

An Analysis of Linguistic Resources for Sports Tourism Media Discourse: A Case Study of the Women's World Cup Final in Sydney

María-Luisa BLANCO-GÓMEZ & María-José GÓMEZ-ORTIZ

Author:

María-Luisa Blanco-Gómez
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos
marialuisa.blanco@urjc.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3319-6877>

Author:

María-José Gómez-Ortiz
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
maria.gomez.ortiz@upm.es
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8822-0320>

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María-José Gómez-Ortiz



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Sports have historically played a significant role in influencing travel, the twenty-first century witnessing a notable surge in sports tourism attributed largely to increasing globalisation and the pervasive influence of social media. International sports events hosted by countries and cities serve as potent platforms for tourist promotion, with meticulous attention to detail often reflected across various social media channels. Notably, recent editions of such events have seen women taking on crucial roles. This paper delves into the FIFA Women's World Cup Final held in Sydney, Australia, in August 2023, analysing three distinct corpora to discern linguistic resources—the use of persuasion with personal pronouns and imperatives, among others—shaping tourism media discourse, specifically focusing on gender visibility and promotion of destination excellence. To conduct this research, we compiled a corpus of 11,549 words comprising webpages, online publications and tourism blogs, using AntConc software for the analysis. Our findings reveal that the media employ specific language choices to portray the event and its host city, projecting values such as teamwork and inclusion, often through community engagement. However, there exists an under-representation of coverage concerning sportswomen, with minimal linguistic patterns used to promote their visibility beyond the event's title. Conversely, the host city receives extensive promotion. Consequently, this analysis serves as a pertinent case study contributing to the understanding of sports tourism media discourse representation.

Keywords: corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS); media communication; sports tourism; sportswomen promotional discourse; destination promotion

1 Introduction

International sports events have witnessed great growth in the last few decades for two main reasons. On the one hand, people demand attendance (Perić et al. 2019), even if such an event occurs on the other side of the world. On the other hand, cities compete to be chosen as potential host cities because the events provide economic benefits, such as increased tourism (Fourie and Santana-Gallego 2022). Bazzanella et al. (2023, 86) highlight that “sports events raise the value of a destination for the tourism industry”. This becomes more true every year, as observed in the figures presented by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).¹ It seems obvious that sports and tourism are two interconnected industries and, as Horne (2017, 19) points out, “[i]nterest in hosting sports mega-events has proliferated because they have become seen as valuable promotional opportunities for nations, cities, and regions.”.

In addition, the world tourism industry has hosted sportswomen’s events in recent years (Scelles and Pfister 2021), with an increase in the number of tournaments, although there is still a disproportion between men’s and women’s events and participation. These differences lead to a certain under-representation of female athletes around the world, which slows down gender equality in sports representation (Statista 2023). Undoubtedly, the emergence of social media and its popularity has contributed enormously to the sports tourism industry, as it allows a “well-developed communication strategy” (Kiráľová and Pavlíček 2015, 360). However, recent findings in sports discourses have shown that it is still “a male domain” (Sobal and Milgrim 2019, 44).

By using specific linguistic resources, sports tourism and its coverage in social media communications could contribute to the visibility of sportswomen and encourage visits to the host city. There are studies on sports media communication (Smith 2011; Hambrick 2017; Wenner 2021; Gómez-Ortiz et al. 2023) and tourism media communication (Bruce 2013; Jaworska 2016a; Stjepić et al. 2022; Bazzanella et al. 2023; Fang et al. 2023; Jiang et al. 2023); however, to our knowledge, few studies have approached the language used in a sportswomen mega-event.

Thus, as Jaworska (2016b, 149) points out, “Discourse, understood here predominantly as language use, plays a crucial role in this process in that it can effectively shape public perceptions of (sport) events and the participating

1 The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency that supports inclusive global tourism and claims that sports tourism generates approximately 10 per cent of the world’s tourism expenditure. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/sport-tourism>

actors.” Since sportswomen seem to be an under-represented group in the language of the sports world, we decided to focus on analysing the linguistic resources used in a specific sport event, namely the Women’s World Cup Final (WWCF, henceforth) in Sydney in August 2023. We resolved to examine three different types of media corpora, one related to tourism webpages, the second concerning the online press, and the third concerning blogs, which usually contribute to enhancing the search experience for would-be tourists. These three types of publication are directly related to an active social media presence. Jaworska (2016b, 149) establishes that “Studying media discourses surrounding events can, therefore, offer considerable insights into how events are medially constructed and shed light on stances and ideologies that underpin such constructions and are widely circulated in society.” The objectives of this study are to deepen our understanding of how tourism communication is characterised when dealing with women’s football events and to discover the specific linguistic resources that are used to influence potential sports tourists’ decisions. In line with this, the following research questions are raised:

1. What characterises tourism communication in women’s football events regarding gender equality?
2. What main linguistic resources could influence potential sports tourists’ decisions when promoting Sydney as the host of an international women’s sports event?

This research is expected to contribute to our understanding of communication strategies developed in the media discourse on sports tourism. Therefore, we are able to formulate two hypotheses:

1. Women’s sports events will result in greater visibility regarding female athletes’ achievements.
2. The host city of the sports event is likely to be shown as an appealing destination for would-be tourists.

The rest of our study will be organised as follows. We will explain the method followed, focusing on the corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) methodology. We will then present the results found in the three linguistic subcorpora and scrutinise them according to our research questions, prior to a detailed discussion. The study culminates with the conclusions drawn after analysing the media discourse represented in this case study related to a specific women’s football event.

2. Method

A corpus is defined as “a large, principled collection of naturally occurring examples of language stored electronically” (Bennett 2010, 2). There are different corpus methodologies in linguistics, including, among others, corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Biber and Reppen (2015, 1) explain that CL usually makes “extensive use of computers for analysis, employing both automatic and interactive techniques.” Computers indeed play a significant role when dealing with quantitative analysis, which is statistically trustworthy; however, in this research, we will follow the CADS approach, the principal aim of which is to research and compare the characteristics of specific discourse types considering both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Following Adamou (2019, 644):

Corpora can be used both in a corpus-illustrated approach (i.e., to provide occurrences of specific phenomena) or in a quantitative approach (i.e., to provide frequency information and comparisons between speakers and texts). For quantitative analyses, appropriate statistical models need to be used.

Biber (1988, 4) indicates that both analyses are necessary for corpus research: “Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However, functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis.” According to Partington et al. (2013, 6), CADS is not “a discipline or field of study but more a methodology, that is, a set of tools and general practices and ways of using those tools for the purpose of language analysis.” The CADS approach considers the quantitative tools presented by CL, but also integrates qualitative aspects, which is fundamental when trying to analyse discourse and the context in which it occurs. Moreover, Jaworska (2016a, 91) indicates that:

CADS is much more eclectic in nature and not focused on a particular kind of discourse analysis, for example, CDA. In fact, it encourages researchers to draw on as many analytical tools, frameworks and contextual information as it may be required to obtain the most complete picture.

Also, as Gillings et al. (2023) point out, research that follows the CADS approach is directly related to social questions, and we can underline the fact that language normally reflects cultural and social values. In the same vein, Gillings and Mautner (2023) highlight two important features to take into account in a CADS approach: social factors and frequency. In this research, we will consider

social aspects when referring to women footballers and the frequency of some terms. In addition, a CADS approach tends to reduce “researcher bias” (Baker 2020, 13), which is a crucial aspect when facing a text more objectively.

To conduct this research, we gathered a corpus of 11,549 words from three different written subcorpora, namely, tourism webpages (henceforth TWP), online press (henceforth OP) and blogs (henceforth B) concerning tourism and WWCF using AntConc (4.2.4, 2023). Regarding corpus size, Bowker and Pearson (2002) consider that specialised corpora are satisfactory when they are bigger than 10,000 words, as this is an adequate size if it is well designed and appropriate for its purpose. Thus, the aim, using the CADS approach, is to analyse language use and its context regarding a minority group, sportswomen, who are increasingly taking on crucial roles.

The three types of subcorpora were selected when looking for texts covering an important sports event such as the WWCF in Sydney in 2023. The three categories contain samples of an equal number of words. As shown in Table 1, the Women’s World Cup Corpus (COR-WWC-23, henceforth) is formed by 11,549 tokens (total number of individual words in the corpus) and 2,601 types (unique word forms).

TABLE 1. Corpus data

COR-WWC-23	Tokens	Types
TWP (Tourism webpages)	4,073	1,385
OP (Online press)	3,735	1,157
B (Blogs)	3,741	1,099
Total words	11,549	2,601

The selected texts within each category deal with the promotion of local tourism (OP, TWP, B) and the attraction of international visitors (OP, TWP, B), thus taking into account target users and readers—i.e. football fans. Table 2 shows the data included in the COR-WWC-23. Concerning the webpages subcorpora, these texts are representative of local tourism promotion, reporting a major event and trying to disseminate it all over the world to attract international visitors. The webpages referred to are the official one of Sydney as the main host city; the page of a specific type of accommodation in Sydney; and a webpage related to road trips, all linked to different types of touristic offer that local and international tourists attending the WWCF could take.

When managing mega-sports events, online publications play a crucial role in covering them. As Stevenson (2002, 211) points out, “[n]ational, metropolitan,

and regional newspapers play an important role in the promotion of different sports, the construction of local and global sporting heroes, the interpretation of events, and the delivery of sporting images to local consumers.” Due to this prominence, we chose different online publications, ranging from online newspapers such as *The Telegraph*² or *The Sydney Morning Herald*, to *The Wander Eater*, a magazine that represents an authority regarding travel, food and drink, or an article from the FIFA webpage commenting on the event and its main attractive touristic offers for fans and tourists attending the event. We assume that the online press can contribute greatly to activating tourism and destinations in general, enhancing their image.

Blogs, considered a relatively recent textual typology, comprise the third category included in our corpus. We thought it would be interesting to conduct a close study of how people express their ideas and/or opinions regarding a specific sports event. Three different types of blog were selected. One of them concerns the Arlington Soccer Association³ (from Virginia, USA); the second one corresponds to Torrens University, with 12 campuses scattered in different cities of Australia, including a very important football team; and the third blog is related to Rezdy, the online booking system for tour and activity businesses. We should highlight that blogs could be considered “tourist-friendly” (Kumar 2014, 187) sources of information available to tourists.

TABLE 2. Corpus COR-WWC-23

COR-WWC-23	
Size	11,549 words
Types of text	Original and unabridged texts samples from a range of sources in order to be representative of local tourism promotion attracting international visitors to a sporting event.
Number of texts	Eleven texts: five online publications, three webpages, three blogs (attending to balance and sample with an equitable number of words within each category).

2 This is the UK version of the online publication that covers local news regarding Commonwealth members, Australia being one of them.

3 This blog was chosen as relevant for the corpus because Arlington SA Women promotes the growth and expansion of women’s football. Additionally, a high number of the international tourists that Australia received for the WWCF came from the USA.

COR-WWC-23

Medium	Digital, social media
Topic	FIFA Women's World Cup Final
Author/Audience	Publicists, journalists, fans/Football fans and general public
Language	Written English
Date of publication	August 2023
Purpose	Persuasive and informative functions
Context	Sports tourism

The quantitative analysis will be derived from the corpus, serving to discern underlying patterns. Later, a qualitative analysis will be carried out to discover the significance of the texts, offering a more detailed description of the data analysed. As Baker and McEnery (2015, 2) highlight:

While the earliest stages of a corpus analysis tend to be quantitative, relying on techniques like keywords and collocates in order to give the research a focus, as a research project progresses, the analysis gradually becomes more qualitative and context-led, relying less on computer software. Once quantitative patterns have been identified, they need to be interpreted and this usually involves a second stage of analysis where the software acts as an aid to the researcher by allowing the linguistic data to be quickly surveyed.

This is the methodology followed in this research. In the next section, we will focus on analyses, examining the data identified.

3. Analysis

In order to discern the most salient discursive and contextual characteristics of sports tourism communication and the common ground between sportswomen's visibility and tourist promotion, a quantitative analysis was conducted to discover the most frequent content words and pronouns within the corpus, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. The 14 most frequent content words and pronouns in the three subcorpora

Rank	TWP	Freq	NF ⁴	OP	Freq	NF	B	Freq	NF
1.	Sydney	89	21.85	World	56	14.99	We	69	18.44
2.	You	46	11.29	Sydney	49	13.12	Cup	57	15.24
3.	Your	31	7.61	Women	37	9.91	World	55	14.70
4.	Stay	27	6.63	Cup	35	9.37	Women	34	9.09
5.	Park	22	5.40	FIFA	32	8.57	Australia	27	7.22
6.	World	22	5.40	Australia	28	7.50	FIFA	24	6.41
7.	Hotel	21	5.15	Harbour	24	6.45	Your	23	6.15
8.	City	21	5.15	Bridge	23	6.16	Our	20	5.35
9.	Our	19	4.66	Football	19	5.09	Game	18	4.81
10.	Staff	15	3.68	Tournament	15	4.02	Sydney	17	4.54
11.	Room	15	3.68	City	14	3.75	Hotel	17	4.54
12.	Women	15	3.68	Stadium	13	3.48	Tour	16	4.28
13.	FIFA	14	3.44	Games	13	3.48	Travellers	14	3.74
14.	Great	14	3.44	Event	12	3.21	Day	14	3.74

From the data in Table 3, the most salient pronouns are “we”, “our”, “you” and “your”, which have a tendency to play a persuasive function in communication. We observe that TWP has a preference for the pronouns “you” (NF 11.29), “your” (NF 7.61) and “our” (NF 4.66), whereas B opts for “we” (NF 18.44), “your” (NF 6.15), and “our” (NF 5.35).

Pérez-Paredes (2021) claims that the highest frequencies—those words with the most numerous appearances—are as important as the lowest frequencies, with the fewest occurrences. In the same vein, Gillings and Mautner (2023, 21) state that “high frequency in itself does not necessarily equate to importance.” For this reason, all occurrences of the mentioned pronouns have been quantified in Table 4.

4 NF stands for normalised frequency. The base of normalisation used in our corpus to calculate the NF and establish a valuable comparison across the subcorpora has been calculated per 1,000 words.

TABLE 4. Pronoun occurrences in COR-WWC-23

Pronouns	TWP - NF	OP - NF	B - NF
We	7.12	1.07	18.44
Our	4.66	2.41	5.35
You	11.29	5.09	6.41
Your	7.61	1.07	6.15

These data could suggest that the main function of communication in OP is informative, with low use of pronouns, whereas in TWP and B it is persuasive, indicated by their high occurrence. In addition, other persuasive resources, such as the use of imperatives, modal verbs and conditional clauses, are present in TWP and B, as shown in the following examples:

1. *Whether you're a frequent guest or you're just planning your first trip to Sydney, we hope you'll find the information you need on our News page (TWP2).*
2. *In between matches, test your own skills at the festival's games—see how fast you can shoot a ball, how long you can juggle and challenge your mates to football putt putt (TWP1).*
3. *Sydney Opera House [...] We learned about the story of how it was built... (B2).*
4. *From check-in to check-out, we strive to make your stay enjoyable and hassle-free (TWP2).*
5. *By appealing to football fans who are going to be inundating the area, you will be able to grow your business and increase the reach of your brand (B3).*
6. *Our friendly and professional staff members are dedicated to delivering exceptional service (TWP2).*
7. *Start your FREE 21-day trial or book a demo with our team today (B3).*

Other noteworthy language resources seem to be the use of adjectives and intensifying adverbs that also support a persuasive function of language. The most frequent adjectives are “great”, “local” and “Australian” (Table 5). The adjective “great” is preferred in TWP since, on the whole, it promotes tourism; OP uses “Australian”, highlighting national aspects; and B prefers “local”, mainly in opinions regarding territorial characteristics. On the other hand, the most frequent intensifying adverb in the three categories is “really”, whereas “very” is not present in OP, as it could be considered more colloquial.

TABLE 5. The most frequent adjectives and intensifying adverbs

Part of speech	TWP - NF	OP - NF	B - NF
Adjectives			
Great	3.44	2.14	1.34
Local	0	1.34	2.14
Australian	0.49	2.41	1.07
Adverbs			
Really	2.21	1.88	1.1
Very	2.7	0	1.07

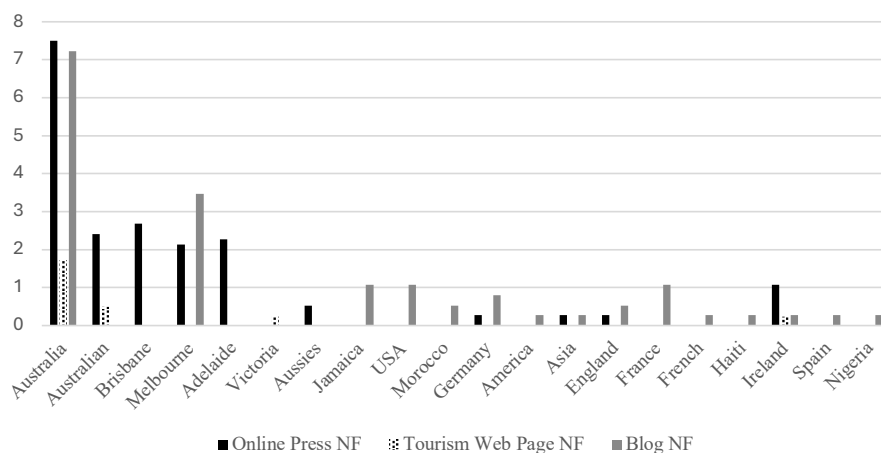
Therefore, COR-WWC-23 shows that persuasive resources (pronouns, positive adjectives, intensifying adverbs, imperatives and conditional sentences) found in TWP and B, and the informative function of OP, involve the promotion of destination and of sports facilities; however, they do not refer to sportswomen, supporting their invisibility.

Regarding the contextual characteristics of sports tourism communication, what Mautner (2022, 250) describes as “social context” should also be considered. On the one hand, we assumed a high representation of women in all three corpora as they are the protagonists of this sports event; on the other hand, we expected an improved destination image. Mautner (2022, 251) stresses the importance of “social actors” and how they are described, as well as the types of activity in which they are engaged; the author continues, asking: “How do the speakers/writers of these texts signal their stance as well as social and professional identities?” To discover the construction of the different social identities reflected in the three subcorpora, the most frequent terms in the corpus were analysed and grouped into three categories, revealing three well-defined identity constructions related to sports tourism: national identity, gender identity and destination identity.

3.1. National Identity

The highest number of occurrences is for the term “Australia”, followed by “Australian”. Although the terms “Melbourne” or “Adelaide” (to allude to national players) rarely appear, they can be added to the first ones to determine that the sign of identity is clearly marked in the three subcorpora (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Terms denoting national identity in the three subcorpora

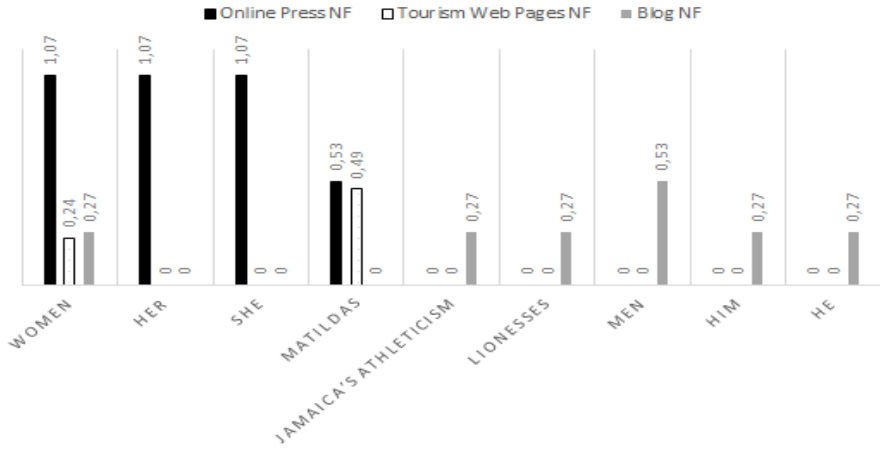


Other terms that denote national identity are “Matildas”, “heritage”, “indigenous”, “aboriginal”, “colonial” and “history”. These cultural references also reflect the place’s identity. Wensing and Bruce (2003, 388) mention that at some mega-sports events, “national identity overrides all other identity markers such as gender”, concluding that for the press, it is more important to present women footballers as Australian citizens than as women. The authors claim that sportswomen have usually been ignored regarding sport and nationality analysis, “focusing instead on the powerful intersections of sport, masculinity and nationalism” (Wensing and Bruce 2003, 389). We could consider that national identity is directly related to gender and destination identities. Thus, this relationship is developed in the two following sections.

3.2. Gender Identity

In order to determine gender identity, male and female referential elements have been considered, including references to the neutral forms of “player(s)” and “footballer(s)”. The most frequent terms related to gender identity found in the three subcorpora are “women”, “her”, “she”, “Matildas”, “Jamaica’s athleticism” (a female athlete), “Lionesses”, “men”, “him” and “he”. The term “women” occurs 86 times (NF 7.45) in the COR-WWC-23; however, as this term is related to the title of the event on 80 occasions, only six occurrences (NF 0.52) are included in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Terms denoting gender identity in the three subcorpora



Following Pérez-Paredes (2021), we have focused on the six least frequent occurrences of the term “women”, as its infrequency indicates a clear underrepresentation of women footballers, being the main protagonists in this event, in sports promotional discourse, pointing to the fact that, as Sherry et al. (2016, 299) mention, “internationally and in Australasia, media images of sportswomen continue to fail to represent the realities of women’s sports performance.” Therefore, the uses of the term that appear within the title “Women’s World Cup” have been discarded and we focus on comparing them within the subcorpora, as shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3. Concordance lines of “women” in COR-WWC-23

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
73 OPF1 ...	ball fans to get involved in the opportunity to help showcase our state and	women'	s football to the world."
74 OPF2 ...	ball fans to get involved in the opportunity to help showcase our state and	women'	s football to the world." The Sydney Harbour Bridge will close to traffic on
75 TWPF2 ...	don't miss the opportunity to witness the excitement of the FIFA World Cup	Women'	s matches in Sydney. Choose Marco Polo Sydney Hotel as your accommod
76 TWPF2 ...	ient Services: We understand that your schedule during the FIFA World Cup	Women'	s matches may be dynamic. That's why we offer flexible services such as ea
77 OPF5 The...	tickets and is expected to break records for the most attended standalone	women'	s sporting event in history. The bulk of international football fans will be ar
78 TWPF1 ...	seat at Sydney Football Stadium where you'll witness history at the biggest	women'	s sporting event in the world. DAY FOUR: PARRAMATTA & SYDNEY OLYMP
79 TWPF2 ...	nt stay. Book your room today and make the most of your FIFA World Cup	Women'	s experience with us. Call one of our friendly staff members by phoning... c
80 OPF4 The...	g has been like a dream so far and hopes the tournament can show off the	women'	s game at its best, as well as her home country, and particularly in Sydney ;
81 TWPF2 ...	ally located, offering easy access to the venues hosting the FIFA World Cup	Women'	s matches. You'll save time and energy on commuting, allowing you to full
82 OPF5 The...	ut off their wedding plans to be in Australia to support "The Gals" – the US	Women'	s National Team (USWNT). "We would have followed the Women's World C
83 BF1 Torre...	ks for the sport both on and off the field, arguably pushing the visibility of	women'	s soccer forward and raising awareness of gender inequality in sports. How
84 TWPF2 ...	Why Choose Marco Polo Sydney Hotel for Your FIFA World Cup	Women'	s Stay If you're planning to attend the FIFA World Cup Women's stay in Sy
85 TWPF2 ...	World Cup Women's Stay If you're planning to attend the FIFA World Cup	Women'	s stay in Sydney, choosing the right accommodation is essential to enhanc
86 OPF5 The...	ved the Women's World Cup anywhere in the world that was safe for queer	women	to be," said Via, who will be travelling to Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland and

Wensing and Bruce (2003, 393) highlighted the fact that “Freeman⁵ was rarely described as a woman: most often the 27 years old was represented as a ‘girl’ and as engaging in girlish behaviour (such as giggling, being bubbly, skipping and producing fairytales).” The six occurrences of the term “women” correspond to lines 74, 77, 78, 80, 83 and 86, as shown in Figure 3. In two examples, corresponding to lines 77 and 78, the mega-sport event involving women is presented as a milestone.

1. The tournament [...] is expected to break records for the most attended standalone *women’s* sporting event in history (OP5).

2. [...] at Sydney Football Stadium where you’ll witness history at the biggest *women’s* sporting event in the world (TWP1).

The next example (line 83) presents a reference to push women’s visibility and highlights gender inequality in sports:

3. The hugely successful 2023 Women’s World Cup set new benchmarks for the sport both on and off the field, arguably pushing the visibility of *women’s* soccer forward and raising awareness of gender inequality in sports (B1).

Combining the concept of women’s visibility with gender inequality, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic Games, stated in 1928: “An Olympiad with females would be impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and improper” (Massonos 2022, n.p.). Since then, women have been fighting not only for equality but also for social change in sports and many other fields. However, Bruce (2013, 131), states that “[i]n the second decade of the 21st century, it appears that it is increasingly accepted and valued for females to participate in sport but what they do *does not matter*.” Moreover, Markula et al. (2010, 4) maintain that “electronic media appears to marginalise women’s sport to an even greater extent than the print media.” Within the unwritten rules when covering sports events, Wensing and Bruce (2003) include gender marking, but only women’s sports events are gender marked, the male event being the norm.

In examples (4) and (5), in lines 74 and 80, gender identity is presented together with destination identity, a concept that will be developed in section 3.3.

4. I encourage football fans to get involved in the opportunity to help showcase our state and *women’s* football to the world (OP2).

5. Kyah Simon [...] says the whole thing has been like a dream so far and hopes the tournament can show off the *women’s* game at its best, as well as her home country, and particularly in Sydney and her state of New South Wales (OP4).

5 Freeman is an Aboriginal Australian former sprinter who specialised in the 400 metres.

However, there is a particular example with no occurrence of the word “women”, where one specific Australian athlete is mentioned to establish a comparison between her and the mega-sport event:

6. *Cathy Freeman* stopped the nation at the Sydney Games in 2000—now we can do the same with the FIFA World Cup (OP4).

According to Horn (2024), winning the gold medal was a landmark for Australia, which again points to the fact that national identity may be highlighted more than gender identity. Moreover, Wensing and Bruce (2003, 393) state that: “[t]his framing may have created a context in which it was more likely that many Australians could feel comfortable enough with her Aboriginality and gender to claim her as their representative.” In our corpus only two athletes were mentioned by name: one is Cathy Freeman, as an icon of the country she represents; the other is Kyah Simon, a footballer in the Matildas, the Australian women’s football team. It is somewhat surprising that the only two athletes mentioned in the entire corpus are aboriginal Australian sportswomen, pointing once again to the importance of national identity over gender identity.

There are other ways to refer to women footballers, such as Matildas and Aussies. “Matildas”⁶ is nowadays the nickname for the official Australian women’s national football team. This term has been used since 1995; previously they were “female Socceroos”, deriving from the male squad, the “Socceroos”—soccer + kangaroos—recognised in 1902 as an official symbol of Australia. Supposedly, until 1995, almost three decades ago, sports were still conceived as men’s territory. In one of our subcorpora, the one regarding TWP, there is a reference to John Aloisi, a male player who played for the Socceroos for many years: he is presented as a hero and as a reference, as the following example shows:

7. Stadium Australia, the ground where *Aloisi* scored to put the Socceroos in the 2006 FIFA World Cup™. For the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2023™, the epic stadium will host the opening game between the Matildas and the Republic of Ireland (TWP1).

Even though we could think that the Matildas do not depend on male footballers, once again, sportsmen are presented as a reference, pointing at “the dominance of gender as a framing device” (Wensing and Bruce 2003, 387). Later,

6 The origin of the term “Matildas” is not completely clear since there are different versions, but all of them point to a way of reinforcing Australian identity from a postcolonial approach.

Sherry et al. (2016, 299) affirm that “[w]omen’s sport continues to be viewed through the prism of male hegemony.” Physical strength, speed, and resilience, among others are still male-dominance characteristics.

The next section deals with the importance of destination identity and how it is linked to the mega-sport event.

3.3. Destination Identity

We have covered gender identity and national identity, and, in our case, the latter especially is directly related to destination identity, because building it is crucial when trying to attract a high number of visitors, particularly when dealing with a huge sports event such as the WWCF. As mentioned, sports and tourism are two interconnected industries, and one of the most important aspects to bear in mind is the main characteristics of the place that hosts such an event, as well as its cultural features—its people and heritage, among others—and the target tourist, especially at present, when social media plays a key role.

According to Marine-Roig (2015, 574), “[i]dentity is a concept related to the tourist subject and projected image.” In this sense, to create the brand identity of a specific destination, the place itself and the tourist businesses have to underline its main strengths to grab the potential tourist’s attention, thus succeeding in selling their product. When countries present their identity, they create a strong image that will distinguish them from their competitors. In our corpus, we have observed some linguistic resources that could influence would-be tourists’ decisions when attending the WWCF in Australia.

We will focus on the specific type of lexicon that presents the destination in a positive way: Dann (1996, 65) notes that “the language of tourism tends to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the services and attractions it seeks to promote”. According to Blanco-Gómez (2023, 294), “[t]he use of positive words and expressions has the objective of transmitting bliss, optimism, pleasure and prosperity.” Regarding nouns, we can mention terms such as “experts”, “service”, “facilities”, “goodies”, “convenience”, or “landmarks”. Many nouns are directly related to information quality and customer satisfaction, which are crucial when dealing with the main proposals and attractions a destination can offer, and thus associated with destination identity.

The most important part of speech here is adjectives since they describe the place to create a specific type of identity. Adjectives are used to produce persuasive texts, and so prospective tourists will believe in a specific product or service. In COR-WWC-23, we have found numerous adjectives, once again trying to convey a positive idea of the host city, including “excellent”, “affordable”, “stunning”, “distinctive”, “impeccable”, “amazing”, “unique”

and “delicious”. Many of these adjectives point to emotions and excellence, another aspect associated with destination identity—for example, excellence in the service provided by tourist businesses. Some of the adjectives point to other values in tourism—teamwork, commitment and inclusion—which are also associated with the values present in sports.

When working to sell a product, whether it is related to sports tourism or not, one strategy, apart from adjectives, is the use of superlatives, which usually express superior quality: some examples in our corpus are “friendliest”, “greatest”, “best” or “hippest”. With the use of adjectives and superlatives in particular, destinations can project an image of uniqueness and top quality, which are two basic concepts when managing tourism and hospitality, connecting the destination with the reader (potential tourist).

When dealing with adjectives to promote a destination, we usually think of intensifying adverbs that precede them so that the meaning of the adjective is emphasised by the adverb. In our corpus, we have found a series of adverbs, such as “extremely”, “highly”, “kindly”, “distinctly”, “culturally”, “proudly” and “domestically”. We can observe how the last three examples are directly related to national identity.

As observed, by using a specific type of lexicon, destinations can create a determined identity of the place, and by using all the linguistic resources mentioned, their main aim is to create a competitive advantage and to look to influence the potential tourist subconsciously, something that takes place in advertising and when trying to promote a specific destination by employing different persuasive language strategies. That is to say, the tourism industry usually builds destination identity through discourse. It is noteworthy that no references to sportswomen or female space are observed in this identity.

4 Conclusion

In this research we have discussed the construction of tourism media discourse, specifically focusing on gender visibility and destination promotion in a case study, the Women’s World Cup Final held in August 23 (COR-WWC-23). The data for the study were extracted from original digital media text samples representative of local tourism promotion attracting international visitors to this mega-event in order to discern the real picture of the linguistic resources used and the context.

A corpus of 11,549 words was compiled and examined using the CADS methodology to study the most frequent instances of content words and pronouns, following a quantitative analysis to avoid researcher bias. The results showed that the main communication function is to persuade, with a preference

for the pronouns “you” (NF 22.79), “your” (NF 14.83), “we” (NF 26.63) and “our” (NF 12.42). Lexical choices show a preference for the adjectives “great” (NF 6.92), “local” (NF 3.48) and “Australian” (NF 3.97) and intensifying adverbs such as “really” (NF 5.19) and “very” (NF 3.77). Neither the adjectives mentioned, nor the adverbs refer to women. Other grammatical choices include conditional sentences, modal verbs, or imperatives. Following a qualitative analysis, social identities (gender, national and destination), which support the construction of the discourse, were also identified.

In line with previous studies, this research outlines the remarkably low use of terms referring to women or their sports achievements, which is surprising as this important international mega-event is specifically organised to represent elite sportswomen in football. There is evidence of under-representation of sportswomen coverage with a reduced choice of linguistic patterns to promote their visibility (NF 0.52) other than the title of the event. Therefore, our first hypothesis, that women’s sports events will result in greater visibility regarding the achievements of female athletes, has not been confirmed.

The second hypothesis, related to the host city of the sports event and its promotion as an appealing destination for potential tourists, has been confirmed. This research reveals a favourable destination image when promoting the host city with a high occurrence of qualifying words (adjectives, NF 14.37), mainly used to refer to the wonderful products and services tourists can enjoy during their stay in the host city—that is, to enhance the image of the destination. In addition, results show that the media represent this event and its location using specific language choices to project sports values that the city identifies with, such as teamwork, inclusion and excellence through engagement with the community, to assimilate would-be tourists or sports audiences.

The most important limitation of the analysis lies in the fact that only one event has been studied and the results cannot therefore be generalised. Researching other women’s sports events could shed more light on the language used in social media. In addition, it would have been interesting to study the presence of news items before, during and after the event. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar study regarding the visibility of male footballers’ achievements in a mega-sports event and compare both language uses and contextual factors.

These findings contribute to the field of discourse analysis in media studies as they reveal communication strategies developed in the discourse of sports tourism, mainly language choices, the emergence of sports values with which the city could identify, and the construction of three salient identities: national, gender and destination. These sports values and identities represent the social context in which this mega-sport event occurred. The strongest identities are national and destination, as gender identity still shows women’s underrepresentation,

revealing the importance of national identity over gender identity. The CADS approach followed may contribute to providing an in-depth picture of the linguistic resources used by social media that could influence sports tourism decisions and to understanding the relationship between language and social phenomena.

It should be clarified that for reasons of space, this research has focused on only the most salient linguistic resources and contextual factors. More linguistic resources could be studied using other analytical tools and procedures, such as analysing the visual images that appear in the texts and how they support or substitute the written media storytelling. This aspect of influence on tourist sports media communication perhaps deserves a detailed multimodal study in a different piece of research. Moreover, a diachronic study of possible changes in the functioning of language regarding sportswomen's visibility could be conducted.

This research has revealed that neither the communicative functions nor the social identities discovered in sports tourism media representation project outstanding visibility of sportswomen, although they do strongly promote the destination. Consequently, this analysis serves as a pertinent case study contributing to the understanding of sports tourism media discourse representation.

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