

THE BRANDING IMAGE OF AMERICAN SOCCER TO GAIN SOCCER POPULARITY  
IN AMERICA IN “HOW BIG SOCCER IN AMERICA?” DOCUMENTARY VIDEO

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**THE BRANDING IMAGE OF AMERICAN SOCCER TO GAIN SOCCER  
POPULARITY IN AMERICA IN “HOW BIG SOCCER IN AMERICA?”  
DOCUMENTARY VIDEO**

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the evolution of soccer in the United States and reasons why it's less popular than other sports like basketball, baseball, and American football. Despite soccer's global popularity, only around 13.6 million people in America enjoy watching and playing it. The objective of this study are to analyze the history of soccer in America and the branding strategy of soccer in America. Soccer is the most popular sport in around the world, but the popularity of soccer in America is less than other sports that from America such as basketball, softball and American football. This studies will discuss about how the branding from America to gain soccer popularity in America.

This undergraduate thesis uses descriptive qualitative methode. The main data are taken from Tifo Football documentary content entitled "How Big is Soccer in America?". The researcher also takes data from some books, journal and internet resources. This undergraduate thesis uses interdisciplinary approach that should be uses more than one theories and this undergraduate thesis the researcher choose three theories. The first theory is American exceptionalism theory by Alexis De Tocqueville. The second theory is branding theory from Philip Kotler and the third theory is branding theory that incorporates with technology from Kevin Keller's brand equity model.

The results of this undergraduate thesis is American exceptionalism have an impact for the development of American soccer since its arrival. The value of American exceptionalism which make America is different with other countries in the cultural, economy and political aspect become motivation for American soccer competition to looks different with other soccer competition in around the world. Other results is, branding strategy from American soccer in social media, sponsorship and technology give positive impact in the development of soccer. Especially the used of Hispanic people as their target market.

*Key Words: American Soccer, History of Soccer, Branding Strategy*

**CHAPTER I**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Background of The Study**

Soccer is the most favorite sport in around the world, based on recent survey from (World Atlas, 2022) there are 3.5 billion people in around the world is like to playing and watching football. But, soccer is not the most favorite sport in America, the prestige of soccer in America is still inferior to Basketball, baseball, and American Football. Since soccer entered American in 1850s in New Orleans, there are only 13.6 million people in American who like to playing and watching soccer. People said culture is one of problem why soccer is not interested for American people, american people always feel that their culture and history is different with other countries in around the world (Burazer, 2020). As I mentioned above that soccer was invented in America on 1850, soccer was brought by immigrants from Europe such as Scottish, Irish, German and Italian, it makes soccer is not interested for Americans because it come from Europe and it's already become a culture in Europe. The other reason why soccer is less of interest for Americans is because soccer in America was arrived lately than the other sports such as baseball, basketball and American football. Especially, these sports are originally come from America and become their culture.

In period of 1970-1990, American soccer are growing rapidly, a lot of children at that time started to play soccer (Greyser, 2021). In the recent years the achievement of American soccer is grow up, especially for women's soccer in America. The US Women's soccer team is already become one of the most succesful women national soccer team in around the world. In 2012 the won gold medal at the 2012 Olympics in London and become the first ranked on FIFA world ranking. Different with women's soccer team, men's soccer team in America is on development era. The most recent achievement for them is when they

qualified for 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and they also on 14th position on FIFA World Ranking. There are few aspects that make soccer in America growing up; the development of young talent, competitive competition and big investment in soccer are the main factor of soccer development in America.

United States Soccer Federation (USSF) now is serious to make American soccer and soccer competition become more competitive to stands in high-level performances sport. Soccer is relate to socialcultural phenomena as the other sports in America, it needs time to make soccer in America grow up and interesting for American people (Greyser & Cortsen, 2021). United States Soccer Federation make an investment to built soccer industry in America through Major League Soccer and make branding strategy to gain soccer popularity in America. MLS is the only high-competition for men soccer's team in America, one of the way to develop MLS is by make branding through broadcasting rights. Broadcasting is vital for a competition to get commercial value and to grow the popularity of the competition in the future (Greyser & Critsen, 2020). In this case USSF make a branding with "Soccer" while other countries called this sport as football. In 2015 MLS made an eight-year deals and \$90 million income every year with ESPN, one of the biggest sport channel in America (Greyser & Cortsen, 2021) .With this parternships, USSF will use the income to built soccer industry in America and try to gain the branding from American soccer.

The basis for choosing the topic in this study is because the author's interest in American soccer, and the strategy from United States Soccer Federation to increase the popularity of soccer in America. People might think that culture become a problem for soccer to grow up in America, but the fact that soccer in 20th century become one of the growing sports in America.

And considering the author's understanding on interdisciplinary studies, especially in history, economy and sport perspective itself. (Adhikari, 2020) stated that it is important for people to choose topic based on researcher's interest. In this research, the author's will use two interdisciplinary studies; history and economy studies to analyze the history of soccer in America and to analyze the way America try to built their soccer industry through branding that they made to make American people interested to soccer.

## **2. Problem Formulation**

- A. What The History of Soccer in America?
- B. How The Branding Strategy From United States Soccer Federation to Gain Popularity of Soccer in America?

## **3. Objective of the Study**

- A. To explain the history of soccer in America.
- B. To explain the branding strategy from United States Soccer Federation to gain soccer popularity in America.

## **4. Review Related Studies**

The first article is from, Rheenen (2009) entitled "The promise of soccer in America: The open play of ethnic subcultures". This journal analyzed about the lack of success of soccer in America and the author's argued about soccer who provide mean for minority to build their cultural identity to become a part of from multicultural country.

The second article is from Markovits and Hellerman (1996) entitled "Soccer in America: A Story of Marginalization". This journal explained about the history of soccer in America and the process of development soccer since its arrival.

The third article is from Smolianov and Naylor (2014) entitled “Comparing the practices of US Soccer against a global model for integrated development of mass and high-performance sport”. The aim of this study was to see how soccer in America face modern soccer with high-performance sport who can make competition and soccer in America become more competitive. This study used quantitative methods, by uses questionnaire who validated by 12 international expert from soccer and use 125 coach to become the respondents and answer the questionnaire.

The fourth article is from Greyser & Cirtsen (2021) entitled “MLS as a Sports Product – the Prominence of the World’s Game in the U.S.”. The aim of this study was to explain how soccer in American with use Major League Soccer as a parameter to see how American soccer development in a quarter of century. This study used descriptive qualitative methods. The data collected by the cohesion between sport and business development, to got the results about Major League Soccer progress in the future.

The fifth article is from Gillet and Tennent (2020) entitled “The Growth of Major League Soccer: Commentary, Analysis & Explanations from the Literature”. The study is focus to analyzed the growth of Major League Soccer and this study will explained about how Major League Soccer maintain every club’s financial. This study used qualitative methods. The findings show that there are a lot of variable to help the development of soccer in America on economy side, such as the attendance of supporters, merchandise and so on. If it’s can going well, the financial of every club in MLS will be safe.

The sixth article is from Southall and Mark (2008) entitled “Marketing Professional Soccer In The United States: Lessons In Exchange Theory And Cause Related Marketing”.

This journal is explained about the strategy from United States Soccer Federation to gain the popularity through the branding that they have made.

The seventh article is from Waddington and Roderick (1996) entitled “American Exceptionalism: Soccer and American Football”. This journal explained about the relation between American Exceptionalism theory to soccer development in America.

The eight article is from Keller (2003) entitled “Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity”. This article explained about Kevin Keller's brand equity model. From this article the author try to explain the relation between Kevin Keller's brand equity model with branding strategy of American soccer in terms of the used of technology.

Based on eight articles that the author reviewed, it can be concluded that three journals who focused on history from American soccer and the process of soccer development in America since the arrival. The other four journals will focus on the development for soccer in American, who focused on economy studies. It will explain economy perspective who will explain about the strategy from United States Soccer Federation to make a branding image for American soccer. These eight journals is relate to authors topic, because it explain the history of soccer in America and the way they build branding image for American soccer to gain soccer popularity in America and in the world.

## **5. Methods of The Studies**

This study will use qualitative methods, Qualitative research is a type of study who focus on the way interpret and understand the experiences to know or analyzing the data (Mohajan, 2018). The author use qualitative methods by analyze problem from trusted and vaildated article.



#### A. Data & Source Data

Before the authors conclude the problem or interpret the information, there will be process to sorting and gathering data (Ajayi, 2017). In the research, the author should define the structure of a study. A main component in the structure consists of its unit of data collection (Yin, 2011). In this research the author used two data as a source for this study.

#### A. Main Data

In this study the author used the video from Tifo Football entitled *“How big is soccer in the United States?”*. The author will use this video as a main data and mental evidence for this study. This video tells the story about the development of soccer popularity in America and this video also tells the reason that makes soccer growing rapidly in America.

#### B. Secondary Data

In this study the authors used the book from George Edward White entitled *“Soccer in American Culture: The Beautiful Game’s Struggle for Status.”* Which is become the secondary data for this study. The authors took the data from reliable source and also from validated article. With good management in data collection will make data analysis, visualization and reporting become more efficient and makes publication more effective and not wasting time (Briney, Coates, Goban, 2020).

#### C. Method and Technique of Collecting Data

There are many ways to collecting data in the qualitative research, by doing observation, analysis from the textual or visual and individual or group interview (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, Chadwick, 2008). In this study the authors was collect data based on several steps: First, the author will watch the video from Tifo Football and took some important point to this study, then analyze the development of American soccer and try to get

another information from other source. After that, the data that show the popularity of soccer in America will be analyzing with the historical theory and economic theory and classify them to the each kind of related problem.

#### D. Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

After collected the data, the authors need to analyzing data and it need some several steps:

- a. Identification. The first step to analyze the data is by identifying the source.
- b. Classification. Then the authors need classify the data.
- c. Interpretation. The next step is interpretation, this step the authors will find the means of the word and try to drawing inferences from the data based on theory that used in this study.
- d. Describing. The fourth step is describing the meaning change and forming the new words.
- e. Conclusion. The last step is concluded all of the data to answer the research question.

#### **6. Theoretical Approach**

Adom & Husein (2018) defined theoretical framework as a framework who based on theory in a study or research who relateed or reflected a study based on hypothesis. In this study, the authors used interdisciplinary studies as a approach for this study. Interdisciplinary studies approach is the way to redefine the problems and to find a solution based on new understanding using several different discipline. This study also divide two discipline studies between history and economy studies.

## CHAPTER II

### A. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The theories discussed in this chapter are the theories who support the understanding of the problem formulation in the first chapter. This chapter will be divided into two subheadings. The first part will explain the historical approach to analyze the history of soccer. The second part will explain about the economic approach by to analyze the branding strategy of soccer in America.

#### a. The Historical Approach

The term "historical approach" refers to a method of studying and interpreting historical events, documents, and sources. This approach involves examining the context, causes, and consequences of events in order to better understand the past and its significance to the present. The historical approach often involves the use of primary sources, such as letters, diaries, government documents, and other historical artifacts, as well as the analysis of secondary sources, such as scholarly books and articles, to provide a more complete understanding of the past. This approach is often used by historians, but it can also be applied to other fields, such as literature and political science, in order to gain a better understanding of the historical context of a particular topic or issue (Jaro, 2016).

#### b. The Economic Approach

The economic approach is a method of studying and analyzing economic phenomena, such as markets, industries, and economies as a whole. This approach typically involves the use of economic theories, models, and concepts, such as supply and demand, marginal cost and marginal benefit, and opportunity cost, to understand and explain economic phenomena. The economic approach often involves the use of data and statistical analysis to support

conclusions and predictions about economic activity. This approach is commonly used by economists, but it can also be applied to other fields, such as business, finance, and public policy, in order to gain a better understanding of the economic factors that influence decision-making and behavior (Paldam, 2021).

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework is something that makes the research strong by provide a scientific research. Theoretical framework also provide scientific justification for the investigation, it shows that the reseach not suddenly coming but it is grounded on scientific story (Vinz, 2015).

Theoretical framework also provides a conceptual framework for understanding the relationships among the different variables being studied, and it helps to ensure that the research is focused and coherent. Theoretical frameworks are used in many different fields of research, including the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities. This section also divided into two sections. The first is the history of soccer in America. The second is the branding theory to analyze the branding strategy from American soccer.

### **A. The History of Soccer in America**

Soccer arrived in America for the first time in the 1850, brought by immigrants from Europe such as Scottish, Irish, German and Italian. Soccer is not American native sport, it's different with baseball, basketball and softball who are the American native sport. It's also showed stigma about the less popularity of American soccer because it's not native American sport and not related to American culture.

## **B. The Branding Theory**

Branding theory is a body of knowledge that focuses on the strategic use of branding to create and maintain a successful brand. This theory involves the use of various branding techniques to differentiate a brand from its competitors and create a strong, positive association with the brand in the minds of consumers. These techniques can include the use of a unique brand name, logo, and other visual elements to create a distinct brand identity, as well as the use of marketing and advertising strategies to promote the brand and its products or services (Roger & Parker, 2006).

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher wants to explain more precisely in the objective study. The researcher focuses to analyze the relation between the history of soccer of America and branding strategy of soccer in America in the “How Big Soccer in America?” documentary video by Tifo Football, using theory that researcher used in this research.

#### **A. History of Soccer in Tifo Football Documentary Videos**

Tifo Football is a popular YouTube channel and website that produces high-quality, in-depth football (soccer) analysis, tactics, and history videos. The channel was founded in 2017 by Joe Devine, Alex Stewart, and Seb Stafford-Bloor, who are all respected football writers and journalists.

Tifo Football's videos cover a wide range of topics related to the sport, including tactical analysis of matches and players, club histories, and profiles of footballing icons. The channel's content is known for its informative and well-researched approach, as well as its unique visual style that often incorporates hand-drawn animations and infographics.

In addition to its YouTube channel, Tifo Football also has a website that features articles and other written content on football-related topics. The channel has garnered a large following and is widely regarded as one of the most informative and entertaining sources of football analysis on the internet (TheAthletic.Com, 2017).

#### **B. The Branding of Soccer in America**

To promote American soccer and to introduce American soccer to around the world, United States Soccer Federation make some branding strategy to develop soccer industry in America. In the Tifo video "How Big Soccer in America?" it is discussed that the

development of the soccer industry in America is a structural process. Because in the historical things, soccer has faced challenges in gaining popularity and competing with other popular sports in America, such as basketball, baseball, and American football.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the analysis presented in Chapter 3, it can be concluded that there is a clear relationship between soccer and American exceptionalism. The concept of American exceptionalism, encompassing political, cultural, and economic aspects, has influenced the development of soccer in the United States.

In the economic aspect, the notion of the "American Dream" has played a significant role. The belief in upward mobility and the pursuit of economic prosperity through hard work and entrepreneurship has shaped the American society. This ideology has also influenced the development of soccer in America, where innovative financial systems have been implemented, particularly in Major League Soccer (MLS).

The MLS franchise system, which aligns with American sports traditions, prioritizes stability, brand recognition, and investment protection. By adopting a franchise model, the league provides greater control and stability for team owners and sponsors, fostering a sense of security. Additionally, mechanisms such as salary caps and player allocations promote parity and competitive balance within the league, contributing to its overall stability and success.

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that Keller's branding theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how technology can be leveraged to build strong and valuable brands in the digital age. This theory can be applied to American soccer as a means to modernize the sport and enhance its brand image. The used of hispanic people as their target market also give positive impact to gain soccer popularity in America.



In brief, the findings suggest that American exceptionalism has influenced the development of soccer in the United States, particularly in the economic domain. The implementation of innovative financial systems, such as the franchise model and salary caps in MLS, align with American values and contribute to the stability, competitiveness, and overall success of American soccer. By applying branding theories like Keller's, American soccer can continue to evolve and establish itself as a modern and valuable sport in the digital age.