

Digital Informal Surveys and Public Opinion on International Football: An Exploratory Study with Faculty Members in Guayaquil

Abstract

Football is widely acknowledged as a global cultural phenomenon that transcends athletic competition, shaping identities, public opinion, and social cohesion. This exploratory study investigates faculty perceptions of the England–Argentina match through informal digital surveys conducted via WhatsApp. Fifteen faculty members from a School of Languages and Business in Guayaquil, Ecuador, participated in two surveys: one before the match to predict the outcome, and one immediately after to evaluate the result.

Findings reveal a shift from pre-match expectations, largely favoring England, to post-match consensus that “the best team won.” Humorous responses were also recorded, underscoring football’s dual role as both a serious cultural event and a playful social interaction. The diversity of nationalities among participants highlights football’s function as a site for identity negotiation and cultural dialogue.

This study contributes to the understanding of how informal digital surveys can serve as micro-public spheres, capturing real-time perceptions and cultural dynamics within academic communities. While limited by sample size and scope, the research demonstrates the potential of digital tools to explore identity, public opinion, and social cohesion in the context of international sport.

Keywords: Digital surveys, Public opinion, Football culture, Identity, WhatsApp polls, Exploratory study

Introduction

Football is more than a sport; it is a global cultural phenomenon that shapes identities, fosters social cohesion, and stimulates public debate. Matches between historically significant teams, such as England and Argentina, often transcend athletic boundaries and become symbolic events reflecting national pride, cultural narratives, and collective emotions.

Digital platforms have transformed the ways in which public opinion is expressed and measured. Informal surveys conducted through messaging applications such as WhatsApp provide opportunities to capture perceptions in real time, offering insights into both serious and playful dimensions of social interaction. Although not designed for formal research, these tools allow exploratory analyses of how communities engage with cultural events.

This study examines the perceptions of 15 faculty members from a School of Languages and Business in Guayaquil, Ecuador, regarding the England–Argentina football match. By analyzing responses collected before and after the game, the research explores how

expectations evolve into evaluations, how humor intersects with opinion, and how digital surveys can serve as micro-public spheres for cultural dialogue.

Literature Review

Habermas (1989) introduced the concept of the public sphere, emphasizing dialogue and collective debate in the formation of opinion. Informal surveys conducted through WhatsApp can be understood as micro-public spheres where participants express and negotiate perceptions of cultural phenomena such as football.

Football has long been recognized as a cultural and social phenomenon. Giulianotti (2005) highlights its role in shaping identity and global cultural flows, while Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) analyze the impact of mega sporting events on societies worldwide. These perspectives underscore football's capacity to transcend its athletic dimension, functioning as a site of cultural identity and social interaction.

Rowe (2004) describes the relationship between sport, culture, and media as an “unruly trinity,” reflecting their complex interplay. In the digital age, this relationship extends to social media and messaging platforms, which serve as spaces for spontaneous opinion sharing. Recent studies reinforce this view: Smith et al. (2025) examined social media perceptions of college football, while Yang et al. (2025) explored the dissemination of sports-related public opinion in digital environments.

Finally, identity and social cohesion provide an important lens for understanding football culture. Giddens (1991) argues that identity in late modernity is constructed through social interaction and cultural practices. In this study, the diversity of nationalities among faculty participants illustrates how football functions as a site for identity negotiation and consensus building.

Theoretical Framework

- **Public Opinion and Public Sphere:** Habermas (1989) frames collective opinion as emerging through dialogue, positioning WhatsApp surveys as micro-public spheres.
- **Football Culture and Identity:** Giulianotti (2005) and Horne & Manzenreiter (2006) highlight football's role in identity and cultural flows.
- **Sport, Media, and Digitalization:** Rowe (2004) and recent studies (Smith et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2025) demonstrate how digital tools capture and disseminate perceptions.
- **Identity and Social Cohesion:** Giddens (1991) emphasizes identity construction through cultural practices, illustrated by faculty diversity and humor in responses.

Methodology

This research adopts an exploratory and descriptive case study design.

Participants: Fifteen faculty members from a School of Languages and Business in Guayaquil, Ecuador, representing diverse national backgrounds.

Instrument: Two informal WhatsApp surveys—one pre-match (predictions) and one post-match (evaluations).

Procedure: Responses were collected digitally and analyzed descriptively. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to illustrate trends. Humorous responses were noted as part of the social dynamics.

Limitations: Small sample size and non-random selection limit generalizability. Nevertheless, the study highlights the potential of informal digital surveys to capture real-time perceptions and cultural dynamics.

Results

Pre-match Predictions:
England: 9
Argentina: 4
Humorous/Other: 2
Post-match Evaluations:
“Best team won”: 10
Argentina explicitly: 3
Humorous/Other: 2

Summary Table

Survey Moment	England	Argentina	“Best team won”	Humorous/Other
Pre-match prediction	9	4	–	2
Post-match evaluation	–	3	10	2

Discussion

The findings illustrate how perceptions evolve from expectations to evaluations. The shift from predicting England’s victory to recognizing Argentina as the rightful winner reflects collective legitimacy, aligning with Habermas’s (1989) notion of the public sphere.

Humorous responses highlight football’s dual role as serious and playful, resonating with Rowe’s (2004) “unruly trinity” of sport, culture, and media. Humor also reinforces Giddens’s (1991) view of identity construction through shared practices.

The diversity of participants underscores Giulianotti’s (2005) perspective on football as a global cultural flow, where identity negotiation occurs across borders. WhatsApp surveys functioned as micro-public spheres, consistent with recent findings (Smith et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2025) on digital dissemination of sports opinion.

Conclusion

This exploratory study demonstrates that informal digital surveys can capture real-time perceptions of football as both a cultural and social phenomenon. Faculty responses shifted from predictive to evaluative, highlighting fairness, identity, and humor as key dimensions.

Although limited in scope, the study contributes to understanding how digital tools can serve as micro-public spheres, fostering dialogue and cultural cohesion. Future research should expand to larger samples, incorporate international comparisons, and deepen analysis of digital platforms in shaping public opinion.

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