

FOOTBALL–SOCCER STICKERS ALBUMS.
A BUSINESS, A SOCIAL REALITY, A COLLECTOR´S
PASSION AND ARTIFACTS OF MEMORY

LOS ÁLBUMES DE CROMOS DE FÚTBOL. UN NEGOCIO, UNA REALIDAD SOCIAL,
UNA PASIÓN COLECCIONISTA Y UNOS ARTEFACTOS DE LA MEMORIA



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Abstract

This text, based on the characteristics of the Topic Review as a typology of research article and supported by Content Analysis—a key method in current communication and documentation studies—presents the results of this review and analysis for a topic that has been little investigated until now in the academic and scientific field in relation to football–soccer: the collecting of sticker albums (figures, figurines, sheets, etc.). This type of collecting has multiple implications, considering business, social reality, collecting passion, and memory artifacts. As a result, we present the selection of more than 120 relevant contents (documents, news, websites, social networks) that highlight the importance of this practice. These contents demonstrate how collecting sticker albums is also fundamental to understanding football–soccer in their imaginaries, and in their historical, economic, power and communication relations.

Keywords: football, albums, collecting, stickers, Panini, Topps.

Resumen

Este texto, desde las características de la Revisión de Tema como una tipología de artículo de investigación, y apoyándose en el Análisis de Contenido, como método clave en los estudios de comunicación y documentación actuales, presenta los resultados de dicha revisión y análisis para una temática poco abordada hasta ahora en el ámbito académico y científico en relación con el fútbol, como es el coleccionismo de álbumes de cromos (figuras, figuritas, láminas, pegatinas). Este tipo de coleccionismo tiene múltiples implicaciones considerando el negocio, la realidad social, la pasión coleccionista y los artefactos de la memoria. Como resultado, se presentan más de 120 contenidos seleccionados por su importancia para esta temática (documentos, noticias, sitios web, redes sociales), los cuales dan cuenta de cómo esta práctica es también fundamental para entender el fútbol en sus imaginarios, en sus relaciones históricas, económicas, de poder y comunicación.

Keywords: fútbol, álbumes, coleccionismo, cromos, Panini, Topps.

Introduction

Football can be a topic that is worked on from different contexts, disciplines and countries both in the academic field (chairs, seminars, courses from higher education institutions or other organizations)¹ as in the scientific–research field (journals focused on this topic)² or who accept it in relation to their discipline³, groups–centers and projects–lines of research⁴, bookstores, publishers and collections of books, both investigative and popular⁵), therefore, although as will be seen in this review and analysis, the specific theme of football sticker albums (or figures, figurines, sheets, stickers, as they are also called in Spanish in other contexts) is not the most present, there are some references.

This article aims to be another contribution to understanding the relationship between collecting football sticker albums and economic, communicative, psychological, historical, and other aspects present in society around this sport.

That is, the sticker albums (if we take up and redefine – from books to albums – contributions such as those of Walter Benjamin⁶ or other authors⁷) for those who collect them, for those who search and search until they obtain them (bought or exchanged), for those who exhibit them as one of their greatest treasures and tastes to their relatives and acquaintances, or even to wider audiences (be it in some exhibitions of different types and levels, but mainly today thanks to the different Internet platforms and social networks); it is a matter of COLLECTING, in capital letters.

¹ Examples:

- FIFA/CIES International Programme – Network of 19 universities from different continents: <https://www.cies.ch/education/fifacies-international-programme/partner-universities>.
- International Association of Applied Football Psychology – Different Spanish universities: <https://aipaf.com/>.
- The complete university guide UK – Football courses at various universities in the United Kingdom: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/search/undergraduate/football-coaching#h1>.

² Examples:

- Cuadernos de Fútbol Magazine – Center for Research on the History and Statistics of Spanish Football (CIHEFE): <https://www.cuadernosdefutbol.com/>.
- Soccer and Society Magazine – University of Glasgow, UK / Northeastern University, Boston, USA: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fsas20/current>.
- Science and Medicine in Football Magazine – University of Birmingham, UK / University of Technology Sydney, NSW, Australia <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsmf20>.

³ Examples:

- SJR Scimago – Ibero–American Sports Science Journals: <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=3699&country=IBEROAMERICA>.
- Culture, Science and Sport Magazine (CCD) – More than 50 articles on football: <https://ccd.ucam.edu/index.php/revista/search/index?query=f%C3%BAtbol&dateFromYear=&dateFromMonth=&dateFromDay=&dateToYear=&dateToMonth=&dateToDay=&authors=>.
- RICYDE. International Journal of Sports Sciences – More than 90 articles on football: <https://www.cafyd.com/REVISTA/ojs/index.php/ricyde/search/search>.

⁴ Examples:

- UFD – University of Football and Sports Sciences – Mexico: <https://ufd.mx/about>.
- Núcleo de Pesquisa e Estudos em Futebol (NUPEF) – Brazil: <https://nucleofutebol.ufv.br/>.
- ARS.FUTBOL – Argentina: <https://arsfutbol.wordpress.com/>.

⁵ Examples:

- Football Book – Argentina: <https://www.librofutbol.com/>.
- Panenka and other publishers (Corner, Libros del KO, Contra): <https://tienda.panenka.org/es/panenka>.
- FDL – Spain: <https://futboldeibro.com/catalogo/>.
- Soccer Books – UK: <https://soccer-books.co.uk/>.
- Heartbooks / Sports Memories – Belgium: <https://www.sportsmemories.be/Groups.aspx?id=1>.

⁶ Benjamin, Walter. "Unpacking my library: a talk about book collectors" In: Kerik, C. (1993). On Walter Benjamin. Mexico: UAM. <https://lobosuelto.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/benjamin-walter-desempacando-mibiblioteca.pdf>.

⁷ https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=es&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=intitle%3A%22Walter+Benjamin%22%22collecting%22&btnG= .

What do we refer to as COLLECTING, in capital letters? To everything that collecting implies (Martin 2010), to what it implies for those who are collectors, in this case, of football sticker albums:

In a way, the collector specializes in this distinction. Even if his collection is thematic (toys, children's books, prints, cartoons, whatever [football sticker albums]), he cannot include everything, because the wrong inclusions are hostile. The collector must restrain his passion for the complete in order to subordinate it to his passion for the representative... The collection is both a set of objects and a set of links not yet found. The collection is always owed something, even if it is not possible to know in advance the magnitude of that debt. The collection is never completely redeemed. In that, it is an image of history (Sarlo 2018).

Collecting does not only involve the collected objects themselves, it involves what they represent for the collector and other collectors of the same hobby, they represent aspects of one's own life and of history in similar contexts, and therefore, they involve the personal and the social:

The collector tends to collect out of passion, that is, he feels desire for what he does and what he collects... The collection of books [for this text, an album library], for the collector, is the environment to which the spaces in his home are adapted, because the book [album] has a central place in his living environment where he physically inhabits... The private/personal library "possesses something more, because it not only keeps something of the world, but at the same time it is the narration of a particular life, with its interests and passions." Libraries carry something of the collector within themselves. That is, in each private/personal library made up of a collection of books [albums] one has a trace of what the existence of the collector is or has been. The personal/private library is a collection of books [albums] that one has gathered over many years, over an almost complete life, perhaps since childhood, often with great difficulty or at great cost due to their rarity (Calva González 2017).

That is to say, it implies something more than the object itself, it is communication and history, as Tello (2016) suggests: "The 'magical' nature of the organization of the elements of the collection is due to the fact that its owner sees in them the multiple conjunction of temporalities and correspondences that can articulate them... The art of the collection thus manifests itself in an irreducible grouping of signs and things."

Returning to Saldaña Medrano (2020): "At some point in history, a human considered that an object was important and decided to preserve it, classify it and group it with others with similar characteristics, thus the figure of the collector emerged. Collecting implies a certain personal development of specialized knowledge on topics of historical significance and antiquity, in addition to search and conservation skills..."

Therefore, sticker albums, in this case specific to football, are an object that represents images and spaces not only for the collector or collectors themselves, but that have a close relationship with what these objects (as artifacts of memory) imply for a society at a given time, in the specific case of football, with its communicative and power aspects, of economy and even of public policy.

To understand these implications in society, we do not have to go back too far, just look at a news item in relation to the Panini album of the Qatar 2022 World Cup and what happened in a country like Argentina, reported in media such as *The Country* from Spain: "Argentines are losing their minds over the World Cup album"⁸ either *CNN* "Panini album from the Qatar World Cup becomes a matter of state in Argentina"⁹, where the Government in power had to intervene due to the importance of this issue:

Football in Argentina is a religion and a matter of state. Collecting the Panini sticker album is too. Less than two months before the World Cup in Qatar, the government has added the challenge of completing the popular album to the country's political, economic and social problems. The Ministry of Commerce finally took action this week in the controversy between representatives of the

⁸<https://elpais.com/argentina/2022-09-19/los-argentinos-pierden-la-cambio-por-el-album-del-mundial.html>.

newsagents and the company that publishes Panini, to mediate in an agreement that seeks to resolve the supply problems of both the stickers and the albums to the sales points... the authorities seem to have resolved one of the priorities of the citizens, young and old: to fill the cards with the greatest soccer stars... For the collector Claudio Destéfano the Panini phenomenon has its roots in the fact that in Argentina, for several decades, stickers have been collected... Although the current paradigm of life has modified the landscape, what has not changed is the passion for this 'religion' 9.

But this reality and the effect of sticker albums is not a case only in Argentina, it is something that is repeated with different particularities, dimensions and examples around the world and this text seeks to show it as another influence of football at a collective level, whether in: the economic (a very lucrative business), the social (it represents practices and views of the world of specific societies or social groups), or the personal of those who identify themselves as collectors (a passion and the possibility of having artifacts of memory in the albums).

Methodology – Review and Analysis

This work, this research, is in itself a type of Review and Analysis as it combines two established methodological processes (Topic Review and Content Analysis), to achieve the expected result for this type of articles: a compilation of documents–contents that contribute to the understanding of a topic considering different categories–aspects.

In this case, the objective was to select a representative bibliographic and content production that accounts for the importance of collecting football sticker albums in certain sectors of society, as part of the representations and mediations surrounding this sport.

Therefore, this review (of topic), with its analysis (of contents), is part of its results, it is a type of article in itself (Codina, 2024), which differs between its typologies, in its scope and degree of depth–systematicity due to: the possibilities of the information sources, the large or small amount of documents–contents of the subject and the quantitative–qualitative methodological possibilities that this allows (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou 2016).

That is to say, for this case, as Pardal–Refoyo (2023) indicates, returning to Aguilera Eguía (2014), in the topic review (narrative or systematized approach, as some authors classify it) the current status of a topic is exposed; and in it, the authors, based on their experience and knowledge (in this case the collecting of football sticker albums), identify and select the most relevant studies (documents–contents) and synthesize the information in a coherent narrative.

For this work, therefore, a review was carried out (after an initial pilot test, as will be explained) having finally the following fundamental keywords, both in its Spanish version, as well as in English, Italian and Portuguese: football, albums, trading cards, figures, figurines, sheets, stickers, Panini, Topps, Navarrete.

The use of these keywords in four languages allowed for a broad scope (although pretending that it is completely global is not possible, especially when it is seen that in the world of football sticker album collecting, there are publishers and editions that are well known globally or regionally (by continent), but others are very local), considering the different sources where the search was carried out, which covered different documentary typologies, keeping in mind the quantitative and qualitative particularities that a review of a topic implies, unlike systematic reviews.

Thus, the sources of information used in this search were, for documents of the article type, the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Dialnet, Scielo, RedAlyc; for documents beyond articles (books, chapters, degree–thesis works, reports) the sources of

⁹<https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2022/09/23/album-panini-argentina-mundial-qatar-figuritas-abastecimiento-orix/>.

Google Books, the catalogue of the Library of Congress of the United States and LaReferencia–OpenAire; and for news–type documents and websites–social networks with a specialized theme (in collecting this type of albums) Google News and search engines for Blogger and WordPress, and Facebook groups were used.

As indicated, a pilot test was carried out that helped to identify the keywords and Boolean operators that worked best, and the most pertinent translations, thereby achieving an adjusted search strategy, and even determining that for this topic, the use of traditional documentary sources (scientific articles) was not an option that provided many contributions, which is an aspect that leads this article to be a contribution in this sense.

Therefore, after this pilot test it was decided that the documents to be tracked and selected for their representativeness would focus on books, news and websites–social networks, that is, *documents in the broad sense*—contents—, therefore, the analysis would be adjusted to a more current vision of the documentation, since the analysis of contents is assumed as:

A research technique that involves the analysis of social reality through the observation and analysis of documents that are created or produced within one or more societies... Content analysis is a useful tool, especially in its qualitative approach, for the exhaustive knowledge of the information existing in a documentary source. It can be essential for the understanding and management of a given social event, present or past (Oliver 2008).

This search process allowed us to locate, from the initial, “raw” documentation–contents, broadly: scientific articles (10 articles: 2 in English, 5 in Spanish, 3 in Portuguese)¹⁰; books (39 books, of which 90% were for children's activities), news (298 in the 4 selected languages), websites (13 sites with a more collector's profile than just business) and social networks (996 Facebook groups).

Once these documents–contents (books, news, websites–social networks about collecting football sticker albums) were located, the selection process was carried out, keeping in mind in the case of this work, the established categories (Ferrando, Ibáñez & Alvira 2016), for the analysis of the different documentary–content inputs located: *Business*, *Social reality*, *Collecting passion*, *Memory artifacts* within each of these categories, different units of analysis were identified as the process was carried out, which depended on what was to be identified from each category.

In this sense, for *Business*, the aim was to detect mentions of football sticker album collecting in which their business and commercial aspects could be highlighted. To this end, the brands of the main album publishers were key, both the most traditional ones (Panini, Merlin, Colecciones Este, Navarrete, etc.) and the more current names (3 Reyes, formerly Navarrete, Merlin, currently Topps–Fanatics).

Regarding *Social reality*, collecting implies a look at the context at a given time, some relationships with social reality, so it was considered whether aspects of the reality of countries, cities, football teams, communities and groups were presented and narrated, which went beyond football itself and interrelated political, cultural, demographic, racial, technological aspects, etc.

¹⁰ Scientific articles with some relation to football sticker albums:

- “Trading Coupons: Completing the World Cup Football Sticker Album” <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1740-9713.2006.00192.x>
- “The Panini album: a tool for the geography teacher?” <https://doi.org/10.4000/echogeo.19763>.
- “The link between the right to one's own image and competition law”. The World Cup album and the illicit use of the footballers' images. <https://tesis.pucp.edu.pe/repositorio/handle/20.500.12404/27646>.
- “The best football album in the history of World Cup film.” <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2011755>.
- “Completing an album of figurines: a mathematical analysis.” <https://doi.org/10.22481/intermaths.v3i2.11749>.
- “The culture of figurines: the language configurations of collecting in the 2018 FIFA World Cup album.” <https://doi.org/10.17851/2526-4494.3.2.9-27>.
- “Album of figurines: a pedagogical victory.” <https://doi.org/10.47328/rpv.v11i2.15027>.

For its part, as has been mentioned, collecting in general, and in the specific case of trading card albums, implies a personal reality, a desire to enjoy, to possess, to have one's own collection, valuable for others (here it is connected with business, with the social), but valuable especially for each collector (*memorabilia*) due to their interrelations with their personal life, with their history, etc. In this category it was key to identify those expressions referring to the *Collector's passion*, collecting as a taste, hobby, life story, among other aspects of feeling.

Finally, collecting involves artifacts (in this case, albums) that become part of the memory (collective and/or personal) because they are given a symbolic value, which sometimes coincides with the economic–business, with the social and/or with the collecting passion itself, because it depends on the characteristics of each artifact, its particularities: the scarcity or abundance of copies (editions), the commonness or not in a context (or worldwide, today with the world of the Internet, e–commerce), the editorial and image quality, the added values (printed signatures or signatures of real players), the degree of preservation, among other aspects; that make them valuable in several senses, that make them *Artifacts of memory*, whether from the shelves in the collector's home or even becoming part of physical museums, or from digital collections organized on websites or social networks specialized in collecting football sticker albums.

In summary, with these four categories and the different units of analysis in each one, the aim was to reach, through the review of the topic and subsequent analysis of content, “a process of un– concealment or revelation of expression, where, above all, what is interesting is what is hidden, latent, non–apparent, potential, unpublished (unsaid) in every message” (Bardin, 1986); in this case, to identify, from books, news, websites–social networks, the collecting of sticker albums as a business, with social implications, whether collective or personal, that generate passion, that build memory.

Results (from topic review and content analysis)

As indicated below, football is a topic that has been addressed from an academic and scientific research perspective, either from the perspective of Sports Sciences or from specific topics in other disciplines such as Sports Journalism, Sports Sociology, Sports Psychology or Sports Administration, among others.

However, when reviewing different sources of academic information (scientific databases, mostly articles) it is evident that when it comes to the relationship between football and sticker albums and their different implications, there are very few references that are located (as evidenced from the pilot test of the topic review), so it is necessary to resort to other sources and formats, since more useful references are located when resorting to books (specific and that address this topic in different languages), and also, to news reported from different types of media with local, regional and international reach, in addition to the new communication formats made possible by the Internet and the Social Web (blogs, wikis and websites specialized in collecting this type of collection, groups and networks, etc.).

Therefore, below, as a result of this review and analysis, *as a result of the investigative process for this type of article*, the selection and categorization of the chosen content documents is presented, thus fulfilling the proposed objective regarding that: *They realized the importance of collecting football sticker albums in certain sectors of society, as part of the representations and mediations around this sport.*

Although this typology was discarded from the pilot test, as regards articles, because it did not provide very broad and pertinent results regarding collecting as such (see footnote 10), it is considered important at the beginning of the presentation of the selected documents–contents, to give an account of 3 texts –of the 5 located in Spanish– published specifically in a Spanish magazine specialized in football (Figure 1) that do approach the orientation regarding collecting football sticker albums of this article:

The magazine *Cuadernos de Fútbol*¹, allowed us to locate, on the one hand, the article “The sticker album of the 1973–74 league” (Jareño Pastor 2012), where it is noted that collecting has had different dynamics and eras, and that each of those who have lived this practice has been impacted in a different way, from the past to the present:

My review of a legendary album, a before and after, a turning point in the world of collecting that not even trading cards. The current ones, with their dazzling arrival, have been able to surpass it. I continue passing by the square, Lino's kiosk is no longer there, but I continue to look with nostalgia at the space left behind and I remember ambiguously in my feelings that summer of 1973.

For many people, collecting football sticker albums is something that began worldwide with Panini in 1970, with its first World Cup album, but the reality and history of this practice can be traced back much earlier, both in countries



Figure 1. Generic cover of the Spanish magazine *Cuadernos de Fútbol*.

specific to Europe such as Italy, England, Portugal or Spain, as in other countries, where Latin America has also had its tradition.

On the other hand, in this same magazine another article could be found that is important to highlight, in which García Cubero (2011) reports that this reality of football albums is not only from the last 50 years (applied to the Spanish case, similarly in other countries), since in his article called “The first sticker album” he indicates that:

In the slippery subject that concerns us, that of diving into the murky and deep waters, due to the distance, of the beginnings of the hobby of collecting football cards, our starting point is established, in a diffuse way, in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is established in a fairly precise way that the first editions related to football were postcards and small die-cut cards that illustrated, often with didactic intention, the way of playing the new sport that caused a sensation among the fans, *Sportsmen* of the time... Without fear of being wrong and until documentary evidence proves us otherwise, the album published around 1915 by the Barcelona publishing house Tiket, with the title “Foot-Ball Album”, is, to this day, the first football sticker album published in Spain.

That is to say, the hobby of collecting football sticker albums (or other themes and sports, but that is not the scope of this article) goes back several decades, but today, it has achieved greater notoriety and different implications.

Finally, in the third text *The cards of the 50 top scorers in the history of the League* from Viñarás de Blas (2014), this author gives an account of his memories and connects them with the top scorers, with their statistical data, but especially with images of the cards of these scorers from Zarra in the 40s and 50s to Messi in recent times (Figure 2).

Considering these three texts, it is important to indicate that the collection then goes back to the social and its own history, that is, to different scenarios, since collecting is an action that can be conceived under four scenarios as mentioned by Yanes (2022): a) A playful/leisure action, b) As a business, c) To gain prestige, and d) As a means of dissemination.

That is why, due to the confluence between the social-collective and the person-history itself, *collecting and memorabilia*. They are two themes that come together in the same intention and importance for those who analyze-study and/or those who carry out-enjoy this practice, as González Míguez (2015) highlights:



<p>Nombre completo: Telmo Zarraonaindia Montoya</p> <p>Fecha de nacimiento: 20 de enero de 1921</p> <p>Lugar de nacimiento: Asúa-Erandio (Vizcaya)</p> <p>Debut en 1ª: 29 de septiembre de 1940</p> <p>Temporadas en 1ª: 15 (1940-1955)</p> <p>Clubes en los que jugó: Athletic Club de Bilbao</p> <p>Partidos jugados: 277</p> <p>Goles: 251</p> <p>Promedio de goles x partido: 0,9061</p> 	<p>Nombre completo: Lionel Andrés Messi</p> <p>Fecha de nacimiento: 24 de junio de 1987</p> <p>Lugar de nacimiento: Santa Fe (Argentina)</p> <p>Debut en 1ª: 16 de octubre de 2004</p> <p>Temporadas en 1ª: 10 (2004-2014)</p> <p>Clubes en los que jugó: F.C. Barcelona</p> <p>Partidos jugados: 277</p> <p>Goles: 243 (en activo)</p> <p>Promedio de goles x partido: 0,8773</p> 
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Figure 2. Data and figures of Zarra and Messi. Viñarás de Blas (2014).

We cling to things that have meant or represent something to us and many people find it difficult to let go or eliminate them from their lives. This happens with the objects that we own or that were part of our life and therefore of our history; a history that can be told through those things that have occupied a place in our existence and that do so in memory. History and memory often have the form of an object... [and this is] what we could call *memorabilia* staff (referring to *memorabilia*, those objects that are kept for a specific reason; either because they have sentimental or personal value, a connection with other people or are associated with certain spaces and events).

In short, the history of football sticker album collecting and its scenarios, as Yanes (2022) indicates, are more easily evident by reviewing what has been published on this subject, therefore, as *result* for this work, the following documents–contents are presented to be highlighted (obviously not all) for their representativeness for this topic and considering the proposed categories:

Books

- ***Figurine Panini: Story of an industrial empire, of an Italian family and of a costume phenomenon*** (Nunzia Manicardi) (Figure 3).

This text was published in Italy, with a first edition in 2000.¹² and a later one in 2019¹³, presents a key aspect in the collection of football sticker albums, the history of the Panini family. Although as indicated, and we will identify for example with the collection of books by Editorial Mercaroni, the albums in different countries, with different publishers, have been present for many decades, it is necessary to recognize that the Panini family¹⁴, today the multinational company Panini, changed the history of this practice not only in Italy but worldwide, and continues to have a high international impact although today with great competition (Topps–Fanatics).

¹² Manicardi, N. (2000). *Figurine Panini: Story of an industrial empire, of an Italian family and of a costume phenomenon*. Italy: Guaraldi. 294 p.

¹³ Manicardi, N. (2019). *Figurine Panini: Story of an industrial empire, of an Italian family and of a costume phenomenon*. Italy: Guaraldi. 265 p. (Kindle format)

¹⁴ <http://www.enignet.it/uploads/documenti/OpusA6%20I%20Paladino.pdf>.

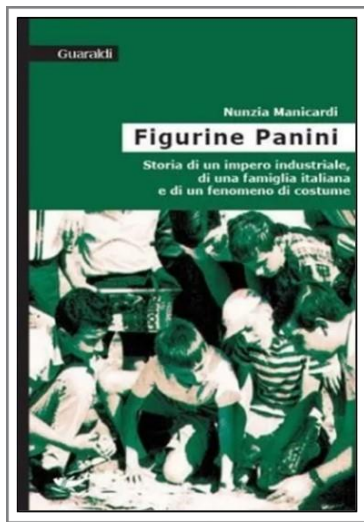


Figure 3. Book cover: *Figurine Panini*.

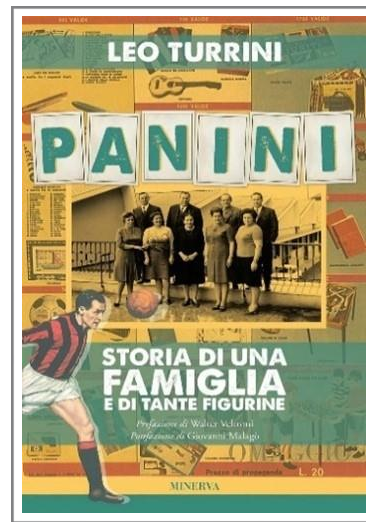


Figure 4. Book cover: *Panini. Story of a family and many figurines*.

As indicated in the presentation of this book (not the only one dedicated to this family/company as we will see later), knowing this story allows us to understand how it went from a kiosk in the *Modena Cathedral* run by his mother (1945) and then to a newspaper distribution agency (1954), to a publishing empire, first in Italy and today worldwide, with distribution of his albums, and other more recent products, in more than 120 countries.

In the Panini family (in its football sticker albums) for more than 60 years and up to today, business, social issues, collecting passion and memory artifacts come together.

But this book has not been the only one dedicated to this family–business, to this collection of sticker albums, where those dedicated to football are its origins and from which it has achieved this global impact (without ignoring the impact it also has on other topics).

In this sense, both because of the family–business aspect and because of the impact of its collection of football albums, the following text is key in this review:

- ***Panini. Story of a family and many figurines*** (Leo Turrini) (Figure 4).

This text published by Turrini in 2020¹⁵, as indicated in his presentation, wants to tell us that:

Once upon a time, there was an Italy that was not afraid to dream. The generous and courageous Italy of the second half of the 20th century: a people full of great figures. And also, magnificent figures. Through small rectangles of paper, the Panini family helped spread optimism in the Boom Country. Four brothers and four sisters, born in poverty, knew how to imagine the future starting from a small newsstand. And from their intuitions, moving from envelopes of simple stamps to envelopes of footballers and more, a global myth was born. The history of Panini is not just a celebration of entrepreneurial ingenuity. Behind and within those albums, between the pages of the collections, a national–popular feeling accumulates. The idea that nothing is impossible, when industriousness is combined with creativity, when imagination is combined with concreteness, when imagination takes power and transforms reality, improving it. From Fascism to the Red Emilia, from Enzo Ferrari to Gianni Rivera, from Giuseppe Garibaldi to Star Wars, from Muhammad Ali to Sandokan, Panini has brought together the history of Italy and the rest of the world in a single, gigantic, ideal figure. They did it in Modena, transforming it into the world capital of collecting. This book tells the story of a dynasty that became a “brand”, while always maintaining a noble attachment to its roots. “Panini is to Italy,” writes Walter Veltroni in the preface to Leo Turrini’s work, “what Disney is to America.” And with nothing to envy.

As indicated, without Panini the world of collecting sticker albums, especially football, would not be the same, and that is represented in the following two texts that have been dedicated

¹⁵ Turrini, L. (2020). *Panini. Story of a family and many figurines*. Italy: Minerva Edizioni. 320 p.

to compile this history focused on football, to present and remember the different football cards that have been presented in their albums over the last 60 years, at an international level with the World Cups, or in countries with specific leagues or continental football tournaments (clubs or national teams):

- *Panini Football Stickers: The Official Celebration: A Nostalgic Journey Through the World of Panini* (Greg Lansdowne) (Figure 5).

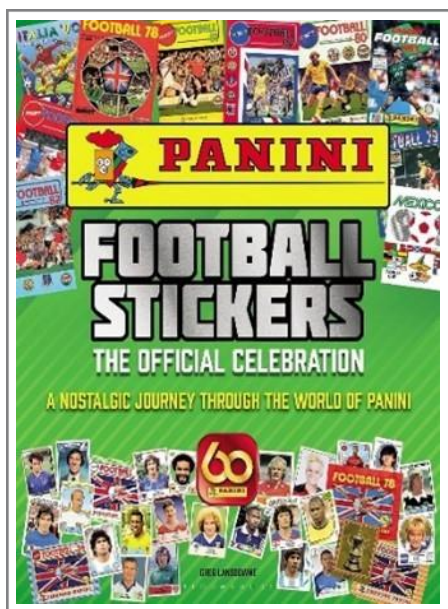


Figure 5. Book cover: Panini Football Stickers.

In this book, published in 2022¹⁶, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the first football album of the *Calcio* Italian produced by the family-company (1962), Panini wanted through the renowned writer and expert in this type of collecting Greg Lansdowne, to tell the story of both its football albums in different leagues-countries (Italy, England, Spain) and the FIFA World Cups or the UEFA European Championship, placing special emphasis on the great players (cards) that have appeared league after league, world cup after world cup, cup after cup: from Pelé and Maradona to Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, or more recently, with historic players of women's football such as Megan Rapinoe or Marta (Figure 6), among many others, which also shows the change that has gradually been taking place so that it is not a sport only for men, which is a key aspect today in the social field.



Figure 6. Panini Legends page from the book: Panini Football Stickers.

¹⁶ https://www.panini.es/shp_esp_es/panini-football-stickers-the-official-celebration-book-by-bloomsbury-003882bloomsburyses01.html.

- ***Panini Legends: A Celebration of the World's Greatest Football Stickers*** (Greg Lansdowne) (Figure 7).

In the case of this book, the most recent of all (2024)¹⁷, although with similarities with the previous one (they share the same author), has a different emphasis that makes it very valuable, its objective is to show how the most famous players in the history of football have had a passage through the Panini albums, from their first appearance in the team of their league or in the representation of their country, until their last years as stars, its emphasis on the figure of rookies (*rookie*), is a key aspect of collecting, as indicated:

Every football star has a Panini 'rookie' sticker, the first time they appear as a young, hopeful and triumphant entry, about to write their names into the history books. These stickers are among the rarest and most expensive in existence, including Lionel Messi's first appearance in 2004/05, Cristiano Ronaldo in his debut season at Sporting Lisbon in 2002/03 and Monaco's 18-year-old Kylian Mbappé from Panini 2016/17.

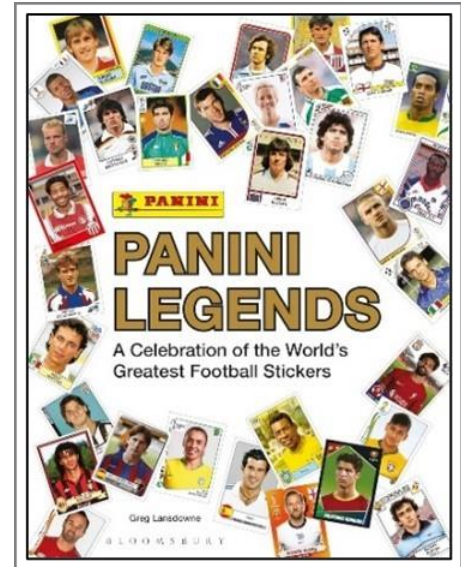


Figure 7. Book cover: *Panini Legends*.

But not everything has been only positive, whether for Panini or football sticker albums in general (because there have been and are other publishing companies in this collecting world: Merlin, Ediciones del Este, Navarrete —now 3 Reyes— or the multinational Topps–Fanatics, with different histories and competitions); so, it is also necessary to present some text that has shown this struggle, this competition between companies:

- ***Stuck on You: The Rise & Fall... & Rise of Panini Stickers*** (Greg Lansdowne) (Figure 8).

This text, 2015 edition¹⁸, narrates how the publication of albums of the English league has been in the last decades (since the seventies), with common aspects with other countries, with the reality of the collectors: "the nostalgia of exchanging the cards in the schoolyard", but delving into a not so nostalgic and beautiful aspect (of collector's passion, of artifacts of memory) as has been the process of competition, of 'business battle', between Panini (Italy) and Merlin–Topps (USA) today belonging to Fanatics, even reaching Latin America with the case of Panini vs. Navarrete (Peru–Latin America).

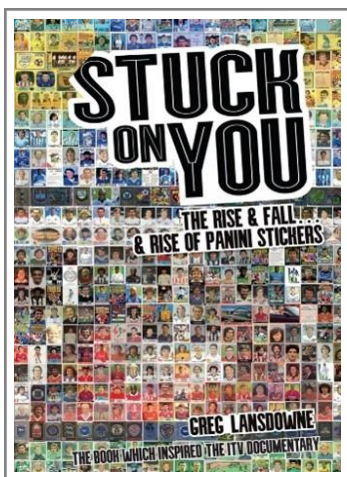


Figure 8. Book cover: *Stuck on You*.

That is to say, a battle that initially took place in the Premier League (England) or also in the Bundesliga (Germany), but which in recent years has reached a global level, proving that this is a business with all its good and bad practices.

On the other hand, among the selected books, we would also like to highlight those that resort to literature, to narrative, to tell the story of this passion, of these artifacts of memory, and in this type of text, among others (for example. *Six Stickers: A Journey to Complete an Old Sticker Album*¹⁹, etc.), there is the following, which we highlight here especially for its central character:

¹⁷ Lansdowne, G. (2024). *Panini Legends: A Celebration of the World's Greatest Football Stickers*. UK: Bloomsbury Sport. 240 p.

¹⁸ Lansdowne, G. (2015). *Stuck on You: The Rise & Fall... & Rise of Panini Stickers*. UK: Pitch Publishing Ltd. 256 p.

¹⁹ Carroll–Smith, A. (2018). *Six Stickers: A Journey to Complete an Old Sticker Album*. UK: Pitch Publishing Ltd. 320 p.

- **500 'figu' for a Bordon. In the world of a collector** (Lorenzo Longhi, Gianni Bellini) (Figure 9).

In this work of 2019²⁰, based on the metaphor of the number of stickers that were exchanged for a scarcer one from an album *Calciatori* of the Italian league, it tells how from childhood to adulthood, he has lived on the part of the character-collector (*Gianni Bellini, the world's biggest collector of sticker albums*²¹) his memorabilia around football sticker albums, which does not remain only in the reality of a person (his collecting passion), but becomes a social reality (of the Nation):

The smell of the envelope being opened, the excitement of the first sticker being stuck on, the exchanges and games with friends: like all children, Gianni Bellini began to develop his passion for stickers. Then, like everyone else, it grew. Only his passion, instead of stopping, grew with him and even more than him, involving relatives, correspondents from all over the world, newspapers and television, even footballers used as... postmen or translators. But these pages, full of anecdotes and curiosities, go further. Because stickers do not only talk about football, they tell a little of the history of an entire population.



Figure 9. Book cover: 500 'figu' for a Staff.

Additionally, some texts were located and analyzed that seek to compile the work of collectors, to be 'encyclopedias' for fans, for those passionate about this type of objects, these artifacts of memory.

Among these, it is necessary to highlight a book from Portugal, another from Argentina and, after these, a Complete Collection (VIII volumes) from Italy dedicated to this subject by Editorial Mercaroni:

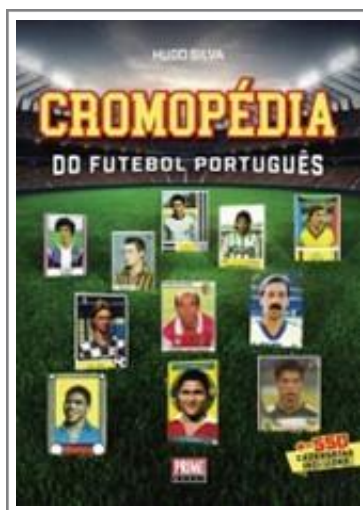


Figure 10. Cover of the book: *Cromopédia do Futebol Português*

- **Portuguese Soccer Cromopédia** (Hugo Silva) (Figure 10).

This book, published in 2020²², by the Portuguese publisher Prime Books, makes a very valuable compilation of the publication of football sticker albums that have circulated in Portugal. In this, it is important to identify that, in addition to the well-known albums published in recent decades by Panini or Topps, there are different independent and smaller publishers from the country itself (more than 150 for Portugal)²³, which is a common fact in other countries in Europe or Latin America, so these texts end up presenting a historical line of 'the Cromopedia', in this case for Portugal (Figure 11), which is useful for collectors – not only from that country – but also for the publishing industry and even for the contemporary history of that nation.

²⁰ Longhi, L.; Bellini, G. (2019). *500 'figu' for a Bordon. In the world of a collector*. Italy: Gianluca Iuorio Urbone Publishing. 105 p.

²¹ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/sport/football/gianni-bellini-meet-the-man-with-the-biggest-football-sticker-album-collection-in-the-world-1.754513>.

²² Silva, H. (2020). *Portuguese Soccer Cromopédia*. Portugal: Prime Books. 308 p.

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/cromopedia>.



Figure 11. Example pages from albums listed in the book: *Cromopédia do Futebol Português*.

On the other hand, from Argentina, we find the book:

- ***The ones before were difficult*** (Rafael Bitrán, Francisco Chiappini) (Figure 12).

This publication, edited in 2013, by the same authors of *Damn Difficult* (2002)²⁴ and other similar books, presents, based on the authors' experience as collectors, an account of football sticker albums in the Argentine context, but also in Latin America. Collecting experience from childhood, adolescence and into adulthood with the different moments and attitudes towards figurine collecting, as indicated by its authors:

Strange paradox. Almost all of us, girls or boys, have collected our figurines at some point. Even those with very few resources always managed to get a few, even if they were few, but very precious. However, when we reach adolescence, they are forgotten, they are “things of boys” or our mothers throw them away “to make room”. They seem like objects from the past and, if many of us had them, they become something rare, unfindable and, in some cases, almost non-existent. Nevertheless, everything remains. And when the memory comes back, many times they are no longer there. And this is our tribute. To bring them back from the memory of our lost childhood to our present that still gets excited when we see, smell and feel them.

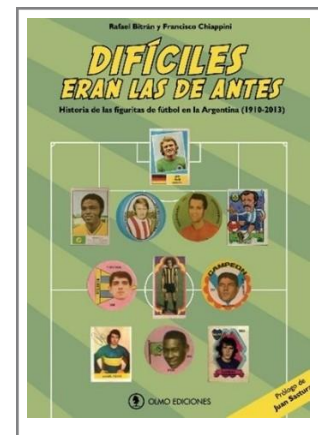


Figure 12. Book cover: *The ones before were difficult*.

The book compiles trading cards (stickers) from 1910 to 2013, and from its cover you can see the variety and temporality of the same, by making a lineup from the authors, of the 11 best players and most difficult stickers, this book being a contribution to collecting from Argentina and Latin America, to the world.

²⁴ Bitrán, R.; Chiappini, F. (2013). *The ones before were difficult: history of soccer figurines in Argentina: 1910-2013*. Argentina: Olmo Editions. 244 p.

Bitrán, R.; Chiappini, F. (2002). *Damn hard: A History of Soccer Figures in Argentina*. Argentina: Aleph. 116 p..

On the other hand, as mentioned, being one of the most outstanding cases since the review carried out, being the most complete documentary material available for collecting sticker albums worldwide, there is the collection of the Mercaroni Publishing House.²⁵ This publishing house has been creating a continuous research process for several years with the support of different researchers and collectors, and from this, it has been publishing an exclusive collection for this theme:



Figure 13. Covers of three of the books (volumes) of the Collection: Album di Figurine.

• **Figure Album Collection** (Valtolina and Carpaneto).

This collection (Figure 13), which began in 1999, now has VIII volumes.²⁶ (with albums from the 1930s to the first decade of this 21st century, not only about football, but mostly), which although focused on what was produced in Italy, gives way to albums that have been known, and even translated, in many other countries:

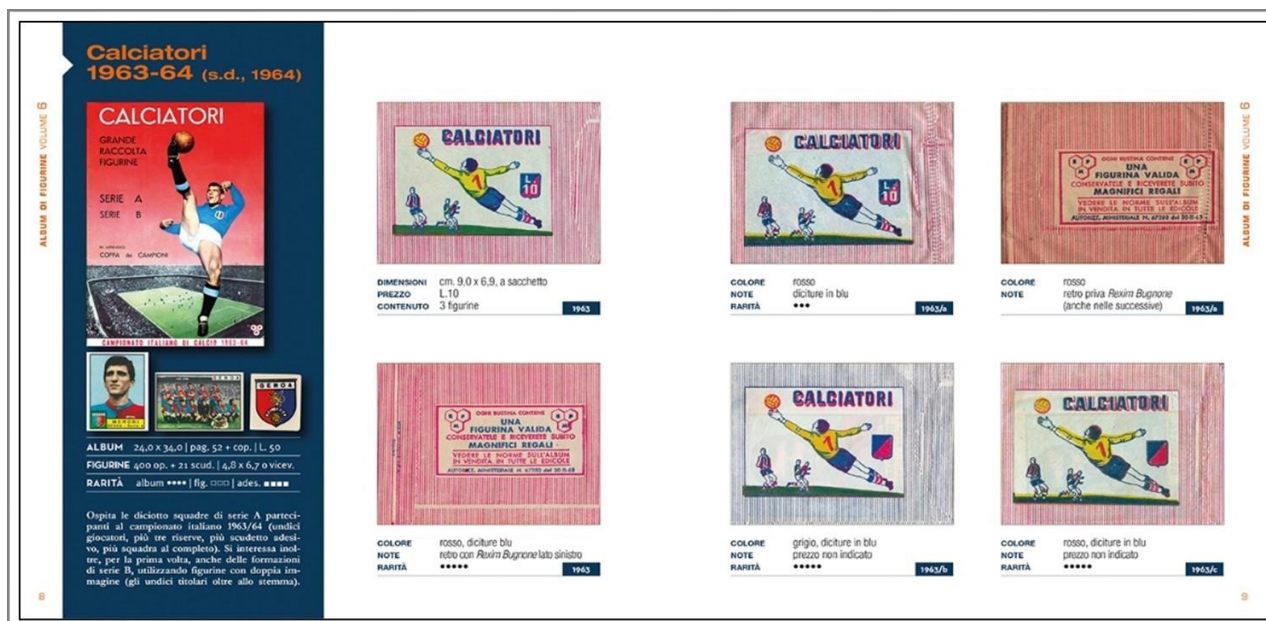


Figure 14. Example page of album and envelopes, recorded in book Vol. VI of the Collection: Album di Figurine.

This collection is an adventure that allows us to see how football sticker albums (and many other themes) have evolved (Figure 14), both in editorial terms and in all the descriptive information they contain, and how generations after generations have lived: the business

²⁵ <https://www.mencaronieditore.com/casa-editrice/>.

²⁶ <https://www.mencaronieditore.com/product-category/album-di-figurine/>.

(with different national publishers and two large multinationals), the social realities they present, the passion for collecting and the objects of memory that they become for people, but also for society, as we will see in the last book, in the Museum created.

Finally, it was impossible to finish this selection from the books located and studied (after reviewing the topic and analyzing the contents), without talking about a text, which represents the social importance that collecting can have from the collectors' point of view, but also from the business, and even the cultural point of view:

- *My greatest album of our life. Story in figurines of miti, campioni and bottles of sport* (Turrini, Basile, Gramolelli) (Figure 15).

This text, published in 2016²⁷ presents the history of the figurines, many of them part of football sticker albums (Figure 16), as they indicate in their presentation:

The best albums of our lives transport the reader to one of the worlds to which stickers, especially in Italy, are most closely linked: sport. If the album of the players of the current championship has been an unavoidable ritual for Italians of all ages for more than fifty years, football is only one of the worlds narrated by stickers, which in their more than one hundred years of history have immortalized the heroes of dozens of sports disciplines and which were also, before television came to change our lives, a vehicle for the dissemination of sport, its rules and its techniques. If the history of sport is a long series of challenges and rivalries, some of which have become legendary, here is the story of dozens of these pairs of opponents, their lives and their exploits, which accompany the flow of images



in this book. Through hundreds of figurines, from the 19th century to the present day, the story of two popular passions [football and albums] that have always been inextricably linked, comes to life in these pages.



Figure 16. Images from the book: *The best albums of our life*.

²⁷ <https://www.mocu.it/sport/migliori-album-della-nostra-vita/>.

Its particularity and special importance lie in the fact that it is published by the Museo della Figurina²⁸ (Figure 17), and is part of other compilation and commemorative texts about the *figurine*. In a broad sense, that is to say, although not everything on display in the Museum and its publications is focused on football sticker albums, a fundamental part is, since its origin, progress and growth comes from there, from the very history of Panini as a family– company, from Italy to the world.

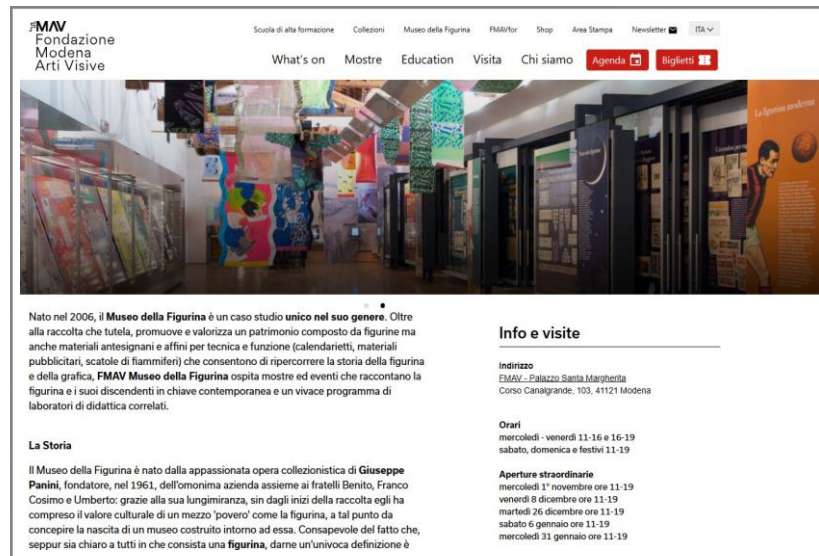


Figure 17. Presentation of the website: Museo della Figurina.

The Museum, located in Modena, Italy (where the company's headquarters are), was created with the sponsorship of the Panini family with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of this publishing and collecting work over the decades, and as it says in its presentation, "it is unique in its kind." It has a permanent exhibition room dedicated to Panini albums and figures over time, and also presents various guides, publications and temporary exhibitions related to it (Figure 18).

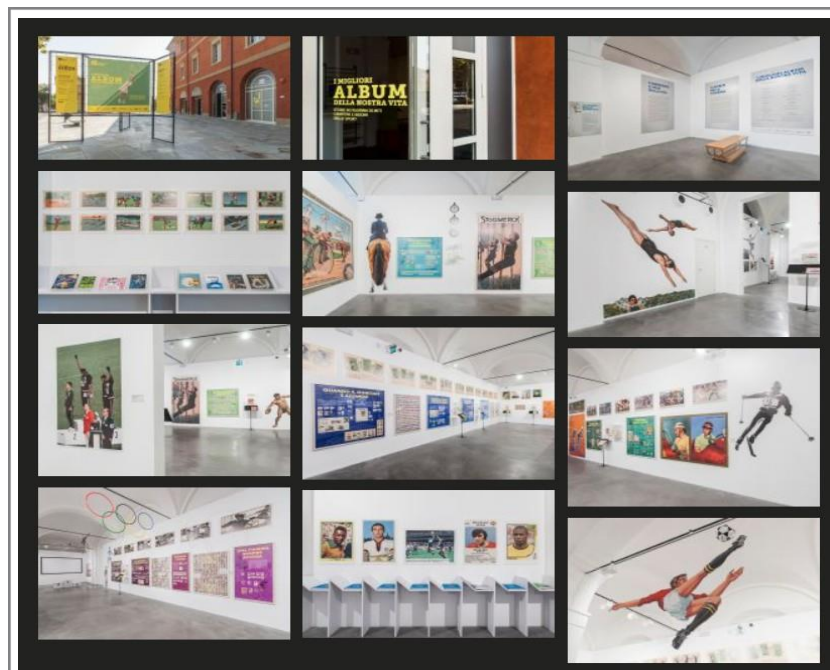


Figure 18. Images from the permanent exhibition at the Museo della Figurina related to football and other sports sticker albums.

²⁸ <https://www.fmav.org/museo-della-figurina/>.

News

After reviewing the news-sourced documents from the perspective of content, a selection was made of different notes (not all of them, due to the length of this text) that show how football sticker album collecting is an aspect that occurs in different sectors, but at the same time, in the groups and people who experience it. Below, some of the most notable ones are classified by the categories considered and in chronological order, which show:

• The Business

- "Panini World Cup stickers: Global craze has led to robberies, counterfeits and panic buying." (*Mirror*, 2014)²⁹.
- "Thousands of people are spending money on virtual trading cards that don't actually exist." (*Business Insider*, 2016)³⁰.
- "Panini Spain puts on sale the official Euro2017 sticker album". (*Brand*, 2017)³¹.
- "The world's most expensive Panini album, signed by Brazilian legend Pele, has been auctioned off for £10,450". (*Mirror*, 2017)³².
- "Blow to Panini trading cards: 1.5 million tax penalty confirmed". (*The Information*, 2018)³³.
- "Back of the net. Is your old Panini football sticker album worth thousands of pounds?" (*The Sun*, 2018)³⁴.
- "Panini, the owner of all the sheets". (*The Weather*, 2018)³⁵.
- "World's most expensive Panini football sticker album sells for £1,500 on eBay – and it's not even complete." (*Mirror*, 2018)³⁶.
- "London toy fair: panini uk talks new premier league cards and stickers". (*Beckett*, 2019)³⁷.
- "Sticking power. Panini stickers over 60 years, from humble origins and swaps at school to a Maradona card that sold for £400,000." (*The Sun*, 2021)³⁸.
- "The most expensive Panini album in history cost £7.6 million and it was bought by a 9-year-old boy." (*The Nation*, 2022)³⁹.
- "Panini Album: How much do editions full of past World Cups sell for?" (*Herald Sports*, 2022)⁴⁰.
- "UEFA has broken its 45-year relationship with Panini as a supplier for national team tournaments." (*Outdoors*, 2022)⁴¹.

²⁹<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/panini-world-cup-stickers-global-3603327>.

³⁰<https://www.businessinsider.com/people-are-spending-hundreds-on-virtual-trading-cards-that-dont-actually-exist-2016-8>.

³¹<https://www.marca.com/futbol/futbol-femenino/2017/05/22/5922fcd746163ff7798b45dc.html>.

³²<https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/worlds-most-expensive-panini-album-10110062>.

³³<https://www.lainformacion.com/empresas/golpe-a-los-cromos-de-panini-confirmada-una-sancion-de-1-5-millones-por/6342145/>.

³⁴<https://www.thesun.co.uk/money/5954705/is-your-old-panini-football-sticker-album-worth-thousands-of-pounds/>.

³⁵<https://www.eltiempo.com/economia/empresas/exito-del-album-de-panini-en-el-mundo-206870>.

³⁶<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/worlds-most-expensive-panini-football-12455502>.

³⁷<https://www.beckett.com/news/london-toy-fair-panini-uk-talks-new-premier-league-cards-and-stickers/>.

³⁸<https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/16730136/panini-stickers-book-italy/>.

³⁹<https://www.nacion.com/puro-deporte/futbol-internacional/el-album-panini-mas-caro-de-la-historia-costo-76/LMC6P2Q76FGE5PDT4PZFSEJC6E/story/>.

⁴⁰<https://www.heraldodeportes.com.mx/tendencias/2022/10/10/album-panini-en-cuanto-se-venden-ediciones-llenas-demundiales-pasados-46653.html>.

⁴¹<https://www.alairelibre.cl/noticias/deportes/futbol/uefa/uefa-rompio-su-vinculo-de-45-anos-con-panini-como-proveedor-paratorneos/2022-04-06/123742.html>.

- "3 Kings: the Peruvian Panini album competition". (*CNN*, 2022)⁴².
- "Panini World Cup Qatar 2022: Cost and when it comes out". (*Goal*, 2022)⁴³.
- "Topps replace Panini as sticker album producers for European Championship from 2024". (*Yahoo Sport*, 2022)⁴⁴.
- "Panini launched the official album of the 2023 Copa Libertadores: How much does it cost?". (*RCN*, 2023)⁴⁵.
- "Conmebol and Panini release an album dedicated to the Copa Libertadores". *Millennium*, 2023)⁴⁶.
- "Back of the net: rare Panini sticker album from 1970 World Cup sells for more than £2,000 at auction." (*Telegraph*, 2023)⁴⁷.
- "Man's rare Mexico 1970 Panini album up for sale – and could fetch £1,800 at auction." (*Mirror*, 2023)⁴⁸.
- "Copa América 2024: how much is it worth and where to get the Panini album from now on". (*Infobae*, 2024)⁴⁹.
- "Colombia is already anticipating the 2024 Copa América with the traditional Panini album; prices and other details". (*The Colombian*, 2024)⁵⁰.
- "The 2024 Copa América album was released: cost, Uruguayan squad and particularities." (Montevideo, 2024)⁵¹.
- "Panini launches the Copa America USA 2024 collection with a 500% increase." (*The Echo*, 2024)⁵².
- "Premier League signs agreement with Fanatics Collectibles for official collectibles". (*Football Finance*, 2024)⁵³.
- "Will Fanatics Upend the World of Sports Collectibles. Fanatics vs Panini." (*New York Times*, 2024)⁵⁴.

• **Social reality**

- "The adults who get misty-eyed over Panini World Cup stickers." (*BBC*, 2014)⁵⁵.
- "Italy striker Mario Balotelli fills up World Cup sticker album with pictures of himself." (*Daily Mail*, 2014)⁵⁶.

⁴²<https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/video/tres-reyes-competencia-peruana-album-panini-digital-pkg/>.

⁴³<https://www.goal.com/es/noticias/album-panini-mundial-qatar-2022-costo-when-sale/bltf7dddde4d91e0d43>.

⁴⁴<https://uk.sports.yahoo.com/news/topps-replace-panini-sticker-album-084008344.html>.

⁴⁵<https://www.noticiasrcn.com/deportes/panini-lanzo-el-album-oficial-de-la-copa-libertadores-2023-cuanto-cuesta-449368>.

⁴⁶<https://www.milenio.com/deportes/futbol-internacional/conmebol-panini-estrenan-album-dedicado-copa-libertadores>. ⁴⁷<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/07/panini-football-stickers-1970-world-cup-auction-brazil/>.

⁴⁸<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/mans-rare-mexico-1970-panini-31559721>.

⁴⁹<https://www.infobae.com/colombia/2024/03/05/how-much-is-it-worth-and-where-to-get-the-panini-album-of-the-copa-america-2024-find-the-details-here/>.

⁵⁰<https://www.elcolombiano.com/deportes/futbol/album-panini-copa-america-2024-precio-JF24122649>.

⁵¹<https://www.montevideo.com.uy/Deportes/Se-lanzo-el-album-de-la-Copa-America-2024-costo-plantel-uruguayo-y-particularidades-uc882604>.

⁵²<https://www.eleco.com.ar/interes-general/panini-lanza-la-coleccion-de-la-copa-america-estados-unidos-2024-con-un-aumentodel-500>.

⁵³<https://futbolfinances.com/premier-league-signature-agreement-con-fanatics-collectibles-para-coleccionables-oficiales-20240509-661521.html>.

⁵⁴<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/26/business/fanatics-sports-memorabilia.html>.

⁵⁵<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-27051215>.

⁵⁶<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/worldcup2014/article-2659304/Mario-Balotelli-fills-World-Cup-sticker-album-pictureshimself.html>.

- "The Panini album was born from a modest newsstand." (*Computer Today*, 2018)57.
- "Maths expert: Filling Panini World Cup sticker album will cost £774 on average". (*Guernsey Press*, 2018)58.
- "An 8-year-old girl wrote to Panini to make a women's football sticker album." (*Infobae*, 2019)59.
- "Call for boycott. Panini criticised for "disrespecting" women's football by questioning fan involvement." (*The Newspaper*, 2019)60.
- "Scotland heroes included in Panini Euro 2020 sticker collection – here's how to win a full album". (*The Scottish Sun*, 2021)61.
- "Inflation pushes average cost of filling Panini 2022 World Cup sticker album to £870". (*The Guardian*, 2022)62.
- "Teacher asks her students to bring her a Ronaldo picture to complete her Panini album; "extra points"". (*Millennium*, 2022)63.
- "Panini created a monster": the furor caused by the World Cup soccer figurines in Latin American countries". *BBC*, 2022)64.
- "Argentines are losing their minds over the World Cup album." *The Country*, 2022)65.
- "Blind boy adapted the Qatar 2022 World Cup album to Braille and the result shocked the Internet." (*Univision*, 2022)66.
- "Is Panini album a risk? Hackers use Qatar World Cup for fraud." (*Forbes*, 2022)67.
- "The Liga F and Panini will launch a sticker album of Spanish women's football" (*Bolavip*, 2022) 68.
- "The F League will have a collection of cards for the first time in its history." (*The Vanguard*, 2022)69.
- "A 'special' album from Panini? Young woman makes a copy of her relationship and gives it to her boyfriend." (*Half-time*, 2022)70.
- "Why can't you buy the Women's World Cup album in Mexico?" *The Country*, 2023)71.

57<https://computerhoy.com/reportajes/life/historia-album-panini-todo-empezo-pequeno-kiosco-248352>.

58<https://guernseypress.com/news/uk-news/2018/03/28/maths-expert-filling-panini-world-cup-sticker-album-will-cost-774-onaverage/>.

59<https://www.infobae.com/america/deportes/2019/04/01/una-nina-de-8-anos-le-escribio-a-panini-para-que-haga-un-album-decromos-women's-football/>.

60<https://www.elperiodico.com/es/extra/20190905/criticas-panini-album-cromos-futbol-femenino-respuesta-mundial-boicotmarta-corredera-7620745>.

61<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/6510231/scotland-euro-2020-panini-sticker-win-album/>.

62<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/31/inflation-pushes-average-cost-of-filling-panini-2022-world-cup-stickeralbum-to-870-pounds-football>.

63<https://heraldodemexico.com.mx/tendencias/2022/9/20/video-una-maestra-encarga-sus-alumnos-de-tarea-la-estampa-panini-decristiano-ronaldo-441452.html>.

64<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-62815473>.

65<https://elpais.com/argentina/2022-09-19/los-argentinos-pierden-la-cambio-por-el-album-del-mundial.html>.

66<https://www.univision.com/entretenimiento/cultura-pop/sebastian-filoramo-nino-ciego-album-panini-qatar-2022-braille>.

67<https://www.forbes.com.mx/el-album-panini-es-un-riesgo-hackers-usan-el-mundial-de-qatar-para-fraudes/>.

68<https://bolavip.com/femenino/futbol-femenino-La-Liga-Fy-Panini-lanzaran-un-album-de-figuritas-del-futbol-femeninoespanol-20221214-0052.html>.

69<https://www.lavanguardia.com/deportes/futbol-femenino/20221215/8645809/futbol-femenino-panini-liga-f-cromoscoleccion.html>.

70<https://www.mediotiempo.com/otros-mundos/album-mundial-panini-chica-regala-imagenes-relacion-novio-edicion-qatar-2022>.

71<https://elpais.com/mexico/2023-08-14/por-que-en-mexico-no-se-poder-comprar-el-album-del-mundial-femenino.html>.

- "The Liga F sticker album presents its second edition: "They stopped us on the street." *The Spanish Newspaper*, 2023)72.
- "The F League now has its Panini sticker album." (*Expansion*, 2023)73.
- "Third album of the 2023–2024 season". (*Queens of the ball*, 2023)74.
- "Panini presents the first album of stickers of the Women's Football League" (*Wave Zero*, 2023)75.
- "Nationwide hunt for begins free Panini England Stickers as 2024 collection launched." (*JOE UK*, 2024)76.

• **The collector's passion**

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- "Father has a feeling when his son opens the Panini World Cup album and it comes true." (*CNN*, 2022)⁹⁰.
- "Panini Qatar 2022 Album: Facebook groups to exchange figures". (*Digital Trends*, 2022)⁹¹.
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- "The 'Panini curse' and its victims throughout history". (*Record*, 2023)⁹³.
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- "Panini's first Women's Super League sticker album launches with Chloe Kelly and Nikita Parris." (*BBC*, 2023)⁹⁶.
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- "Mexican national team will have 'surprise' players for Copa America, according to Panini Album". *TUDN*, 2024)⁹⁸.
- "Euro 2024 stickers". (*90 minutes*, 2024)⁹⁹.
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• The Artifacts of Memory

- "The Panini sticker album that took 34 years to complete: Welcome to 1984." (*UK Sports*, 2018)¹⁰¹.
- "Remember Panini football stickers? Nostalgia overload as we look back at the classic albums of the 80s and 90s." (*Daily Record*, 2018)¹⁰².

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⁹⁰<https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/video/album-panini-laminita-messi-mundial-qatar-presentimiento-futbol/>.

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⁹²<https://www.rtve.es/deportes/20230319/172-jugadoras-fantasma-primer-album-liga-f/2432206.shtml>.

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⁹⁹<https://www.90min.com/es/posts/fecha-de-launch-de-los-topps-de-la-euro-2024-when-y-donde-comprar-precio-y-todo-loque-need-to-know>.

¹⁰⁰<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-13272707/Phil-Foden-John-Stones-SNUBBED-Topps-Euro-2024-Englandsticker-album-Championship-player-included-instead.html>.

¹⁰¹<https://uk.sports.yahoo.com/news/panini-sticker-album-took-34-years-complete-welcome-1984-140023435.html>.

¹⁰²<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/sport/football/football-news/remember-panini-football-stickers-nostalgia-9484852>.

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- "Swapsies and shinies: 60 years of Panini football stickers". (*The Guardian*, 2021)¹⁰⁵.
- "Mexico in 1970 and Spain in 1982, among the most collected World Cup albums." (*The Republic*, 2022)¹⁰⁶.
- "One hundred stories on the road to Qatar 2022: Panini, protagonist of the World Cups". (*ESPN*, 2022)¹⁰⁷.
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- "Panini World Cup stickers: The history, the joy, the mullets and more." (*The NY Times*, 2022)¹⁰⁹.
- "Impossible cards, 'repeats' and other myths about LaLiga collecting". (*ABC*, 2023)¹¹⁰.

Finally, as mentioned, another key aspect in football sticker album collecting is the websites and social networks that have been created around them in recent years. Therefore, as the final part of this topic review and content analysis, those considered to be the most representative are highlighted (although again, it is not possible to cover all of them due to the lack of space in the text).

Websites–Social networks

Websites

Regarding websites worth highlighting for collecting football sticker albums, we can generally indicate that there are two trends: on the one hand, those focused on the commercial part of the business, where the direct sites of the Editors would be (e.g. Panini).¹¹¹ and Topps¹¹² with their sites in different countries and languages, or some smaller ones or focused on certain countries: e.g. 3 Kings¹¹³, Prislei Guimaraes¹¹⁴ or Ebay sales sites¹¹⁵ or AllCollection¹¹⁶, etc.; and on the other hand, those sites that are for collectors where sharing the collection, exchanging with other collectors is the most important thing, not so much the commercial part of the business, although it can happen.

¹⁰³https://as.com/futbol/2020/06/18/reportajes/1592464008_395191.html.

¹⁰⁴<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-58724794>.

¹⁰⁵<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/dec/15/panini-football-stickers-swapsies-shinies-60-years>.

¹⁰⁶<https://www.larepublica.co/ocio/mexico-del-70-y-espana-del-82-entre-los-albumes-del-mundial-que-mas-secoleccionan-3444814>.

¹⁰⁷https://www.espn.com.mx/futbol/mundial/nota/_/id/11024334/panini-figuritas-historia-coleccion-album-copa-mundomundial-qatar-2022-cuenta-regresiva-cien-historias.

¹⁰⁸<https://www.excelsior.com.mx/trending/esta-es-la-historia-album-panini/1537968>.

¹⁰⁹<https://theathletic.com/3603546/2022/09/20/panini-world-cup-stickers-history/>.

¹¹⁰<https://www.abc.es/eslaliga/cromos-imposibles-repes-y-demas-mitos-sobre-la-coleccion-de-laliga/>.

¹¹¹ Panini, in addition to its headquarters in Italy (https://www.panini.it/shp_ita_it/figurine-panini/collezioni/calcio/raccoltecomplete.html) has subsidiaries in: Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Spain, United States, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Switzerland, Uruguay and Venezuela.

¹¹² Topps (Fanatics) in addition to the United States (<https://www.topps.com>), has a commercial site for: Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, France, India, Japan and Brazil.

¹¹³<https://www.facebook.com/colecciones3reyes/>.

¹¹⁴<https://prisley-guimaraes.lojaintegrada.com.br/>.

¹¹⁵https://www.ebay.com/sch/64482/i.html?_from=R40&_nkw=album+fig%C3%BAtol.

¹¹⁶<https://www.todocoleccion.net/buscador?bu=album&sec=albumes%2Dcromos%2Ddeportes&O=r>.

Here, we will present those of this second trend, as they are more significant considering the passion for collecting and artifacts of memory, which this text aims to highlight:

• **LastSticker**¹¹⁷

This is one of the most important sites for collecting albums of all subjects, but with a speciality in football, where it is possible to identify what is being published by the most well-known publishers but also by smaller ones. In its list of football sticker albums there are more than 3850 (Figure 19), where the most surprising thing is that it is possible to locate copies from the first decades of the 20th century (England Collection), or those of Bruguera from the end of the 40s (Spain Collection), or all the Calciatori (Italy Collection) from its beginnings (Figure 20).

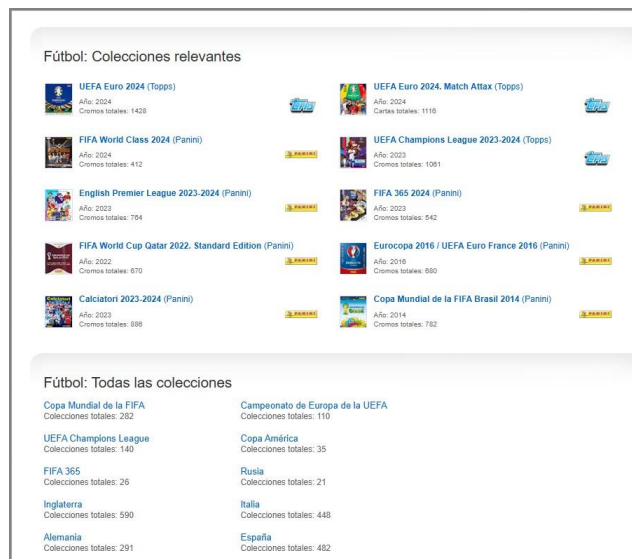


Figure 19. List of all football sticker albums in LastSticker.

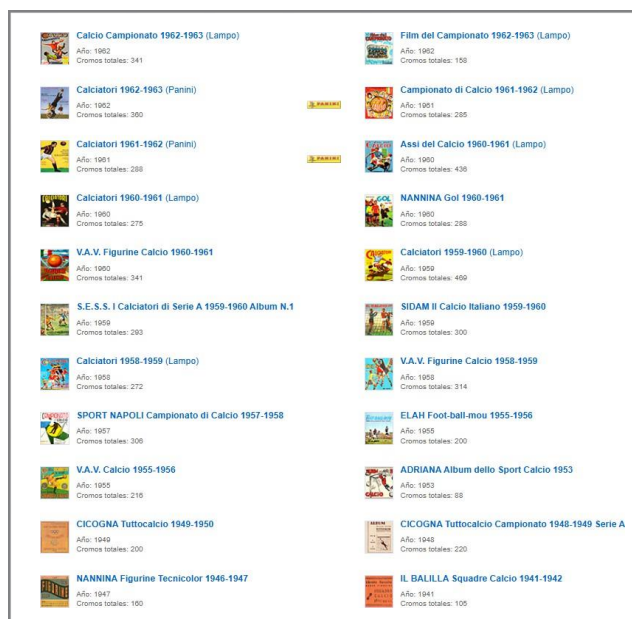


Figure 20. List of albums from the Italy Collection on LastSticker.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.laststicker.com/es/cards/s/football/>.

• **Only Goods Stickers**¹¹⁸

This blog-format site presents a collector's analysis of various albums from publishers from different countries and companies. The site began its reviews in 2013, but it contains reviews of football sticker albums from the 1970s onwards, reaching more than 450 reviewed albums (Figure 21).

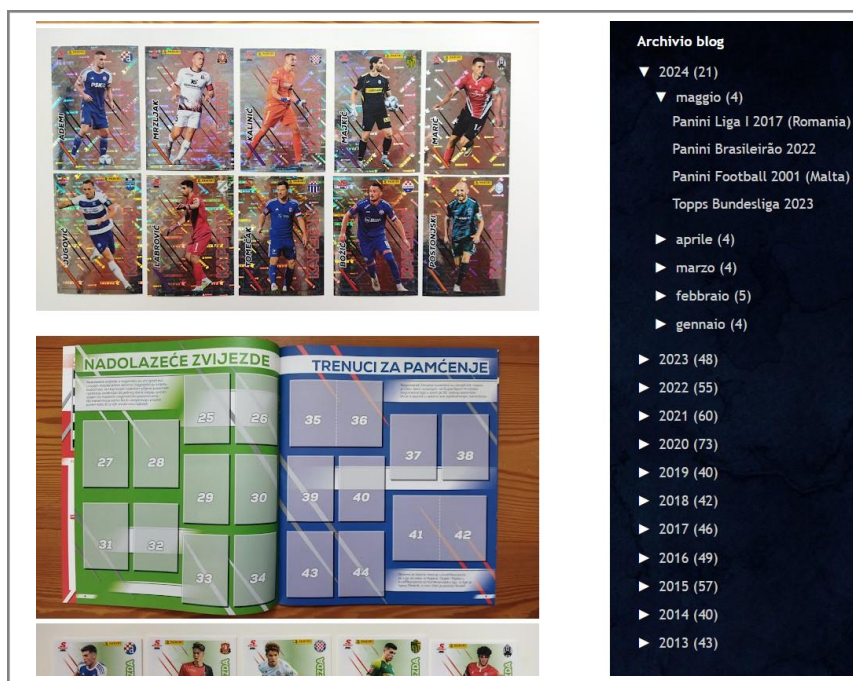


Figure 21. List of albums and example of the 2024 Croatian league album. OnlyGoodStickers.

• **Football Cartophilic**¹¹⁹

This site, also in blog format, as indicated in its presentation information, seeks to share “football cards issued around the world, from 1880 to the present and even some that have not yet been issued... no sales or evaluations... it is only a means to transmit information that has been collected over many decades.”

This presentation reflects that passion, those artifacts, and from them, the social realities involved in collecting soccer card albums. Its first publications were in February 2013 and continue to this day (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Alphabetical listing of albums and example of the Topps Euro 2024 album. Football Cartophilic

¹¹⁸ <https://fsaatg.blogspot.com/>.

¹¹⁹ <https://cartophilic-info-exch.blogspot.com/>.

Social networks

Finally, although it is not possible to expand in this section on the different aspects that social networks provide an account of the interaction between collectors from the same country, region and even at a transnational level, a list of some of these prominent groups is presented below (Table 1), although we are aware of the limitation that others are probably missing. It focuses on Facebook groups, as they are the most traditional web 2.0 spaces for collector interaction, although they have also existed more recently on other social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, etc.

Group Name	Participants	Group Identification in Facebook
Collectors of Spanish football cards (PANINI)	5.400	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1281739295579248/
Collectors Album of Figurinhas Futebol	6.300	https://www.facebook.com/groups/221264535060651/
Panini Spain Trading Cards	7,500	https://www.facebook.com/groups/573173599426031/
Topps UEFA EURO 2024 Stickers UK – Swaps Only!	8.600	https://www.facebook.com/groups/849861075871339/
Figurine Calciatori Panini – Italy	8.700	https://www.facebook.com/groups/figurinecalciatoripaninitaly/
Club Panini Mx sales, exchanges and more	9.100	https://www.facebook.com/groups/325965132289362/
Panini stickers buy/sell or exchange	9.800	https://www.facebook.com/groups/793148127541891/
Navarrete and Panini-Peru Album Collectors	10.100	https://www.facebook.com/groups/827370134273582/
Exchange and sale of Panini-Argentina albums and figurines	11,000	https://www.facebook.com/groups/667481383609894/
Buy Sell and Trade Albums Figurinhas Antigos and Novos	11.300	https://www.facebook.com/groups/338269747930481/
Panini and other album collectors network-Chile	12.800	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1408738896068587/
Official Group Scambio Figurine Calciatori Panini	14,700	https://www.facebook.com/groups/331128633708910/
Panini Colombia	16.300	https://www.facebook.com/groups/639385406155818/
Football Album Collectors	16.900	https://www.facebook.com/groups/583101478474386/
Collectors of football albums	18.100	https://www.facebook.com/groups/coleccionerosdealbumesdefutbol/
Collectors of sports cards, albums, magazines and posters	19,000	https://www.facebook.com/groups/366937816779506/
Panini collectors	19,700	https://www.facebook.com/groups/366937816779506/
Collectors Classic, old, current albums Mexico	20.100	https://www.facebook.com/groups/collectors.albums.mexico/
Topps Euro 2024 Sticker Swap Group	20.100	https://www.facebook.com/groups/Brazil2014StickerSwapSite/
World Cup and vintage album collectors club	20,500	https://www.facebook.com/groups/380129632542120/
Copa America 2024 Figurine Exchange	24,700	https://www.facebook.com/groups/figurinescupamerica2024/
Panini & Topps Football Stickers Buy, Sell or Swap	34,000	https://www.facebook.com/groups/268491767244944/
Panini Collectors	34.300	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1458919850980412/

Table 1. Featured Facebook Groups for Football Sticker Album Collectors.

Conclusions

After this journey that allowed this Topic Review and Content Analysis, it is possible to identify how collecting football sticker albums is a practice that has been a business, a social reality, a passion and a way of reviving memory with albums as artifacts for decades and decades.

Football sticker albums are one more of the elements that help football to occupy a central place in the ways of life and communicative habits of contemporary societies, since the albums with the large companies that exist today (Panini / Topps–Fanatics) and for a few decades (from 1970 onwards...), are already a globalized editorial process, which with electronic commerce has become a big business, with its social influences, that is, collective aspects, which are interrelated with the personal aspect of each collector, with his passion, with his memory, which in many cases coincide with those of other collectors, thus becoming a circle (like a roundabout) with four starting points (entry–exit, to continue with the metaphor) as categorized in this work. Therefore, in this practice, we go from business to memory artifacts, from collecting passion to social implications, or from social implications that mutually influence business or from collecting passion that gives more value to certain football sticker albums making them important memory artifacts, whether individually (memorabilia) or collectively (collecting), etc. Finally, it is important to note that this practice has evolved since the beginning of the 20th century (or earlier in some countries, or globalized since the 1970s) and up to the present, but has been heavily influenced by paper and the printed version.

However, little by little, digital has been entering, with the well-known versions *on-line* of important albums, such as those of the World Cups and with their own followers, collectors (eg. Group for Collectors of Digital Football Sticker Albums¹²⁰ o Panini Virtual Sticker Album Codes and Exchange Group¹²¹); that is, it is a movement that does not stay still and continues from its practice, with the old and new generations, demonstrating its importance as a cultural and communicative action with all the implications of football in different sectors, in different areas, since football sticker albums (or the *cards* more recently, according to certain contexts or audiences) are fundamental to the imaginary that this sport implies and awakens.

And it will continue to grow and evolve (in the near future), both with the printed practice (the tradition will be maintained, as with books and analog reading), and with the digital, with the changes that are already emerging (non–fungible tokens –NFT–¹²²) and even due to the massive arrival of artificial intelligence (AI) with the possibility of player cards and even albums, according to my choice or design (some things can already be done with tools such as Léxica or others) (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Example of a Messi card created with Lexical AI.

In short, collecting football sticker albums is a fundamental part of this sport, as they share their implications with the political and economic, the communicative and cultural, the present and the past, the collective and the personal, as the writer Roberto Fontanarrosa says:

*"I think that if you don't understand that this is a passion, and passions are quite inexplicable, you don't understand anything that happens in football,"*¹²³ which also applies, as we have seen in this text, to football sticker albums.

¹²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/253079781527542/> (with 17,100 participants).

¹²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/586714151688590/> (with 8,900 participants).

¹²² <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-56502251>.

¹²³ <https://www.libertaddigital.com/deportes/futbol/2014-11-15/futbol-etabajos-frases-1948776/#fontanarrosa>.

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