

## Brazilian fans' social representations on soccer.

### Representaciones sociales de los hinchas brasileños sobre fútbol.

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#### **Abstract**

The study aims at describing the organizing principles and the structure of Brazilian soccer fans' social representations on soccer. 521 participants, who supported five Brazilian clubs, participated in the study. Data collection took place through an internet form advertised in online communities about soccer. Participants answered open-ended free evocation tasks in which they mentioned the first words that came to their minds when thinking about soccer. Responses were categorized according to their theme and correspondence analysis, prototypical analysis and similarity analysis were employed for data analysis. Results suggest that soccer clubs, fans, emotion and goal constitute the representation's central core and organize the structure. Correspondence analysis results present contrasts between concrete and symbolic aspects of the sport, while there are also variations in the representational field according to participants' clubs, age ranges and involvement with fan clubs.

**Key words:** soccer; social representations; soccer fans; sport psychology; football.

#### **Resumen**

El estudio tiene como objetivo describir los principios de organización y la estructura de las representaciones sociales de los hinchas brasileños sobre fútbol. 521 participantes, que apoyaron a cinco clubs brasileños, participaron en el estudio. La colección de datos ocurrió a través de un cuestionario de Internet anunciado en comunidades *on line* sobre fútbol. Los participantes contestaron a tareas de evocación libre en las cuales mencionaron las primeras palabras que vinieron a sus mentes al pensar sobre fútbol. Las respuestas fueron categorizadas según su tema y el análisis de correspondencia, el análisis prototípico y el análisis de semejanza fueron empleados para el análisis de datos. Los resultados sugieren que los clubs, los aficionados, la emoción y el gol constituyen la base central de la representación y organizan la estructura. Los resultados del análisis de correspondencia demuestran contrastes entre aspectos simbólicos y concretos del deporte, mientras que hay también variaciones en el campo de representación según los clubes de los participantes, la edad e implicación con los clubes de hinchas.

**Palabras claves:** fútbol; representaciones sociales; hinchas; psicología del deporte.

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## Introducción

The present study is about the social meaning of sports. It is a survey conducted through the World Wide Web about Brazilian soccer fans' shared beliefs on the country's – and one of the world's – most popular sport. Its objective is to describe the fans' social representations about soccer, in order to have an understanding of what the game conveys to society, fully allowing an apprehension of the sport's symbolic dimensions in the Brazilian context.

### *Soccer in Brazil*

According to Tubino (1992), sport evolved from physical educational activities in the Olympic Games of ancient Greece and incorporated its modern conception in England in the 20s, as Thomas Arnold introduced it to aristocratic and bourgeois schools, codifying rules and organizing games. Since then, sport's modern conception has three dimensions: that of a game, that of a competition and an educational side as well. Gradually, sports evolved from a pedagogic approach to an agonistic one, involving competition and confrontation between groups and individuals. High performance sports became not only an arena for contest between game participants, but also a source of entertainment for people, at the same time a competition, a source of leisure, and a business. Sport also has a semiotic nature, carrying messages, with athletic practices and related aspects serving as symbols. It is a cultural good, a manifestation of popular culture.

Soccer first emerged as a popular game, not as a modern sport. There have been games with similar rules to soccer in various civilizations, such as ancient Egypt, Babylon, China, Japan, Greece, Rome and others (Aquino, 2002). Due to its extreme violence, the medieval games that looked like soccer were often banned by kings and rulers, but still remained popular throughout the years. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, soccer was introduced in aristocratic schools with different goals from the ones that it has nowadays: to nurture discipline in students and keep themselves busy (Aquino, 2002; Damo, 2002).

It was practiced with different rules at English schools for years, but a single divergence, the use of hands, brought about a schism between institutions that gave birth to two modern sports: rugby and soccer. The latter was born at a school called Harrow, whose students later printed the sport's rules and founded the first soccer association in 1863, the Football Association (FA) (Giulianotti, 2002). Soccer became highly popular in the British Empire and was diffused through colonies and other countries by sailors, workers, aristocrats, and students that had spent time in England (Aquino, 2002; Giulianotti, 2002).

In 1894, Charles Miller, a Brazilian who had studied in England, brought two footballs and the sport itself to Brazil, mainly to the region of Sao Paulo. He organized teams formed by players from the privileged classes and introduced the game to Brazil. A few years later, Oscar Cox did the same in Rio de Janeiro, which was the federal capital at the time (Aquino, 2002; Damo, 2002).

According to Damo (2002), soccer became a modern sport after a double institutionalization process took place. Historically, a first step was made when it was adopted by schools and courts, having been given new meanings and styles of play. Later, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England and Europe, and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil, the modernization of the sport was concluded with the flourishing of associationism: from schools, soccer migrated to clubs, which formed associations and leagues. Soccer and teams became a way to live group identities, as they expressed social and local conflicts.

The first soccer clubs only accepted the participation of elite members as players or counselors, but they managed to attract the interest of the popular classes as well, which assembled to watch matches. Some factors contributed to the popularity of soccer among the people, such as the lack of need of expensive equipment to play, and the government's repression of *capoeira* in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art developed by slaves which is half dance – half fight, and was the most popular physical activity of its time, with famous *capoeira* fighters being considered popular heroes. Due to their participation in the Vaccine Revolt, a popular insurrection against compulsory vaccination, the government banned the practice (Aquino, 2002).

As the people became fond of soccer, the technical level of regional leagues and championships improved, and factory clubs were also founded to serve as leisure and an integration activity to workers (Damo, 2002). Elite clubs, which rejected poor and black players, had to open space for them on their rosters in order to be competitive (Aquino, 2002). Gradually, soccer became the people's sport. The elite switched from their role as club players to club managers and directors, and people from the lower classes, who were more skilled, took over as players (Damo, 2002). In order to survive, clubs were forced to adopt professionalism to hire the best players that were available, and thus to have higher chances of winning (Levine, 1982). They went from amateur institutions restricted to a certain number of members from the high class to big clubs that paid good amounts of money to players and technical directors, who relied on fans and the spectacle's value to grow. Clubs who insisted on being amateur either closed their doors or became unimportant in the Brazilian soccer context (Damo, 2002).

Giulianotti (2002) divides the history of soccer in three periods. The traditional one is marked by the emergence of soccer as a sport, and it is also identified as pre-modern, which goes from the birth of the game until the end of World War I. The modern period, in which there was a high rate of urbanization and demographic growth of the working class and the consolidation of soccer as the world's most popular sport, goes from the 20s to the 80s. Finally, the period which goes from the 80s until the 21<sup>st</sup> century is called by the author as the post-modern era, in which internationalization and globalization became general tendencies.

Levine's (1982) segmentation of the Brazilian history of soccer is similar. The author divides it in four periods: the first, ranging from 1894 to 1904, is marked by soccer's restriction to urban clubs founded by foreigners and their descendants. The second, from 1905 to 1933, is the amateur era of Brazilian soccer, in which the sport was diffused and became popular, with a pressure to improve the game's technical level. From 1933 to 1950 there were the years in which the professional game was installed, and from 1950 on, Brazilian soccer was awarded international recognition and became a structured business. Another period could be added to

update Levine's classification and pair it with Giulianotti's (2002) division: that of globalization, from the 80s to the present day. Nowadays, Brazilian soccer is perhaps the world's main source of skillful players, which are transferred to more profitable European leagues in early ages as fast as they start calling the media's attention, following a tendency from globalization.

Soccer is one of Brazil's people main vehicles of expression, together with popular music and religion (Meihy, 1982). It is in a relationship of consonance with the ways in which Brazilian society organizes itself, and other elements of popular culture (Rinaldi, 2000). Brazilian soccer expresses Brazilian culture symbolically. The style of soccer practiced in Brazil glorifies individualism, skill and improvise (DaMatta, 1982).

In Brazil, enjoying soccer is something that is lived through fans' "team of the heart", a preferred club chosen during fans' socialization. Soccer makes some social conflicts public, and that gives birth to club rivalries (Damo, 2002). Several factors influence the choice of the team of the heart: the club's success during childhood and adolescence, in terms of conquests; the existence of idols playing for the club in that period; regional links; friendships and family preferences. Being supporters of soccer clubs is a part of fans' social identities, from which the whole soccer phenomenon is experienced by them (Silva, 2005). The importance of a soccer club to a person depends on the meaning of soccer to that individual (Damo, 2002).

When a sports fan identifies himself highly with a club or team, the club becomes one of his most important social affiliations, guiding his behavior and beliefs in many areas of his everyday life (Gibson, Willming & Holdnak, 2002). In this sense, supporting a soccer club becomes a serious leisure, an important activity with serious implications to fans lives, even their health (Banyard & Shevlin, 2001). Soccer fans tend to perceive their roles - when chanting for their team, booing the opponent or pressuring the referee - as something important for club success (Wolfson, Wakeling & Lewis, 2005).

In Brazil, soccer fans understand that a soccer club or team is formed by the club's patrimony, players and fans. A club's patrimony includes concrete and symbolic elements such as the club's headquarters, club history, jersey, flag, colors, anthem, insignia, mascot, stadium and titles. Soccer fans motivate players, which in turn increase their dedication to the patrimony and conquer more leagues and championships. As a result, the patrimony grows, and fans become satisfied and employ even more strength to motivate players and defend the club's patrimony (Morato, 2005).

### *Social representations and soccer*

Giulianotti (2002) pointed out that studying the different cultures of soccer throughout the world is important to increase the body of knowledge about soccer meanings. In Brazil the majority of analyses about the meanings of Brazilian soccer is of a theoretical nature, represented by essays from disciplines such as sociology, social communication, anthropology, and history, as well as journalistic accounts. Empirical investigations on the meanings of soccer usually focus on the views of professionals involved with the sport and young practitioners.

There are few studies that rely on fans as primary sources of data to investigate the common knowledge about that specific sport. Oliveira (1999) has carried out a study to describe the social representation of soccer fans about soccer. After interviewing fans and non-fans, employing focus groups and free evocation techniques and analyzing graphic and textual material, the author identified three main dimensions concerning the social representation about soccer in Brazil: passion, money and escape.

Social representations theory provides a useful framework to understand the symbolic aspects of soccer in Brazilian culture. It is a sociopsychological theory formulated at first in France, by Moscovici (1961), which proposes the scientific study of common sense. In this sense, it is a theory of how people communicate in the midst of the reflexive groups to which they belong, creating and transforming knowledge about the world, with the aim of guiding social practices and communication (Vala, 1996). A social representation is a form of knowledge that has as main function to make familiar to a group something which is strange or new in the social environment, through anchoring of beliefs and narratives related to that social object in pre-existing knowledge structures (Moscovici, 2000). The word social representation designs both the process through which those explanations are generated and changed and the explanations themselves (Valsiner, 2003). In this last sense, a social representation can be considered a common sense theory, a narrative (Laszlo, 1997), or a network of interacting and ever-changing images and cognitions about a given social object (Moscovici, 1988). A social representation is specific to a social position in an intergroup context, i.e., the representation is shared by members of a social group or social category (Abric, 1998; Jodelet, 1989).

A social representation is formed and transformed through interaction between group members, with an important influence from mass communication. Social representations are not distorted reproductions of objects from reality, but collective constructions that replace the object, recreating it for group members (Moscovici, 1961), and it is that symbolic production which guides the behavior of social actors concerning that object (Moscovici, 2000). Social representations acquire thus the status of concrete, almost tangible networks, organized in a cognitive structure that resembles a conceptual map (Doise, Clemence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1992).

The cognitions that constitute social representations, that is, concepts, ideas or notions which compose it, are organized in a knowledge structure (Abric, 1998), related to one another by means of a natural logic, which is diverse from formal logic (Rateau, 1995). That structural organization has a hierarchical nature, which means that the systems of interconnected cognitions differ according to their nature and functions relative to a representation. Research on the structure of social representations has identified two of those systems: a central and a peripheral one. The central system includes the elements which define the representation's identity (Abric, 1998). Central elements tend to be very stable, rarely suffering changes, and have a normative and abstract nature. A change in the central system brings about a change in the whole representation (Abric, 2003). Non-central elements constitute the peripheral system, which refer to concrete scripts of everyday action, working as schemes for social actors, with a functional nature: they describe and determine actions to be taken (Abric, 2003; Flament, 1989). Peripheral elements are more concrete and provide a connection between the representation's central core and social actors' everyday lives. That connection makes it possible for the representation to be

like a reading guide for reality (Campos, 2003). Peripheral elements are more flexible to change, and function as shields for the central ones (Flament, 1989; Guimelli, 1993).

There has not been a survey study conducted with a relatively large sample of Brazilian soccer fans about their social representations on soccer. Such an investigation could provide important data in order to understand that sport's social impact, given that it could enable an understanding of the role played by soccer in the lives of those that follow it regularly in the context of a nation of continental proportions, which is known worldwide as "the country of soccer". The case of the relationship between Brazilian fans and soccer is an illustration of a situation in which a sport has been deeply incorporated into everyday life, constituting an important part of the country's culture. Perhaps it is the world scenario in which soccer has achieved the deepest penetration, to the point of being considered a national passion.

The present research aims at describing the contents and structure of Brazilian fans' social representations about soccer, as well as its underlying organizing principles.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Five hundred and twenty-one participants took part of the study. The vast majority of them (92.3%) were male. Their mean age was approximately 25 years old ( $M = 25.24$ ;  $SD = 9.04$ ). Most participants resided in cities located in the South-east and South regions of Brazil (49.5% and 24.4%, respectively). Nearly sixty percent of participants had occupations that did not require university level. Participants with six different "teams of the heart" were included, all of which are national-level Brazilian clubs (short name within parentheses): Clube de Regatas Flamengo (Flamengo), Sao Paulo Futebol Clube (Sao Paulo), Clube Atletico Paranaense (Atletico), Fluminense Football Club (Fluminense), Sport Club Corinthians Paulista (Corinthians) and Goias Esporte Clube (Goias). Most participants were not members of organized fan clubs (88.7%). Table 1 summarizes participants' characteristics.

Table 1. Sample characteristics ( $N = 521$ )

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	481	92.3
Female	40	7.7
<i>Region of residence</i>		
North	9	1.7
North-east	32	6.1
Center-west	95	18.2
South-east	258	49.5
South	127	24.4
<i>Educational level required for occupation</i>		
up to secondary school	311	59.7
University level	210	40.3
<i>Age (years old)</i>		
up to 18	113	21.7
19 – 23	141	27.1
24 – 30	134	25.7
more than 30	133	25.5
<i>Club of the heart</i>		
Flamengo	137	26.3
Sao Paulo	120	23.0
Atletico	93	17.9
Corinthians	64	12.3
Fluminense	64	12.3
Goiias	43	8.2
<i>Member of organized fan club</i>		
Yes	59	11.3
No	462	88.7

### *Instrument*

A questionnaire was administered as an internet form. First there were instructions in which the author was identified, as well as his university. Further information made it clear that the questionnaire was part of a scientific study, and not a regular internet preference poll. Potential participants were informed that they should only answer the questionnaire once, and that the system would exclude their data from the research if they sent more answers. They were also informed by instructions that they should answer all questions, and that if there were data missing, they would be required by the system to provide valid answers. Final instructions clarified that participation was fully optional, and thus if potential participants decided to quit answering the questionnaire, all that needed to be done was to exit the site, by navigating with their Web-browser.

After clicking the “advance” button, the questionnaire itself was accessible. There were blank fields for participants to write down their age, occupation, and Brazilian club of the heart. Clicking options (browser radio buttons) were also included to characterize variables such as sex, state of residence, and if the fan was or was not associated to an organized fan club. Social

representations content was accessed through an open ended question with the following instructions, translated from Portuguese: "Please write the first five words or expressions that come to your mind when you think about soccer". There were five blank fields available for participants to write their answers. Such type of question is usually called free evocation task (Sá, 1996).

### *Procedure*

The research was conducted as an internet survey, through the World Wide Web, in the months of March and April 2006. Participants were recruited through advertisement of the research in internet sites and forums maintained by fans from the soccer clubs Flamengo, Sao Paulo, Atletico, Corinthians, Fluminense and Goias, as well as communities from a relationship network called Orkut related to those clubs. The sites and communities included were determined after searching in the search engine Google and Orkut's own search mechanism for communities. Webmasters received a request to advertise the research on their sites. In the case of forums and Orkut communities, an advertisement made by the researcher was posted directly. It invited fans to participate of a national research about soccer fans. The advertisement contained the information that was present in the questionnaire's first instructions.

The form contained programming instructions that stated that only complete forms, i. e., without missing data fields, would be sent to the data file to be analyzed. When a participant tried to send an incomplete questionnaire, he would receive a message on his screen telling him to answer the item or question which was blank. Additional programming ensured that date and time of questionnaire completion were registered together with the rest of the data, as well as the IP (Internet Protocol) address of computers used by respondents.

The data bank was analyzed prior to statistical treatment. Participants who indicated clubs of the heart different from the six ones mentioned were excluded. Double answers generated when participants clicked two times on the form's send button were also eliminated: only the first answer sent by each participant was kept. Finally, IP numbers were verified, being kept only the first answer sent associated with a single IP number, to avoid intentional fraud.

### *Data analysis*

Answers to the free evocation task were submit to a content analysis and grouped together according to their theme (Bardin, 1977). Data concerning residence and age were recoded for further analysis: age was categorized into four segments: up to 18 years of age, from 19 to 23 years old, from 24 to 30 years old and more than 30 years old; the states of residence of participants were rearranged according to the Brazilian geographic regions to which they belong: North, North-east, Center-west, South-east and South.

Two techniques of data analysis were employed to provide a description of fans' social representations on soccer. A correspondence analysis (Doise, Clemence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1992) was carried out with the software SPAD (Lebart & Salem, 1994) to explore the organizing



principles of that social representations and anchoring points of participants according to sex, age, Brazilian region of residence, club of the heart, affiliation to an organized fan club and type of occupation. In order to describe the representation's structure, two analyses were employed. First, with the aid of the software Evocation 2000 (Vergès, Scano & Junique, 2002) the evocation frequency of categories and their average evocation order were calculated. According to Vergès (1992), elements that are more frequently evoked by participants and have lower average evocation orders constitute good hypotheses of possible central elements, while the others form probable peripheral systems. To confirm the findings about representational structure and describe the relationships of element connectivity, similarity analysis (Degenne & Vergès, 1973) was conducted with the software Similitude 2000 (Vergès, Junique, Barbry, Scano & Zeliger, 2002).

## Results

Four hundred and eleven word or expressions forms were evoked by participants, in a total of 411 different words. They were reduced to 32 categories, which covered 2456 word occurrences (95%). The remaining 118 words (5%) did not fit into one of those categories and were excluded from the analysis, with frequencies lower than 10. Table 2 presents the number of occurrences of each category, the number of participants that mentioned each one, and examples of words contained in them.

Table 2. Content, occurrences and number of participants that mentioned word categories generated from free evocation task about soccer

<i>Category</i>	<i>Included words</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>N</i>
emotion	emotion, adrenaline, drama, happiness, ...	257	196
club	club, club names, ...	244	220
goal	goal, goals, objective, aim	199	197
passion	love, passion	166	153
competition	cup, competition, game, match, decision, ...	142	128
champion	champion, titles, trophy, victory, to win, ...	129	107
stadium	stadium names, field, ticket, seats, grass, post, ...	128	112
fans	fans, fan club, fan club names	121	118
player	player, idol, player names, striker, ...	120	99
fun	fun, to have fun, entertainment, leisure, hobby, ...	114	94
effort	dedication, effort, courage, determination, will, ...	91	70
ball	ball	89	89
spectacle	art, beautiful, wonderful, spectacle, show, ...	83	73
party	party, celebration, dancing, ...	67	65
friends	friends, friendship, gathering, ...	56	51
plays	dribble, shot, pass, passing, ...	45	37
brazil	Brazil, Brazilian	44	44
tradition	glory, history, honor, tradition, flag, pride, ...	39	34
rivalry	rivalry, opponent, rival, ...	36	34
suffering	sadness, suffering, anger, frustration, ...	36	33
national team	national team	35	35
referee	referee, judge, rule, card, penalty, ...	29	19

com. and media	watching, following, tv, press, ...	29	23
skill	skill, technique, talent, mastery, ...	23	21
fanatism	fanatism, fanatic, devotion, vice, ...	21	18
union	union, collectivity, understanding, ...	21	20
strategy	tactics, intelligence, strategy, ...	20	19
business	money, business, deal, market, businessman, ...	19	18
people	people, community, crowd, ...	19	18
corruption	corruption, dishonest, set-up, cheating, ...	13	11
magic	magic, fantasy, ...	11	11
violence	violence, fights, injuries, ...	10	10

The mean word frequency was calculated through the division of the number of occurrences of words included in the analysis (2456) by the number of categories (32), resulting in a value of 76.8. Four quadrants were obtained from the crossing of a frequency criterion (lower than mean – 76.8, and higher than mean) and the average evocation order criterion (lower than or equal to 3, and higher than 3). The quadrant from the upper left, which includes categories with the highest frequencies, thus more salient, and with the lowest evocation orders, and therefore more readily recalled, has a high probability of containing most of the representation's central elements. Those elements are emotion, club, goal, passion, fan club and fun. The other quadrants are probably constituted by peripheral elements. There is no element on the quadrant including categories with low frequencies and low evocation orders.

Table 3. Categories' frequencies and average evocation orders

	<i>AEO</i> ≤ 3	<i>AEO</i> > 3
<i>f</i> > 76.8	emotion ( <i>f</i> = 257; <i>AEO</i> = 3.0) club ( <i>f</i> = 244; <i>AEO</i> = 1.6) goal ( <i>f</i> = 199; <i>AEO</i> = 2.2) passion ( <i>f</i> = 166; <i>AEO</i> = 2.4) fans ( <i>f</i> = 121; <i>AEO</i> = 3.0) fun ( <i>f</i> = 114; <i>AEO</i> = 2.9) ball ( <i>f</i> = 89; <i>AEO</i> = 2.8)	competition ( <i>f</i> = 142; <i>AEO</i> = 3.3) champion ( <i>f</i> = 129; <i>AEO</i> = 3.4) stadium ( <i>f</i> = 128; <i>AEO</i> = 3.3) player ( <i>f</i> = 120; <i>AEO</i> = 3.5) effort ( <i>f</i> = 91; <i>AEO</i> = 3.6) spectacle ( <i>f</i> = 83; <i>AEO</i> = 3.1)
<i>f</i> < 76.8		party ( <i>f</i> = 67; <i>AEO</i> = 3.6) friends ( <i>f</i> = 56; <i>AEO</i> = 3.9) plays ( <i>f</i> = 45; <i>AEO</i> = 3.4) brazil ( <i>f</i> = 44; <i>AEO</i> = 3.4) tradition ( <i>f</i> = 39; <i>AEO</i> = 3.7) suffering ( <i>f</i> = 36; <i>AEO</i> = 3.5) rivalry ( <i>f</i> = 36; <i>AEO</i> = 3.6) national team ( <i>f</i> = 35; <i>AEO</i> = 3.4) communic. and media ( <i>f</i> = 29; <i>AEO</i> = 3.5) referee ( <i>f</i> = 29; <i>AEO</i> = 3.9) violence ( <i>f</i> = 24; <i>AEO</i> = 4.1) skill ( <i>f</i> = 23; <i>AEO</i> = 3.2) union ( <i>f</i> = 21; <i>AEO</i> = 3.3) fanatism ( <i>f</i> = 21; <i>AEO</i> = 3.5) strategy ( <i>f</i> = 20; <i>AEO</i> = 3.6) business ( <i>f</i> = 19; <i>AEO</i> = 3.8) people ( <i>f</i> = 19; <i>AEO</i> = 3.9) corruption ( <i>f</i> = 13; <i>AEO</i> = 3.4) magic ( <i>f</i> = 11; <i>AEO</i> = 3.8)

The similarity graph (Figure 2) shows cooccurrences of the categories as mentioned by participants. Numbers between vertices represent the percentage of participants that mentioned both categories. The graph represents all links made by at least 7 percent of the sample. Elements club, goal, fans and emotion form a *clique*, a meaning complex in which all vertices are interconnected to each other (Degegne & Vergès, 1973). Moreover, the centrality of those elements, that were on the upper left quadrant of Table 3, can be confirmed, as they seem to organize the representational structure through connecting to isolated elements and having a larger number of links than the other vertices. Broadly speaking, two representational dimensions can be identified upon analyzing the similarity structure. The first dimension includes the interconnections of elements club and goal, including their mediation by peripheral elements. That set of elements form a representational dimension about the game itself, the competition, its actors and context. In other words, a dimension of game can be identified in the social representation of fans about soccer, in which the most important elements, which organize the representation, are the club of the heart, and the objective of the game itself, the goal.

A second dimension includes mainly the element emotion and its adjacent elements. It is a dimension on emotional involvement, typical of fans' relationship with soccer. The element emotion forms a star shape, leading to other elements such as the fans themselves, passion, fun and spectacle, which constitute the entertainment side of soccer. It is also possible to identify through the cliques emotion – fans – club and emotion – passion – club that the commitment and involvement of fans is directed to supporting the club of the heart, with its consequences. Links involving emotion, fun and spectacle show that soccer is also understood as entertainment, with an aesthetic function.

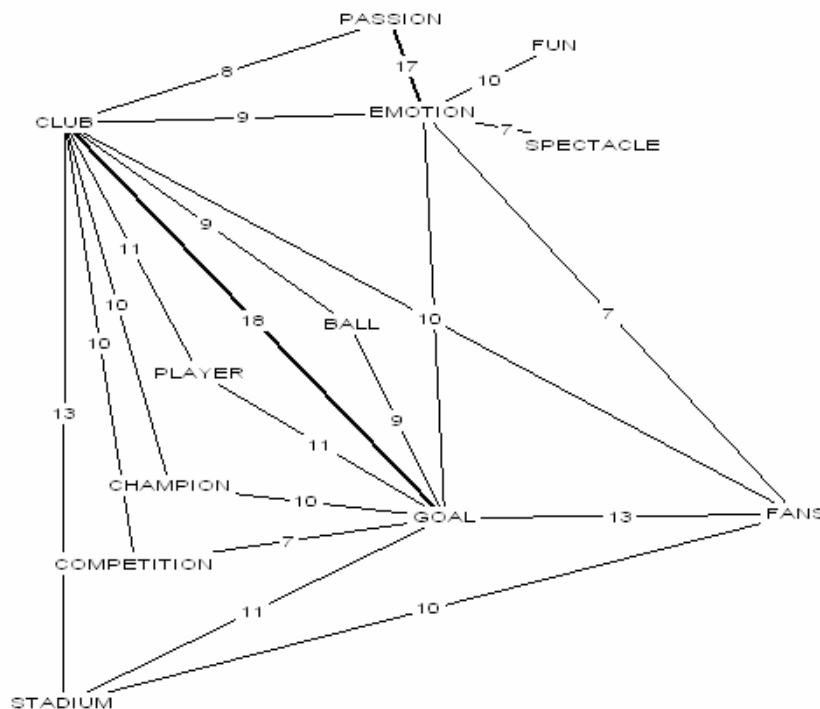


Figure 1. Similarity graph on the social representation of soccer, minimum cooccurrence link at 7%.

A binary correspondence analysis was carried out from a participants X word categories table. Participants' variables such as sex, club, educational level required for occupation, region of residence and membership to a fan club were included in the analysis as illustrative variables. The first five factors from the analysis will be described, explaining 29.3% of the total inertia. Categories with relative contributions (RCT) to a factor 3.2 or higher were considered significant, as that value is superior to the average relative contribution (100 divided by 32 active variables = 3.1). The analysis' results are presented on Table 4.

The illustrative values whose values test' modules are equal or higher than 2 are significant to a factor. Table 5 presents all illustrative variables with their values tests and factor coordinates

Table 4. Binary correspondence analysis from soccer categories x participants table

Category	RW	DO	Factor 1			Factor 2			Factor 3			Factor 4			Factor 5		
			Cor	RCT	C2	Cor	RCT	C2	Cor	RCT	C2	Cor	RCT	C2	Cor	RCT	C2
ball	3.6	4.6	.9	4.9	.17	.1	0.0	.00	-.1	.1	.00	.02	.1	.00	-.1	.2	.00
brazil	1.8	10.4	.5	.9	.03	-.6	1.6	.03	.5	1.1	.02	.6	2.2	.04	.32	.6	.01
business	.8	27.2	-.6	.5	.01	-.8	1.4	.03	-1.5	4.4	.08	1.6	6.0	.10	-.1	.1	.00
champion	5.3	4.3	.3	1.0	.03	.1	0.0	.00	.5	3.0	.05	-.4	2.3	.03	.5	4.8	.07
club	10.1	1.5	.6	5.4	.20	-.2	0.8	.02	.3	2.2	.06	-.01	.3	.00	.3	2.4	.05
com.med.	1.3	20.7	.2	.1	.00	-1.4	6.5	.10	.1	.1	.00	1.8	11.4	.15	-.1	.1	.00
competit.	7.5	2.6	.2	.7	.02	-.4	2.8	.06	.3	1.7	.03	.4	4.1	.08	.02	.0	.00
corruption	.6	45.4	-.2	.2	.01	-.7	0.7	.01	-3.8	20.7	.32	2.1	7.0	.10	.1	.0	.00
effort	3.7	7.8	-.8	4.6	.09	1.8	29.0	.40	.3	.6	.01	.6	3.3	.04	1.1	14.0	.15
emotion	10.2	2.2	-.9	13.8	.35	-.1	0.4	.01	-.01	.0	.00	-.7	14.3	.23	-.1	.3	.00
fanatism	.8	31.1	-1.3	2.5	.06	-.5	0.5	.01	-1.6	5.4	.08	.01	.3	.00	-.01	.1	.00
fans	5.0	3.3	.4	1.4	.05	-.1	0.0	.00	.1	.1	.00	-.5	3.6	.08	.1	.3	.01
friends	2.30	9.7	-.57	1.3	.03	-.7	2.8	.00	0.2	.1	.00	.7	2.8	0.04	0.1	.0	.00
fun	4.3	5.9	-.9	6.8	.15	-.9	8.2	.13	-.01	.0	.00	.5	2.4	.03	-.6	4.6	.06
goal	8.0	1.6	.6	5.3	.23	.3	1.5	.04	-.01	.1	.00	-.2	1.1	.03	-.2	1.0	.02
magic	.4	52.0	.11	.9	.02	.3	0.1	.00	-.3	.1	.00	-2.2	5.2	.09	-.02	.1	.00
national t.	1.4	13.5	.7	1.2	.04	-.4	0.6	.01	.6	1.2	.02	.1	.1	.00	.2	.2	.00
party	1.4	16.2	-.47	.6	.01	-.2	0.2	.00	.3	.4	.01	-1.0	3.8	.06	.4	.6	.01
passion	6.6	2.7	-.9	9.1	.29	.2	0.4	.01	-.3	1.4	.03	-.1	.1	.00	.2	.7	.01
people	.8	32.9	-.9	1.0	.02	-.7	1.0	.02	-.2	.1	.00	.7	1.2	.01	-1.0	2.1	.03
player	4.8	4.9	1.1	9.4	.23	-.1	0.1	.00	.1	.0	.00	.2	.3	.00	.1	.0	.00
plays	1.9	15.2	.7	1.8	.04	1.7	13.4	.18	.5	1.2	.02	.4	1.0	.01	-2.5	38.0	.4
referee	1.2	29.0	1.9	7.7	.12	1.0	3.3	.04	-4.1	52.8	.57	-.7	1.9	.02	-.1	.1	.00
rivalry	1.7	11.8	-.7	1.4	.04	-.5	1.3	.03	-.4	.8	.02	-.1	.1	.00	-.4	1.0	.02
skill	.9	25.1	-1.1	1.9	.05	2.5	14.1	.25	.3	.3	.00	.9	2.2	.03	-.03	.0	.00
spectacle	3.5	6.6	-.6	2.4	.06	.1	0.2	.00	.1	.1	.00	-.2	.4	.01	-1.0	9.6	.14
stadium	5.0	4.1	.8	5.9	.16	-.3	0.9	.02	.1	.0	.00	-.3	1.0	.02	.2	.5	.01
strategy	.8	27.2	.1	.1	.00	1.7	6.0	.11	.6	.8	.01	.8	1.5	.02	-1.6	6.4	.09
suffering	1.4	16.0	-1.3	4.0	.10	-.2	0.2	.00	-.4	.4	.01	-1.5	8.6	.14	.02	.0	.00
tradition	1.7	15.4	-.4	.5	.01	.7	2.2	.03	-.4	.6	.01	1.2	7.1	.10	1.6	12.3	.16
union	.8	30.6	-1.4	2.7	.07	.3	0.1	.00	.02	.0	.00	1.4	4.1	.06	-.2	.1	.00
violence	.4	49.1	.1	.0	.00	.1	0.0	.00	-.3	.1	.00	.2	.2	.00	-.4	.2	.00

Factor 1 explains 8.3% of total inertia, opposing on the negative pole elements emotion, fun, passion, effort and suffering, and on positive pole referee, ball, stadium, player, club and goal. Broadly speaking, this factor segments representational elements into either symbolic elements that describe fans' experiences in supporting a club and soccer's connotative meaning in their lives, consisting of the negative part of the axis, or elements that are related to the sport's concrete nature as a game, that of the positive pole. Variables such as being a supporter of Atletico and Sao Paulo and living in the Southern region of Brazil associate with the factor's symbolic side, and supporting Flamengo and being up to 18 years of age are characteristics associated with the axis' concrete pole.

Factor 2 accounts for 5.8% of inertia and opposes soccer as a game to soccer as a source of entertainment. Elements on the positive pole form the game dimension: effort, referee, plays, strategy and skill. Those elements relate to game flow, describing events and components of soccer matches' action that interfere with the outcome and happenings on the pitch. Participants that are members of fan clubs and supporters of Corinthians associate with that pole. The negative pole groups the elements communication and media, and fun, which are related to the entertainment dimension of soccer to fans that like to watch matches and follow competitions. Fans that are not fan club members and that are more than 30 years old of age associate with that pole. Figure 2 represents graphically factors 1 and 2.

Table 5. Illustrative variables' value tests and coordinates for the correspondence analysis

Variables	Eff.	AW	D0	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3		Factor 4		Factor 5	
				V.test	Coor.	Vtest	Coor.	Vtest	Coor.	Vtest	Coor.	Vtest	Coor.
<i>Sex</i>													
Male	481	2333.0	0.1	-.5	-.01	.3	.0	.1	.0	.9	.01	-.3	.0
Female	40	191.0	12.5	.5	.1	-.4	-.1	-.1	-.01	-.9	-.1	.3	.1
<i>Fan club member</i>													
Yes	59	290.0	7.9	.0	.0	2.1	.3	1.1	.1	-1.2	-.2	-.4	-.01
No	462	2234.0	.2	.0	.0	-2.1	-.01	-1.1	-.01	1.2	.01	.4	.01
<i>Region</i>													
North	9	47.0	53.3	.1	.01	1.0	.3	.4	.1	.1	.01	-.7	-.2
North-east	32	152.0	16.1	1.3	.2	.0	-.01	.1	.01	-1.4	-.2	-1.3	-.2
Center-west	95	464.0	4.5	1.0	.1	1.2	.1	-1.6	-.2	.3	.01	2.3	.2
South-east	258	1253.0	1.1	1.2	.1	.3	.01	.5	.01	1.2	.1	.2	.01
South	127	608.0	3.3	-3.0	-.2	-1.7	-.1	.7	.1	-.9	-.1	-1.3	-.1
<i>Age</i>													
up to 18	113	554.0	3.6	2.4	.2	1.8	.2	.5	.1	1.4	.1	-1.3	-.1
19-23	141	685.0	2.8	-1.5	-.1	1.5	.1	.6	.1	-.1	-.01	-.4	-.01
23-30	134	645.0	3.0	-.2	-.01	-1.3	-.1	-.9	-.1	-.5	-.01	1.3	.1
more than 30	133	640.0	3.1	-.6	-.01	-2.0	-.2	-.3	-.01	-.7	-.1	.4	.01
<i>Occup. type</i>													
Sec. school	311	1508.0	.7	.2	.01	1.7	.1	-.2	.01	1.0	-.01	-1.1	-.1
University	210	1016.0	1.5	-.2	-.01	-1.7	-.1	.2	-.01	-1.0	-.1	1.1	.1
<i>Club</i>													
Atletico	93	452.0	4.6	-3.4	-.3	-1.3	-.1	1.4	.1	-.6	-.1	-1.6	-.2
Flamengo	137	676.0	2.8	5.5	.4	.1	.01	-.1	-.01	-2.2	-.2	-.2	-.01
Sao Paulo	120	573.0	3.5	-3.7	-.3	-1.3	-.1	-2.3	-.2	.9	.1	-.7	-.1
Fluminense	64	309.0	7.7	.3	.01	.0	.0	1.0	.1	.4	.1	.9	.1
Corinthians	64	305.0	7.5	1.4	.2	2.0	.2	.6	.1	.7	.1	-.1	-.01
Goias	43	209.0	11.3	-.7	-.1	1.2	.2	-.1	-.01	1.6	.2	2.7	.4

Factor 3 (5.6% of total inertia) groups elements on a single pole, emphasizing external aspects of soccer, which have a negative interference on the sport: referee, corruption, business, fanaticism. That factor seems to be related to backstage and excesses of club directors and other social actors such as dishonest referees and extreme fans. The factor associates with Sao Paulo fans. Factor 4 (5.0% of total inertia) opposes public elements of soccer as a cultural and societal phenomenon (business, corruption, communication and media, competition, effort, union and tradition) to elements that represent fans' experiences with the sport. (fans, suffering, party, magic and emotion). Flamengo fans associate with them. Finally, factor 5 (4.7% of inertia) separates between desired entertainment benefits to fans obtained from soccer matches (fun, plays, spectacle and strategy) and objectives that fans seek for their clubs, derived from victories and dedication (champion, effort, tradition). The latter are associated to fans that support Goias and live in the Center-West region of Brazil.

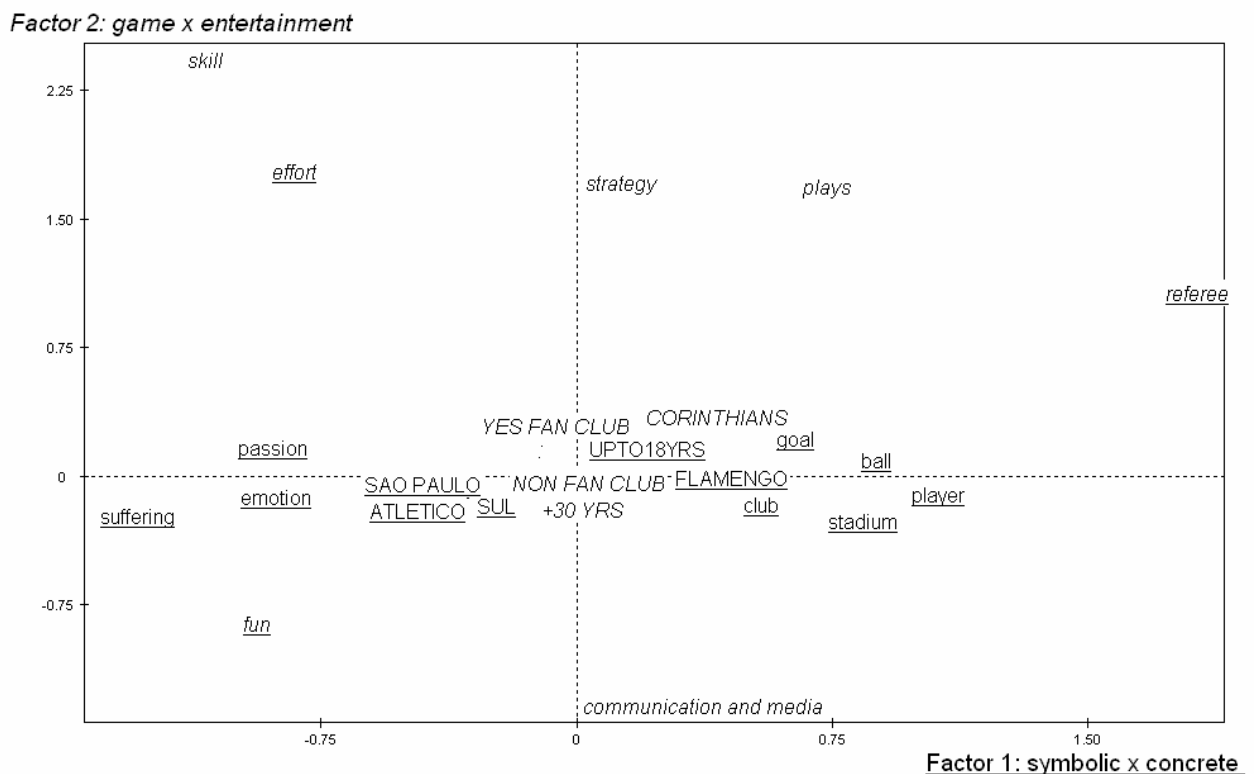


Figure 2. Projection of axes 1 and 2 from correspondence analysis.

## Discussion

The results from quadrant and similarity analysis support the idea that elements emotion, club, goal and fans form the central core of Brazilian soccer fans' social representations about soccer. Those elements organize the representation and are more salient, as the shared social representation about soccer seems to consist of two dimensions, one connected to the game itself in its concrete action, and the other to fan involvement, which is directly related to the club of the heart. Such results support Silva (2005) when the author says that club identification is an important part of fans' social identity as well as Damo's (2002) statement that the club of the heart mediates the experiences an individual has on the world of soccer.

Those results are partially similar to what was found by Oliveira (1999), at least considering that passion by the sport was also present in the author's study as a relevant soccer dimension. The other dimensions found by that author, escape and money, were not essential representational elements according to similarity and quadrant analysis, even though money is clearly related to the business category, significant in some factors from correspondence analysis. Nevertheless, there are differences between Oliveira's (1999) study and ours, in terms of sample and methodological procedures of data generation and analysis. It could be said that our findings present another perspective on the meanings of soccer to its fans, through a different social representations approach – the structural one (Abric, 1998).

Correspondence analysis results show that the field of representations suffers variations according to group segmentations, most notoriously fans' supporting clubs (all factors), their age (factors 1 and 2), and their involvement with the game in the form of organized fan clubs (factor 2). Factor 1 is an example of Tubino's (1992) multidimensional view of sports, as competition and game but also as entertainment and leisure, and thus that factor displays and opposition between the game of soccer itself and symbolic aspects of fan involvement and derivations from the concrete game in terms of entertainment. Soccer guarantees fan involvement and emotional experiences because as a cultural good it conveys meanings and expresses conflicts, in the field, which oppose sides from different sectors of social contexts.

Factor 2 is basically related to the degree of fan involvement with soccer. Fans that are highly identified to their teams and are members of fan clubs emphasize elements from the pitch and that lead to victory and success, while others that are not fan club members conceive soccer as fun from watching games on television or following the sport through other communication means.

Factor 3 is an example that, for some fans, backstage aspects of the game, or elements which are not directly present during matches, are important as well, which accounts for some of the size and importance soccer has achieved. It is a business, which sometimes is not as clean as it should be, as corruption is a reality. In a sense, this factor refers to club directors' actions, involving the hiring and dismissal of players as well as the use of illegal maneuvers to win, which include sometimes bribing referees.

Factor 4 contrasts social and public aspects of soccer and fans experiences. Public elements include soccer's business nature, undesirable but existing corruption, and its coverage on communication channels. It also focuses elements related to, as Morato (2005) put it, club's patrimonies and fans relationships towards them: club tradition and the unity of its players and fans. The ways fans experience soccer involve other fans as well as their group members, celebrations of victories and championships, a certain mystique, as well as passion and inevitable suffering. Fans suffer with team losses because of their passionate involvement with their clubs: as Silva (2005) stated, being a supporter is a significant portion of their group identities.

Results which focus group involvement and suffering are somewhat supported by the study carried on by Gibson, Willming and Holdnak (2002) which made a thorough analysis of the prominent role of following an American football team, including attending matches, being enemies with rivals and organizing fan meetings in the lives of their supporters. Moreover, the fact that Brazilian fans, especially on factors 1 and 4, are also predicted by Banyard and Shevlin's (2001) research, which demonstrated that club failure led to fans' distress and health problems.

Factor 5 expresses a conflict between what fans want for their clubs in terms of winning, and what they want to see in soccer matches. The former involves conquering championships, the effort of players and a consequent gain in tradition, while the latter is about what fans want to watch when attending games or following them on television: a true spectacle with beautiful plays and smart strategical moves, which is a source of fun.

Elements such as fun (mentioned on factors 1, 2 and 5), plays (factors 2 and 5), skill (factor 2) and spectacle (factor 5) express the Brazilian style of play identified by DaMatta (1982): Brazilian players are known for their individual skills and capacity to improvise. That is what fans want to watch, in other words a good soccer match is above all a match in which players show that they are skilled and can do things with the ball that "regular people" cannot. The entertainment side of soccer in Brazil is directly related to the possibility of watching such displays of skill during matches. It is a part of Brazilian soccer culture, and perhaps in other parts of the globe, fans seek other things in the game. As elements related to that style of play are present in different views of soccer (i. e. factors), their importance seems to be significant in the meaning of soccer to Brazilian fans.

The study provides data about the meaning of soccer in Brazil, a country where it has great importance, according to people that are highly involved with it: soccer fans. The chosen theoretical network was social representations theory. The research contributes to Giulianotti's (2002) call for studies about the sport's social meanings. Much remains to be investigated, as only a limited portion of the fans' universe was covered, including only five major clubs. Moreover, there could be important advances in the understanding of social representations of soccer by means of other methodological strategies, either quantitative or qualitative. Future research might make use of the same or similar data collecting and analytical procedures in order to describe the social representations on soccer in other countries, enabling the identification of relevant differences and the establishment of worldwide diagnoses about what people think about soccer.



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