consequences of the concept by focusing on it from and macro and micro level perspective. (See Figure 6 and Table 3).

#### 4.3.1 Positive consequences

The first identified positive consequences of sportswashing perceived from the fan's perspective is that it contributes to expanding sports to new regions. This can be considered positive due to that sport should be available for fans all over the world and should not discriminate any country. International sport is for something to all take part in and watch together and that includes the countries that are accused of sportswashing (A39; A63). To further demonstrate this consequence is when FIFA awarded the world cup to Qatar because they wanted to expand the football into the Middle east (B13).

Another consequence of sportswashing is offering a positive outcome for domestic audiences through the reforms implemented by authoritarian countries such as Saudi Arabia & Qatar (See Table 6 below). One example in Saudi Arabia is that the country has introduced reforms related to women's rights to drive cars, obtain a passport, and take education abroad. Unfortunately, this is a consequence of previous activists jailed and tortured (B17; A116;

A12). Saudi Arabia is introducing minor reforms as part of their strategy called “*Vision 2030*” a program of economic reforms and diversification (B17; A116). Additionally, the study`s discussed the Saudi backed LIV golf tournament impact on the players, Saudi Arabia funded a golf tournament to rival the traditional PGA. Several golfers have joined for a significant amount of money, but several of the big names have declined to participate because of the tight links to the Saudi Arabian regime (B24;A36). The sportswashing mega events bring some of the best performances, for instance several fans and practitioners in media have labelled the Russia World Cup in 2018 as possibly one of the best world cups in history (A63). This is consequences and its positive outcomes perceived from players, domestic audiences, and fans. Where the individual fans witness high quality mega events and Russia's regime gets positive PR (B9; A63).

**Table 3:** Consequences of sportswashing

<b>Coding subcategory</b>	<b>First order construct</b>	<b>Excerpts from transcripts</b>
Micro level	Positive consequences	<p><i>“The country`s notorious kafala system, inherited from the British, has been reformed, the country passed a new labour law in 2020 that increased the minimum wage and allowed workers to more freely change employers”. (A100)</i></p> <p><i>“But in such a small country, where there has been a big effect to constructs hotels, upgrade, and expand transport networks, and create areas of comfortable hospitality”. (A103)</i></p> <p><i>“Beyond what is generally viewed as the washing of its reputation sits Saudi Arabia`s strategy of reforms called vision 2030 and part of it womens rights to drive, obtain a passport, and take educations abroad”. (A116)</i></p>
Macro level	Positive consequences	<p><i>“And he said Al Nassr signing Ronaldo will help in preventing childhood obesity and other health issues in young people. When kids see Ronaldo, they</i></p>

		<p><i>get excited. They go and play soccer, rather than sitting and playing on iPads.” He said if people become healthier, the government can curb health care costs it will have to pay after 30 years”. (A22)</i></p> <p><i>“The country has now spent \$220 billion to build stadia, hotels and other facilities”. (B9)</i></p> <p><i>“Matches will be broadcast all around the globe. Fans will delight in the countries battling it out for the cup of life.</i></p> <p><i>Some in sports media praised the mega event for bringing Germany back into the fold of the global community through sports competition”. (B1)</i></p>
Micro level	Negative consequences	<p><i>“Peng had dared to speak up. She raised a voice against Beijing's top brass, she naming names, and now she is nowhere to be seen”. (B12)</i></p>
Macro level	Negative consequences	<p><i>“Qatar has been at pains to fend off persistent accusations of worker abuse, homophobia, sexism, racism. And as if that weren't enough corruption and what right now is it front and center? Are these harrowing accounts of exploitation, abuse of thousands of mostly South Asian migrant workers, foreign workers who sweat and toil? Human Rights Watch saying Qatar's police were still jailing, harassing and beating members of the LGBT+ community”. (B14)</i></p>

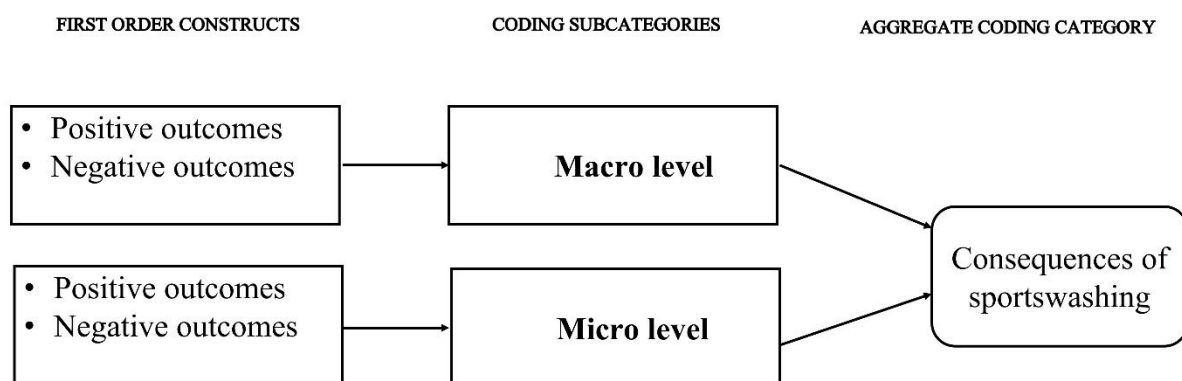
When the Saudi Arabia PIF took over Newcastle, they started spending money to keep them in the league. This contribution made Newcastle fans ignore the dark side of their owners as long as the team was successful. Another example is Chelsea, as pointed out earlier the Chelsea fans were chanting Roman Abramovich names during a moment of silence for the war victims. Further, during the ownership of the English club, it was explained



according to practitioners as one of the most successful ownerships (Fruh, et al., 2022). The club won everything it could: two Champions League, five Premier League, five FA Cups and three League Cups. So long as the club is successful on the pitch, the fans don't care where the money comes from (Wilson, 2022). The findings reveal that when Abramovich arrived, Chelsea fans welcomed his money, and some threw Russian rubbles onto the pitch. Moreover, according to practitioners the money allowed the club to compete on a level it couldn't compete on before (Storey, 2022).

As a result, according to practitioners using financial resources to invest into sports can bring positive returns like public health, with more healthy people a country can reduce its health care costs at the same time the population gets healthier (Sakajiri, 2023). One Saudi minister argued that profiles such as Ronaldo may contribute to affect kids to play soccer rather than playing on their Ipad. The Saudi minister means that it will be more effective to let children see iconic players like Ronaldo than to educate them about health (Sakajiri, 2023).

When Qatar won the bidding process, they had no recent history about football. The facilities and infrastructures were poor, and they needed to build it from scratch. So, in the build-up Qatar spent \$220 billion to build a stadium, hotels, new airport, hospitality centre, shopping centres and other facilities (B9). After criticism from human rights the Qatar government made reforms to protect the migrant workers, this is positive because it's a step in the right direction in their treatment of foreign workers (B14).



**Figure 6:** Consequences of sportswashing

#### 4.3.2 Negative consequences

A former Chinese tennis player disappeared after criticising the Chinese republic. China response has been to buy people silence, bribing big names and hosting sports events. Essentially sportswashing their reputation as result of situation regarding the women

Chinese tennis player. The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has given an ultimatum to China where they have threatened to pull out of the agreement with China and stop visiting the country. WTA are willing to risk over \$120million as a result of the disappearance (B12).

Football White Paper is a new set of rules that will determine who can own clubs in the English league. The point with the new rules is to restrict who can own and do club takeover in the English league. There will only be those that are considered fit and proper that will get green light to purchase. Billionaires that can't prove they have earned their wealth legitimately won't be allowed to secure ownership (Nettavisen, 2023).

However, the practise of sportswashing has significant negative consequences for individuals. The lead up to the Qatar World Cup, was argue by the tragic deaths of several migrant workers employed in construction (A88; A93). These workers were affected by abysmal working conditions, with some being denied their rightful wages (B13).

Furthermore, the LBTQ+ community in Qatar faces harassment, physical abuse, and imprisonment, as reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW) (B14). This unwelcome atmosphere not only affects the community`s well-being but also raises concerns for those who attended the world cup in Qatar (B14).

Another concerning incident involves a women Chinese tennis player, who went missing after making sexual allegations against a former high-ranking member of the Chinese Communist Party. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has failed to initiate an investigation into her disappearance, thereby forsaken their duty to protect athletes who speak out and voice their concerns (B18). This lack of action by governing bodies may discourage future athletes from coming forward and expressing their opinion about issues. started an investigation towards her disappearances. The IOC have failed to protect the athletes who speak out and raise their voice (B18).

China has been implicated in attacks against UN human rights workers and the Islamic population. By allowing a country like China to host the Olympic games, the IOC has demonstrated a willingness to align itself with any government hosting the games, whether it be Russia, France, China, or the USA. Consequently, the IOC becomes than important; it leverages a significant political role in these countries and may even rationalise their actions (B4).

In contrast, to the World Tennis Association (WTA), which threatened to sever ties with China and cease hosting tournaments due to the disappearance of a woman`s tennis player, the IOC president has chosen to remain politically neutral instead of taking a stance against the Chinese government. The president`s statement "*Once an Olympian, always an*

*Olympian*” is hypocritical and fails to demonstrate a viewpoint against China`s actions when a former Olympic athlete has gone missing (B12).

According to the CIA findings, the Saudi Government was implicated in the murder of US Journalist. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is funding a golf tournament, called LIV Golf, which has attracted prolific players. These players are fully aware of reports implicating the Saudi government in the murder, but they choose to participate as a means against the PGA tour. Instead of challenging the PGA tour, they aligned themselves with a tournament backed by a brutal Saudi regime (B4; A35).

Simultaneously, while Saudi Arabia announced that it would allow women to drive, the country was locking up women`s rights activists that campaigned for their right to drive (A57; A84). These activists faced poor treatment during their arrest (B17). Saudi Arabia`s actions showcase a façade of willingness to reform and change, but when examined, these alleged reforms seem more like public relations exercises. Saudi Arabia also announced the launch of women`s football league, but Amnesty International`s Middle East Research Director argues that a proper process can only be achieved by releasing former activists who fought for basic women`s rights. Amnesty International`s Middle East Research Director believes that Saudi reforms should not be taken seriously until these activists are set free (Amnesty, 2020b). she strongly criticises the Saudi government and for their actions against women`s rights activists. Amnesty International`s Middle East Research Director emphasises that any efforts to improve women's overall situation in Saudi Arabia should go hand in hand with the inclusion and release of brave individuals who fought tirelessly for this change. Instead, these activists remain in jail and are facing trials as a form of repression, while those responsible for their torture in detention go unpunished (Amnesty, 2020b). Amnesty International holds the opinion that all Saudi Arabia`s promises for reforms should not be taken seriously until the government release all those still detained for peaceful human rights work immediately (Amnesty, 2020b).

The bidding process for the hosting rights for Qatar world cup was mainly affected by corruption (Guardian, 2014). In 2015, the US Department indicted nine FIFA officials for bribery related to the bidding process for hosting the tournament. Furthermore, court papers in 2020 revealed that representatives of Qatar have paid millions of dollars in return for votes and supports during the bidding process (B31; A11; A10). The Sunday Times leaked documents and emails that exposed corruption, bribery, and hospitality events used to influence votes for the Qatar World cup (Guardian, 2014). Another practitioner argues that there were documents

explaining that representatives of Russia bribed FIFA officials, which allowed the votes to swing in Qatar's favour (Aljazeera, 2020).

Additionally, sportswashing has the negative consequence of football supporters turning a blind eye when club owners with questionable backgrounds purchase their clubs (Pranto, 2022). Examples include clubs such as Manchester City, Chelsea, Newcastle demonstrate takeovers associated with dirty money (A45; A64; B1). It was revealed that the Chelsea takeover was a direct order from the Russian president, and the club benefited from his support until sanctions were imposed and the club was forced to be sold (A45). The head cost of Liverpool made a statement acknowledging societies acceptance of these questionable owners and asked whether supporters truly care about such issues (Pranto, 2022; A45).

When Chelsea FC was sanctioned, the British government froze Roman Abramovich assets. This had significant consequences for the club, including the inability to sell tickets, closure of club's megastore, limitations on the away budget, and frozen broadcasting and merit payments. Some fans questioned why the clubs was being punished for a conflict between two countries they were not involved in (Storey, 2022). On the contrary the same Chelsea fans initially welcomed Abramovich's investments and celebrated the financial boost it brought to the club. Some event displayed paper roubles and chanted his name during matches. The fans focused on the success of the team in the Champions League while disregarding potential issues associated with an owner like Abramovich and his political connections (Storey, 2022).

FIFA awarded the 2022 world cup to Qatar, in the build-up thousands of migrant workers died in Qatar for building infrastructure to its world cup. FIFA claims neutrality which means that they don't feel it's their place to decide who gets the world cup. Qatar wrote a big check and have spent billions to host the world cup. When Qatar got awarded the hosting rights it was promised they would build state of the art conditioned stadium so they could play in the summer, which didn't happen. FIFA was willing to accept this lie because of the money involved (B4).

FIFA are expecting to pocket \$3billion from the Qatar world cup, Qatar are expecting a revenue boost of \$20billion. This can explain why both FIFA and Qatar are silent on the issues relating to migrant workers abuse, death penalty for same sex relationship blasphemy, flogging for alcohol consumption, ban of all political parties, guardianship system for women and overall restrictions on freedom of expression (B13).

The IOC president holds onto the notion of political neutrality. When the IOC don't make a stance but instead claim neutrality its sides with the oppressor. When the Chinese player disappeared after criticising a former Chinese government for sexual assault, IOC did

nothing to China. IOC are the governing bodies that sit with the power to stop the sportswashing trend (B18).

FIFA and IOC have billion-dollar revenues, they do not have to follow any state or nations. These are two governing bodies for sport that have gained influential political power despite the fact they are supposed to only govern sport. FIFA is expecting to pocket \$7.5 billion from the Qatar World Cup, every Olympic brings billions of dollars into the IOC. With the money involved in these megaevents it becomes some sort of protection as to why they let countries with human rights violations host (B30).

Saudi Arabia's involvement in the Yemen war gets little attention. The Saudi Arabia government has authorised strikes that have seen more than 100 000 people killed since 2015. Saudi Arabia has also carried out aerial attacks targeting residential areas which has resulted in over 12 000 civilians killed, while over 84 000 have died of starvations. Saudi Arabia's neighbour country UAE has also been involved in the Yemen war, but their involvement has not been criticised like Saudi Arabia's (B7).

The Qatar government has bid for Manchester United FC. This move has already been criticised by human rights group Amnesty pointing fingers toward Qatar's migrant workers treatment and how they treat gay people. This news came out shortly after the world cup and they see this as an opportunity to continue improving their reputation (Brandsnes, 2023).

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

This section summarises the study by addressing the research questions presented in the first chapter. The following topics will then be presented, theoretical contributions and practical implications of the study. Finally, the study is concluded by addressing the limitations during this study that may motivate other researchers for further research.

### 5.1 Summary

This study conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to exploit sportswashing through how popular media conceptualises the topic and exploring the motives and consequences associated with engaging in sportswashing. Sportswashing is a topic, which are discussed and debated where the sportswasher are; hosting events, sponsoring teams, and athletes, or engage through ownership of sports teams. The sportswasher are briefly discussed and debated as either; individuals, corporations, or governments accused of engaging with questionable critical issues. These issues are often involving human rights abuses or environmental concerns. Sportswashing is an important topic today, due to the impacts of increased globalisation and commercialisation has led to more attention from i.e., governments and corporations with questionable intentions. As a result, this has led to increased discussions and debates among scholars, practitioners, and activists to raise concerns about ethics, transparency, and the integrity of sports. The study identified that there are key gaps in the existing literature regarding sportswashing, the previous academic studies which offer a broadly view tend to be limited. Additionally, previous studies are covering too many events, which contributes to a lack of comprehensive perception on the concept. To address these gaps, the study performed CDA to undertake the debates and discussion in popular media, online media content, and any publicly available content of sportswashing on internet. CDA was the chosen methodology for this study and allowed for a systematic exploitation of popular media content. CDA as research method was suitable for analysing how sportswashing is represented in popular media. The data collection process involved a range of media sources, newspapers, online articles, and social media platforms within a limited time period. Additionally, by including diverse media sources it contributed to a comprehensive overview of sportswashing. Further, the theoretical framework provided the analysis with relevant theories related to sportswashing; soft power, agenda-setting, and social identity theory. These theoretical frameworks provided perspectives to interpret and analyse sportswashing.

This led to these formulated research questions:

**RQ1:** How did popular media conceptualise sportswashing.

**RQ2:** What are the motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing. The research questions will now be answered. The analysis of popular media's discussion and debates revealed that the concept of sportswashing complex and should be understood based on several components (RQ1). This corroborates with previous arguments and findings that the research conducted on sportswashing among scholars fails to cover several aspects of the phenomenon such as Greenwashing and Whitewashing as components impacting sportswashing (Skey, 2022). However, there is a common agreement that sportswashing is a negative concept where the responsible part is behaving with wrongdoing through some form of propaganda (Skey, 2022; Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2023). Other scholars share the similar perception in the conceptualisation of sportswashing that there are missing aspects in the conceptualisation of sportswashing, which should be covered more (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2023). These scholars are focusing on their conceptualisation of sportswashing differently, where the first discuss and debated governmental aspects on sportswashing (Boycoff, 2022a). Additionally, Fruh, et al., (2023) are discussing and debating this further by adding important components to the concept of sportswashing to include ownerships in clubs as well as hosting of Mega Events, which Boycoff (2022a) did not discuss or debated. Other components discussed by scholars that should be addressed when conceptualising sportswashing are sponsorships (Mabon, 2022; Kryzaniak, 2018). However, Mabon (2022) are considering the climate aspects as well, which is more aligned with the greenwashing aspects of sportswashing (Skey, 2022). As a result, of limited journals covering sportswashing and some different perception the study addressed popular media's view.

The findings based on popular media's discussion and debates shared a similar conceptualisation on sportswashing by providing various discussions and debates (Leeks, 2023; Ogilvie, 2022; Unnithan, 2023; Fruh, et al., 2022). This led to this thesis conceptualisation of sportswashing to be based on that it should be considered as a practice used by an individual, governments, or corporation primarily used to divert attention away from wrongdoing or other questionable business practices. Additionally, sportswashing are conducted in three forms: ownership, hosting of mega events, or sponsorship.

The second research question which were focused on the motives and consequences of engaging in sportswashing in popular media provided more common agreement among practitioners, scholars, and activists. Motives for engaging in sportswashing such as Reputation Management and Impression Management were discussed and debated as the desire from the sportswasher to enhance their self-presentation (Boycoff, 2022b; Byrkjefloot

& Wæraas, 2012; Grix & Brannagan, 2016). Reputation management were considered as a long-term motive for engaging in sportswashing and impression management as a short-term motive (Byrkjefloot & Wæraas, 2012; Skey, 2022). The findings suggested a prominent example based on the UAE governments investments into Manchester City oriented to achieve reputation management an impression management by aiming to creating a positive self-image of the country by removing attention away from their negative human rights issues (Purchell, 2023; Simms, 2023; Garside, 2023). Similarly, this is aligned with previous discussions on UAE`s intentions for engaging in sportswashing by a scholar (Kryzaniak, 2018). Additionally, other discussions and debates focused on a third component related to self-presentation, Brand image (Leek, 2023). The Saudi Arabian government owned club Al Nassr acquisition of Ronaldo were provided as the most prominent examples based on the findings.

Moreover, the findings provided another suggestion for a motive for engaging in sportswashing as diversification (Zidan, 2023). The Saudi Arabian governments investments into sports through their PIF was discussed as part of their vision 2030 aimed to diversify its revenue from oil and gas. While others discuss and debated whitewashing as previously mentioned as a motive for engaging sportswashing through two directions; protect attention from wrongdoing and deflect attention from wrongdoing (Zidan, 2023; Gay, 2023). The first motive was discussed by providing an example of the Saudi Arabian Government and how they aimed to deflect attention away from the human rights issues within the country (Zidan, 2023). Protect attention away from wrongdoing was exemplified as well by how the Saudi Arabian government used golf profiles to remove the attention away from wrongdoing by taking a neutral stance (Gay, 2023). The discussions and debates from the findings suggested that there were different motives for each stakeholder engaging and different motives behind events. Corporations and individuals that are using sponsorship or ownership takeover aims to improve a tarnished image from damaging companies practice or reputation (Daley & Simms, 2022; Hopkinson, 2023). Additionally, the discussion and debates suggest governments engage in sportswashing for both PR and economic reasons (Ewoma, 2022; Zidane, 2023).

However, the consequences of sportswashing were mostly negative based on the findings. Popular media discussed and debated negative consequences on two different levels: macro and micro. The most prominent type of negative consequences of sportswashing discussed and debated were the lack of commitment from sport`s governing bodies to prevent sportswashing, and damage of the sports integrity through fair play (Fruh,



et al., 2022; Storey, 2022; Wilson, 2022). In conclusion, sportswashing is complex and by exploring the research questions, the study provided a comprehensive view in how popular media conceptualised sportswashing by identifying the motives and consequences for engaging in this practice. By understanding the conceptualisations of and impacts of sportswashing this study can inform stakeholders, policymakers, and sport's governing bodies in developing strategies to prevent this practise for damaging the sports integrity.

## **5.2 Theoretical implications**

Sportswashing is a less researched topic with limited number of studies. The existing literature on sportswashing is scarce and empirical studies are almost non-existent. Due to scarce literature available and lack of peer reviewed journals, therefore there is confusion among scholars and practitioners (Skey, 2022; Søyland & Moriconi, 2022). Media coverage of sporting events may be focusing more on sports aspects of an event rather than controversial issues based on this theory. Sportswashing can then in that way influence what the public perceives as important (McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver, 2014; Wu & Coleman, 2009).

This study has conducted a CDA of any publicly available content available on internet on sportswashing and will contribute significantly to a limited prior literature. Based on the coding from the articles collected, three major themes were identified and provided the objectives for this study; conceptualisation, motives, and consequences of engaging in sportswashing. Due to how practitioners, activists, and scholars have conceptualised sportswashing differently, there are still confusions in the development of a common concept, and lack of peer reviewed journals on the concept.

It was understood that scholars mostly observed soft power as the theoretical framework to understand the motives behind sportswashing. While this supports some of our understanding through impression management it limits our understanding of other important aspects. Scholars should take on other theories such as agenda setting and social identity theory to explore other motives for engaging in sportswashing and concepts, which should be included in sportswashing. In this study we have found five different motives when doing a thematic narrative analysing, self-presentation, economic reasons, whitewashing, different motives for different stakeholders and different motives for different events. These categories can be further analysed and help to improve the understanding of this complex phenomenon. Theoretical implications of sportswashing suggest that there needs to be a deeper understanding of what role sport has within international relations (Skey, 2022; Grix & Brannagan, 2014; Grix & Brannagan, 2016).

With prior literature on sportswashing is limited, there is little understanding of consequences engaging in sportswashing. This study has found on that there are many potential consequences on both macro and micro level, this study can give foundation for future studies where they can investigate these consequences further. Better understanding of consequences, it will make it easier for stakeholders involved to implement measures. Since there is little prior research on sportswashing related to consequences this study will contribute to adding knowledge on this complex phenomenon.

### **5.3 Practical implications**

This study has four stakeholders of interests and practical implications. The theme-based articles covered that sportswashing are conducted through three distinct aspects; hosting of events, sponsorships, or ownerships that practitioners and activists have investigated over the recent years and may serve as contributing factor for governments in management positions. For example, the literature informs us that there is a lack of commitment for the governments responsible for the hosting of events. By focusing on increasing the awareness on the negative issues of sportswashing through media debates and discussions, this can lead to force these governments to make changes for the public audiences in the sports industry.

This study by providing sportswashing studies from different sources and publishers explored different aspects of sportswashing, while practitioners and activists through this source discussed and debated how the sport's governing bodies lack in their commitment to ensure sports integrity and fair play, insights from fans, athletes, and public audiences are still needed to validate their findings. The insights from these stakeholders may contribute to the ongoing discussions and debates to provide directions for changes in the sport's governing bodies.

This study covered the role of athletes, which are indirectly a part of sportswashing due to their connection to sports teams that are discussed and debated related to the negative issues surrounding sportswashing. Additionally, several athletes may scrutinise the sportswashers actions and their negative impact on the environment, by raising their voices against sportswashing this can contribute to amplify the pressure on the sport's governing bodies to stake a stance against the hosted events, ownership, or sponsorship. Moreover, by this study it can contribute to increase awareness of sportswashing which may inform athletes broader on the negative issues.

This study by increasing the awareness on several aspects with sportswashing can have an important impact for sports fans, due to athletes and sports team's role as part of a

sports fan's life. They could come forward and actively influence fans to take a stance against sportswashing. Moreover, the teams and athletes, which are considered most popular could with the knowledge provided by this study urge sports fans to stop attending events, purchasing the televisions rights among others.

#### **5.4 Limitations and future research**

While this study made valuable contributions to understanding sportswashing, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Additionally, directions for future research can be explored to further enhance knowledge in this area. One potential gap and limitation with this study's method is the reliance on popular media discussions and debates as primary source of data. As a result, it is likely that issues which were recognised by popular press as important or relevant to sportswashing are usually discussed. Consequently, it is likely that other events or aspects related to sportswashing may be less discussed. Future research should consider incorporating a broader view of data sources. Examples may include interviews with stakeholders such as fans or players or official statements from sport's governing bodies to get a more comprehensive understanding of sportswashing.

While retrieving content based on news articles and video interviews conducted by others can provide valuable insights into mainstream media's perception of sportswashing. There may be a limitation and potential gap with the study's decision of qualitative research method, which imply the findings and its generalisability could be questionable due to different suggestions by scholars, activists, and practitioners in their research of sportswashing. Further, factors such as the context, period, and media sources analysed during this study may limit the generalisability of the findings to the period conducted. Future research could apply quantitative methods, for example surveys or content analysis of a large sample, to provide a more representative perspective and assess the importance of sportswashing across different time periods.

Another limitation is the focus on a specific period, since this study was conducted after the year 2022 famous for several sports events accused of sportswashing, it implied that popular media were mostly providing case studies such as the Qatar world cup held in 2022 and several Saudi Arabian involvements into sports. While these cases provide relevant examples of sportswashing to explore motives and consequences for engagement, they may not be representative for the deeper issues of sportswashing. For example, the events focusing on individual involvement, by providing Abramovich and Ratcliffe's potential motives were not sufficiently covered by practitioners. Therefore, future research could track changes in

media representations over a longer timed period, to examine how the motives and consequences of sportswashing have evolved.

Moreover, future research could build on this study by exploring a deeper level of fans and athletes' perspective of sportswashing by conducting interviews and surveys to measure their thoughts about either participating in events hosted by countries with questionable human rights records or how their inner motivation can be better explained when their favourite team or country may be involved with sportswashing. Additionally, future research could investigate the role of international governing bodies such as FIFA, IOC, and FIA in their attempt to combat sportswashing. Hereafter, this could include an analysis based on criteria`is used when awarding the hosting rights of major sports events and the measures developed to ensure that the host countries are following these guidelines.

Future research could explore the effectiveness of alternative strategies for improving a country or corporations' image for example investing in sustainable development or implementing social responsibility initiatives. As a result, this could provide valuable insights into how governments and corporations can achieve their goals without contributing to moral wrongdoings by upholding ethical standards and promoting social and environmental impacts.

Finally, this study provides insights into how popular media conceptualises sportswashing and the motives and consequences of engaging in this practice, there are limitations that should be considered. Future research could dig deeper into sportswashing as a strategy and way to achieve political and economic goals for the government, individuals, and corporations that engage in sportswashing and also seek to answer the long-term consequences on sports integrity. In that way, researchers can contribute to a better and more nuanced understanding of sportswashing as a phenomenon and the connection between sport, politics, and international relations.

## References

- Abdi, K., Fullerton, J., Dehesti, M., Kavand, R., Monibi, H., Talebpour, M. (2022). Identifying the conceivable diplomatic outcomes of Sport Diplomacy initiatives. *International Area Studies Review*, 25 (4), pp.322-337. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/22338659221120973>
- Adolphus, M. (N.d.). *How to use discourse analysis*. Emerald Publishing. Retrieved 31.03.2023. From: <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/how-to/research/data-analysis/use-discourse-analysis>
- Aljazeera. (2020. 07.04). Qatar denies allegations of corruption in World Cup 2022 bid. *Aljazeera*. Retrieved 14.01.2023. From: <https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2020/4/7/qatar-denies-allegations-of-corruption-in-world-cup-2022-bid>
- Ames, N., & Ingle, S. (2022. 21.11). ‘Very frustrated’: England and Wales back down over OneLove armband . *Guardian*. Retrieved 17.03. 2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/21/bullingham-admits-england-may-step-back-from-onelove-armband>
- Amnesty. (2020a. n.d). Reality check: Migrant workers rights with two years to the Qatar 2022 world cup. *Amnesty*. Retrieved 15.01.2023. From: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/02/reality-check-migrant-workers-rights-with-two-years-to-qatar-2022-world-cup/>
- Amnesty. (2020b. 26.02). Saudi Arabia: Launch of women’s football league should not distract from abysmal human rights situation. *Amnesty*. Retrieved 18.01.2023. From: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/saudi-arabia-launch-of-womens-football-league-should-not-distract-from-abysmal-human-rights-situation/>
- Amnesty. (2020c, 30. 08). Qatar: New laws to protect migrant workers are a step in the right direction. *Amnesty*. Retrieved 18.01.2023. From: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/08/qatar-announcement-kafalareforms/>
- Arabnews.(2019.23.05.). PSG chief Al-Khelaifi charged with corruption over Qatar world athletics champs. *Arabnews*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1501061/sport>
- Arabnews.(2020.14.09.). BeIN Sports chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi goes on trial over TV rights corruption. *Arabnews*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1734466/media>
- Bean, B. W. (2019). FIFA is corruption: what is to be done. *Michigan State International Law Review*, 27(2), 197-282. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3399530>
- Blincoe, N. (2023. 08.05). Manchester City’s history shows there never was a golden age of ownership. *Guardian*. Retrieved 09.05. 2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2023/may/08/manchester-city-ownership-qatar-abu-dhabi>
- Bokat-Lindell, S. (2022.14.12). ‘The Qatar World Cup is peak sportswashing.’ But will it work? *New York Times*. Retrieved 15.01.2022. From: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/world-cup-qatar-sportswashing.html>
- Bougie, R., & Sekaran,U. (2020). *Research Methods For Business- A Skill Building Approach* (8 edition). Wiley.

- Boykoff, J. (2022a). Toward a Theory of Sportswashing: Mega-Events, Soft Power, and Political Conflict. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 39(4), 342-351. From: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.20220095>
- Boycoff, J. (2022b. 30.11). A sportswashing Qatarstrophe. *Play the Game*. Retrieved 28.04.2023. From: <https://www.playthegame.org/news/a-sportswashing-qatarstrophe/>
- Brandsnes, H. (2023, 8. February). BRITISKE MEDIER: EMIREN AV QATAR ØNSKER Å KJØPE MANCHESTER UNITED. VG. From: <https://www.vg.no/sport/fotball/i/pQrAyR/britiskemedier-emiren-av-qatar-oensker-aa-kjoepe-manchester-united?fbclid=IwAR2MEH53SrjKZegnXP5pcjCgHSgUZR0830ZscovNi6wuO19GKsrhYMcVIW4>
- Brannagan, P. M. & Giulianotti, R. (2018). The soft power-soft disempowerment nexus: the case of Qatar. *International Affairs*, 94(5), 1139-1157. From: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iyy125>
- Brown, N., & Deegan, C. (1998). The Public Disclosure of Environmental Performance Information—A Dual Test of Media Agenda Setting Theory and Legitimacy Theory. *Accounting and Business Research*, 29, pp. 21-41. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00014788.1998.9729564>
- Bruck, T. (2022. 09.12). World Cup in Qatar brings to light term 'sportswashing'. *Spectrum news*. Retrieved 24.01.2023. From: <https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/news/2022/11/29/term--sportswashing--comes-to-light-at-world-cup->
- Burke, P. (2023, 21. 01). Patrick Burke: Usmanov ties and Qatari interest raise more questions for Premier League. *Inside the games*. From: <https://www.insidethegames.biz/index.php/articles/1132784/premier-league-blog-usmanov-qatar>
- Byrkjefloot, H., Wæraas, A. (2012). Public Sector Organizations and Reputation Management: Five Problems. *International Public Management Journal*, 12 (2), pp. 186-206. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2012.702590>
- Cardenas, F., Kloke, J., Stjejskal, S., Tenorio, P. (18.11.2022). The World Cup arrives in Qatar: What we've seen the week before the tournament. *Athletic*. Retrieved 17.01.2023. From: <https://theathletic.com/3909824/2022/11/18/qatar-world-cup-scene/>
- Chadwick, S. (2022). From utilitarianism and neoclassical sport management to a new geopolitical economy of sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 22 (5), pp. 685-704. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2032251>
- Coca Cola. (2023). Human Rights Principles. *Coca Cola homepage*. Retrieved 15.01.2023. From: <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/policies-and-practices/human-rights-principles>
- Collantine, K. (2023, 24.01). 'FIA's attempt to silence Hamilton and others is seriously disturbing' – rights groups. *RaceFans*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.racefans.net/2023/01/24/fias-attempt-to-silence-hamilton-and-others-is-seriously-disturbing-rights-groups/>
- Coleman, M. (Screenwriter) & Gordon, D. ( Director). (November 9, 2022a). Episode 1. (Season 1, Episode 1) [Part of TV Series]. In J. Battsek & M. Coleman ( Producer), The truth about FIFA: Uncovered. *Netflix*. From: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80221113>
- Coleman, M. (Screenwriter) & Gordon, D. ( Director). ( November 9, 2022b). Section 2. ( Season 1, episode 2) [Part of Tv Series]. In J. Battsek & M. Coleman ( Producer), The

- Truth About Fifa: Football, money and corruption. *Netflix*. From: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80221113>
- Contes, B. (20.01.2023). National Press Club slams CW for partnering with LIV Golf: 'Saudi Arabia murdered a Washington Post journalist'. *Awful Announcing*. Retrieved 15.01.2023. From: <https://awfulannouncing.com/golf/national-press-club-slams-cw-partner-liv-golf.html>
- Craven Herald & Pioner. (2023, 19. 1). Messi-Ronaldo match is sportswashing at full throttle – Amnesty International. *Craven Herald & Pioner*. From: <https://www.cravenherald.co.uk/sport/national/23262174.messi-ronaldo-match-sportswashing-full-throttle---amnesty-international/>
- Cypress, B.S. (2017). Rigor or Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Strategies, Reconceptualization, and Recommendations. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 36(4), pp.253-263. From: <https://doi.org/10.1097/dcc.0000000000000253>
- Das, A. (25.01.2023). This is why QSI want to buy a Premier League club soon. *Technosport*. Retrieved 15.01.2021. From: <https://technosports.co.in/2023/01/25/this-is-why-qsi-want-to-buy-pl-club/>
- Towriss, D. (24.11.2022). Explainer: What is ‘sportswashing’, and how does it threaten democracy? *INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE*. Retrieved 01.05. 2023. From: <https://www.idea.int/blog/explainer-what-%E2%80%98sportswashing%E2%80%99-and-how-does-it-threaten-democracy>
- Davis, L., Plumley, D., Wilson, R. (2023). For the love of ‘sportswashing’; LIV Golf and Saudi Arabia’s push for legitimacy in elite sport. *Managing Sport and Leisure*. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2022.2162953>
- Degrushe, A. (2023.11.01). WWE Accused of Helping Saudi Arabia "Sportswash" Its Poor Human Rights Records. *Distractify*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.distractify.com/p/sportswashing-meaning>
- Delaney, M. (2022, 29. 12). 2022 was a momentous year for football, wrapped around a rotten core. *The Independent*. 08.01. 2023. From: <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/2022-review-of-the-year-world-cup-b2252483.html>
- Edgar, A. (2021). Super Leagues and Sacred Sites. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 305–307. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2021.1953814>
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, S. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62(1), 107–115. From: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE open*, 4(1). From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Elsborg, S. (23.10.2018). Putin’s use of sporting events as a domestic policy tool. *PlaytheGame*. Retrieved 25.01.2023. From: <https://www.playthegame.org/news/putin-s-use-of-sporting-events-as-a-domestic-policy-tool/>
- Elsborg, S. (27.10. 2022). The Saudis in sport: Ambitions much larger than sportswashing. *PlaytheGame*. From: <https://www.playthegame.org/news/the-saudis-in-sport-ambitions-much-larger-than-sportswashing/>
- Ewoma, M. (2022, 29. 11). Why Sportswashing Really Matters. *Versus*. From: <https://versus.uk.com/2022/11/sportswashing-really-matters/>
- Eyre, A. (1997). *Football and religious experience: sociological reflections*. From: <https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/386/1/RERC2-011-1-EYR.pdf>

- Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies*, 7 (2), pp. 177-197. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239>
- FIA. (2023a). Organisation. *FIA website*. Retrieved 30.03.2023. From: <https://www.fia.com/organisation>
- FIA. (2023b). The FIA. FIA website. Retrieved 30.03.2023. From: <https://www.fia.com/fia>
- FIFA. (2022.13.07). Coca-Cola. FIFA. Retrieved 25.01.2023 From: <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/commercial/partners/coca-cola>
- Firmstone, J. (2019). Editorial journalism and newspapers' editorial opinions. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. From: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.803>
- Foster, G., & O'Reilly, N. (2023). Sporting Club Stakeholder Alignment: Key Stakeholder Relationships and their Association with On-The-Field and Off-The-Field Performance. *Journal of Global Sport Management*. 8, (1), pp.183-2021. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2020.1805213>
- Francis, M. (2022, 27.01). Politics and Government Chair Boykoff Speaks Out Against IOC, Beijing Games. *Pacific University Oregon*. Retrieved 29.03.2023. From: <https://www.pacificu.edu/about/media/politics-and-government-chair-boykoff-speaks-out-against-ioc-beijing-games>
- Fruh, K., & Archer, A., Wojtowicz, J. (2022.20.11). Sportswashing: What It Is, Who Does It, and How to Stop It. *Liberal Currents*. Retrieved 25.01.2023. From: <https://www.liberalcurrents.com/sportswashing-what-it-is-who-does-it-and-how-to-stop-it%EF%BF%BC/>
- Fruh, K., Archer, A., Wojtowicz, J. (2023). Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption. *Sports, Ethics and Philosophy*, 17(1), 101-118. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2022.2107697>
- Ganji, S. K. (2022). How Qatar Became a World Leader in Sportswashing. *Journal of Democracy*. Retrieved 14.01.2023. From: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/how-qatar-became-a-world-leader-in-sportswashing/>
- Gay, J. (2022, 25. February). The Bleak Truth of 'Sportswashing' --- Phil Mickelson brazenly acknowledges the moral trade-off with a problematic partner, and the sports world roils. *Wall Street Journal*. From: <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/bleak-truth-sportswashing-phil-mickelson-brazenly/docview/2632643010/se-2>
- Garside, K. (2023, 17.02). Buying Man Utd would resume Qatar's sportswashing project for a fraction of the World Cup price. *Inews*. Retrieved 29.04.2023. from: <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/buying-man-utd-qatar-sportswashing-project-world-cup-price-2157152>
- Gelmini, S. (2022.17.03). Man Utd bidding war a "dirty derby" of sportswashing. *Greenpeace*. Retrieved 24.04.2023. From: <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/man-utd-bidding-war-a-dirty-derby-of-sportswashing/>
- Golafshani, N. Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. (2003). *The Qualitative report*, 8(4), pp.597-606. From: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>



- Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B. M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse education today*, 56, pp. 29-34. From: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002>
- Griffin, T.J. (2017). Football in the hands of the other: Qatar's World Cup in the British broadsheet press. *Arab World Geographer*, 20(2-3), pp. 170-182. From: <https://meridian.allenpress.com/awg/article-abstract/20/2-3/170/59987/Football-in-the-Hands-of-the-Other-Qatar-s-World>
- Grix, J., & Brannagan, P.M. (2016) Of Mechanisms and Myths: Conceptualising States' "Soft Power" Strategies through Sports Mega-Events. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27(2), pp. 251-272. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1169791>
- Grix, J., & Houlihan, B. (2014). Sports Mega-Events as Part of a Nation's Soft Power Strategy: The Cases of Germany (2006) and the UK (2012). *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16(4), 572–596. From: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.12017>
- Guardian. (2014. 01.06). World Cup 2022: the allegations against Mohamed bin Hammam. *Guardian*. Retrieved 10.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/ng-interactive/2014/jun/01/world-cup-2014-the-allegations-against-mohamed-bin-hammam>
- Gurevitch, M. Bennet, T., Curran, J., Wollacott, J. (2005). Culture, society and the media. *Routledge*. From: <http://didik.mercubuana-yogya.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Culture-Society-and-the-Media.pdf>
- Hathotuwa, S. (2022. 18.10). The rise of soft power: can sportswashing be a good thing?. *Business Leader*. Retrieved 01.05.2023. From: <https://www.businessleader.co.uk/the-rise-of-soft-power-can-sportswashing-be-a-good-thing/>
- Hearst, D. (2023.10.01). World Cup 2026: Will the US face the same kind of scorn as Qatar?. *Middle East Eye*. Retrieved 17.01.2023. From: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/qatar-world-cup-us-scorn-face-will>
- Heath, E. (2023.19.04). Bryson DeChambeau Hits Out At 'Completely Inaccurate' LIV Sportswashing Claims. *Golf Monthly*. Retrieved 22.04.2023. From: <https://www.golfmonthly.com/news/bryson-dechambeau-hits-out-at-completely-inaccurate-liv-sportswashing-claims>
- Hogg, M.A. (2016). Social Identity Theory. Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory. *Springer International Publishing*, pp 3-17. From: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-29869-6_1)
- Holmes, T. (2023. 24.04). LIV Golf, sportswashing and women's rights in Saudi Arabia in the spotlight as Adelaide event wraps up. *ABC sport daily*. Retrieved 26.04.2023. From: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-24/liv-golf-saudi-arabia-and-sportswashing-adelaide/102255808>
- Holt, D. (2016). Branding in the Age of Social Media A better alternative to branded content. Social media. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved 30.03.2023. From: <https://hbr.org/2016/03/branding-in-the-age-of-social-media>
- Hopkinson, T. (2023.21.01). Man Utd told to NOT accept any Sir Jim Ratcliffe bids after he registers takeover interest. *Mirror*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/ratcliffe-manutd-takeover-glazers-greenpeace-29013753>

- Houlihan, B., Zheng, J. (2015). Small states: sports and politics at the margin. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 7 (3), pp.329-344. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2014.959032>
- Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political psychology*, 22(1), 127-156. From: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00230>
- IndianExpress.(2023.24.01). Saudi Arabia's investment fund tried to buy Formula One, valued it at \$20 billion dollars: Report. *IndianExpress*. Retrieved 24.01.2023. From: <https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/motor-sport/saudi-arabias-investment-fund-tried-to-buy-formula-one-valued-it-at-20-billion-dollars-report-8400790/>
- International Olympic committee (IOC). (N.D.). THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (IOC). *Paris2024*. Retrieved 29.03.2023. From: <https://www.paris2024.org/en/the-international-olympic-committee/>
- Jimenez-Martinez, J. & Skey, M. (2018). How repressive states and governments use 'sportswashing' to remove stains on their reputation. *The Conversation*. Retrieved 20.03.2023. From: <https://theconversation.com/how-repressive-states-and-governments-use-sportswashing-to-remove-stains-on-their-reputation-100395>
- Jochem, P. (2022, 20.05). WHY football is complicit in Putin's war. Retrieved 31.03. 2023. *DW Kick off!*. From: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dXvvZU77Ao>.
- Katwala,S. (2000.18.09). Democratising global sport. *The foreign policy centre*. Retrieved 30.03.2023. From: <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/democratising-global-sport/>
- Kihl, L.A., Skinner, J., Engelberg, T. (2017). Corruption in sport: understanding the complexity of corruption, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17(1),pp. 1-5. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2016.1257553>
- Knowles, C. (2021). Responsibility in Cases of Structural and Personal Complicity: A Phenomenological Analysis. *The Monist*, (2),pp. 224–237. From: <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onaa034>.
- Krackauer, S. (1953). The Challenge of Qualitative Content Analysis. *Special Issue on International Communications Research*, 16(4), pp. 631-642. From: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2746123>
- Krehbiel, R. (2023. 08.05). Criticism of LIV Golf is personal for some: "The kingdom is not to be trusted. *Tulsa World*. Retrieved 20.04.2023. From: [https://tulsa-world.com/news/local/criticism-of-liv-golf-is-personal-for-some-the-kingdom-is-not-to-be-trusted/article\\_c0d11004-e84a-11ed-aa8d-8fa812c6e6a1.html](https://tulsa-world.com/news/local/criticism-of-liv-golf-is-personal-for-some-the-kingdom-is-not-to-be-trusted/article_c0d11004-e84a-11ed-aa8d-8fa812c6e6a1.html)
- Krzyzaniak, J. S. (2018). The soft power strategy of soccer sponsorships. *Soccer & Society*, 19(4), pp. 498-515. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1199426>
- Lawson, A. (2022.16.12). Messi business: how 'sportswashing' could land Saudi Arabia the 2030 World Cup. *Guardian*. Retrieved 24.04.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/16/messi-business-how-sportswashing-could-land-saudi-arabia-the-2030-world-cup>
- Leeper, C. (2011). Chapter 9 - More Similarities than Differences in contemporary Theories of social development?: A plea for theory bridging. In J. B. Benson (Ed.), *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 40, pp. 337-378. From: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-386491-8.00009-8>
- Leeks, J. (2023.19.01). From executions to torture: The dire state of human rights in Cristiano Ronaldo's new home. *Mirror*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From:

- <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/cristiano-ronaldo-saudi-arabia-rights-28977285>
- Lees, J. (2023. 28.02.). Lewis Hamilton and rivals urged to boycott races as MPs accuse F1 of 'sportswashing'. *Mirror*. Retrieved 29.04.2023. From: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/formula-1/lewis-hamilton-f1-race-sportswashing-29338226>
- Luke, T. W. (2015). The interpretation of power. In *Handbook of Critical Policy Studies*, pp. 151-168. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Lynch, E. (2023. 14.01). Lynch: The Saudis are dodging a U.S. court, and the impact on LIV Golf could be huge. *Golfweek USA Today*. Retrieved 25.01.2023. From: <https://golfweek.usatoday.com/2023/01/14/lynch-saudis-dodging-us-court-huge-liv-golf-impact/>
- Mabon, L. (2022). Football and climate change: what do we know, and what is needed for an evidence-informed response?. *Climate policy*, pp. 1-15. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2022.2147895>
- Maennig, W. (2005) Corruption in International Sports and Sport Management: Forms, Tendencies, Extent and Countermeasures. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 5(2), pp. 187-225. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740500188821>
- Mannin, A. & Ozornina, N. (2020). Framing the image of Russia in the British media during the World Cup 2018. *Russian Journal of Communication*, 12(2), pp. 121-136. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19409419.2020.1823563>
- Marcin, K. M. (2023). Sport at the World Expo. Analysis of sports diplomacy at the non-sporting event. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. From: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-023-00294-6>
- Margol, I. (2022, 27. 10). September 11 attack survivors, relatives of victims denounce event in Doral. *Local 10*. From: <https://www.local10.com/news/local/2022/10/27/september-11-survivors-denounce-saudi-arabias-sponsorship-of-event-at-trumps-property-in-doral/>
- Martina, M. Martina, M. (2021.28.07). U.S. Lawmakers blast Coca-Cola, VISA and other sponsors of Beijing Olympics. *Reuters*. From: <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/pathetic-disgraceful-us-lawmakers-blast-coca-cola-visa-others-over-beijing-2021-07-27/>
- Matthes, J. (2009). What's in a frame? A content analysis of media framing studies in the world's leading communication journals, 1990-2005. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86(2), pp. 349–367. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900908600206>
- Mata, W. (2023. 21.02). What is sportswashing? Manchester United face Qatar takeover dilemma. *Evening Standard*. Retrieved 14.04.2023. From: <https://www.standard.co.uk/sport/football/what-sportswashing-manchester-united-takeover-qatar-ineos-b1061886.html>
- McCombs, M.E., Shaw, D.L, Weaver, D, H. (2014). New Directions in Agenda- Setting Theory and Research. *Mass Communication & Society*, 17 (6), pp.781-802. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2014.964871>
- McEwan, C. (2018). Postcolonialism, Decoloniality and Development. Second edition. *Routledge London*. from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315178363>
- McGinley, S. (2010.06.12). Zidane was paid \$15m to support Qatar bid – report. *Arabianbusiness*. Retrieved 17.01.2023. From:

- <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/industries/sport/zidane-was-paid-15m-support-qatar-bid-report-365745>
- Middle East Monitor (MEM). (2022, 06.09). Saudi Arabia to add MotoGP to ever-growing 'sportswashing' strategy. *Middle East Monitor*. From: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220906-saudi-arabia-to-add-motogp-to-ever-growing-sportswashing-strategy/>
- Miller, T. (2020). Routledge Handbook of Sports Journalism. In first. Edition (Ed.), Routledge Handbook of Sports Journalism (pp. 10). *Routledge*. From: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315616704-35>
- Mineret, Z. (2023.17.01). Formula 1 neutrality legislation is anything but neutral. *The McGill Tribune*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.mcgilltribune.com/sports/formula-1-neutrality-legislation-is-anything-but-neutral/>
- Morin,R. (N.D). National Press Club president slams television broadcast deal between LIV Golf, CW Network. *USA Today sports*. Retrieved 20.01.2023. From: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/golf/2023/01/20/national-press-club-president-slams-liv-golf-cw-network-tv-deal/11090151002/>
- Morse, B. (2022, 16. 08). As golf travels to its 'Home' for 150th Open, it's played against the backdrop of its biggest threat. *CNN*. From: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/13/sport/the-open-liv-golf-st-andrews-spt-intl/index.html>
- Murray, E. (2023, 02.01). LIV Golf risks becoming an irrelevance in growing Saudi sportswashing portfolio. *Guardian*. Retrieved 15.04.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2023/jan/02/liv-golf-risks-becoming-an-irrelevance-in-growing-saudi-sportswashing-portfolio>
- Neate, R. (2021,12.11). Winter Olympics top sponsors 'silent' over China's human rights record. *Guardian*. Retrieved 21.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/nov/12/winter-olympics-top-sponsors-silent-over-chinas-human-rights-record>
- Nettavisen Sport. (2023. 02.02). Avis: Nye Premier League-regler vil skape jordskjelv – tar grep rundt klubbeierskap. *Nettavisen*. Retrieved 02.02. 2023. From: [https://www.nettavisen.no/sport/avis-nye-premier-league-regler-vil-skape-jordskjelv-tar-grep-rundt-klubbeierskap/s/12-95-3424352251?fbclid=IwAR3ekLv\\_XBw5IuTucTnSJymTN26zCq5y4ShEkE3FQ\\_g27195kXI7H8I38TA](https://www.nettavisen.no/sport/avis-nye-premier-league-regler-vil-skape-jordskjelv-tar-grep-rundt-klubbeierskap/s/12-95-3424352251?fbclid=IwAR3ekLv_XBw5IuTucTnSJymTN26zCq5y4ShEkE3FQ_g27195kXI7H8I38TA)
- Noel, H., Mariannunziata,L. (2023). 'Be a game changer and keep the ball rolling': exploring linkages between football clubs, charitable foundations and doing good. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, pp. 1-33. From: <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-06-2022-5876>
- Nye, J. (1990). Soft power. *Foreign Policy*, (80), pp. 153-171. From: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1148580?seq=5>
- Næss, H.A. (2017). Sandwiched Between Sport and Politics: Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, Formula 1, and Non-Democratic Regimes. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34(7-8),pp. 535-553. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1371700>
- Ogilvie,S. (2022.08.09). Word of the month: "Sportswashing". *Prospect Magazine*. Retrieved 24.01.2023. From: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/society-and-culture/word-of-the-month-sportswashing-etymology>

- Pandey, K. (15.12.2022). Do Host Countries Make Money from FIFA?. *Jumpstart*. Retrieved 20.01.2023. From: <https://www.jumpstartmag.com/do-host-countries-make-money-from-fifa/>
- Pavitt, M. (2023. 20.04). Greg Norman reveals he 'has NOT' spoken to Saudi Arabia's leadership over human rights, with the LIV Golf chief insisting breakaway series is a 'force for good' amid accusations of sportswashing. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved 23.04.2023. From: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/golf/article-11994327/Greg-Norman-not-spoken-Saudi-Arabias-leadership-human-rights.html>
- Pemberton, J. (09.07.2022). Sportswashing: 'A dirty rewarding game'. *I24news*. Retrieved 24.01.2023. From: <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/sport/1656590390-sportswashing-a-dirty-rewarding-game>
- Pitpass. (2022.28.12). Sporting Code update to see drivers gagged?. *Pitpass*. Retrieved 24.01.2023. From: <https://www.pitpass.com/74328/Sporting-Code-update-to-see-drivers-gagged>
- Polley, M. (2022. 18.11). Sportswashing: a historical perspective on a current trend. *History Extra*. Retrieved 28.04.2023. From: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/sportswashing-history-olympics-world-cup-sport-reputation/>
- Portus, J. (2023, 21. January). Extinction Rebellion's Tour Down Under protests should be a wake-up call for cycling. *Bikeradar*. Retrieved 18.01.2023 From: <https://www.bikeradar.com/features/opinion/extinction-rebellion-tour-down-under/>
- Pranto, T. A. (2022, 14.03). Abramovich and the deep tentacles of 'dirty money' in football. *The Business Standard*. Retrieved 15.01. 2023. From: <https://www.tbsnews.net/sports/abramovich-and-deep-tentacles-dirty-money-football-384394>
- Purchell, J. (2023, 23.03). What is sportswashing and why is it such a big problem?. *Greenpeace*. Retrieved 15.04.2023. From: <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/sportswashing-definition-examples/>
- Ronay, B. (25.02.2022). Uefa and Fifa are too late: Russia's sportswashing has served its purpose. *Guardian*. Retrieved 17.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/feb/25/uefa-and-fifa-are-too-late-russias-sportswashing-has-served-its-purpose>
- Ronkainen, N.J, Watkins, I., Ryba, T.V. (2016). What can gender tell us about the pre-retirement experiences of elite distance runners in Finland?: A thematic narrative analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 22, pp.37-45. From: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.06.003>
- Rushden, M., Glendenning, B., Ames, N., Fadugba, J., Vickery, T., Begum, R., & Donovan, L. (2022,18.11). World Cup Groups G and H, plus: women in Qatar – Football Daily podcast. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 14. 01, 2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/audio/2022/nov/18/world-cup-groups-gand-h-plus-women-in-qatar-football-daily-podcast>.
- Rødningen, D. (3.1.2022). Sportsvaske er årets ord 2021. *Språkrådet*. Retrieved 15.01.2022 From: <https://www.sprakradet.no/Vi-og-vart/hva-skjer/Aktuelt/2021/sportsvaske-er-arets-ord-2021/>
- Sakajiri, N. (20.01.2023). Interview: Saudi minister calls 'sportswashing' claims 'naive'. *The Asahi Shimbun*. Retrieved 23.01.2023. From: <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14819388>

- Said, E.W. (1985). Orientalism Reconsidered. *Cultural Critique*, 1, pp. 89–107. From: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354282>
- Saunders, M.N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed). Pearson Education Limited.
- Schofield, W. (2023. 23.03). Jim Ratcliffe's INEOS branded 'undisputed champions' of sportswashing with Man Utd bid. *Daily Star*. Retrieved 28.04.2023. From: <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/sport/football/sir-jim-ratcliffe-manchester-united-29533194>
- Selvi, A.F. (2019). The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Qualitative content analysis. *Routledge*. From: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780367824471-37/qualitative-content-analysis-ali-fuad-selvi>
- Sequeira.A.H. (2014). Conceptualization in Research. *SSRN electronic journal*. From: <https://sta.uwi.edu/igds/sites/default/files/igds/documents/Conceptualizing%20in%20Research-1.pdf>
- Shannon, S.E., Hsieh, H.F. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), pp. 1277-1288. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Shelley, E. (2022.30.06). 2022: The Year Of Sportswashing. *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/2022-the-year-of-sportswashing/>
- Simms, G. (2023. 03.03). What is sportswashing? Meaning of the term explained amid criticism of Qatar’s Man Utd takeover bid. *inews*. Retrieved 17.04. 2023. From: <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/sportswashing-what-meaning-explained-qatar-man-utd-takeover-bid-2163730>
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2019, June 3). Consequentialism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 19.03. 2023. From: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/consequentialism/>
- Simpson, M. (11.10.2021). What is sportswashing? Definition of the sports term, LIV Golf series and Newcastle United ownership. *Nationalworld*. From: <https://www.nationalworld.com/sport/football/what-is-sportswashing-definition-of-the-sports-term-amid-newcastle-united-takeover-3414209>
- Skey, M. (2022). Sportswashing: Media headline or analytic concept?. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0(0),pp. 1-16. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221136086>
- Slabbinck, H., & Witteloostuijn, A.V. (2020.30.06). Explicit and Implicit Basic Human Motives, and Public Service Motivation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. From: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01542/full#:~:text=Human%20motives%20are%20defined%20as,etal.%2C%201989>
- Smiley, M. (2022, 19.12). Collective Responsibility. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 17. 03.2023. From: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-responsibility/>
- Smithfield, J. (2023. 02.03). Sportswashing at Newcastle United is a myth – Listen to what Yasir Al-Rumayyan and Amanda Staveley are saying. *The Mag*. Retrieved 29.04.2023. From: <https://www.themag.co.uk/2023/03/sportswashing-at-newcastle-united-is-a-myth-listen-to-what-yasir-al-rumayyan-and-amanda-staveley-are-saying/>

- Spear, S. (2017). Impression Management Activity in Vision, Mission, and Values Statements: A Comparison of Commercial and Charitable Organizations. *International studies of Management & Organization*, 47 (2), pp. 159-175. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2017.1256165>
- Spiegelman, D.V. (8. February 2023). The ugliness of the Beautiful Game: How can Supporters Morally enjoy Football in the Modern Era? [Master Thesis concerning the program "Applied Ethics", Utrech University]. From: <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/43527>
- Stavrum, G. (24.11.2021). Qatars milliardsponsorer Coca-Cola og Visa sitter musestille mens journalister fengsles. *Nettavisen*. Retrieved 10.01.2023 From: <https://www.nettavisen.no/norsk-debatt/qatars-milliardsponsorer-coca-cola-og-visa-sitter-musestille-mens-journalister-fengsles/o/5-95-345991>
- Stephard, A. (2022.29.12). Was 2022 the High-Water Mark of Sportswashing?. *New republic*. Retrieved 17.01.2023. From: <https://newrepublic.com/article/169605/2022-high-water-mark-sportswashing>
- Storey, D. (10.03.2022). Abramovich sanctions: The days of sportswashing are over at Chelsea, but not in English football. *inews*. Retrieved 20.01.2023. From: <https://inews.co.uk/sport/football/abramovich-sanctions-sportswashing-chelsea-english-football-1509190>
- Swarm, J. (2018. 29.10). The Impact of Social Media on the Sports Industry. *College of Communication*. Retrieved 18.04.2023. From: <https://www.bu.edu/prlab/2018/10/29/the-impact-of-social-media-on-the-sports-industry/>
- Søyland, H. S., & Moriconi, M. (2022). Qatar's multi-actors sports strategy: Diplomacy, critics and legitimation. *International Area Studies Review*, 25(4), pp. 354-374. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/22338659221120065>
- Tai, F.M., & Chuang, S.H. (2014). Corporate Social Responsibility. *iBusiness*, 6 (3),pp 117-130. From: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ib.2014.63013>
- Taylor, M. (2021.22.03). Major climate polluters accused of greenwashing with sports sponsorship. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 21.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/22/major-climate-polluters-accused-of-greenwashing-with-sports-sponsorship>
- Tedder, M. (2023. 19.01). CW cancels most of your favourite shows, makes a deal with Saudi- Backed golf league. *TheStreet*. Retrieved 21.01.2023. From: <https://www.thestreet.com/sports/cw-cancels-most-of-your-favorite-shows-makes-deal-with-saudi-backed-golf-league>
- Thomas, R. J. (2011). Media Morality and Compassion for "Faraway Others". *Journalism Practice*, 5(3), pp. 287-302. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2010.540132>
- Towriss, D. (24.11.2022). Explainer: What is 'sportswashing', and how does it threaten democracy?. *INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE*. Retrieved 01.05. 2023. From: <https://www.idea.int/blog/explainer-what-%E2%80%98sportswashing%E2%80%99-and-how-does-it-threaten-democracy>
- Unithan, J. (2023.21.01). Saudi Arabia Grants Mike Tyson Citizenship After Mere 'Hours' in the Country Amid Sportswashing Accusations. *Essentially Sport*. Retrieved 21.01.2023. From: <https://www.essentiallysports.com/boxing-news-saudi-arabia-grants-mike-tyson-citizenship-after-mere-hours-in-the-country-amid-sportswashing-accusations/>

- Vuving, A., 2009. How soft power works. *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://dkiapcss.edu/Publications/Vuving%20How%20soft%20power%20works%20APSA%202009.pdf>
- Watkins, M.D. (2007.10.09). Demystifying Strategy: The What, Who, How, and Why. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved 01.05.2023. From: <https://hbr.org/2007/09/demystifying-strategy-the-what>
- Wearing, D. (2022.16.11). A game of two halves: how `sportswashing` benefits Qatar and the west. *Guardian*. Retrieved 14.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/16/sportswashing-qatar-west-world-cup-regime>
- Wertheim, J. (2023. 09.04). Saudi Arabia shelling out on sports, athletes amid accusations of sportswashing. *CBS*. 15.04.2023. From: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saudi-arabia-sportswashing-accusations-60-minutes-transcript-2023-04-09/>
- Whiteaker, J.( 2021. 09.11). What is sportswashing and does it really work?. *Investment Monitor*. Retrieved 18.04.2023. From: <https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/features/what-is-sportswashing-and-does-it-really-work/>
- Wilson, J. (2022.11.03). Sportswashing and Global Football's Immense Power. *Sports Illustrated*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.si.com/soccer/2022/03/11/sportswashing-chelsea-abramovich-russia-qatar-abu-dhabi-saudi-arabia>
- Wu, H.D., Coleman, R.( 2009). ADVANCING AGENDA- SETTING THEORY: THE COMPARATIVE STRENGTH AND THE NEW CONTINGENT CONDITIONS OF THE TWO LEVEL OF AGENDA-SETTING EFFECTS. *J&MC Quarterly*, 86 (4), pp. 775-789. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900908600404>
- Wæraas, A., Byrkjeflot, H. (2012). Public Sector Organizations and Reputation Management: Five Problems. *International Public Management Journal*, 15 (2), pp.186-206. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2012.702590>
- Zamorano, M. M. (2016). "Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory". *Culture Unbound Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 8, pp. 166–186. From: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se>
- Zidan, K. (2023, 11. 01.2023). Report: Saudi Arabia in talks to buy WWE, expand sportswashing empire. *Bloody Elbow*. Retrieved 15.01.2023 From: <https://bloodyelbow.com/2023/01/11/saudi-arabia-bid-buy-wwe-wrestling-politics-sportswashing-news/>
- Zheng, R. (2018). What is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, (21),pp. 869–885. From: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-018-9892-8>



## **Discussion paper**

Ludvig Bodal

### **Summary of thesis**

In this comprehensive and insightful discussion paper, I will delve into the multifaceted concept of responsibility in relation to my compelling thesis on sportswashing. Firstly, I will provide a concise yet informative introduction, elucidating the central theme and establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent discourse. After that I will proceed to analyse ethical challenges that arise for entities that engage in sportswashing. By shedding light on these challenges, I intend to give a deeper understanding of the implications and consequences that comes with sportswashing. After that I will discuss ethical challenges and responsibility in relating to our thesis research questions and findings and also discussing units of analysis. By addressing key such as ethical challenges, research questions, and findings, I hope to contribute to the collective understanding of the complex interplay between responsibility, sportswashing, and ethics.

### **Responsibility**

In my thesis we have explored the topic 'Sportswashing' and researched motive, consequences and conceptualised sportswashing. Sportswashing is a complex phenomenon with various definitions. Sportswashing are when any individual, government or state use sport to repair or improve a tarnished reputation. We found out that there are many motives behind engaging in sportswashing where the consequences could be fatal. The primary goal of sportswashing is to improve image of some sort and there are different methods in how this goal can be achieved: (1) people or states can invest in sports clubs, whether that is sponsorships or ownerships. Individuals or states want to improve their reputation and connect themselves with these sporting entities by aligning themselves with successful teams or athletes. This strategy gives them a chance to demonstrate their dedication to sporting greatness and win the support of the public. (2) Nations can host major events and take the centre of the world stage when they organize internationally renowned competitions or tournaments. This offers a singular opportunity to garner significant interest, produce significant favourable publicity, and possibly alter the perceptions held about the host country. The ensuing media attention, tourist influx, and infrastructure improvements brought on by these events all significantly help to promote a more positive view of the country while also possibly generating economic benefits through increased travel, investments, and local development initiatives. Hosting significant athletic events transforms sportswashing into a complex strategy with the potential to have lasting positive effects. (3) Individuals,

corporations, or nations can sponsor high-athletes or clubs. By forming partnerships with well-known sports figures (Krzyzaniak, 2018). they take advantage of the athlete's success to link their own brand or identity with brilliance and accomplishment. Both the athlete and the sponsor gain from the association in this type of agreement, with possibly increasing their individual reputations.

These issues include transparency, as entities may engage in deceptive practices to manipulate public perception. Additionally, questions arise regarding human rights abuses, as some sporting events may be hosted in countries with questionable records. The commodification of sports and the potential exploitation of athletes are also significant ethical dilemmas that warrant examination. Furthermore, the impact on local communities, cultural appropriation, and the environmental consequences of mega sporting events are all essential considerations within the realm of ethical challenges. In sportswashing there are many stakeholders that are responsible for allowing this process to happen. For instance. For starters there is hypocrisy among governments when discussing sportswashing. Governments engaging in sportswashing have usually something such as government engaging in human rights abuses. Hypocrisy comes up when governments that are criticizing other governments, but still make trade deals with them. Other ethical challenges in sportswashing is that it can potentially pollute sports integrity which will affect the fans negatively and also governments that engage in sportswashing which opt under brutal dictators can get normalised behaviour (Pauls, Shuman, van Zomeren, Saguy & Halperin. 2022). Another potential ethical challenge is that can be money laundering. For instance, there can occur that the people engage in sport could be connected to blood money. With lack of transparency can raise concern about corruption, societies and individuals involved. With sportswashing it can create competitive advantage for some clubs/athletes or whoever that engage, and it will be unfair for the rest of competition. Which can result in small clubs or nations unable to compete against financially dominant sides. If sporting bodies, clubs, and athletes fail to disclose relationship with entities that are involved in sportswashing, and as result prevent stakeholders or public making informed decision can be problematic for the competition to be held to its high ethical standards. Lastly, sportswashing can create a perception that are distorted of a nation or entity, further it can hide underlying issues relating to sportswashing or conflicts that require attention and resolution. When the representations are misleading in sportswashing it leverages positive narratives that are associate with sports and by this divert attention away from underlying issues, conflicts, or human rights abuses. This can lead to a skewed perception of involved entity and will be presented as more positive than reality.

For the hypocrisy issue when governments criticize others for engaging in sportswashing and for example opt for boycott but will gladly do deals with them. The population of these governments can act in protests and make a stand against their own government. If sporting integrity is on track to be polluted, the fans can start boycotting and stop buying merchandise, tickets, or something else, the consumer power is a real thing and if they don't want to be part of sportswashing they can make these sporting bodies lose money and indirectly force changes. When brutal dictators' behaviour gets normalised by international audience, activists' groups such as Amnesty will play an important role in bringing these issues up. For whitewashing to be successful when individuals show lack of transparency to where the money is coming from, the governing bodies or government can implement a strategy where it says that to be allowed investing in sport it need to show clear document and history where the money comes from and show that the money is legit. If sporting teams or athletes gain unfair competitive advantage because they have been bought up or sponsored by corporations or states, governing bodies can implement measures to even out the field and make it a fairer competition. Whether it be money related, or structure related in how these money is being paid or % of revenue allowed to be use or wage cap etc., there are many different solutions to tackle the challenge about unfair competition and tools can be used to restore competitions integrity. If athletes, sporting bodies or clubs don't co-operate and show full transparency of the relationship, they can be banned from competing, a simple and effective measure to force the stakeholder involved in sportswashing to be transparent. Lastly, if the sportswasher have managed to distort the reality and hide underlying issues a solution to this is that governing bodies or governments can put pressure on those nations, corporations or governments involved in sportswashing and protect their sport and be put hard measures against those. Further to tackle this problem is that sporting bodies can develop and implement ethical guidelines will explicit address the issue of sportswashing. The guidelines should again emphasize responsibility of sports organizations to avoid complicity in misleading representations and as a result promoting integrity and transparency. Example of these guidelines provided could be that sponsorship can receive provisions for engaging in ethical partnership, human rights impact assessments and also evaluate reputational risks that will be associated with affiliations.

Our research questions or purpose of the study was to conceptualise sportswashing and finding out motives and consequences for engaging in sportswashing. Ethical challenges that come up when trying to conceptualise this topic is that when there are many different opinions and definitions it is important to ignore background bias and be open to new

definitions and views. For example, is it equally amount of sportswashing that polluting companies engage in sportswashing by invest in sport to deflect attention from climate wrecking practices or should those issues be ignored and instead focusing on countries that engage in dubious human rights practices. For the other research question about motive and consequences it is important to be open for positive consequences and laying moral compass aside because there are two sides of sportswashing, and it can do good. Example when governments are hosting events, they will improve infrastructure that will benefit future generations. Analysing in this topic have been thorough and everything have been considered, whether it be government, corporations, and individuals. All these are involved in sportswashing one way or another, in some cases the individuals are the ones that do the sportswashing. However, when improving infrastructure, it can be on expense of the individuals, whether it can be labour exploitation where the workers get low pays and can be worked to death. For the athletes that are participating in sports they will face tough questions regarding sportswashing and they need to be prepared to answer questions on human rights or climate motivated questions. For this topic, to be not only talks about but implement measures the fans and athletes needs to have deep understanding so it can be easier for them to take a stand. Ethical challenges related to our findings that there were many positive outcomes for engaging in sportswashing, as mentioned earlier there will be an increase in infrastructure but sportswashing will also help to expand sport to new regions. Example when a country is hosting a men's football world cup for first time it will increase its popularity in football because it's the biggest and most watched competition in the world. Another ethical challenge related to motives is that if the sportswashing is successful it can help manipulate its population which comes back to an ethical challenge previously discussed that brutal dictators will be further legitimised. When discussing sportswashing in context of polluting companies that engage in sportswashing, is that for example sports like running or cycling are low-carbon activities but when high polluting companies sponsor events with these two sports it not only pollutes the event but also the sport that are supposed to be low-carbon. That result in that desired to make people use the bike cycle instead of driving is that they see these fossil fuel companies sponsor events and it can make feel peoples admission pointless. In this discussion paper I have discussed our master thesis on the topic sportswashing, we have researched conceptualisation, motive, and the consequences of sportswashing. Sportswashing is most often defined as the use of sports by any individual, government, or state to repair or improve a tarnished reputation. We found many different motives behind engaging in sportswashing and the consequences could be fatal. We found out that the

primary goal of sportswashing is to improve an image that have been tarnished by any individual, corporation or government practise. In this discussion paper there have been discussed many ethical challenges for engaging in sportswashing, there is hypocrisy among governments, sports integrity potentially polluted, there is concern on money laundering, unfair competition, and misleading representation. There has also been discussed many solutions which involves transparency, taking accountability, implementing ethical guidelines, banning non-compliant entities, levelling playing field, and exerting pressure on sportswasher. This research was done to obtain conceptual clarity which is important to understand the complex phenomenon so proper measures can be implemented to the ethical challenges for engaging in sportswashing. All positive outcomes were acknowledged with having ethical challenges in mind. Potentially manipulating population and the contradiction when polluting sponsoring low-carbon sports. To take actions against the ethical practice of sportswashing there is important that fans, athletes and entities involved in sportswashing have deep understanding and are aware of this problem. Only then a stand can be taken against sportswashing, and measures can be implemented to address these ethical challenges that are associated with sportswashing.

### **References:**

- Krzyzaniak, J. S. (2018). The soft power strategy of soccer sponsorships. *Soccer & Society*, 19(4), pp. 498-515. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1199426>
- Pauls, I. L., Shuman, E., van Zomeren, M., Saguy, T., & Halperin, E. (2022). Does crossing a moral line justify collective means? Explaining how a perceived moral violation triggers normative and nonnormative forms of collective action. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 52, 105– 123. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2818>)

## **Discussion paper**

Alexander Kallevåg Tenden

### **Summary**

The main theme on our provided master thesis has been conceptualisation, motives, and consequences of sportswashing. We have been working with a Critical Discourse Analysis where we collected discussions and debates by popular media from articles, videos, and any available publicly content collected in the time period January- February and March- April to develop themes. The choice of research method implies that our thesis was primarily based on secondary sources retrieved, with the aim of possibly increasing the awareness on sportswashing from practitioners, scholars, and activists perception. Further, the thesis has looked at several theories to understand the concept, motives, and consequences of sportswashing is applied. These theories are (a) soft power, (b) agenda setting, (c) and social identity theories related to the sportswasher, events, and stakeholders involved within this practice to analyse the ongoing practice of sportswashing.

The main findings of this study implies that sportswashing is complex to conceptualise. Further, discussed and debated during the findings the topic seems to have too many minor similar topics, that need to be addressed as well when investigating sportswashing. This is the reason of applying several theories to contribute to a broader view on sportswashing for the benefit of facilitating more research by scholars, practitioners, and activists to help governments, sport's governing bodies and athletes to take a stance against sportswashing. However, there are some practitioners and scholars that have tried to connect sportswashing with improving its image, but the phenomenon is much more complex than that. The previous literature does also include a lot of case studies, which focus on governments or corporations, but because of the descriptive discussions, debates, and lack of clear connection through the conceptualisation, it may result in more confusion rather than widely accepted answers.

### **International trends**

Sportswashing is an emerging phenomenon, therefore it is important to consider how international trends influences sportswashing, and how various actors react to these trends. This reflection paper purpose is to explore the association between sportswashing, international trends, and reaction from stakeholders, by taking insights into our research questions, findings, unit (s) of analysis, and their impact on the topic.

Sportswashing is influenced by international trends and forces and one trend that is having an important impact are the increased globalisation of sports competitions such as

English Premier League and Formula One to led to financial benefits for the sportswasher (Næss, 2017; Boycoff, 2022). This has led to attracting actors such as corporations, governments, and individuals namely the sportswasher to invest their money into this concept (Unnithan, 2023; Boycoff, 2022; Burke, 2023; Portus, 2022). Further, sportswashing has created opportunities for the sportswasher to exploit sports as their platform for achieving self-presentation (Skey, 2022; Davis, et al., 2023; Boycoff, 2022). This is possible, due to that sports bring benefits for those interested a possibly platform for reaching a global audience through media covering (Wearing, 2022; Bokar-Lindell, 2022). Additionally, the increased use of social media by fans and others may imply that the sportswasher have a digital platform where they can provide sportswashing beyond the traditional format and this could lead to an successful attempt.

Sportswashing, is a complex concept often discussed and debated in the context of international trends for the use of hosting of mega events, sponsorships of teams or athletes, or ownership in teams by the sportswasher as tool for deflecting attention from negative issues (Skey, 2022; Boycoff, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2023). Firstly, sportswashing has gained prominence in recent year, where 2022 was discussed and debated as the year of sportswashing with two provided examples by scholars of mega events where relevant; Qatar world cup 2022 and China`s hosting of the Olympic (Boycoff, 2022; Skey, 2022).

Secondly, recent examples of trends if we consider the ownerships in sports teams as part of sportswashing are the acquisition of the English club Newcastle by the Saudi Arabian government. This is discussed and debated regarding how the regime aiming to remove attention away from their poor human rights records (Davis, et al., 2023).

Thirdly, as mentioned above, the third type on how this type of sportswashing is applied in practise are sponsorship of teams and athletes This are probably the type of events, which have got least attention from practitioners, but discusses how the Saudi Arabian government state owned company Aramco is used as a sponsor in several sports for deflecting attention from the poor human rights record by the Saudi Arabian kingdom (Leeks, 2023).

Sportswashing, are widely discussed as a practice used by the sportswasher for the purpose of achieving reputation management through a theory called soft power (Skey, 2022). The concept has gained prominence in recent years, due to the allegations against countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar for using events for example the World cup held in 2022, or other events Liv Golf, Formula One as tools to increase their bonds with the international community and deflect attention from the negative issues. Qatar is heavily

discussed and debated of employing migrant workers in the build up to the world, which suffered deaths and poor treatment of LGBTQ people (Søyland & Moriconi, 2022; Skey, 2022). Similarly, Saudi Arabia are accused of poor treatment of women, imprisoning activists which are demonstrating for their basic human rights, and murder of American journalist Khashoggi (Davis, et al., 2023).

Another influential force with sportswashing is the increased awareness and scrutiny of corporate social responsibility and ethical concerns (Simpson, 2021; Tai & Chuang, 2014). When international communities become more aware on negative issues of sportswashing sustainability, and social injustices, sportswashing practises faces more scrutiny (Hopkinson, 2023; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2019). International organisations, civil society, and the public opinion plays an important role in shaping the international perception about sportswashing, and by their role it is possible to pressure sports governing bodies for their lack of commitment in preventing these events, sponsorships, ownership from starting (Næss, 2017; Fruh, et al., 2022).

Other stakeholders in the sports industry such as sponsors, athletes, and fans may respond to these trends and forces in different ways (Boycoff, 2022a, Shelly 2022, Næss, 2017). For example, sports governing bodies bear a high responsibility of ensuring values in the sports industry such as fair play and this may be impacted by the societal pressure from other stakeholders. For example, fans with expectations that their sports team or favourite competition is built on fair play and integrity (Boycoff, 2022a; Fruh, et al., 2022). If for example sports governing bodies such as FIFA, IOC, FIA, and others, which all have been heavily criticised for lack of commitment to prevent sportswashing are working together this mean they possibly could combat sportswashing (Fruh et al., 2023; Fruh, et al., 2022; Boycoff, 2022; Næss, 2017), by adopting transparency measures or stronger ethical guidelines this may prevent sportswashing.

Sponsors is also an important stakeholder in most sports and their role in sportswashing is also important to discuss regarding international trends. For examples sponsors needs to consider, if they should choose profits by be integrated into an mega events through brand promotion or avoid associations that could lead to allegation of supporting the sportswashing. Some discussions have again provided how the Qatar World Cup where a example where sponsors such as McDonalds and Coca Cola faced this decision (Bokat-Lindell, 2022; Martina, 2021). As an example, some discussions argued that Coca Cola`s partnership with FIFA (Federation Internationale Football Association) should be questioned for the reason that the sponsor is focusing on profits over the allegations that Qatar may be considered to



behaving with negatively issues beside the sports competitions (Martina, 2021; FIFA, 2022). Interestingly, according to the company they are having a principle that is about respect and ensuring human rights in line with the principles made by UN (United Nation) on business (Coca Cola, 2023). On the other hand, the company`s sponsorship during the previously held mega event in Qatar, seems to be a lack of commitment (Bokat- Lindell, 2022).

Athletes are also having an important role in sportswashing (Mineret, 2023; Kev, 2023). Some debates argue in regarding events such as Formula One, drivers which has an high profile for example Hamilton used his profile to raise the issues of controversies happening during the GP held in countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (Mineret, 2023; Kev, 2023). Another example of international force is the Saudi Arabian Kingdom purchase of Newcastle, which was conducted in 2021. Several researchers raised questions that his purchase should be considered as sportswashing due to the kingdoms negative issues as explained previously (Fruh, et al., 2022; Murray, 2023; Delaney, 2022). In addition, there is critics that the head coach in Newcastle avoid answering questions about the owners wrongdoing, this created a distance between the owners and team in general (Fruh, et al., 2023; Murray, 2023; Delaney, 2022).

Fans are also having a role in sportswashing, but probably more indirectly (Wearing, 2022). Some researchers mean they are victims of the wrongdoing by the sportswasher (Fruh, et al., 2023). But are they responsible, then for attending to matches or following their sports teams in different situations. Other discuss that fans probably may become responsible for the consequences of sportswashing because if fans have not attended this match or supported their favourite team and athletes it has not allowed the sportswasher to succeed (Wearing, 2022; Fruh, et al., 2023). Other researchers argue for an perception that countries accused of sportswashing, for example Qatar have made reforms recently due to the political pressure from for example activists organisations (Amnesty, 2020). Another view is that responsibility for situations of something bad or unfairness should not be solved by fans, but to their choice of response (Knowles, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this discussion paper has focused on international trends and forces of sportswashing by providing different part and their perception of the phenomenon. By discussion different stakeholders the paper, provided a broad view on how and why sportswashing is an international and increasingly discussed trend today. Sportswashing is influenced by international trends and forces for example those impacted by the concept, these included fans, sports governing bodies, sponsors, athletes, another sports

person. The sportswasher was discussed through different types, but the examples provided was mostly focused on ownership and hosting of mega events because of the existing research.

The critics placed on sportswashing practices, due to increased awareness of corporate social responsibility and ethical concerns has further influenced the interest in the phenomenon and a reason for why this is an emerging trend. By understanding the bigger picture between sportswashing and international trends, researchers can actively collaborate on behalf of the international community to prevent the negative consequences.

## References

- Amnesty. (2020a. n.d). Reality check: Migrant workers rights with two years to the Qatar 2022 world cup. Amnesty. Retrieved 15.01.2023. From: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/02/reality-check-migrant-workers-rights-with-two-years-to-qatar-2022-world-cup/>
- Bean, B. W. (2019). FIFA is corruption: what is to be done. *Michigan State International Law Review*, 27(2), 197-282. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3399530>
- Bokat-Lindell, S. (2022.14.12). 'The Qatar World Cup is peak sportswashing.' But will it work? *New York Times*. Retrieved 15.01.2022. From: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/world-cup-qatar-sportswashing.html>
- Boykoff, J. (2022). Toward a Theory of Sportswashing: Mega-Events, Soft Power, and Political Conflict. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 39(4), 342-351. From: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.20220095>
- Burke, P. (2023, 21. 01). Patrick Burke: Usmanov ties and Qatari interest raise more questions for Premier League. *Inside the games*. From: <https://www.insidethegames.biz/index.php/articles/1132784/premier-league-blog-usmanov-qatar>
- Coca Cola. (2023). Human Rights Principles. *Coca Cola homepage*. Retrieved 15.01.2023. From: <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/policies-and-practices/human-rights-principles>
- Collantine, K. (2023, 24.01). 'FIA's attempt to silence Hamilton and others is seriously disturbing' – rights groups. *RaceFans*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.racefans.net/2023/01/24/fias-attempt-to-silence-hamilton-and-others-is-seriously-disturbing-rights-groups/>
- Davis, L., Plumley, D., Wilson, R. (2023). For the love of 'sportswashing'; LIV Golf and Saudi Arabia's push for legitimacy in elite sport. *Managing Sport and Leisure*. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2022.2162953>
- Delaney, M. (2022, 29. 12). 2022 was a momentous year for football, wrapped around a rotten core. *The Independent*. 08.01. 2023. From: <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/2022-review-of-the-year-world-cup-b2252483.html>
- FIFA. (2022.13.07). Coca-Cola. FIFA. Retrieved 25.01.2023 From: <https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/commercial/partners/coca-cola>

- Fruh, K., & Archer, A., Wojtowicz, J. (2022.20.11). Sportswashing: What It Is, Who Does It, and How to Stop It. *Liberal Currents*. Retrieved 25.01.2023. From: <https://www.liberalcurrents.com/sportswashing-what-it-is-who-does-it-and-how-to-stop-it%EF%BF%BC/>
- Fruh, K., Archer, A., Wojtowicz, J. (2023). Sportswashing: Complicity and Corruption. *Sports, Ethics and Philosophy*, 17(1), 101-118. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2022.2107697>
- Hopkinson, T. (2023.21.01). Man Utd told to NOT accept any Sir Jim Ratcliffe bids after he registers takeover interest. *Mirror*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/ratcliffe-manutd-takeover-glazers-greenpeace-29013753>
- Knowles, C. (2021). Responsibility in Cases of Structural and Personal Complicity: A Phenomenological Analysis. *The Monist*, (2), pp. 224–237. From: <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onaa034>.
- Leeks, J. (2023.19.01). From executions to torture: The dire state of human rights in Cristiano Ronaldo's new home. *Mirror*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/cristiano-ronaldo-saudi-arabia-rights-28977285>
- Næss, H.A. (2017). Sandwiched Between Sport and Politics: Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, Formula 1, and Non-Democratic Regimes. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34(7-8), pp. 535-553. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1371700>
- Martina, M. (2021.28.07). U.S. Lawmakers blast Coca-Cola, VISA and other sponsors of Beijing Olympics. *Reuters*. From: <https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/pathetic-disgraceful-us-lawmakers-blast-coca-cola-visa-others-over-beijing-2021-07-27/>
- Mineret, Z. (2023.17.01). Formula 1 neutrality legislation is anything but neutral. *The McGill Tribune*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.mcgilltribune.com/sports/formula-1-neutrality-legislation-is-anything-but-neutral/>
- Murray, E. (2023, 02.01). LIV Golf risks becoming an irrelevance in growing Saudi sportswashing portfolio. *Guardian*. Retrieved 15.04.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2023/jan/02/liv-golf-risks-becoming-an-irrelevance-in-growing-saudi-sportswashing-portfolio>
- Portus, J. (2023, 21. January). Extinction Rebellion's Tour Down Under protests should be a wake-up call for cycling. *Bikeradar*. From: <https://www.bikeradar.com/features/opinion/extinction-rebellion-tour-down-under/>
- Shelley, E. (2022.30.06). 2022: The Year Of Sportswashing. *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. Retrieved 19.01.2023. From: <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/2022-the-year-of-sportswashing/>
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2019, June 3). Consequentialism. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 19.03. 2023. From: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/consequentialism/>
- Simpson, M. (11.10.2021). What is sportswashing? Definition of the sports term, LIV Golf series and Newcastle United ownership. *Nationalworld*. From: <https://www.nationalworld.com/sport/football/what-is-sportswashing-definition-of-the-sports-term-amid-newcastle-united-takeover-3414209>

- Skey, M. (2022). Sportswashing: Media headline or analytic concept?. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0(0),pp. 1-16. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221136086>
- Søyland, H. S., & Moriconi, M. (2022). Qatar's multi-actors sports strategy: Diplomacy, critics and legitimation. *International Area Studies Review*, 25(4), pp. 354-374. From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/22338659221120065>
- Tai, F.M., & Chuang, S.H. (2014). Corporate Social Responsibility. *iBusiness*, 6 (3),pp 117-130. From: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ib.2014.63013>
- Unithan, J. (2023.21.01). Saudi Arabia Grants Mike Tyson Citizenship After Mere 'Hours' in the Country Amid Sportswashing Accusations. *Essentially Sport*. Retrieved 21.01.2023. From: <https://www.essentiallysports.com/boxing-news-saudi-arabia-grants-mike-tyson-citizenship-after-mere-hours-in-the-country-amid-sportswashing-accusations/>
- Wearing, D. (2022.16.11). A game of two halves: how 'sportswashing' benefits Qatar and the west. *Guardian*. Retrieved 14.01.2023. From: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/16/sportswashing-qatar-west-world-cup-regime>

## Appendix 1. Video material

Link to dropbox for analysis:

[https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/y2nfs1m6nktqo8bytogq6/Video-koding.ods?dl=0&rlkey=5rf7nhln06zs2czxj2pqgx77z&fbclid=IwAR3IdEryhNAZrDJq2JFutr\\_r9d2NyHPANF6crv8RPSbsf2ngNQ2WOZhIA](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/y2nfs1m6nktqo8bytogq6/Video-koding.ods?dl=0&rlkey=5rf7nhln06zs2czxj2pqgx77z&fbclid=IwAR3IdEryhNAZrDJq2JFutr_r9d2NyHPANF6crv8RPSbsf2ngNQ2WOZhIA)

<b>Video coding</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
B1	Why FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, is the latest example of 'Sportswashing'	CBS Sports
B2	Sportswashing Isn't New: The Olympics, LIV Golf, and Qatar 2022 are just the beginning	CBS Sports
B3	How Sportswashing is changing the Game	Human Rights Foundation
B4	Sportswashing: How Countries Use Sports to Distract From Their Crimes	Amanpour and Company
B5	2022: The year of sportswashing?	Web Summit
B6	"Sportswashing & Greenwashing": Ex-Soccer Player Jules Boykoff on Qatar Hosting World Cup	Democrat Now!
B7	Is Saudi Arabia 'Sportswashing' to Clean its Image	TRT World
B8	'Sportswashing' only an issue when its not the right person doing it'	Sky News Australia
B9	Gravitas Plus: What should you feel about Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup	WION
B10	Why rich regimes are ruining football   Newcastle, Man City, PSG and Bayern Munich	DW Kick off!
B11	EU leaders in Kyiv, Battle for Donbas, Sanctions and soaring energy prices, Saudi sportswashing	FRANCE 24 English
B12	Gravitas: China, Qatar fail in their sportswashing campaign	WION

B13	Gravitas: Fifa helps Qatar sportswash human right abuses	WION
B14	The shadow workers of Qatar: Is World Cup host 'sportswashing' its reputation	FRANCE 24 English
B15	Governments Use 'Sportswashing' To Lie To The World	TYT Sports
B16	Ruiz Jr-Joshua 2: Is the fight 'Sportswashing' Saudi Arabia's human rights violations?	Sky News
B17	Saudi-led takeover of Newcastle United is 'Sportswashing', not football	Sky News
B18	At Beijing Olympics, China & IOC Accused of "Sportswashing" Amid Uyghur Abuses	Democracy Now!
B19	LIV Golf's "Sportswashing" Does More Harm Than Good	TYT Sports
B20	Saudi Arabia Exploits F-1 Racing for Sportswashing	TYT Sports
B21	Newcastle United takeover: Good or bad? Farage, Davison and Paul Embery on Saudi 'sportswashing'	GBNews
B22	Coronavirus & Sportswashing with Murad Ahmed	The Athletic Football
B23	Bob Ley on World Cup, Sportswashing and Crypto   What Did I Miss? With Michelle Beadle	What Did I Miss? With Michelle Beadle
B24	Saudi-backed golf tour faces sportswashing charge	Reuters
B25	Why Qatar is different and we can't just 'stick to football'   It's not just about sportswashing	Off the ball
B26	LIV Golf Controversy Explained: Saudi Arabia, Sportswashing, Greg Norman, and the PGA	Behind the News
B27	Rights groups call for boycott of Dakar Rally amid accusations of 'sportswashing' by Saudi Arabia	euronews
B28	THE FOOTBALL SHOW   Saudi takeover & sportswashing   iguel Delaney on Newcastle United	Off the ball

B29	How Formula 1 is used for sportswashing    Sportswashing explained	Darkside of sport
B30	Is sportswashing a systematic problem at FIFA and the IOC? - with Jules Boykoff	Sustaining Sport
B31	The 2022 FIFA World Cup And The Rise of 'Sportswashing' (In the Loop)	Newsy

## Appendix 2. Article material

Link to dropbox analysis:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/nvscbpsetvr71nn945ty7/Finalising-of-code-1.xlsx?dl=0&rkey=ciyuxdmsant7mxfzz6yausoqm&fbclid=IwAR2I5Kp2KxJzuBcJdutwpP-jpQvKSddS1u944DvgmPJZHPJYmJqP1LbjlSM>

Article coding number	Title	Date	Publisher
A1	A game of two halves: how sportswashing benefits Qatar and the west	2022	Guardian newspaper
A2	The Qatar world cup is peak sportswashing. But will it work?	2022	The New York Times
A3	The bleak truth of sportswashing--- phil mickelson brazenly acknowledges the moral trade- with a problematic partner, and the sports with world roils	2022	The wallstreet journal
A4	what is sportswashing? Definition of the sports term, LIV Golf series and Newcastle United Ownership	2021	National World
A5	Sportvaske er årets ord 2021	2021	Sprakradet

A6	Qatars milliardsponsorer Coca- Cola og Visa sitter musestille mens journalister fengsles	2021	Nettavisen
A7	Coca Cola Company Human rights policy	2022	Coca Cola company
A8	U.S. lawmakers blast Coca- Cola, Visa and other sponsors of Beijing Olympics	2021	Reuters
A9	Qatar announces plan to bid for 2032 Olympic games	2020.	Aljazeera
A10	World cup 2022: the allegations against Mohammed bin Hammam	2014	The Guardian
A11	Qatar denies allegations of corruption in World Cup 2022 bid	2020.07.04	Aljazeera
A12	Saudi Arabia: Launch of womens fotball league should not distract from abysmal human rights situation	(2020b. 26.02)	Amnesty international
A13	Reality check: Migrant workers rights with two years to the Qatar 2022 world cup	2020	Amnesty international
A14	Qatar: New laws to protect migrant workers are a step in the right direction.	2020. 30.08	Amnesty international
A15	Zidane was paid \$15m to support Qatar bid- report	2010. 06.12	Arab business
A16	PSG chief Al- Khelaifi charged with corruption over Qatar world athletics champs	23 May 2019	Arab news



A17	BeIN sports chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi goes on trial over tv rights corruption	2020. 14.09	Arab news
A18	Saudi Arabia Wealth Fund Explored Bid to Buy F1 Motor Racing	2023. 20. 01	Yahoo news
A19	Messi-Ronaldo match is sportswashing at full throttle – Amnesty International	2023. 19.01	Craven Herald & Pioner
A20	Was 2022 the High-Water Mark of Sportswashing	29. December 2022	New Republic
A21	Report: Saudi Arabia in talks to buy WWE, expand sportswashing empire	11. January 2023	Bloody elbow
A22	Interview: Saudi minister calls ‘sportswashing’ claims ‘naive’	20. January 2023	The Asahi Shimbun
A23	Sportswash is always an own goal	2022. 28.09	The Ecologist
A24	National Press Club slams CW for partnering with LIV Golf: ‘Saudi Arabia murdered a Washington Post journalist’	20 . January 2023	Awful Announcing
A25	Man Utd told to NOT accept any Sir Jim Ratcliffe bids after he registers takeover interest	21. January 2023	The Daily Mirror
A26	Sports Fans Say Qatar Has Now Politicized the World Cup	22. January 2023	Fair Observer
A27	Extinction Rebellion’s Tour Down Under protests should be a wake-up call for cycling	21. January 2023	BikeRadar

A28	'FIA's attempt to silence Hamilton and others is seriously disturbing' – rights groups	24. January 2023	RACEFANS
A29	Patrick Burke: Usmanov ties and Qatari interest raise more questions for Premier League	21. January 2023	Inside the Games
A30	This is why QSI want to buy a Premier League club soon	25. January 2023	TechnoSports
A31	National Press Club president slams television broadcast deal between LIV Golf, CW Network	n.d.	USA Today
A32	The Saudis in sport: Ambitions much larger than sportswashing	27. October 2022	Play the Game
A33	Formula 1 neutrality legislation is anything but neutral	17. January 2023	The McGill Tribute
A34	Word of the month: "Sportswashing"	2022. 08.09	Prospect Magazine
A35	As golf travels to its 'Home' for 150th Open, it's played against the backdrop of its biggest threat	2022. 16.08	CNN
A36	Lynch: The Saudis are dodging a U.S. court, and the impact on LIV Golf could be huge	14. January 2023	Golf Week   USA Today
A37	F1 sends incendiary letter to FIA after Mohammed Ben Sulayem's 'inflated price tag of \$20bn' claim	25. January 2023	Sky Sports
A38	Bloomberg: Saudi-Arabias oljefond ville bruke nesten 200 milliarder kroner på å kjøpe Formel 1	21. January 2023	Aftenposten

A39	2022 was a momentous year for football, wrapped around a rotten core	29. December 2022	The Independent
A40	Putin's use of sporting events as a domestic policy tool	23. October 2018	Play the Game
A41	62 September 11 attack survivors, relatives of victims denounce event in Doral	27. October 2022	Local News
A42	Major climate polluters accused of greenwashing with sports sponsorship	22. March 2021	Guardian
A43	64 Palestinian clubs urge Spanish clubs not to sports-wash Israeli apartheid	9. July 2021	Wafa Palestine News & Info Agency
A44	NO GOING KAZAKH   Kazakhstan warns cartel boss Daniel Kinahan he won't be able to hide there	3. October 2022	Sunday World
A45	Abramovich and the deep tentacles of 'dirty money' in football	14. March 2022	The Business Standard
A46	Do Host Countries Make Money from FIFA?	15. December 2022	Jumpstart
A47	Last Word: Normalisation is the name of the game	24. January 2023	Sportstar
A48	Saudi Arabia to add MotoGP to ever-growing 'sportswashing' strategy	6. September 2022	Memo Middle East Monitor
A49	China at the 2022 World Cup: Shining Everywhere But the Pitch	12. December 2022	Australian Institute of International Affairs

A50	2022: The Year Of Sportswashing	30.Juni 2022	Australian Institute of International Affairs
A51	Why Sportswashing Really Matters	29.November 2022	Versus
A52	Saudi Arabia Grants Mike Tyson Citizenship After Mere 'Hours' in the Country Amid Sportswashing Accusations	21.Januart 2023	Essentially sports
A53	Winter Olympics top sponsors 'silent' over China's human rights record	12.November 2021	Guardian
A54	WWE Accused of Helping Saudi Arabia "Sportswash" Its Poor Human Rights Records	11. January 2023	Distractify
A55	CW cancels most your favourite shows, makes deal with Saudi-Backed golf league	19. January 2023	TheStreet
A56	Saudi Arabia's investment fund tried to buy Formula One, valued it at \$20 billion dollars: Report	24. January 2023	TheIndianEXPRESS
A57	From executions to torture: The dire state of human rights in Cristiano Ronaldo's new home	19. January 2023	Mirror
A58	Oleksandr Usyk v Anthony Joshua: Saudi Arabia could host heavyweight rematch in late June	29 March 2022	BBC
A59	Sporting Code update to see drivers gagged?	28 December 2022	<a href="https://www.pitpass.com">Pitpass.com</a>

A60	Mainz to play Newcastle pre-season friendly despite fan protest	5 July 2022	BBC
A61	Bryson DeChambeau calls LIV Golf series involvement 'a business decision'	14 Juni 2022	BBC
A62	The World Cup arrives in Qatar: What we've seen the week before the tournament	18 November 2022	The Athletic
A63	Sportswashing and Global Football's Immense Power	11 March 2022	Sports Illustrated
A64	Abramovich sanctions: The days of sportswashing are over at Chelsea, but not in English football	10. March 2022	inews
A65	Sportswashing: What It Is, Who Does It, and How to Stop It	20. november 2022	Liberal Currents
A66	World Cup 2026: Will the US face the same kind of scorn as Qatar?	10. January 2023	Middle East Eye
A67	World Cup in Qatar brings to light term 'sportswashing'	9. December 2022	Spectrum News
A68	Uefa and Fifa are too late: Russia's sportswashing has served its purpose	25. February 2022	the Guardian
A69	Sportswashing: 'A dirty, rewarding game'	9. July 2022	i24News
A70	Sporting Braga, the team living on the edge	3. February 2023	Optus Sport
A71	Avis: Nye Premier League-regler vil skape jordskjelv – tar grep rundt klubeierskap	2. February 2023	Nettavisen Sport

A72	Premier League: Manchester City under etterforskning	6. February 2023	TV2 Sport
A73	MANCHESTER CITY TILTALT FOR FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY-REGELBRUDD	6. February 2023	VG Sport
A74	Man City Premier League charges explained: What are they? What could punishment be? What's the timescale?	6. February 2023	Sky Sports
A75	Manchester City charged with breaking financial rules by Premier League	6. February 2023	BBC Sport
A76	CLUB STATEMENT	6. February 2023	Man City
A77	BRITISKE MEDIER: EMIREN AV QATAR ØNSKER Å KJØPE MANCHESTER UNITED	8. February 2023	VG Sport
A78	HEMMELIG PLAN: HEVDER SAUDI-ARABIA TILBØD MILLIARDER I JAKTEN PÅ FOTBALL-VM	9. February 2023	VG Sport
A79	Saudi Arabia's grand sportswashing campaign comes to finish off cricket's current order	21.04 2023	Guardian
A80	Polluting companies and dodgy governments are trying to clean up their image by buying teams and sponsoring tournaments. We shouldn't let them get away with it.	23.03.2023	Greenpeace

A81	Opinion   Inside Saudi Arabia's Sportswashing: Why Riyadh Is Spending Billions on Soccer, Ski-runs and Off-road Car Rallies	02.05.2023	Haaretz
A82	Bryson DeChambeau Hits Out At 'Completely Inaccurate' LIV Sportswashing Claims	19.04.2023	Golf Monthly
A83	Owen Lloyd: The Azerbaijan Grand Prix - a prime example of sportswashing at work	29.04.2023	Inside the games
A84	Saudi Arabia shelling out on sports, athletes amid accusations of sportswashing	09.04.2023	CBS
A85	What is sportswashing? Meaning of the term explained amid criticism of Qatar's Man Utd takeover bid	03.03.2023	Inews
A86	What is sportswashing? Manchester United face Qatar takeover dilemma	21.02.2023	Evening Standard
A87	Greg Norman plays down LIV sportswashing claims insisting he is 'focused on golf'	20.04.2023	Mirror
A88	World Cup 2022: Qatar is accused of 'sportswashing' but do the fans really care?	21.11.2022	The Conversation
A89	UK MPs express "grave concerns" over FIA and F1 role in "sportswashing"	02.03	Motorsport
A90	Newcastle and Manchester United fans unite to condemn sportswashing	31.03.2023	Guardian

A91	Sportswashing's malign influence on display as LIV Golf lands in Adelaide	19.04.2023	Guardian
A92	LIV Golf risks becoming an irrelevance in growing Saudi sportswashing portfolio	02.01.2023	Guardian
A93	Messi business: how 'sportswashing' could land Saudi Arabia the 2030 World Cup	16.12.2022	Guardian
A94	Man United fans concerned the club could be used as part of a 'sportswashing' project if they are sold to a group of Qatari investors... but others claim some supporters will be 'uncomfortable' with the source of funding of WHOEVER buys them	02.03.2023	Daily Mirror
A95	Saudi Arabia's Newest Sportswashing Strategy: Sponsorship Of Women's World Cup	16.02.2023	Human Rights Watch
A96	Bahrain Grand Prix: Human rights group writes to F1 about 'ongoing concerns' over 'sportswashing'	27.02.2023	CNN
A97	FIFA criticised by Women's World Cup hosts over potential 'sportswashing' Saudi Arabia sponsorship deal	03.02.2023	Sky sports
A98	F1 responds to fresh Saudi Arabian 'sportswashing' concerns	16.03.2023	GP Fans



A99	Buying Man Utd would resume Qatar's sportswashing project for a fraction of the World Cup price	17.02.2023	Inews
A100	A sportswashing Qatarstrophe	30.11.2022	Play the game
A101	Sportswashing: a historical perspective on a current trend	18.11.2022	History Extra
A102	'No Qatari sportswashing!' Manchester United fans protest against Sheikh Jassim takeover bid	12.03.2023	Independent
A103	Men`s football is sportswashing working?	09.12.2022	Morning Star
A104	Man Utd bidding war a "dirty derby" of sportswashing	17.03.2022	Greenpeace
A105	Forget 'sportswashing': Qatar 2022 is about military might and hard sports power	14.10.2022	Guardian
A106	Accusations of Formula 1 'sportswashing' with Saudi Arabian Grand Prix	19.03.2023	Reprieve
A107	Greg Norman reveals he 'has NOT' spoken to Saudi Arabia's leadership over human rights, with the LIV Golf chief insisting breakaway series is a 'force for good' amid accusations of sportswashing	20.04.2023	Daily Mail
A108	Lewis Hamilton and rivals urged to boycott races as MPs accuse F1 of 'sportswashing'	28.02.2023	Mirror

A109	Sportswashing and spectacle as Qatar's World Cup of conflicts kicks off	20.11.2022	Independent
A110	As repression grows in Saudi Arabia, so too does investment in sports	09.04.2023	CBS news
A111	F1 faces legal challenge over Bahrain contract and sportswashing	27.10.2022	Guardian
A112	Sportswashing at Newcastle United is a myth – Listen to what Yasir Al-Rumayyan and Amanda Staveley are saying	02.03.2023	Mag
A113	BAH HUMBUG F1 are failing to tackle Gulf's sportswashing and holding 2023 season opener in Bahrain is not helping situation	28.02.2023	Sun
A114	In Qatar, 'sportswashing' runs out of steam	23.11.2022	Christian Science Monitor
A115	Jim Ratcliffe's INEOS branded 'undisputed champions' of sportswashing with Man Utd bid	23.03.2023	Daily Star
A116	LIV Golf, sportswashing and women's rights in Saudi Arabia in the spotlight as Adelaide event wraps up	24.04.2023	ABC Sport Daily
A117	Scott Stinson: Messi, Ronaldo, Saudi Arabia and the petro-state takeover of soccer	07.05.2023	Toronto Sun
A118	Alex Morgan attacks 'bizarre' potential Saudi Women's World Cup Sponsorship	09.02.2023	Guardian

A119	Criticism of LIV Golf is personal for some: 'The kingdom is not to be trusted	08.05.2023	Tulsa World
A120	Manchester City's history shows there never was a golden age of ownership	08.05.2023	Guardian
A121	Why Lewis Hamilton's SCATHING F1 Miami GP comments should have FIFA World Cup impact	08.05.2023	GP Fans
A122	Newcastle player rules himself out of Leeds game as £30m target enjoys St James' Park visit	08.05.2023	The Shields Gazette