

The Design Aspects of National Soccer Jerseys

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Abstract:

- Purpose – To investigate what design attributes make up the ultimate national soccer jersey.
- Methodology – Quantitative study and content analysis of the 32 home jerseys worn at the 2018 World Cup.
- Findings – Functional, expressive, and aesthetic attributes make up the ideal soccer jersey in terms of design.
- Originality – Only study of its kind from a national soccer jersey perspective.
- Research limitations/implications – The research was completed approximately 1 year after the 2018 World Cup. Only men's jerseys were observed. Information examined on websites was limited by the computer monitor used (i.e. colour perception).
- Practical implications – Will benefit advertisers, marketers, and athletic wear designers to achieve ideal soccer jersey design.

Keywords: Content analysis, world cup, football, jerseys, soccer

1.0 Research Gap addressed

Other researchers have examined club soccer jerseys and consumption (Ross et al. 2006) and the design aspects of club soccer jerseys (Stride et. al 2015) but none have investigated national jerseys from a Canadian perspective.

2.0 Key Findings

Most jerseys were made by Adidas, followed by Nike. Designs were inspired by a past kit and/or country colours. Most jerseys were priced around \$110 CAD. The jerseys were manufactured in men's sizing, and these sizes ranged from small to extra-large. The fabric most commonly used was a 100% polyester fabric. Jersey colour was most commonly red. A majority of jerseys included some form of pattern. The necklines of the jerseys were commonly V-necklines. Finally, the jersey crests were embroidered on the left chest. The research findings are important to product developers, marketers, and advertisers working for big athleticwear brands as they provide insight into the range of soccer jersey styles.

3.0 Method

The theoretical background used to frame this study was the FEA (Functional, Expressive, and Aesthetic) consumer needs model by Lamb and Kallal (1992). Data collection began with a content analysis of the home soccer jerseys from the 2018 World Cup available on North American websites. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is defined as a procedure that deducts a variety of inferences and patterns from text, photographs, and audio, providing a way to analyse and map repetition or differential information. Google searches, using the phrases "2018 World Cup team participants" and "2018 World Cup jerseys" were used. This led to the 2018 World Cup page on FIFA.com, which subsequently provided information on all 32 jerseys worn. Jerseys were systematically examined using a form with inductive and deductive categories. Deductive categories included colour, price, size range, sleeve length, neckline, fibre

content, pattern, place of manufacturing, availability, and brand. Inductive categories emerged during data collection, these included: collar style, crest details, trademark fabric, availability on company website, and jersey inspiration. This necessitated a second review of each jersey to augment the charts. This data was then contrasted and compared to find the most popular options for each of these categories via the FEA model (Lamb & Kallal 1992), to determine the range of design attributes in national soccer jerseys.

4.0 Results & Discussion

The results were categorised into themes, including brand and inspiration, place of manufacture, price, size range (specifically men's), fabric type/fibre content, colour, pattern, sleeve length, neckline and crest. Each group of attributes were categorised according the FEA model. Brand and inspiration were considered aesthetic and expressive attributes. Most of the jerseys were manufactured by Adidas and Nike, with the remaining market shared by a few other brands (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Jersey Brands

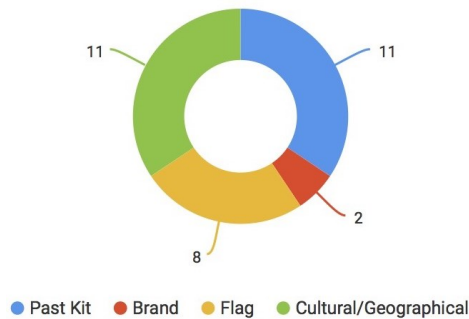


Fig. 2: Jersey Inspiration

Inspiration for jerseys was derived from different places. Only three countries, Japan, Germany, and Australia, did not use their country's colour scheme in their jersey colourway. As shown in Fig. 2, eleven were inspired by a past kit, two were inspired by a brand concept, eight were inspired by the flag itself, and 11 were inspired by cultural or geographical ideas pertaining to the country. For instance, the Icelandic jersey mimics their landscape and Denmark's jersey was inspired by the Danish royal lifeguards. It is important to note that these inspirations were not mutually exclusive. Some jerseys were inspired by multiple things, but for the purposes of this content analysis only the main inspiration was noted. Fig. 3 shows three jerseys that were designed with a jersey template and/or brand concept created by Nike.



Fig. 3: Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and France 2018 jerseys with same jersey template.

Place of manufacture, price, and size range were considered functional attributes. The content analysis was completed after the 2018 World Cup and many sizes were out of stock, the most popular size ranges were from small to double extra-large. 26 out of the 32 jerseys did not include information on where the jerseys were produced. Out of the brands that did provide this information, jerseys were made in Thailand (n=4), Indonesia (n=2), Netherlands (n=3), Bangladesh (n=1), and Brazil (n=1).

Fabric type/fibre were also functional attributes. 100% polyester was the most common description of fabric fibre. Trade names were often used for these polyester fibres (ie. Adidas Climalite, Nike dri-FIT, etc.). These brand-based materials were all polyester hybrids.

Colour and pattern were considered aesthetic attributes. The most predominant jersey colour was red (13), followed by white (8), blue (5), yellow (4), then green (2). In addition to colour, some jerseys had patterns. They were most commonly stripes (8), no pattern (6), wave pattern (4), and miscellaneous patterns such as diamonds, chevron, zig zags, checkers, or specific motifs (14), see Fig. 4.



Fig. 4: Jerseys with different examples of stripes (Japan, Argentina, and Peru).

Sleeve length, neckline, and crest were considered aesthetic attributes. Jerseys were advertised as a short sleeve, 21 jerseys had a V-neckline, and the remaining 11 had a scoop neckline. 26 jerseys had the soccer crest embroidered on the left side of the chest, the remaining had the crest in a different place or used heat transfer instead of embroidery.

This study has offered a glimpse into the range of design attributes in soccer jerseys worn in the 2018 World Cup and has contributed to knowledge. Most soccer jerseys were manufactured by Adidas, though Nike followed close behind. They were all made from 100% polyester, or polyester blends. Klepp (2011) considers recent improvements of fabrics used to manufacture soccer jerseys because of the availability of sweat wicking materials. Most jerseys had the crest embroidered on the left chest, were inspired by a past kit and/or country colours, had a V-neckline, were red in colour, and had some form of pattern. Sociologist Herbert Blumer (1986) coined the concept of symbolic interactionism, referring to how people convey meaning through gestures and symbols. By using non-verbal forms of communication, meaning is still communicated. This may be applied to these aspects of the jerseys, as the meaning behind the design of the jersey, the colours, the crest, and patterns were deliberately chosen to represent their respective nations. Finally, all jerseys were priced around \$110 CAD, manufactured in men's sizing, and ranged from small to extra-large. This research highlights national soccer jerseys and the design aspects needed to create a successful garment for consumers that prioritises functional and aesthetic design principles, as well as expressive design inspiration. This information is critical to athleticwear designers and retailers. In addition, product developers working for global brands may use the research to create a design that is distinct from those currently on the market. If a Canadian national soccer jersey were to be designed using this research, it would have the following attributes: A polyester sweat wicking fabric, a V-neckline, the crest embroidered on the left chest, and cost about \$110 CAD. In order to create something distinctive for consumers, pattern and colours would be considered. The Nigerian jersey from the 2018 World Cup consisted of a unique pattern while maintaining the country's colours and was popular amongst consumers (Fig. 5). A Canadian jersey would follow suit in its uniqueness as many other national jerseys have missed this opportunity. As a majority of jerseys were red in relation to the flag colours, the Canadian jersey would follow that same colour scheme with a red home jersey. It would also have a pattern, potentially pertaining to some Canadian landscape, in order to create design symbolism for the consumers and a jersey that represents Canada.



Fig. 5: 2018 Nigerian Jersey

5.0 Theoretical Background

The football World Cup is hosted every 4 years. Over 3.57 billion people gathered to watch the 2018 series (FIFA, 2018). Soccer fans from around the globe purchase jerseys worn by their favourite teams and players, wearing them not only to watch games but also as everyday clothing. This research probed North American websites to better understand the range of national soccer jerseys available for the 2018 World Cup. The FEA theoretical framework used in this research was derived through interviews and created with the intention of designing clothing for people with special needs. It may also be used for other types of design. It includes three attributes: Functional, Expressive, and Aesthetic. The FEA model may be applied to any research that includes clothing, specifically human centred clothing design. Björk (2019) discusses the perceived value of custom-made athletic clothing using the FEA model amongst two other models. Emerich (2011) also uses the FEA model to consider women's snowboarding apparel and the requirements for athletes who wear it. In this jersey model, functional attributes relate to the utility of the garment, expressive attributes are associated with what the garment symbolises, and aesthetic attributes deal with the design of the garment itself.

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Author Contribution: O.G. conducted research as part of her graduate degree; conceptualised research question, collected and analysed the data and wrote up the results. S.T.P. acted as supervisor to all phases of the research and edited this manuscript.

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