

The Value-Oriented Discourse of Football Commentators and its Impact on Sports Audiences in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This study examines the value-oriented discourse of football commentators and analyzes its impact on sports audiences in the United Arab Emirates. It proceeds from the central role of sports media, particularly football commentary, in shaping collective sporting consciousness and guiding audience behaviors and emotions. Sports commentary is no longer confined to narrating match events and providing technical analysis. Rather, it has become a media discourse with cultural and ethical dimensions that conveys a system of values and meanings, directly and indirectly influencing how audiences perceive sporting competition, the meanings of victory and defeat, and the nature of relationships among teams and supporters. The study is grounded in the premise that the value-laden discourse of football commentators can function as a positive force that promotes sportsmanship, respect, discipline, and the rejection of fanaticism and violence. Conversely, in the absence of professional regulation, it may become a negative factor that inflames emotions, entrenches sports fanaticism, and normalizes verbal abuse and aggressive behavior. The significance of this issue is heightened in the Emirati context, given the cultural diversity and coexistence that characterize society, as well as the national orientation toward consolidating values of tolerance and social responsibility across domains, including sport.

Keywords: Value-Oriented Discourse, Audience, Sports Commentator, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

Sports media discourse constitutes one of the most influential and pervasive forms of communication in contemporary societies, owing to its direct engagement with mass audiences and its extensive social reach. Football commentary, in particular, occupies a central position in shaping symbolic meanings and value orientations. The football commentator does not merely report match events or provide technical analysis, but also

performs an indirect cultural function through linguistic choices, evaluative stances, and the ethical and behavioral messages conveyed to audiences during live broadcasts. Accordingly, sports commentary functions as a powerful mechanism for shaping audience attitudes and for reinforcing or undermining value systems related to sportsmanship, belonging, tolerance, and respect for others.

In the context of the United Arab Emirates, where football enjoys widespread popularity and society is characterized by marked cultural and social diversity, examining the value-oriented discourse of football commentators is especially significant. Sports commentary in this setting intersects with national and social values promoted by the state, including tolerance, discipline, mutual respect, teamwork, and the rejection of fanaticism and violence. However, existing scholarship on sports media discourse has largely focused on European and Latin American contexts, with limited empirical attention to the Gulf region in general and the United Arab Emirates in particular. Moreover, previous studies have tended to prioritize linguistic features, framing strategies, or audience reception, while giving insufficient attention to the systematic analysis of value-laden discourse in live football commentary and its potential social implications.

The research problem addressed in this study stems from the observation that certain patterns of football commentary may, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to the normalization of sports fanaticism, the legitimization of aggressive behavior, or the reproduction of negative stereotypes. In contrast, other patterns promote fair play, respect for rules, acceptance of defeat, and ethical conduct in sport. Despite the prevalence of such discursive practices, there remains a lack of rigorous empirical research that examines how value orientations are constructed and communicated in football commentary within the Emirati media context, and how these orientations may shape collective sporting consciousness.

The motivation for conducting this study lies in the growing social influence of sports media and its capacity to shape public attitudes and behaviors beyond the sporting arena. By providing a systematic analysis of the value-oriented discourse of football commentators in the United Arab Emirates, this research seeks to fill a clear gap in the literature and to contribute theoretically and empirically to the fields of media discourse analysis and sports communication. The study contributes by offering an analytically grounded framework for identifying value patterns in sports commentary, by documenting the dominant positive and negative value orientations present in Emirati football broadcasts, and by providing evidence-based recommendations that can guide sports media practitioners and policymakers toward more socially responsible and value-consistent media practices.

The Concept of the Value-Oriented Discourse of Football Commentators

The value-oriented discourse of football commentators refers to the complex system of linguistic expressions, discursive strategies, and semantic symbols employed by commentators during match broadcasts. This discourse extends beyond the description of technical performance or the narration of gameplay to encompass an integrated set of ethical, social, and cultural values. It emerges from the interaction of multiple interrelated factors, most notably the prevailing socio-cultural context, media policies, the commentator's cognitive and ideological background, and the nature of the sporting competition and target

audience. Accordingly, value-oriented discourse is not produced in a vacuum, but is shaped within a specific cultural framework and reflects, directly or indirectly, the dominant value system of society (Al-Obaidi, 2023).

Value-oriented discourse constitutes an integral component of sports media discourse due to its substantial capacity to influence audience perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Sports commentary functions as an interpretive mediator between the sporting event and the recipient. Audiences do not experience the match as a neutral visual occurrence, but rather as a linguistically and value-framed event mediated by the commentator's discourse. Consequently, this discourse becomes a tool for meaning production, the guidance of interpretation, and the construction of attitudes, both at the strictly sporting level and within the broader social sphere (Abu Shahab, 2017).

The value-oriented discourse of football commentators is characterized by immediacy and real-time delivery, broadcast within short temporal moments that are nonetheless charged with high levels of excitement, tension, and collective enthusiasm. This immediacy amplifies its influence compared with other media forms that are more reflective or deliberative. Through lexical choices, vocal tone, speed of reaction to unfolding events, and modes of describing players, referees, and spectators, commentators exercise an implicit directive role that encourages audiences to adopt particular values and stances (Ahmed, 2017). This role may manifest in the promotion of positive values such as sportsmanship, fair play, respect for rules, acceptance of defeat, and appreciation of teamwork and tactical discipline. Conversely, it may transmit negative values, including sports fanaticism, ridicule of opponents, persistent questioning of refereeing integrity, and the justification of aggressive behavior on and off the field.

Conceptually, value-oriented discourse in sports commentary is linked to the notion of the symbolic authority of the media professional. The commentator is often perceived as an expert and a credible source of interpretation, a voice endowed with legitimacy to shape audience understanding. Recipients tend to grant commentators epistemic trust, which leads their evaluations and analyses to be received as legitimate interpretations of events. In this sense, audiences do not consume the match in its raw form, but through a linguistic and value-based filtering process constructed by the commentator, which defines what is fair or unfair, acceptable or unacceptable, heroic or reprehensible. Commentary thus becomes not merely the transmission of an event, but a cultural practice that contributes to reproducing or reorienting prevailing values within society (Al-Batykh, 2021).

Within the context of the United Arab Emirates, the concept of the value-oriented discourse of football commentators acquires additional specificity due to the cultural diversity of Emirati society, its emphasis on coexistence and respect for others, and the institutional commitment to promoting values of tolerance, discipline, and social responsibility. Football enjoys wide popular reach across diverse age and social groups, rendering the accompanying discourse, particularly commentary, directly influential in shaping collective sporting consciousness. Sports media in the UAE is therefore expected to align with these values and to contribute to their reinforcement rather than to their erosion (Pan, 2013).

The impact of value-oriented discourse on sports audiences refers to the scope and nature of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses elicited among recipients. Audiences are influenced not only by match outcomes or performance levels, but also by the linguistic and value-based framing of the event. Positive value-oriented discourse may enhance sports awareness, promote civilized modes of support, reinforce a culture of accepting difference, and reduce manifestations of violence and fanaticism. By contrast, negative discourse may inflame hostility, normalize verbal abuse, and justify unethical behavior under the guise of sporting allegiance (Prill, 2025).

From this perspective, sports audiences are viewed as both affected and interactive agents. They do not merely receive discourse, but also reproduce and circulate it within various social spaces, whether in stadiums, across social media platforms, or in everyday discussions. Accordingly, the influence of the value-oriented discourse of football commentators extends beyond the moment of live broadcast into the public sphere, becoming a formative element in the construction of prevailing sporting culture within society (Muneda et al., 2023).

In sum, the concept of the value-oriented discourse of football commentators and its impact on sports audiences in the United Arab Emirates can be defined as an analytical framework that examines the nature of the values and meanings conveyed through commentators' media discourse, their alignment with societal and national values, and their influence on audience awareness, attitudes, and sporting behavior. This framework provides a foundational entry point for understanding the social role of sports media and for evaluating the extent of its responsibility in cultivating a positive and sustainable sporting culture that enhances social cohesion and elevates sport from mere competition to a civilizational value.

The Significance of the Value-Oriented Discourse of Football Commentators

The significance of the value-oriented discourse of football commentators stems from its pivotal role in shaping audience sporting consciousness, as one of the most visible and influential forms of media discourse in the public sphere. Football commentary is not merely a means of narrating match events or analyzing them technically and tactically. It constitutes a value-based interpretive framework that guides audience perceptions of events and influences how meanings of victory and defeat, success and failure, competition and difference are understood. In this sense, value-oriented discourse becomes a powerful instrument in constructing sporting culture through the ethical and behavioral messages it transmits during moments of intense audience engagement, when recipients are especially susceptible to emotional influence (Lee, 2016).

First, this discourse plays a central role in promoting ethical values and sportsmanship within the sporting milieu, including respect for opponents, adherence to the rules of the game, acceptance of defeat with positivity, acknowledgment of error, and the rejection of violence and fanaticism. When commentators emphasize such values through the praise of exemplary conduct or the objective and balanced critique of unethical behavior, they contribute to consolidating positive models of fandom and to mitigating negative practices that may arise from excessive enthusiasm or unreflective bias. In this way, sports commentary becomes a supportive element in building a sporting culture grounded in respect, discipline, and responsibility.

Moreover, the value-oriented discourse of commentators is instrumental in guiding and regulating collective emotions. Football matches constitute fertile environments for the generation of tension and heightened emotional responses, both within stadiums and across broadcast platforms. Through language, vocal tone, and interpretive framing of controversial moments, commentators possess substantial capacity to calm audiences or to inflame their sentiments. Balanced and responsible discourse can contain anger, reduce tension, and offer rational explanations for contentious events. By contrast, biased or provocative discourse may escalate emotions and reinforce aggressive and fanatical behavior. Accordingly, a balanced value-oriented discourse represents a crucial factor in promoting behavioral stability among sports audiences (Kunert and Kuni, 2023).

The significance of value-oriented discourse is further evident in its role in shaping audience attitudes and mental representations of players, referees, teams, and sporting institutions. The manner in which commentators describe outstanding or poor performance, address refereeing decisions, and discuss players' conduct may contribute to constructing either positive images grounded in professionalism, respect, and fairness, or negative images based on suspicion, incitement, and doubt. This renders value-oriented discourse a decisive factor in building or undermining trust within the sporting system, particularly among youth and adolescents who often adopt sports figures as role models (Frederick et al., 2013).

In the Broader Societal Context

Within the broader societal context, the value-oriented discourse of football commentators acquires strategic significance, as it contributes to aligning sporting practice with societal and national values, particularly in societies that seek to consolidate principles of tolerance, coexistence, acceptance of others, and social responsibility. Sport, as a mass social phenomenon, can function either as a means of enhancing social cohesion or as a for fueling division and conflict, depending on the nature of the discourse that accompanies it. Accordingly, conscious and responsible value-oriented discourse does not serve sport alone, but also supports social stability, strengthens the role of sports media as an active partner in the cultural and moral development of society, and contributes to directing sport toward fulfilling its humanitarian and educational mission alongside its competitive and entertainment dimensions.

Characteristics of the Value-Oriented Discourse of Football Commentators

The value-oriented discourse of football commentators is characterized by a set of features that distinguish it from other forms of media discourse and grant it a high capacity to influence sports audiences. The most prominent of these characteristics can be summarized as follows (Laeyali, 2024):

1. Immediacy and live transmission

Value-oriented discourse is produced during live match broadcasts within a rapid and continuously unfolding temporal context. This immediacy renders the conveyed value messages highly impactful, as they are delivered at moments of heightened emotional arousal among audiences, when recipients are more susceptible to influence and emotional engagement.

2. Strong association with emotion and affect

Value-oriented discourse in football commentary is often shaped under the pressure of competition and mass enthusiasm. This is reflected in vocal tone, lexical choices, and

dramatic modes of event description. Such emotional intensity may reinforce positive values such as legitimate motivation and constructive enthusiasm. However, if not professionally regulated, it may also transmit negative values such as fanaticism and bias.

3. **High symbolic and linguistic load**

Commentators rely on language as the primary tool for constructing value-laden meaning. The use of terms such as justice, fighting spirit, and respect, or conversely allegations of refereeing injustice and provocation, carries value connotations that exceed their literal meanings and guide audience interpretations of events.

4. **The symbolic authority of the commentator**

The commentator is perceived as an expert and a credible source of football-related knowledge, which grants value-oriented discourse a degree of legitimacy and acceptance among audiences. This symbolic authority amplifies its impact, as opinions and evaluations are often received as authoritative interpretations of on-field events.

5. **Contextual and cultural embeddedness**

The value-oriented discourse of football commentators is inseparable from the social and cultural context in which it is produced. It reflects prevailing societal values and is shaped by media policies, audience characteristics, and the local sporting environment. Consequently, its content and intensity vary across societies.

6. **The intertwining of description and evaluation**

Value-oriented discourse combines the narration of sporting events with ethical and behavioral evaluation. The commentator does not merely describe what occurs, but implicitly or explicitly attaches value judgments that define what is considered acceptable or unacceptable within the sporting context.

These characteristics render the value-oriented discourse of football commentators a complex and deeply influential form of discourse that requires a high level of professional and ethical awareness, given its role in shaping sporting culture and guiding audience behavior.

The Impact of the Value-Oriented Discourse of Football Commentators on Sports Audiences in the UAE

The value-oriented discourse of football commentators constitutes a key component in shaping the collective consciousness of sports audiences, particularly within the context of the United Arab Emirates, which is characterized by extensive cultural and social diversity. The sports commentator does not merely transmit match events and analyze technical performance, but performs a symbolic function that extends beyond description to the construction of meanings and values related to belonging, sportsmanship, respect, and national identity. Consequently, the value-oriented discourse produced by commentators' functions as an indirect guiding mechanism that contributes to reproducing value systems within the sporting field (Hussein, 2021).

This discourse is grounded in concepts such as justice, fair competition, respect for opponents, and adherence to rules, as well as the promotion of team spirit and affiliation with clubs or the national team. When commentators consistently embed these values in their commentary, they contribute to reinforcing positive behaviors among audiences by normalizing respectful language and rejecting fanaticism and verbal aggression. Conversely, when discourse is characterized by bias, excessive sensationalism, or negative insinuations, it

may inflame audience emotions and strengthen fanatical tendencies, particularly in highly competitive matches (Fattouni and Constantine, 2024).

Within the Emirati context, value-oriented discourse acquires an additional dimension related to national identity and state policies aimed at promoting tolerance and coexistence. Sport functions as a public platform that reflects societal values, and commentators play a role in reinforcing discourse that supports national unity and mutual respect among diverse audience groups. Moreover, the regulated media environment in the UAE contributes to guiding commentators' professional performance in line with ethical and professional standards adopted by media institutions.

From a sociological perspective, the impact of value-oriented discourse can be explained through framing theory, whereby commentators define the interpretive frame through which sporting events are understood. Lexical choices, the manner of highlighting errors or successes, and the level of emotional intensity in vocal delivery all shape a cognitive frame that influences how audiences interpret events. Over time, this cumulative influence contributes to shaping audience attitudes toward teams, players, and even the very meaning of competition itself (Zouaoui and Merichich, 2013).

Accordingly, the value-oriented discourse of football commentators in the UAE represents an active factor in constructing sporting culture and promoting disciplined audience behavior. The development of this discourse in accordance with clear professional and ethical standards remains a strategic necessity to ensure that sport continues to serve as a domain for reinforcing positive values rather than reproducing division or fanaticism.

Challenges and the Responsibility of the Sports Commentator in Promoting Positive Value-Oriented Discourse

1. Competitive media pressures and the pursuit of viewership

Sports commentators operate within a competitive media environment governed by performance indicators such as viewership ratings and audience engagement. This context may encourage exaggerated sensationalism or the amplification of controversy to enhance media appeal. Excessive reliance on such strategies may result in biased or inflammatory discourse that intensifies audience emotions rather than moderating them. Professional responsibility lies in maintaining a careful balance between excitement and value discipline, ensuring that enthusiasm remains within sporting boundaries and does not incite fanaticism or undermine respect for all parties involved (Zouaoui and Merichich, 2013).

2. The challenge of neutrality amid fan affiliations

Football is closely associated with strong emotional allegiances, and commentators may face direct or indirect pressures arising from audience expectations or institutional orientations. Even minor verbal bias may be interpreted as alignment with one side against another, undermining credibility and eroding trust. Responsibility in this regard entails adherence to objectivity and the use of analytical language grounded in facts and technical criteria, rather than personal preferences (Triki et al., 2021).

3. Managing emotional intensity during live broadcasts

Live broadcasting requires immediate engagement with rapidly unfolding and controversial moments, such as refereeing decisions or player confrontations. The

absence of reflection time may lead to inaccurate or emotionally charged statements. The challenge lies in exercising self-regulation and adopting rational discourse that prioritizes explanation over premature judgment, thereby contributing to calming audiences rather than inflaming them.

4. The influence of social media and the re-circulation of discourse

In digital environments, any statement may be extracted from its context and widely redistributed, amplifying its impact and exposing commentators to public scrutiny. This reality necessitates heightened linguistic awareness and precision in word choice, as discourse is no longer ephemeral but subject to archiving and continuous circulation. Professional responsibility therefore requires consideration of the extended implications of every utterance.

5. Limited specialized training in sports media ethics

Some commentators possess strong technical expertise in performance analysis but lack systematic training in media ethics and the social consequences of discourse. The absence of structured training frameworks renders commentary vulnerable to individual improvisation. This underscores the need for continuous professional development programs that emphasize the value dimension of discourse and its management in competitive media environments.

6. Balancing national identity and cultural diversity

In culturally diverse societies, sports discourse represents a space that reflects values of coexistence and mutual respect. Unregulated commentary may inadvertently contain culturally sensitive references or symbolic cues. Responsibility in this regard entails promoting inclusive language that emphasizes respect and sportsmanship, framing competition as a space for encounter rather than confrontation, and thereby fostering a positive and sustainable sporting culture.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the value-oriented discourse of football commentators is not merely a supplementary component of sports media practice, but a central factor in shaping audience sporting consciousness and influencing behaviors and attitudes both within and beyond the sporting arena. Football commentary extends beyond technical narration and tactical analysis to constitute a discursive practice with ethical, social, and cultural dimensions capable of promoting positive values such as sportsmanship, respect, and discipline. In the absence of professional awareness, however, it may contribute to the reproduction of fanaticism and verbal or behavioral violence.

The strength of the impact of value-oriented discourse derives from its immediacy and emotional intensity, as well as from the symbolic authority attributed to commentators as trusted sources of interpretation and evaluation. Audiences do not consume sporting events as purely visual spectacles, but engage with them through a linguistic and value-based frame constructed by the commentator. This renders commentary a powerful agent in the social and sporting meaning-making process and underscores both the risks and the importance of this role.

Within the context of the United Arab Emirates, the importance of value-oriented discourse is further amplified by the culturally diverse and coexistence-oriented nature of society, as well as by national commitments to promoting tolerance, responsibility, and discipline across

social domains, including sport. Sports media, given its extensive public reach, is therefore expected to function as an active partner in supporting these values rather than undermining them.

Accordingly, this study concludes that strengthening responsible value-oriented discourse in football commentary constitutes both a professional and societal necessity. This requires heightened awareness of the commentator's role and the institutionalization of clear ethical standards within sports media practice. Balanced and reflective commentary can contribute to building a positive and sustainable sporting culture that frames football as a space for fair competition and human solidarity rather than as a site of fanaticism and division.

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