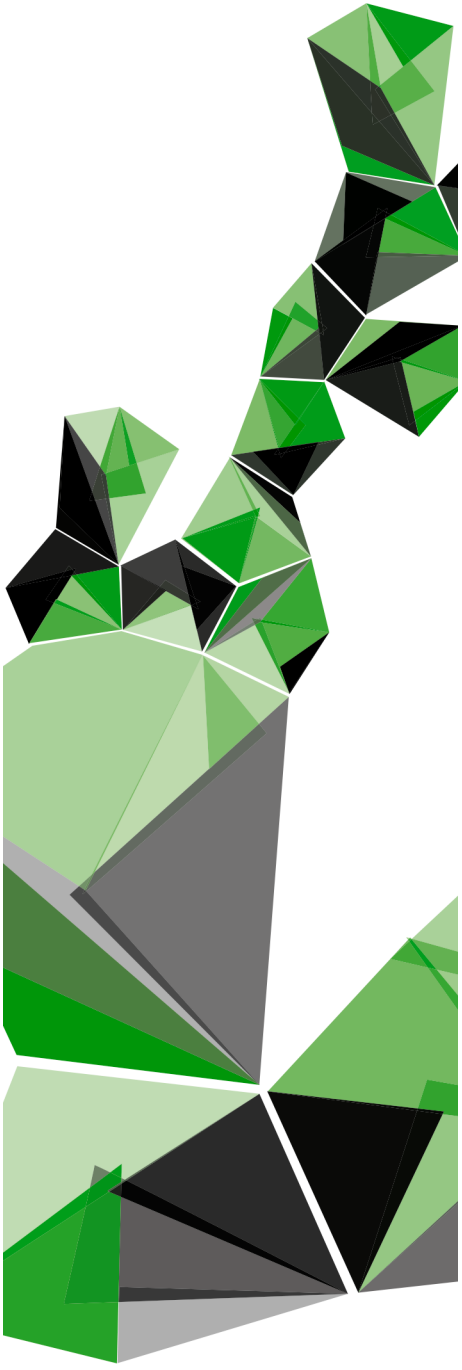**BACHELOR THESIS**

KICKING DISCRIMINATION: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CSR INITIATIVES REGARDING DISCRIMINATION IN SOCCER ON FAN ATTITUDES

PIA SIERING (2129124)

FACULTY OF BEHAVIOURAL, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
Communication Science

SUPERVISOR
Prof. Dr. Menno de Jong

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UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Abstract

Purpose: In soccer anti-discrimination and anti-social behavior have been reoccurring themes in CSR, yet little research has been conducted to explore the impact of specific cause-related CSR activities in soccer. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether there is a difference in the perception and impact of anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and anti-sexism CSR initiatives as well as identify to what extent CSR fit, strategic- and value-driven motive attributions and fan identity affect fans' attitude towards soccer clubs.

Method: An online survey was distributed to German soccer fans (n=378), who were randomly divided into four conditions (racism, sexism, homophobia, and littering). The study applied a between-subject design and the data was analyzed using SPSS.

Results: The study suggests that fans are more receptive to initiatives concerning anti-racism as they are perceived to be more value-driven and to have a high CSR fit. Analyzing CSR fit and perceived attributions showed that both high fit and a high degree of value-driven attribution are positively related to reputation and therefore substantiated findings from previous research.

Conclusion: This study clearly illustrates the need for more research that specifically focuses on the impact of taking a stance against social issues in CSR. This study contributes to existing literature on CSR in soccer and supports findings that engaging in CSR has a positive impact on team reputation. Furthermore, the findings show that soccer clubs need to focus on specifically counteracting homophobia and sexism in soccer.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Soccer, Fit, Attribution Theory, Reputation

Table of Contents

Introduction

Within the past decades, sport has experienced a time of rapid commercialization and professionalization as well as an increasing social, political, and economic relevance (Breitbarth et al., 2015). Following the 2015 assembly for sustainable development, the United Nations (United Nations, 2015) recognized sport's contribution to "[…] peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives." (p.10). This recent spotlight on sport's mobilizing role in society, results in growing responsibility and expectations from stakeholders (Carlini et al., 2021). Therefore, sport's corporations, leagues, teams and athletes increasingly adopted corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to maintain good relations and engage stakeholders (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Originally, CSR included addressing "[…] economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of an organization at a given point in time" (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). More recently CSR has been defined as "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance." (Aguinis, 2011, p. 855). While the roots of CSR activities lie in philanthropy (Godfrey, 2009) today's political and societal landscape demands putting more focus on critical CSR concerning emancipation, empowerment, grassroot communities and unequal power relations (Levermore & Moore, 2015).

Corporate social responsibility in professional sport distinguishes itself from other industries. The high visibility and communication power through constant mass media distribution is believed to increase legitimacy of CSR activities as well as provide a natural platform for addressing social issues (Heinze et al., 2014). As suggested by Babiak and Wolfe (2009) sport is unique in regards to CSR in four factors: passion, economics, transparency and stakeholder management. Additionally, the celebrity status of many professional athletes along

with the connection to local communities broadens the reach for CSR initiatives in sport (Walker & Kent, 2009). Thus, professional sport teams provide an ideal platform for CSR.

While many disciplines in sports have adopted CSR strategies, the global economic, cultural and social relevance of soccer stands out (Jager & Fifka, 2020). In the 2018/19 season, the European soccer market revenue reached a record high at €28.9 billion increasing by 2% in comparison to the year before (Deloitte, 2020). In the same year, 43% of European professional soccer clubs had a specific budget for CSR (Zeimers et al., 2019). In general, professional soccer has experienced a shift in the utilization of CSR throughout the past decade. As argued by Constandt et al. (2019) soccer fans have moved from being external stakeholders and spectators to having more active and sometimes even internal involvement. To accommodate this development, soccer clubs are encouraged to meet the fan's expectations of ethical leadership and proactively turn attention to social issues (Kolyperas et al., 2015). The Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) "Respect" campaign (UEFA, 2020); the Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) sustainability strategy for the World Cup 2022 (FIFA, 2020) and the diversity/ anti-discrimination program of the German football association (Deutscher Fußball Bund, n.d.) are just some examples of how soccer clubs try to implement social responsibility more explicitly.

Literature linking CSR to sport has initially emerged in 2008/2009 (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Godfrey, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009). In the following years more research focusing on strategic sport CSR at the organizational level was conducted (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014; Heinze et al., 2014; Inoue et al., 2011; Rowe et al., 2019). Later studies also emphasized the difference between implicit and explicit CSR (Francois et al., 2019) as well as prioritizing current social issues (Babiak & Kihl, 2018; Carlini et al., 2021; Levermore & Moore, 2015). However, little research has been conducted to explore the impact of specific cause-related CSR activities on team reputation. As implied by Kim et al. (2020)

this gap in research can be addressed by focusing on stakeholder perception's regarding corporate stances on socio-political issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Against this background, the aim of this study is to examine the effects of explicit and proactive CSR activities related to three recently controversial topics (i.e., sexism, racism, homophobia) on team reputation and behavioral intentions. Additionally, based on Walker et al. (2010) and Kim et al. (2018), the role of CSR fit will be examined as well as the distinction between motive attributions to distinguish between the strategic-driven and value-driven CSR. The study will be conducted against the contextual background of professional European soccer namely German soccer due to its high visibility and contemporary relevance. Other than previous work, this study focusses on individual-level analysis to explore the effect on fans' opinions. Hence, the main goal of this research is to determine:

Research question 1: How does the type of different appeals in CSR initiatives affect attitudes of soccer fans?

Research question 2: To what extent do CSR fit, strategic- and value-driven motive attributions and fan identity affect fans' perception of a soccer club's reputation and their behavioral intentions?

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, a typology of CSR activities in sport is created. Next, the CSR landscape in soccer is briefly summarized and the three social causes (sexism, racism, homophobia) are further elaborated and put in the context of soccer. Secondly, the concepts of CSR fit, attributions, fan identification and team performance are explained. Then, the design of the study is introduced. Finally, the results are presented, and the findings are further discussed in light of theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Framework

Developments in the field of CSR and Soccer

Corporate Social Responsibility

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has drastically evolved during the last several decades. Literature concerning CSR in organizations already gained popularity in the mid-20th century (Bowen, 1953; Davis, 1960; Davis & Bromstrom, 1966). Back then corporate social responsibility was still seen as a voluntary act of firms and therefore broadly defined as "businessmen's decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest" (Davis, 1960, p. 70). In the 1960s, Friedman's (1962) declaration of social responsibility of business suggests that behaving socially responsible solely includes engaging in competition without deception and fraud. This view on CSR has long been outdated. Consequently, Carroll (1979) introduced his conceptual model of CSR, which still serves as a base for CSR research today. In the model CSR activities are divided into *economic* (the responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants), *legal* (responsibility to act according to laws and regulations), *ethical* (responsibility to meet society's expectations beyond legal and economic requirements) and *discretionary* (voluntary social roles that go beyond expectations) responsibilities (Carroll, 1979). In more recent publications, CSR is seen as an established management practice and defined by Aguinis and Glavas (2012) as "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (p. 933). Hereby, the triple bottom line thinking suggests that CSR is no longer optional but plays a crucial role in an organization's success (Aguilera et al., 2007). This development also entails that CSR is recognized beyond purely ethical practice but is also an accepted predictor of corporate reputation, brand equity and corporate credibility, and is included in measures for corporate reputation, for instance the reputation quotient [SM] (Fombrun et al., 2000).

The acknowledgment of CSR's importance for businesses reached a breakthrough when Orlitzky et al. (2003) provided evidence for the positive association between corporate social responsibility and corporate financial performance. Therefore, recent CSR literature goes beyond substantiating the correlation between CSR and financial success and instead focusses more closely on outcomes of strategic CSR. Most frequently studied outcomes include corporate reputation and loyalty as CSR activities can be used to enhance positive attributions of stakeholders and convey a positive image. Especially, corporate philanthropy is a simple way of increasing attitudes without having to make material changes within the company (Vishwanathan et al., 2020). However, it is important to mention that when studying outcomes of CSR, researchers often distinguish between reactive and proactive (Groza et al., 2011) or implicit and explicit CSR (Matten & Moon, 2008). Implicit and reactive CSR refers to a corporations role in wider society and consists of general values, norms and rules (Matten & Moon, 2008) and is only used as a tool to protect corporate image (Groza et al., 2011). Explicit and proactive CSR refers to clearly articulated policies in societal interests such as voluntary programs and strategies combining business and social values (Matten & Moon, 2008). Corporations engage actively in these policies and programs before negative information affects the corporate image (Groza et al., 2011). Proactive and explicit CSR activities yield a more favorable effect on reputation and image than reactive and implicit activities (Groza et al., 2011). This comparison has already been researched extensively and overall concludes that proactive CSR leads to a more favorable attitude towards a company (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Du et al., 2010; Groza et al., 2011; Wagner et al., 2009). However little research discusses the potential differences of initiatives within the two conditions. Therefore, this study only focusses on the proactive and explicit CSR initiatives and seeks to determine if there is a difference of effect on reputation of several cause related proactive CSR initiatives.

Corporate Social Responsibility in Soccer

At the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century CSR research first acknowledged the unique position of the sports industry in CSR. Babiak and Wolfe (2009) identified four factors that distinguish professional sport in terms of CSR from other industries: passion, economics, transparency, and stakeholder management. Indeed, the passionate identification with a team; the monopoly power of leagues; the open knowledge about team leadership, outcomes, and contributions plus the unique position of fans as stakeholders set professional sport apart from other organizations. CSR in professional sport also serves the purpose to counteract the ethical faults of the industry (Babiak & Kihl, 2018). This results in a paradox where on the one hand sport generates legitimacy and respect through achievements of athletes and on the other hand causes criticism for unethical governance, doping scandals, lack of diversity and exorbitant spending (Levermore & Moore, 2015). Consequently, soccer clubs are ethically obliged to point out unethical or inappropriate behavior among fans and other stakeholders while still encouraging fandom and passion for the club (Constandt et al., 2019).

Soccer is the most popular sport within Europe and has, as many other sports, grown beyond being mere entertainment to being an active contributor in development and change (Baena, 2019; Blumrodt et al., 2013). A recent vivid example of sport's active contribution to development, is the German captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer during the European Championship 2020, who wore a rainbow armband to show support for the LGBTQ+ community during Pride Month. In the same manner the soccer stadium in Munich was planned to light up with the rainbow colors during a match against Hungary. The UEFA was investigating whether this violated their rules over athletes not being permitted to make political statements. While Neuer was permitted to keep wearing the armband as it was for a „good cause", the stadium was not allowed to show the rainbow colors. This caused both outrage and support but also fueled the debate on homophobia in sport (spiegel.de, 2021). Therefore, when

investigating CSR practices in sport, soccer is undoubtedly one of the most influential industries.

Due to the increasing pressure and expectations the majority of CSR activities in soccer have been implemented in two main areas (Rathonyi-Odor et al., 2020; Reiche, 2014). The first general area involves social measures which can be further specified as activities supporting social institutions, CSR platforms with sponsors and school projects (Reiche, 2014); other social activities include health, diversity and anti-discrimination, and cultural programs (Rathonyi-Odor et al., 2020). The second area involves ecological measures. Here the main activities concern promotion of public transport, environmental management systems, promotion of renewable energy, and carbon offsetting (Reiche, 2014). Particularly, waste management and water/ energy efficiency are prioritized in soccer clubs (Rathonyi-Odor et al., 2020). However, the focus of CSR in soccer experienced a shift. Soccer clubs' CSR activities have moved beyond neutral causes such as environmental sustainability and are increasingly taking stance in contemporary societal issues (Kolyperas & Sparks, 2011). As suggested by Zeimers et al. (2019) integration, health, anti-discrimination and anti-social behavior are the dominating strategic themes in soccer, while safety promotion and environment score lowest. Within these activities, further distinctions can be made between soft communication and high-risk communication (Kolyperas & Sparks, 2011). Similar to the implicit/explicit and reactive/proactive framework by Matten and Moon (2008), high-risk CSR communication is usually proactive, value driven and usually concerns social change. Soft CSR communication is reactive and/or defensive and focusses on implicit endorsement (Kolyperas & Sparks, 2011). Hence, the rest of this paper focusses on the high-risk, proactive, and explicit CSR activities, which have become more and more prominent in the soccer industry recent years.

Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in Soccer

Traditionally, soccer is regarded as a masculine sport with a predominately white, male, and working class fanbase (Jones, 2008; Lawrence & Davis, 2019). While other aspects in society increasingly shift away from discriminatory environments, soccer still plays a fundamental role in the maintenance of traditional masculinity (Nylund, 2004). Therefore, the theory of hegemonic masculinity, introduced by Connell (1987) more than three decades ago, is still relevant in soccer today since contact sports such as soccer are widely associated with stereotypically masculine qualities such as physical strength and aggressiveness (Winiarska et al., 2016). Thus, boys are socialized from a young age into playing and watching soccer as a way of confirming their masculinity and heterosexuality (Cleland et al., 2020).

In the male dominated world of soccer women are often seen as an intrusion (Kaelberer, 2020). In discourse on soccer, sexist and hegemonic themes such as misogyny, violence and objectification of women are dominating (Nylund, 2004). Similarly, behavior in soccer stadiums further undermine feminine characteristics. Phrases like "you play like a girl" strengthen the belief that athleticism is directly tied to being male (Jones, 2008). The existing patterns of 'feminine' and 'masculine' activity discourage women from playing soccer but also from watching soccer games since, according to traditional gender norms, women perceive soccer as boring or violent (Winiarska et al., 2016). In line with that, women that engage in soccer are typically seen as unladylike and aggressive while at the same time women are often assumed to be less authentic and committed fans (Cleland et al., 2020; Jones, 2008). This results in an environment where women have to prove themselves as dedicated, authentic fans while simultaneously having to endure sexist chanting and banter. The latest study by Cleland et al. (2020) found that although most fans expressed progressive position in relation to the role of women in soccer, concrete measures to challenge sexism were widely opposed. Therefore, stadiums remain a space where acceptable forms of masculinity, sexist behavior and attitudes are normalized (Kian et al., 2011).

The role of women directly ties in with the perception of homosexuality in soccer. Since sport is often used to distance oneself from femininity and homosexuality, deploying homophobia is central in the maintenance of conservative expression of gender (Adams, 2011). The masculinization of soccer forces boys and men to conceal feminine and homosexual desires as they risk being emasculated, subordinated, and ridiculed. Similarly, to using female language as insults to athletic ability, the common use of words like "sissies", "poof" or "fags" portray the authorization of abuse to confirm heteronormativity and show how homophobia is largely unchallenged in a traditionally male environment (Adams, 2011; Adams et al., 2010; Cashmore & Cleland, 2011). Although, attitudes toward homosexuality have improved, cultural stereotypes of homosexuals being feminine and therefore weaker still remain (Adams, 2011). Despite the decline in overt homophobic sentiments, it is still broad consent that openly gay players would hurt their career (Campbell et al., 2011). Former German national team captain Phillip Lahm even advised against openly coming out and confiding in teammates about homosexuality. Lahm bases his claims on the lack of tolerance and acceptance in the soccer environment (sportschau.de, 2021). Consequently, many players only admit to being gay when retired, leading to a lack of openly gay players and thus no environment that supports active players who want to come out (Cleland, 2018).

Other than homophobia and sexism, racism is already a thoroughly addressed concept in soccer. Nevertheless, as stated by Chakraborty (2011) soccer still " […]offers the largest public arenas in which racism can be openly expressed" (p.302). Racism in soccer first became a public concern in the 70s when soccer served as a platform for far-right movements and chanting " ain't no black union jack, send the bastards back" in English soccer stadiums was common practice (Back et al., 1999). At the beginning of the 21st century, a change in behavior in the soccer industry is evident and the existence of racism is widely acknowledged (Burdsey, 2004). This however did not eradicate the issue of racism in soccer. Reporting, documenting, and leadership in soccer is still dominantly white (Burdsey, 2009). The underrepresentation of

ethnic minorities on and off the pitch leads to not only the issue of individual prejudice but also enables hegemonic structural ideologies from which the "whitewashed" game of soccer emerges (Bradbury, 2013; Lusted, 2009). Due to that structural and regulatory racism remains largely unchallenged (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). On a more positive note, Lawrence and Davis (2019) found a decline in racist stadium behavior over the last 20 years. This is in line with the assumption that explicit overt racist behavior is successfully combatted by anti-racism initiatives as well as the increasing number of ethnic diverse soccer players (Kaelberer, 2020). Despite this development internalized dispositions, perceptions and expressions towards race continue to be displayed (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). While overt racism is no longer tolerated, racial prejudice is still expressed through casual racism mostly expressed through humor or banter (Cleland, 2014; Wolfers et al., 2017). Hereby, racist humor can act as a bonding mechanism with one's in-group, but also as an exclusionary instrument towards the minority (Wolfers et al., 2017). In line with that casual racism enforces structural white privilege within soccer as well as individual prejudice. Hence, prior research calls for more work form associations and anti-racist organization to sustainably change public stereotypes (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016).

Based on the explanation above it could be expected that CSR initiatives addressing racism are received more positively by soccer fans than initiatives addressing homophobia or sexism. Furthermore, as anti-racism campaigns are prominent in soccer than e.g., anti-sexism campaigns, it could be expected that fans perceive them to be more fitting in the soccer context.

Relevant Theories and Hypotheses Development

Attribution theory

Now that it is established that engaging in CSR is in the organization's financial best interest, another important new line of inquiry within the field of CSR is no longer whether CSR works but, rather, what stakeholder perceive motivates organizations to engage in CSR, primarily

proactive and explicit initiatives (Aguilera et al., 2007). On that account, attribution theory offers a way of understanding soccer fans' perception of motives underpinning social responsibility efforts. The roots of attribution theory lie in Heider's (1958) concept of "naïve psychology" and aims at understanding how people determine the cause of specific events or behaviors. Regarding CSR in soccer, the correspondent interference theory developed by Jones and Davis (1965) provides a basis to understand how soccer fans attribute motives to CSR initiatives taken by soccer clubs. Their theory implies that people make judgements about intentional behavior, which is then used to predict future behavior by identifying correspondence between motive and behavior. High correspondence occurs when actions truly reflect the underlying disposition of an organization or actor (Rees et al., 2005). In other words, engaging in CSR activities would be attributed to a soccer club being socially responsible in its core.

Due to the increasing relevance of corporate socially responsible activities, the field of CSR began to consider motive attributions as a contributing factor to CSR's success. Originating at the beginning of the 21st century, studies established the influence of perceived underlying motives on the evaluation of an organization (Ellen et al., 2000; Webb & Mohr, 1998). As suggested by Becker-Olsen et al. (2006), motives consumers assign to CSR activities can be generally categorized into two types, firm-self serving motives (e.g. increasing profits) and public-serving motives (e.g. raise awareness for a specific cause). Hereby, self-serving motives contribute negatively to attitudes towards the organization while public-serving motivates generally improve a firm's reputation (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Ellen et al. (2006) argued for a more elaborate distinction of motive dimensions in CSR attributions. Specifically, three types of motives including value-driven, strategic-driven, and stakeholder-driven attributions. Value-driven motives refer to perception that a company or soccer club is purely engaging in social responsibility initiatives based on moral, ethical and societal standards and ideal (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Like public-serving motives, several studies found that

value-driven motives have a positive effect on reputation as well as increased the support for a team since they are seen as truly altruistic (Groza et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2018; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Similar to self-serving motives, strategic-driven motives refer to any social responsibility activities that are carried out attain business objectives and economic interests while still supporting the cause (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). This can create dissonance for fans, as on the one hand the team is acting ethical by supporting a social cause, but on the other hand the sincerity of the action is questionable due to its economic intent. Lastly, stakeholder-driven CSR is based on pressure from stakeholders and is therefore largely reactive with little intent of explicitly positioning the team but rather adapting a stance that is expected of them (Groza et al., 2011; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). As this paper primarily focusses on explicit and proactive CSR, stakeholder-driven motives are not relevant and will not be reflected on. Consequently, two types of motives are considered for the purpose of this research, namely value-driven motives, and strategic-driven motives.

Although, research investigating the CSR induced attributions in corporate settings is extensive, little research exists on sport organizations and specifically soccer clubs. Nevertheless, one of the few existing studies revealed that the effect of value-driven and strategic-driven attributions are enhanced in the sports environment (Walker et al., 2010). Both the effect on reputation and patronage intentions is therefore more impactful in a sports-setting compared to a business-setting. Kim et al.'s (2018) study on CSR in Baseball confirms Walker et al.'s (2010) findings and shows that value-driven intentions are evaluated as positive while strategic-driven intentions as negative. Nevertheless, Kim et al. (2018) also question the actual impact perceived motives have on fan's intention to support their team as some findings indicated strong intentions to support the team's CSR regardless of the motivations behind them. Additionally, Kim et al. (2020) examined the same relationship in highly politicized CSR activities and concluded that value-driven motives have a positive effect on reputation and

behavioral intentions. Given these previous studies' findings about the role of attributions in CSR it is assumed that:

H1. Compared to strategic-driven attributions, value-driven attributions and reputation are more strongly related

H2. Compared to strategic-driven attributions, Value-driven attributions and behavioral intentions are more strongly related

CSR Fit

CSR fit generally refers to the "degree of similarity or compatibility that consumers perceive exists between cause and brand" (Lafferty, 2007, p. 448). Hereby, low fit initiatives are perceived as inconsistent whereas high fit initiatives are in line with prior expectations and are therefore deemed as appropriate as they reduce uncertainty (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). A high fit between an organization and its CSR efforts can therefore enhance reputation (Lafferty, 2007; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006), brand loyalty (Cha et al., 2016), authenticity (Alhouti et al., 2016) and patronage intentions (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Similarly, early literature on company-cause fit found that in philanthropic activities, higher congruence between the organization and social cause increases favorable ratings of CSR (Menon & Kahn, 2003). However, it is important to mention that a high fit is not always preferable. In some cases, a social initiative that is not aligned with corporate objectives can be evaluated more positively since the profit for organization is not visible instantly. Therefore, incongruency might in some cases be equaled with altruism (Ellen et al., 2000).

Fit itself does not only influence attitudes and intentions towards organizations, but can also affect consumers' motive attributions (Menon & Kahn, 2003; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). As suggested by Du et al. (2010) low fit is likely to enhance cognitive elaboration and

therefore making possible strategic motives more noteworthy. Hence, low fit can result in self-serving attributions and vice versa. Many previous studies distinguish between different types of fit. Most commonly, it is differentiated between functional-fit and image-fit. Functional fit refers to the congruence between the product or service category and the type of social cause, while image-fit refers to the fit between the brand associations and image and the type of social cause (Alcañiz et al., 2010). In line with that, Kim et al. (2012) extended the findings on the correlation of fit and attributions by suggesting two new types of fit. To do so, CSR fit is divided into business fit (degree that the business domain of one organization matches with the business domain of another) and activity fit (match between a company's major business and the activity that the company performs). However, findings suggest that only activity fit has an impact on consumer's attributions while attributions do not significantly vary in combination with a low or high business fit (Kim et al., 2012). Based on the literature, this study proposes differentiating between two types of CSR fit that are adapted for the soccer setting. The first type is club-fit and refers to the match between the soccer club's attributes and a specific CSR activity. The second type is industry-fit and refers to the match between the general industry of soccer and a specific CSR activity.

In the context of sports, literature concerning the impact of CSR fit is limited. However, it was shown that a higher fit between cause and organization resulted in the perception that contributions will have a greater impact as well as a higher willingness to donate (Lee et al., 2018). Similarly, Kim et al. (2018) argued that congruence between a team and its social initiative leads to support and positive assessment of the team. Based on prior studies on CSR Fit as well as its relation to motivation this study hypothesizes:

H3. A high club-fit and reputation are more strongly related than a low club fit and reputation

H4. A high club-fit and behavioral intentions are more strongly related than a low club fit and behavioral intentions

H5. A high club-fit is positively related to value-driven attributions

Fan identity

As mentioned before, sport is unique in comparison to other industries in its strong emotional attachment of fans (Kim & Manoli, 2020). Especially in soccer being a fan is described as permanent devotion for one club for an entire life (Porat, 2010). Based the original theory of social behavior by Tajfel and Turner (1979) it is assumed that individuals have both a personal and social identity. While the personal identity merely relies on individual characteristics such as abilities and skills, social identity is based on group membership (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Social identity theory says that when a person identifies with a team they experience "oneness with or belongingness to the organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization (s) of which he or she is a member" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 104). Thus, fan identity describes the connection between fans and a sports team and explains how teams build the powerful relation between the club and its supporters (Baena, 2018). Highly identified fans are understood as those who exhibit an exceptional level of support and spend large amounts of money on their fan activities, but at the same time differentiate themselves from other participants in the football context (Winands et al., 2019). As suggested by Tajfel and Turner (1979) individuals are driven through being member of a group to establish a high self-esteem. As a result, soccer fans have a favorable attitude towards their own club (in-group) and see other clubs (out-group) as inferior, which is commonly referred to as in-group, out-group bias (Fink et al., 2009).

In sport, high levels of identification with a team are directly tied to intentions of attending games, buying merchandise as well as staying loyal despite poor performance (Fink

et al., 2009). Fans with low levels of fan identification tend to only associate with a team when it is successful (Inoue et al., 2013). Hence, the level of fan identification acts as a moderator between CSR activities and attitudes towards a team and behavioral intentions (Lii & Lee, 2012). Regarding CSR fit, highly identified fans actively seek out socially responsible actions of their team to enforce their fan ship, while negative information is dismissed and not seen as incongruent or contradictory to the team's image (Walker & Kent, 2009). Therefore, fan identification can positively affect the perceived fit of CSR initiatives, while simultaneously CSR fit can enhance identification with a team (Cha et al., 2016).

H6. The higher the fan identification, the higher the reputation

H7. The higher the fan identification, the higher the behavioral intentions

H8. The effect of CSR fit on reputation and behavioral intentions is moderated by the level of fan identification

Research Models

Based on the theoretical framework above, this study proposes two research models to test the hypotheses. The experimental model 1 is presented in figure 1 and seeks to explore how and if the impact of the independent variable CSR initiative with three conditions (i.e., anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia) on the dependent variables of reputation, behavioral intentions, CSR fit, and attributions differs significantly between conditions. Model 2 (figure 2) suggests a relationship between the independent variables CSR fit and attributions and the dependent variables reputation and behavioral intentions. Since the study is focused on individual-level analyses, the dependent variables are suggested to be moderated by fan identity as well as team performance.

Figure 1

Research Model 1
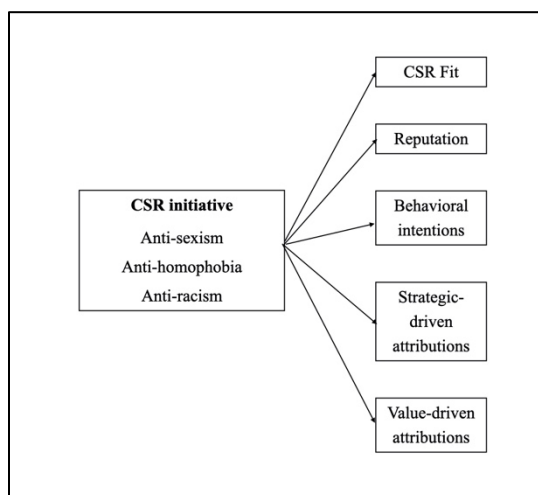
Figure 2

Research Model 2
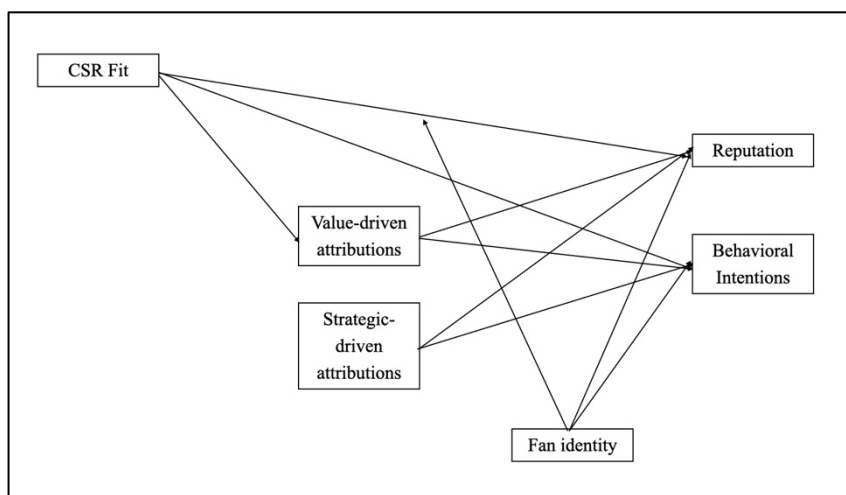
*Note: Club Fit and Industry Fit were collapsed into one variable based on factorial analysis discussed in the method section of the report

Method

Research Design

This study employed an online experiment to examine the role of CSR initiative type, attributions and CSR fit on reputation and behavioral intention of soccer teams. It firstly aimed to explore differences between the impact of four conditions of explicit CSR. To do so, an experimental between-subject study was utilized with the type of CSR initiative as the independent variable and CSR fit, attributions, reputation, and behavioral intentions as the dependent variables. The type of CSR initiative was operationalized by four different conditions, namely anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, and anti-littering. Hereby, the anti-littering initiative served as a neutral condition. Motive attributions was operationalized by two different types: strategic- and value-driven attributions. Behavioral intentions were operationalized into three constructs namely, racist, sexist, and homophobic behavioral intentions. CSR fit was operationalized by two constructs. One measuring congruence between

soccer club and CSR initiative and one measuring congruence between the soccer industry and the CSR initiative.

Secondly, for hypotheses testing the study employed a between-subject analysis with CSR fit and attributions as the independent variables and reputation and behavioral intentions as the dependent variables. Additionally, level fan identity and team performance were considered as moderator variables for the dependent variables. The study was reviewed by the university's ethics committee.

Stimuli

In total four manipulations were created. Three of the manipulations related to the three types of controversial societal issues included in the research model (sexism, racism, homophobia) and one manipulation served as a neutral control factor (littering). The manipulation materials consisted of a mock-up Instagram post explaining the soccer club's fictitious involvement in the CSR initiative (Figure 3). Instagram was chosen as the social media platform based on findings by Kim and Hull (2017) exploring the use of Instagram in sport club's CSR efforts and showing that Instagram has the highest engagement rate among all social media platform such as Facebook and Twitter. During the study, participants were asked to imagine that their favorite soccer club posted the initiative. Therefore, the design of the Instagram post was kept relatively neutral and the same to across the four manipulations to avoid association with other soccer clubs. As the goal of this research was to explore specifically explicit and proactive CSR initiatives, it was important to formulate the posts as extreme as possible while remaining realistic. The post consists of two pages each. The first page states the club's zero tolerance for the respective issue and explains that from now on discriminatory behavior will be reported and prosecuted. The second page lists a number of explicit consequences of engaging in said behavior (e.g., restraining order for stadium). For sexism, racism, and homophobia the consequences were kept exactly the same, while for littering the consequences seemed

unrealistically harsh and were therefore adjusted (e.g., "restraining order for stadium" was replaced by "ban from one match"). The posts were captioned "we would rather have no fans than racist (homophobic, sexist) fans"

Figure 3

Stimuli Instagram Mock-up
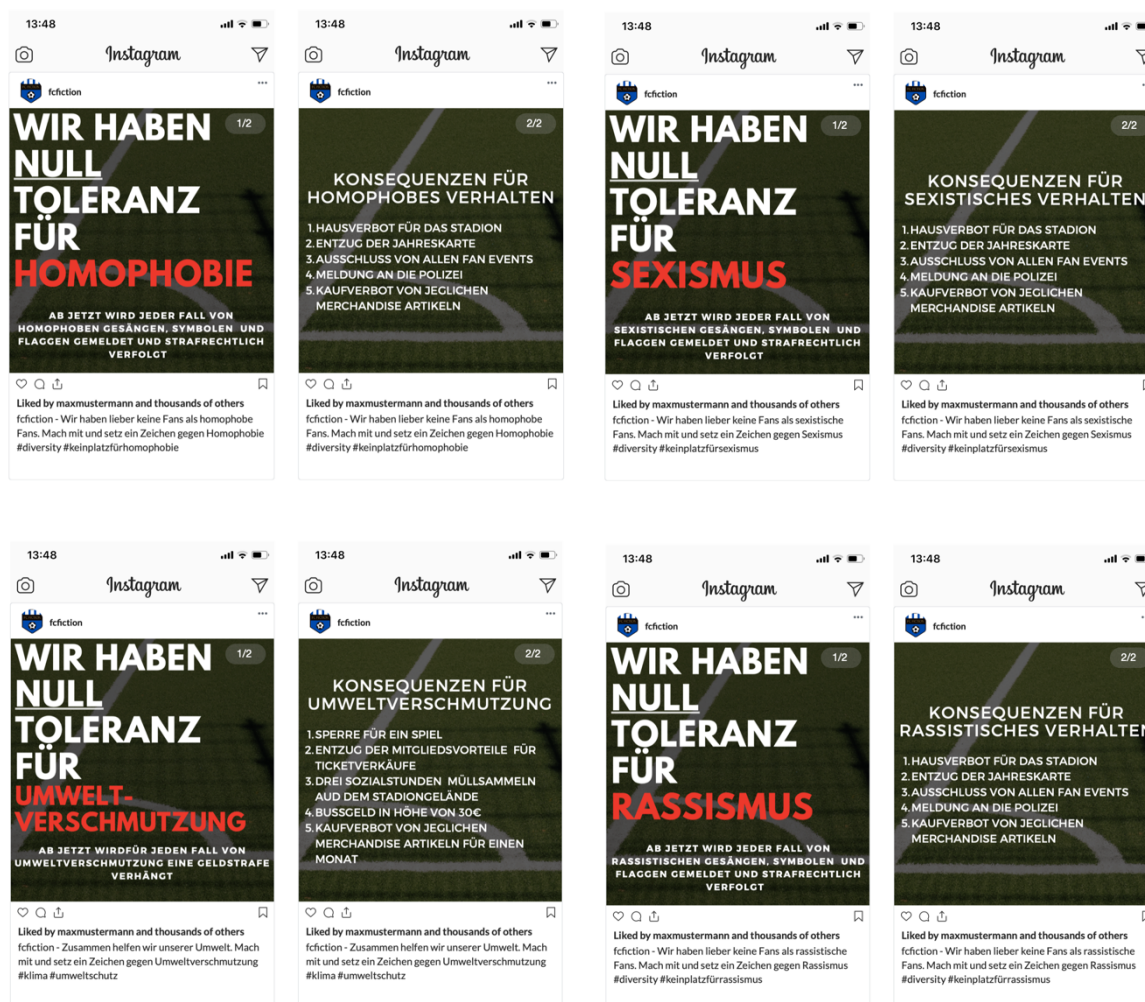
Measurements

This study used items taken from previously validated scales and newly created items to measure the variables examined. All items were measured using 5-point Likert scales (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Some items needed to be reverse coded. All items were adapted to fit the context of soccer and rephrased accordingly. Pre-existing scales were

translated into German for the purpose of the survey as shown in the full survey in Appendix A. Furthermore, items were checked for validity and construct reliability by means of a factor analysis and a reliability analysis (Table 1). The factor analysis of the questions asked for behavioral intentions and club and industry fit, showed an overlap between the various components used in the study. Namely instead of measuring specific behavior for each of the four social issues, behavioral intentions were summarized in two constructs. Therefore, one construct measuring behavioral intentions in the stadium and one measuring general behavior was used instead. Based on the factor analysis, it was decided to eliminate the differentiation between club and industry fit and measure CSR fit with one construct.

To measure the first independent variable CSR fit, a 5-item scale was constructed. The items were based on statements made in interviews by soccer fans conducted by Cleland et al. (2020) for their study on hegemonic masculinity in professional soccer. The items included for example "Messages like these take attention away from the actual sport" and "Other soccer clubs are more appropriate to address it than my club".

To measure the independent variable value-driven motive attributions, a 2-item scale was used. Items included "My club want to contribute to a better society" and "My club's values truly align with the initiative". Strategic-driven motive attributions were measured by five items including "My club feels society in general expects it" and "My club follows the example of other clubs who have similar initiatives". The two constructs were partly adapted from pre-validated value-, strategic- and stakeholder-driven motive attributions scales by Walker et al. (2010) and Groza et al. (2011).

To measure the first dependent variable reputation, a 3-item scale adapted from Walker et al. (2010) was constructed. Items included for example "My club sets an example of how major sport organization should be run" and "My club is a high-quality organization".

The second dependent variable of behavioral intentions in the stadium was measured by six items. The items were partly adapted from Brigham's (1993) and Sears and Henry's (2005)

symbolic and modern racism scales as well as Swim et al.'s (1995's) modern sexism scale. Items included "I would not participate in chants that include racial slurs" and "I believe that traditional soccer chants that have been used for decades, should be banned if they include racist language". General behavioral intentions were measured using a 5-item scale. Items included for example "I enjoy a funny racial joke, even if some people might find it offensive" and "I believe that discrimination against homosexuality is not a real problem in soccer".

As moderator variables fan identification and team performance were operationalized. Fan identification was measured by five items adapted from Inoue et al. (2013). The items included "When someone criticizes my team it feels like a personal insult" and "I am very interested in what others think about my team". Team performance was measured by three items adapted from Chang et al. (2017). Items included for example "My favorite soccer club has done well in the past 3 years" and "My favorite soccer club's performance is good".

Table 1

Results of factor and reliability analysis

Items [a]	Factor Loading								α
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Team performance									.95
My favorite soccer club has done well in the past 3 years	.93								
My favorite soccer club's record has been good in the past 3 years	.93								
My favorite soccer club's performance is good	.88								
Fan identification									.79
When someone criticizes my team, it feels like a personal insult.		.8							
I am very interested in what others think about my team		.59							
My Team's successes are my successes		.59							
When someone praises my team, it feels like a personal compliment.		.78							
If a story in the media criticized my team, I would feel embarrassed		.74							
CSR Fit									.81
I worry that messages like these make soccer over politicized*			.7						
Messages like these take attention away from the actual sport*			.7						
Professional soccer is not the right place to address it*			.64						
Other soccer clubs are more appropriate to address it than my club*			.43						
Messages like these ridicule the athletic performance of my soccer club*			.57						
Value-driven attributions									.73
My club want to contribute to a better society				.72					
My club's values truly align with the initiative				.79					
Strategic-driven attributions									.79
My soccer club feels society in general expects it					.66				
My club wants to avoid fines					.77				
My club follows the guidelines of associations (e.g. FIFA, UEFA)					.69				
The soccer club follows the example of other clubs who have similar initiatives					.74				
Reputation									.86
The club is a high-quality organization						.73			
The club is a sound organization									
The club sets an example of how major sport organization should be run						.82			
Behavioral intentions general						.72			.85
I enjoy a funny racial joke, even if some people might find it offensive							.83		
I enjoy a funny homophobic joke, even if some people might find it offensive							.8		
I enjoy a funny sexist joke, even if some people might find it offensive							.82		
I believe that discrimination against ethnic minorities is not a real problem in soccer							.69		
I believe that discrimination against women is not a real problem in soccer							.68		
I believe that discrimination against homosexuality is not a real problem in soccer							.68		
Behavioral intentions stadium									.87
I would not participate in chants that include racial slurs*								.61	
I believe that traditional soccer chants that have been used for decades, should be banned if they include racist language*								.67	
I would not participate in chants that include homophobic slurs*								.74	
I believe that traditional soccer chants that have been used for decades, should be banned if they include homophobic language*								.71	
I would not participate in chants that include sexist slurs*								.73	
I believe that traditional soccer chants that have been used for decades, should be banned if they include sexist language*								.71	

[a] 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree
* need to be reverse coded

Procedure

Data was collected via an online survey created in Qualtrics. Participants were required to answer all questions and were not able to skip questions. Along with a consent form, the first page of the survey explained that the purpose of this study is to measure attitudes towards the participant's favorite soccer club. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four manipulation conditions. Prior to viewing the assigned stimulus materials, participants were asked to provide the name of their favorite soccer club, how many hours they watch soccer, indicate the importance of soccer in their life as well as answer questions concerning the performance of their favorite soccer club and their level of fan identification. Viewing the stimulus material was followed by a series of questions relating to measuring the CSR fit, motive attributions, reputation, and behavioral intentions. At the end of the survey, the participants were asked to answer demographic questions and were presented with a message explaining the actual intent of the study and debriefing the participants.

Participants

Participants included in the sample needed to be fans of a specific soccer club and proficient in German to complete the survey. A total of 590 participants were recruited by means of convenience sampling to complete the online survey using Qualtrics. The questionnaire was distributed via several social media platforms, namely WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook groups. Out of the 590 individuals that opened the survey, 378 fully finished the survey and were included in the sample. This corresponded to 101 participants in the racism manipulation condition, 106 participants in the sexism manipulation, 74 in the homophobia condition and 97 participants in the neutral littering condition. Of the 378 participants, 327 (87 percent) were male and 44 (11 percent) were female. The average age of the participants was 32.8 years (*SD* =11.99) ranging from 17 to 78 years old. Furthermore, the majority of participants did not belong to an ethnic minority (91 percent), 5 percent chose not to answer and 4 percent of

participants self-identified as belonging to an ethnic minority. When asked about sexual orientation, 92 percent identified as heterosexual while 3 percent identified as homosexual and 2 percent as bisexual. Table 1 presents participants' demographic information across the four conditions. To avoid biased and extreme answers, participants who are directly affected by the three conditions (i.e., women in the sexism condition, homosexuals in the homophobia condition and ethnic minorities in the racism condition) were excluded from the sample. The remaining 353 participants were all included in the analyses.

To verify that the four experimental groups are comparable, a chi-square test of independence was used for gender, sexuality, and ethnicity and an ANOVA was used to test age and level of importance of soccer in the participant's life. The chi-square test showed no significant differences between the groups for gender ($X^2 = 7.83$, p = .55), sexuality ($X^2 = 16.8$, p = .16) and ethnicity ($X^2 = 4.21$, p = .24). An ANOVA showed no differences regarding participants' age, F(3, 370) = 2.12, p = .1; level of importance of soccer, F(3, 374) = .82, p = .49. It can therefore be concluded that the four groups are comparable.

Table 2

Demographics

	Overall				Racism				Sexism				Homophobia				Littering			
	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD	N	%	M	SD
Gender																				
Male	327	86.7			93	92.1			86	81.1			64	86.5			84	86.6		
Female	44	11.4			7	6.9			16	15.1			9	12.2			12	12.4		
Other	7	1.9			1	1			1	1			1	1.4			1	1		
Ethnic minority																				
yes	15	4			4	4			6	5.7			0	0			5	5.2		
no	344	91			92	91.1			90	84.9			72	97.3			90	92.8		
other	19	5			5	5			10	9.4			2	2.7			2	2.1		
Sexual Orientation																				
Heterosexual	347	91.8			93	92.1			94	88.7			68	91.9			92	94.8		
Homosexual	12	3.2			3	3			5	4.8			2	2.7			2	2.1		
Bisexual	7	1.9			4	4			1	1			3	4.1			0	0		
Other	1	0.3			1	1			6	5.7			1	1.4			3	3.1		
Age			32.8	12			31.1	10.5			32.8	12.4			32	11.9			35.2	12.7
Total	378	100			101				106	100			74	100			97	100		

Results

This section explains the findings of the data analysis. Firstly, the results of the experimental study investigating the impact of the type of CSR initiative on reputation, behavioral intentions, CSR fit, and attributions are outlined (model 1). Secondly, this section tests the hypotheses by reporting the results of the regression analyses concerning the impact of CSR fit, attributions and fan identity on reputation and behavioral intentions (model 2).

Model 1

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to test the experimental link between the type of manipulation and the variables in the model. For CSR fit there was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (3, 349) = 3.04, p = .029, η^2 = 0.25). Post-hoc comparisons with Bonferroni corrections showed that participants in the anti-racism condition (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = 0.1) perceived CSR fit to be significantly higher than participants in the neutral anti-littering condition (*M* = 3.5, *SD* = 0.1), p = .030. In the anti-sexism and anti-homophobia condition no significant differences of perceived CSR fit could be found. Furthermore, value-driven attributions were also significantly different between groups (F (3, 349) = 7.85, p < .001, η^2 = 0.06). Participants in the anti-racism condition (*M*=4.44, *SD* = 0.08), p < .001, the anti-sexism condition (*M* = 4.22, *SD* = 0.09), p = .029 and the anti-homophobia condition (*M* = 4.25, *SD* = 0.1), p = .022, perceived the initiative to be significantly more value-driven than in the neutral anti-littering condition (*M* = 3.88, *SD* = 0.08). The difference of strategic-driven motive attributions (F (3, 349) = 2.49, p = .059) between the groups was not significant. There were no further significant differences for reputation and behavioral intentions, all p-values were > .05. Thus, the results suggest that the three conditions concerning controversial social issues in soccer significantly differ from the neutral littering condition when it comes to perceived fit and motive attributions. Especially, the anti-racism

condition yields a positive effect on the perception of value-driven attributions and perceived fit.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations across Manipulations

	Racism		Sexism		Homophobia		Littering	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
CSR Fit	3.89	0.1	3.56	0.1	3.68	0.12	3.5	0.1
Value-driven attributions	4.44	0.08	4.22	0.09	4.25	0.1	3.88	0.08
Strategic-driven attributions	2.77	0.09	2.88	0.1	2.6	0.11	2.97	0.09
Reputation	4.16	0.1	4.03	0.1	3.93	0.12	3.85	0.1
Behavior stadium	2.28	0.12	2.27	0.12	2.41	0.14	2.48	0.12
Behavior general	2.65	0.12	2.6	0.11	2.61	0.13	2.46	0.11

Model 2

Reputation

A regression with reputation as dependent variable and fit, value- and strategic-driven attributions, team performance and fan identity as independent variables was run to test hypotheses 1, 3, and 6. This model was significant, $F(5, 347) = 42.38$, $p < .001$, and explained 38% of variance on reputation in this sample. There was a significant main effect of CSR fit on reputation, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(347) = 2.13$, $p = .034$. There was also a significant main effect of value-driven attributions on reputation, $b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(347) = 6.38$, $p < .001$. The effect of strategic-driven attributions on reputation was not significant, $b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(347) = 0.43$, $p = .665$. Additionally, the effect of team performance on reputation was significant, $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.03$, $t(347) = 11.71$, $p < .001$. and the effect of fan identity on

reputation was significant, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(347) = 2.54$, $p = .011$. To test the expected moderation effect of fan identity and team performance in hypothesis 8, two interaction terms were created, which were included in the regression analyses. The analysis indicated that the interaction effect of fan identity and CSR fit is not significant and does not enhance the effect of fit on reputation ($t(374) = 0.02$, $p = .99$). The moderating effect of team performance by fit on reputation also yielded insignificant $t(347) = -0.73$, $p = .46$. To summarize, a small positive correlation between CSR fit and reputation could be found supporting hypothesis 3. In line with hypotheses 1 value-driven attributions and team performance were found to have a positive effect on reputation. However, the effect of strategic-driven attributions was not significant therefore hypothesis 1 can only be partly supported. Confirming hypothesis 6, fan identity appears to enhance reputation. Hypothesis 8 cannot be confirmed as there is no significant moderating effect of either fan identity or team performance on reputation.

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Reputation

	b	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	
				LB	*UB*
CSR fit	.11	.052	.034	.008	.212
Value-driven attributions	.347	.054	<.001	.240	.454
Strategic-driven attributions	.022	.05	.665	-.076	.119
Fan identity	.117	.046	.011	.026	.207
Team performance	.331	.028	<.001	.276	.387
CSR Fit x Identity	-.030	.044	.495	-117	.057
CSR Fit x Performance	-.021	.029	.466	-.078	.036
R^2	.379				

Behavioral Intentions

A regression with general behavior as dependent variable and fit, value- and strategic-driven attributions, team performance and fan identity as independent variables was run to test hypotheses 2,4, and 7. This model was significant, $F(5, 347) = 28.23$, $p < .001$, and explained 29% of variance on general behavioral intentions in this sample. There was a significant main effect of CSR fit on general behavior, $b = -0.44$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(347) = -7.52$, $p < .001$. There was also a significant positive main effect of fan identity on general behavioral intentions, $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(347) = 2.79$, $p = .006$. There were no further significant effects for general behavioral intentions, all p-values were above the cutoff point of .05.

For behavioral intentions in stadiums as dependent variable and fit, value- and strategic-driven attributions, team performance and fan identity as independent variables the model was also significant, $F(5, 347) = 20.72$, $p < .001$ and explained 23% of variance in the sample. There was a significant negative main effect of CSR fit on stadium behavior, $b = -0.5$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(347) = -7.44$, $p < .001$. The effect of team performance on stadium behavioral intentions was also significant, $b = -0.09$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(347) = -2.47$, $p = .014$. The interaction effect of fan identity and CSR fit is not significant and does not enhance the effect of fit on general behavior ($t(374) = -.69$, $p = .49$), or stadium behavior ($t(347) = -.68$, $p = .495$). Furthermore, the analysis showed that the interaction of CSR fit and team performance indicates a significantly positive effect on stadium behavior, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(347) = 2.1$, $p = .038$. The results show a negative association between fit and general discriminatory behavior as well as a significant positive effect of fan identity on general behavioral intentions. For stadium behavior only CSR fit, and team performance showed a small negative effect. As there was no significant relation between attributions and behavioral intentions hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Table 5

Regression Analysis for General Behavioral Intentions

	b	SE	p	95% CI	
				LB	UB
CSR fit	-.441	.059	<.001	-.557	-.326
Value-driven attributions	-.051	.062	.409	-.172	.070
Strategic-driven attributions	.109	.056	.054	-.002	.219
Fan identity	.145	.059	<.001	.043	.247
Team performance	-.038	.032	.234	-.101	.025
CSR Fit x Identity	-.036	.050	.477	-.134	.063
CSR Fit x Performance	-.014	.033	.661	-.079	.050
R^2	.289				

Table 6

Regression Analysis for Stadium Behavioral Intentions

	b	SE	p	95% CI	
				LB	UB
CSR fit	-.502	.068	<.001	-.635	-.370
Value-driven attributions	-.068	.071	.341	-.207	.072
Strategic-driven attributions	-.002	.065	.972	-.129	.125
Fan identity	.041	.060	.496	-.077	.158
Team performance	-.091	.037	.014	-.163	-.018
CSR Fit x Identity	.033	.057	.571	-.080	.146
CSR Fit x Performance	.078	.038	.038	.004	.152
R^2	.225				

Effect of CSR Fit on Attributions

To test hypothesis 5 stating perceived CSR fit influences perceived motive attribution, a regression analysis was run with value-driven attributions as dependent variable and CSR fit as independent variable. This model was significant, $F(1, 351) = 60.04$, $p < .001$., and explained 15% of variance on value-driven attributions in this sample. A significant positive main effect of CSR fit on value attributions was found, $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(351) = 7.75$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the regression analysis with strategic-driven attributions as dependent variable was significant, $F(1, 351) = 62.93$, $p < .001$, and yielded a significant negative main effect of fit on strategic-driven attributions, $b = -0.37$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(351) = -7.93$, $p < .001$. Thus, in line with initial hypotheses the results suggest a positive effect of CSR fit on value-driven attributions and a negative effect on strategic-driven attributions.

Discussion

Main Findings

The goal of this study was twofold, firstly it investigated the impact of perceived CSR fit and motive attributions on reputation and behavioral intentions in the context of explicit CSR in soccer. Secondly, the study examined the difference within the realm of proactive CSR initiatives concerning socio-political issues in soccer. Therefore, this study builds on the suggestion by Kim et al. (2020) to focus on fans' perceptions regarding proactive stances on socio-political issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. This study is novel in its approach to specifically compare different types of explicit CSR activities as well as exploring its effect on a fan-level rather than an organizational level.

Research question 1 attempted to explore the differences between the four types of CSR initiatives with regard to CSR fit, perceived motive attributions, reputation and behavioral intentions. The results indicated that all three socio-political initiatives (anti-racism, -

homophobia, -sexism) elicited higher levels of value-driven attributions than the neutral condition of anti-littering. Furthermore, the anti-racism initiative was perceived to have an overall higher fit than the other conditions. These results support Kaelberer (2020) findings that racism is publicly rejected and condemned in soccer while sexism and homophobia is still overtly part of soccer. Hence, fans are used to soccer clubs explicitly taking stances against racism, thus leading to higher evaluations of fit for anti-racism initiatives. However, it is worth noting that differences between the four conditions were minimal thus to obtain conclusive results concerning differences in types of explicit CSR more research is necessary. Surprisingly, the results indicate that the type of CSR initiative does not have an impact on the team reputation or the behavioral intentions although previous literature suggested that engaging in proactive CSR has a positive effect on fan attitudes (Groza et al., 201; Becker-Olsen, 2006). This is interesting as one would expect that the high CSR fit and value-driven attribution in the anti-racism condition also elicits a higher degree of reputation and the willingness to refrain from discriminatory behavior.

Research question 2 attempted to investigate the correlation between CSR fit and attributions as well as their impact on team reputation and behavioral intentions. Additionally, it was hypothesized that team performance and level of fan identity would moderate the impact. In line with H1 results indicate that value-driven attributions lead to an increase in reputation. This is no surprise as the relation between value-driven attributions and reputation was already suggested by research in both the corporate setting (Groza et al., 2011; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013) and sport setting (Kim et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this study confirms the prior findings by showing the same impact of value-driven attributions on reputation regarding proactive and explicit CSR initiatives in soccer. Similarly, the degree of perceived CSR fit positively affected the team reputation. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported and in line with prior literature. However, the effect of fit was significantly smaller than the effect of value attributions on reputation. This raises the question if CSR fit in soccer is actually a direct

antecedent of reputation or if its impact might be mediated by attributions. This interpretation is supported by the results suggesting that a higher perceived CSR fit is significantly related to a higher value-driven attribution and a lower strategic-driven attribution. Thus, it might be interesting to further investigate the role of CSR fit in a conceptual model with attributions and reputation in soccer.

With regard to perceived fit related to behavioral intentions in both the soccer stadium and generally acknowledging discrimination as an issue in soccer, it was expected that higher levels of fit will result in more anti-discriminatory behavior. The analysis supported this expectation as it indicated that fit negatively impacted discriminatory behavior in stadiums as well as behavior denying discrimination as a problem in soccer. That means that fans in this study who see racism, sexism, and homophobia as a problem in soccer also see initiatives against discriminatory behavior to have a high fit in the soccer industry. Thus, a high CSR fit correlates with the willingness of fans to actively change behavior. While this suggests promising results, as mentioned before a significant difference in CSR fit could only be recorded for the anti-racism initiative. Therefore, more research into the topic would be needed to generalize the effect of fit on intent to behave less discriminatory.

This study also investigated the impact of the moderating variables fan identity and team performance. While some moderation was indicated by the data most effects were insignificant or minimal. Results indicate that a high level of fan identity positively impacts the general behavior intentions. In line with findings by Inoue et al. (2013), this could be attributed to the fact that fans that are highly connected and loyal to their club are more likely to ignore or oversee issue in their club in order to avoid cognitive dissonance (Walker & Kent, 2009). Despite these expectations, fan identity did not moderate the effect of fit on behavior and only minimally enhanced the impact of value-attributions on stadium behavior. Surprisingly, the analysis suggests that team performance reduces the effect of value attributions on reputation. This could be explained by the fact that high performance teams are automatically believed to

have more financial means and power, which might lead to the assumption that CSR initiatives are not truly value driven. However, the effect is very small and should not be given too much weight in further interpretations.

Theoretical Implications

Generally, the results of this study call for further exploration of the impact of different types of CSR initiatives within the explicit, proactive framework on reputation and behavior in sport. While previous research mainly focused on either the distinction between implicit and explicit CSR in sport (Francois et al., 2019; Godfrey, 2009; Kolyperas & Sparks, 2011) or the general implementation of CSR in soccer (Jager & Fifka, 2020; Zeimers et al., 2019), these results demonstrate that paying attention to high-risk, proactive and explicit CSR activities is important in the current world of soccer. More importantly the results build on the existing evidence of Kaelberer (2020), that anti-homophobia and anti-sexism initiatives do not receive as much attention as anti-racism campaigns. However, results are not definite on the difference within the conditions and mainly suggest a distinction between neutral CSR (e.g., littering) and CSR concerning socio-political or controversial topics. Furthermore, the study supports previous results suggesting a positive relation between fit and value-attributions as well as the impact of value-driven attributions to enhance reputation. Therefore, the study shows that soccer clubs seeking to engage in explicit CSR efforts might benefit from ensuring a high CSR fit to enhance reputation as well as elicit ethically sound and value-driven perceptions from fans.

Practical Implications

The implications for soccer clubs and organizations primarily involve the underrepresentation of anti-sexism and anti-homophobia initiatives in soccer. By laying the focus on campaigns addressing women and members of the LGBTQ+ community in soccer, overt sexism and homophobia could be counteracted in the same way as racism has. Although this claim needs

to be researched further, the findings imply that soccer clubs should increase attention for anti-homophobia and anti-sexism CSR initiatives to increase their CSR fit and thus potentially impacting discriminatory behavior in stadiums. This could be accomplished by making sure that, especially on an organizational level (managers, coaches, referees, reporters), women and LGBTQ+ members are more represented and therefore also act as role models. While this study only provides a small overview over discrimination in soccer, it clearly shows the overall need for soccer organizations to actively address the hegemonic masculinity preserved in the predominantly white and male world of soccer. On a more general note, the findings suggest that soccer clubs might benefit from any involvement in any CSR concerning sexism, homophobia, and racism as they seem to suggest a more positive evaluation of the soccer club.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of the research should be noted. Particularly, the generalizability of results is limited by the characteristics of participants. The study was conducted in Germany and therefore results can only be seen as applicable in the setting of German soccer. While prior research has already explored CSR in soccer in other European countries (Anagnostopoulos, 2017; Fifka & Jaeger, 2020), future studies could investigate the impact of different types of explicit CSR concerning socio-political issues in other countries than Germany to explore if similar results would occur in different national settings. Moreover, participants were predominantly male, heterosexual, and white. While it might be argued that the sample accurately reflects the population of soccer fans (Lawrence & Davis, 2019), it would still be interesting to investigate a more heterogenous sample of participants, especially concerning topics like homophobia, sexism, and racism. Furthermore, this study aimed to measure behavioral intentions based on the three types of discrimination, namely homophobia, sexism, and racism. However, the planned constructs showed to be not valid in the factor analysis, which ultimately resulted in measuring overall discriminatory behavior and behavior in soccer

stadia rather than behavioral intentions specified by issue. Future research could therefore aim at finding a validated scale to measure homophobic, racist, and sexist behavioral intentions in soccer. Moreover, only two items measure value-driven attributions. To get more extensive and strong results on the impact of value-attributions on fan attitudes, it might therefore be necessary to create a scale with more items. Finally, this study examined the impact of CSR fit, attributions, and the manipulation on reputation. Due to time constraints, it was beyond the scope of this study to measure a change in perceived reputation. Hence, it could be interesting to run pre-test measuring reputation to explore a change of impact of the variables before and after being shown the manipulation.

Conclusion

This research aimed to determine whether there is a difference in the perception and impact of anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and anti-sexism CSR initiatives as well as identify to what extent CSR fit and strategic- and value-driven motive attributions affect fans' attitude towards soccer clubs and behavioral intentions of soccer fans. Based on a quantitative analysis of a survey among German soccer fans, it can be concluded that there is some significant difference between types of explicit CSR initiative. The results indicate that fans are more receptive to initiatives concerning anti-racism as they are perceived to be more value-driven and to have a high CSR fit than for instance anti-homophobia initiatives. Analyzing CSR fit and perceived attributions showed that both high fit and a high degree of value-driven attribution are positively related to reputation and therefore substantiated findings from previous research. Therefore, this study clearly illustrates the need for more research that specifically focuses on the impact of taking a stance against social issues in CSR.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Full questionnaire

Beginn des Blocks: Einleitung

Q1 Liebe Teilnehmer*Innen,vielen Dank, dass Sie sich entschieden haben an meiner Studie über die Social Media Präsenz von Fußballvereinen teilzunehmen. Die Studie wird im Rahmen meiner Bachelorarbeit in Kommunikationswissenschaften an der University of Twente durchgeführt. Das Ziel der Studie ist, Ihre Meinung und Bewertung von Social Media Kampagnen Ihres Lieblingsfußballvereins zu untersuchen. Die Teilnahme an der Umfrage dauert circa 5-10 Minuten. Ihre Teilnahmen an der Studie ist völlig freiwillig und Sie können jederzeit aussteigen. Alle Antworten werden anonym und vertraulich behandelt, d.h. Sie können nicht anhand Ihrer Antworten identifiziert werden. Die Daten werden ausschließlich für Forschungszwecke benutzt. Falls Sie noch weitere Fragen haben, können Sie sich gerne an mich per Email wenden: p.m.siering@student.utwente.nl Wenn Sie Fragen über Ihre Rechte als Teilnehmer mit jemand anderem als dem Forscher besprechen wollen, können Sie gerne das Ethik Komitee der Universität kontaktieren unter:Secretary of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl
Pia Siering

○ Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich die oben genannten Informationen gelesen habe und einwillige an der Studie teilzunehmen

Ende des Blocks: Einleitung

Beginn des Blocks: Ihr Lieblingsverein

Q2   **Ihr Lieblingsverein** Willkommen bei der Umfrage! In den folgenden Fragen könne Sie Ihre ehrliche Meinung über Ihren Lieblingsfußballverein und deren Social Media äußern. Von daher bitte ich Sie sich bei allen Fragen vorzustellen, dass es um ihren Lieblingsverein geht. Was ist der Name Ihres Lieblingsfußballvereins?

_____

Q3 Wie viele Stunden gucken Sie wöchentlich Fußball (Fernsehen, Livestream)?

_____

Q4 Planen Sie eine Jahreskarte für Ihren Lieblingsverein zu kaufen?

○ Ja

○ Nein

○ Weiß ich noch nicht

Q5 Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Fußball spielt eine große Rolle in meinem Leben	○	○	○	○	○
Ich verbringe sehr viel Zeit damit mich auf Sozialen Medien mit anderen Fans meines Lieblingsvereins auszutauschen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich unterhalte mich oft mit anderen Fans, um über Aktuelles in meinem Lieblingsverein zu reden	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Ihr Lieblingsverein

Beginn des Blocks: Block 2

Q9 Wenn Sie an Ihren Lieblingsfußballverein denken, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mein Lieblingsfußballverein hat sich gut geschlagen in den vergangenen 3 Jahren	○	○	○	○	○
Die generelle Leistung meines Lieblingsfußballvereins war gut in den vergangenen 3 Jahren	○	○	○	○	○
Die Höchstleistung meines Lieblingsfußballvereins war gut in den vergangenen 3 Jahren	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Block 2

Beginn des Blocks: Block 3

Q7 Wenn Sie an Ihren Lieblingsfußballverein denken, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Wenn jemand meinen Lieblingsverein kritisiert, fühle ich mich persönlich angegriffen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich bin sehr interessiert daran, was Andere über meinen Lieblingsverein denken	○	○	○	○	○
Die Erfolge meines Lieblingsvereins sind auch meine Erfolge	○	○	○	○	○
Wenn jemand meinen Lieblingsverein lobt, fühlt es sich wie ein persönliches Kompliment an	○	○	○	○	○
Es ist mir peinlich, wenn die Medien meinen Lieblingsverein kritisieren	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Block 3

Beginn des Blocks: Block 4

Q8 Hier sehen Sie einen fiktiven Instagram Post. **Stellen Sie sich vor, dass dieser Post von Ihrem Lieblingsfußballverein veröffentlicht wurde**. Bitte gucken Sie sich das Bild an und lesen die Beschreibung sorgfältig bevor Sie die weiteren Fragen beantworten

.
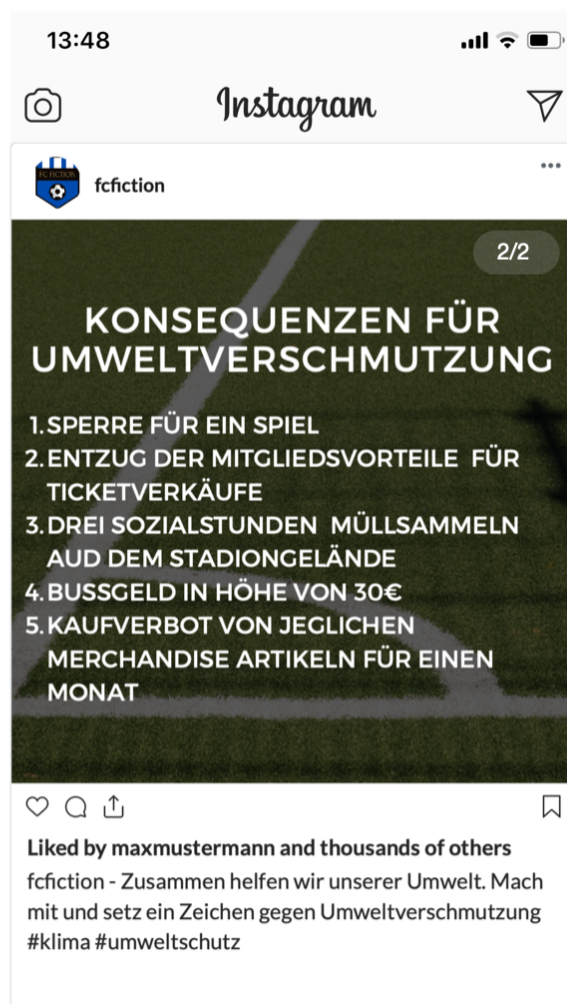
Q9 Hier sehen Sie einen fiktiven Instagram Post. **Stellen Sie sich vor, dass dieser Post von Ihrem Lieblingsfußballverein veröffentlicht wurde**. Bitte gucken Sie sich das Bild an und lesen die Beschreibung sorgfältig bevor Sie die weiteren Fragen beantworten

Q10 Hier sehen Sie einen fiktiven Instagram Post. **Stellen Sie sich vor, dass dieser Post von Ihrem Lieblingsfußballverein veröffentlicht wurde**. Bitte gucken Sie sich das Bild an und lesen die Beschreibung sorgfältig bevor Sie die weiteren Fragen beantworten

.

Q11 Hier sehen Sie einen fiktiven Instagram Post. **Stellen Sie sich vor, dass dieser Post von Ihrem Lieblingsfußballverein veröffentlicht wurde**. Bitte gucken Sie sich das Bild an und lesen die Beschreibung sorgfältig bevor Sie die weiteren Fragen beantworten

Ende des Blocks: Block 4

Beginn des Blocks: Block 5

Q12 Nachdem Sie den Instagram Post gesehen haben und an Ihren Lieblingsfußballverein denken, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Es ist sinnvoll so ein Thema im Fußball anzusprechen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich mache mir Sorgen, dass so eine Aussage Fußball zu sehr politisiert	○	○	○	○	○
So eine Aussage überschattet die eigentliche sportliche Leistung	○	○	○	○	○
Professioneller Fußball ist nicht der richtige Ort um so ein Thema anzusprechen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich kann mir vorstellen, dass mein Lieblings Fußballverein so etwas postet	○	○	○	○	○
Andere Fußballvereine sind geeigneter so ein Thema anzusprechen	○	○	○	○	○
So ein Thema zu adressieren zieht die Leistung meines Lieblingsvereins ins Lächerliche	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Block 5

Beginn des Blocks: Block 6

Q13 Wenn Sie sich vorstellen, dass Ihr Lieblingsfußballverein so einen Instagram Post veröffentlicht, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen über die Motive der Kampagne zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mein Lieblingsverein will mit der Kampagne zu einer besseren Gesellschaft beitragen	○	○	○	○	○
Die Werte meines Lieblingsvereins stimmen komplett mit der Kampagne überein	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsverein startet so eine Kampagne, weil die Gesellschaft es von ihnen erwartet	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsverein startet so eine Kampagne, um neue Sponsoren zu gewinnen	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsverein startet so eine Kampagne, um Bußgeldern zu entgehen	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsverein startet so eine Kampagne, weil sie den Richtlinien des Verbands (z.B. FIFA, UEFA) folgen	○	○	○	○	○

| Mein Lieblingsverein folgt dem Beispiel anderer Vereine, indem sie so eine Kampagne starten | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Ende des Blocks: Block 6

Beginn des Blocks: Block 7

Q14 Wenn Sie sich vorstellen, dass Ihr Lieblingsfußballverein so einen Instagram Post veröffentlicht, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen über das generelle Bild zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mein Lieblingsfußballverein ist eine qualitativ hochwertige Organisation	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsfußballverein ist eine vernünftige Organisation	○	○	○	○	○
Mein Lieblingsfußballverein dient als Beispiel für eine gut geleitete Sportorganisation	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Block 7

Beginn des Blocks: Block 8

Q15 Nachdem Sie den Instagram Post gesehen haben, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mir gefällt ein lustiger rassistischer Witz, selbst wenn Andere ihn als Beleidigung sehen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich würde nicht bei Fangesängen mitmachen, die rassistische Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass traditionelle Fangesänge verboten werden sollen, wenn sie rassistische Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass Diskriminierung gegenüber ethnischen Minderheiten kein echtes Problem im Fußball ist	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mir gefällt ein lustiger, sexistischer Witz, selbst wenn Andere ihn als Beleidigung sehen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich würde nicht bei Fangesängen mitmachen, die sexistische Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass traditionelle Fangesänge verboten werden sollen, wenn sie sexistische Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass Diskriminierung gegenüber Frauen kein echtes Problem im Fußball ist	○	○	○	○	○
Im professionellen Männerfußball würde ich lieber männliche als weibliche Trainer und Schiedsrichter haben	○	○	○	○	○

Q17 Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Mir gefällt ein lustiger, homophober Witz, selbst wenn Andere ihn als Beleidigung sehen	○	○	○	○	○
Ich würde nicht bei Fangesängen mitmachen, die homophobe Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass traditionelle Fangesänge verboten werden sollen, wenn sie homophobe Begriffe enthalten	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass Diskriminierung gegenüber Homosexuellen kein echtes Problem im Fußball ist	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass die Anwesenheit von homosexuellen Spielern das Image eines Fußballvereins ungünstig beeinflussen könnte	○	○	○	○	○

Sexuelle Orientierung von homosexuellen Spielern ist ein privates Thema und sollte nicht diskutiert werden	○	○	○	○	○
Ich würde mich unwohl fühlen, wenn homosexuelle Spieler in meinem Verein öffentlich über ihre sexuelle Orientierung reden würden	○	○	○	○	○

Q18 Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu oder nicht zu

	Stimme voll zu	Stimme teilweise zu	Weder noch	Stimme teilweise nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
Ich würde nicht bei Fangesängen mitmachen, die das Werfen von Plastikbechern oder anderem Müll erfordern	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass Einweg-Plastikbecher verboten werden sollten in Fußballstadien	○	○	○	○	○
Ich glaube, dass Umweltverschmutzung in Fußballstadien kein echtes Problem im Fußball ist	○	○	○	○	○

Ende des Blocks: Block 8

Beginn des Blocks: Block 9

Q19 Als letztes würde ich Sie bitten ein paar Fragen über sich selbst zu beantworten. Wie alt sind Sie?

_____

Q20 Mit welchem Geschlecht identifizieren Sie sich?

○ Männlich

○ Weiblich

○ Nichtbinär/drittes Geschlecht

○ Keine Angabe

Q21 Was ist Ihre sexuelle Orientierung?

○ Heterosexuell

○ Homosexuell

○ Bisexuell

○ Andere

○ Keine Angabe

Q22 Sind Sie Teil einer ethnischen Minderheit?

○ Ja

○ Nein

○ Keine Angabe

Diese Frage anzeigen:
If Q22 = Ja

Q23 Wenn Ja, welcher ethnischen Minderheit gehören Sie an?

_____

Ende des Blocks: Block 9

Beginn des Blocks: Block 10

Q24 Vielen Dank für die Teilnahme an meiner Umfrage! Falls Sie die endgültigen Ergebnisse meiner Studie erfahren wollen, können Sie gerne Ihre E-Mail-Adresse hinterlassen. Ich werde Ihnen die Ergebnisse senden, sobald die Forschungsarbeit abgeschlossen ist. Wollen Sie über die Forschungsergebnisse informiert werden?

○ Ja

○ Nein

- -

Diese Frage anzeigen:
    If Q24 = Ja

Q25 Was ist Ihre E-Mail Adresse? (Die Adresse wird einmalig zu der Verteilung der Ergebnisse genutzt)

_____

Ende des Blocks: Block 10