Fan engagement in professional team sports

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Summary

Abstract

This dissertation presents a fan engagement framework and examines the influence of non-transactional engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with managers and fans of European professional sports teams. Analysis of the interview data followed a general inductive approach supported by MAXQDA data analysis software. Results provide managers with a scheme for classifying positive and negative components, as well as benefits and detriments. Positive components are fan resource integration, fan learning as well as fan knowledge sharing resulting in fan resource development and fan value co-creation as fan engagement benefits. Negative components are fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team causing fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development as detriments. Both positive and negative outcomes of fan engagement practices relate to team performance on the field and business performance. In case of team performance on the field, study participants highlighted that winning a game is partly based on stadium atmosphere and loss of a game, in turn, may have its reason in the fact that the game was cancelled as a result of violent fan behavior. In terms of business performance, it was mentioned that the financial contribution by sponsors will be higher or lower depending on how well fan engagement is. Through the framework, sports marketing managers are able to examine whether fans are engaged with the team and use non-engagement or negative engagement activities as a warning signal to initiate changes in their approach. If perspectives differ between managers and fans, managers should collaborate with fans to find solutions on how to prevent negative activities and avoid the associated negative consequences.

To investigate the influence of non-transactional engagement on merchandise purchase intentions, data were collected from 206 season ticket holders (STH; Study 2a) and 520 fans of professional sports teams (Study 2b). Reliability and validity of the measured variables were tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and the hypotheses of the model were tested

using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The two studies indicated a good model fit. Results demonstrate that emotional engagement predicts merchandise purchase intentions across general sports fans, but not to STH. For researchers and sports marketing managers, this is an important new finding, as these results show that individuals who are committed STH make decisions to purchase merchandise that go beyond emotional commitment. In addition, the results reveal that merchandise purchase intentions are driven by dimensions that relate to the individual fan. This insight enables teams to better align their marketing activities to reach the fan personally in order to drive merchandising revenue.

This dissertation extends the literature by providing a perspective on both positive and negative facets with a distinction between components and outcomes of fan engagement. In addition, this framework captures the perspective of sports team managers and adds the perspective of fans, whereas previous studies have mostly focused only on the fan perspective. Moreover, this research expands the literature by providing a more specific examination of non-transactional fan engagement on merchandising purchase intentions, whereas previous research has measured the impact of fan engagement on general purchase intention. In addition, managers should measure fan engagement and implement tactics to positively influence it to the club's benefit.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation stellt ein Fan-Engagement-Framework vor und untersucht den Einfluss von nicht-transaktionalem Engagement auf die Kaufabsicht von Merchandise-Artikeln. Zunächst wurden Tiefeninterviews mit Managerinnen und Managern sowie Fans europäischer Profisportmannschaften durchgeführt. Die Analyse der Interviewdaten folgte einem allgemeinen induktiven Ansatz, unterstützt durch die Datenanalysesoftware MAXQDA. Die Ergebnisse liefern den Managerinnen und Managern ein Klassifizierungsschema für positive und negative Komponenten sowie für Vor- und Nachteile von Fan Engagement.

Positive Komponenten sind die Integration von Fan-Ressourcen, das Lernen von Fans sowie das Teilen von Fan-Wissen, was zur Entwicklung von Fan-Ressourcen führt, und die Co-Creation von Fan-Werten als Vorteile des Fan-Engagements. Negative Komponenten sind die Verletzung von Fan-Normen und der Widerstand der Fans gegen das Team, was zur Zerstörung von Fan-Werten und zur Entwicklung von Fan-Identitätskonflikten als Nachteilen führt. Sowohl die positiven als auch die negativen Folgen von Fan Engagement beziehen sich auf die Teamleistung auf dem Spielfeld und die wirtschaftliche Leistung des Vereins. Im Falle der Teamleistung auf dem Spielfeld betonten die Studienteilnehmer, dass der Gewinn eines Spiels zum Teil auf der Stadionatmosphäre beruht und der Verlust eines Spiels wiederum seinen Grund darin haben kann, dass das Spiel aufgrund von gewalttätigem Fanverhalten abgebrochen wurde. In Bezug auf die wirtschaftliche Leistung des Vereins wurde erwähnt, dass der finanzielle Beitrag der Sponsoren höher oder niedriger sein kann, je nachdem wie das Engagement der Fans ausfällt. Durch das Framework können Sportmarketing-Manager und -Managerinnen untersuchen, inwieweit Fan Engagement vorliegt und Nicht-Engagement oder negative Engagement-Aktivitäten als Warnsignal nutzen, um Änderungen in ihren Fan Management Aktivtäten einzuleiten. Wenn sich die Perspektiven von Managern und Fans unterscheiden, sollten Manager und Managerinnen gemeinsam mit den Fans Lösungen finden, wie negative Aktivitäten verhindert und die damit verbundenen negativen Konsequenzen vermieden werden können.

Um den Einfluss von nicht-transaktionalem Engagement auf die Kaufabsicht von Fanartikeln zu untersuchen, wurden Daten von 206 Dauerkarteninhabern (Studie 2a) und 520 Fans von professionellen Sportmannschaften (Studie 2b) erhoben. Reliabilität und Validität der gemessenen Variablen wurden mittels konfirmatorischer Faktorenanalyse (CFA) getestet und die Hypothesen des Modells wurden durch ein Strukturgleichungsmodell (SEM) überprüft. Die beiden Studien zeigten einen guten Modellfit. Die Ergebnisse weisen auf, dass emotionales Engagement die Kaufabsicht für Merchandising-Artikel bei allgemeinen Sportfans vorhersagt,

aber nicht bei Dauerkarteninhabern. Für Wissenschaftler und Sportmarketing-Manager ist dies eine wichtige neue Erkenntnis, da diese Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Personen, die Dauerkarteninhaber sind und Fan Engagement zeigen, Entscheidungen zum Kauf von Merchandise treffen, die über emotionales Engagement hinausgehen. Ferner zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass die Kaufabsichten für Merchandise-Artikel von Dimensionen getrieben werden, die sich auf den einzelnen Fan beziehen. Diese Erkenntnis ermöglicht es den Teams, ihre Marketingaktivitäten besser auf die persönliche Ansprache der Fans auszurichten, um die Merchandising-Einnahmen zu steigern.

Diese Dissertation erweitert die Literatur, indem sie eine Perspektive auf positive und negative Facetten mit einer Unterscheidung zwischen Komponenten und Ergebnissen des Fan-Engagements bietet. Darüber hinaus erfasst dieses Framework die Perspektive von Managerinnen und Managern von Sportteams und fügt die Perspektive der Fans hinzu, während sich bisherige Studien meist nur auf die Fanperspektive konzentriert haben. Zudem erweitert diese Dissertation die Literatur, indem sie eine spezifischere Untersuchung von nicht-transaktionalem Fan-Engagement auf Merchandising-Kaufabsichten liefert, während frühere Forschungen den Einfluss von Fan-Engagement auf allgemeine Kaufabsichten gemessen haben. Managerinnen und Managern sollten das Fan Engagement messen und Strategien implementieren, um es zum Vorteil des Vereins positiv zu beeinflussen.

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1. Introduction

Fan engagement is fundamental to professional sport clubs' relationship management and has received careful attention from scholars and practitioners. Fans often form highly engaged relationships with their preferred teams (Funk et al., 2016), frequently leading to fan behavior that benefits those teams (Funk & James, 2001). It is therefore important for sport marketers to understand the relationships among fans' behavior to optimize marketing campaigns. Yoshida et al. (2014) conceptualized fan engagement as "a sport consumer's extra-role behaviors in non-transactional exchanges to benefit his or her favorite sport team, the team's management, and other fans" (p. 403). Fan engagement embodies a unique type of customer engagement in a sport context. According to Verhoef et al. (2010), the conceptualization of customer engagement provided a fresh perspective on customer management. This new framing became necessary as the importance of non-transactional customer behavior grew.

Sport teams generate revenue through media rights, sponsorships, ticket sales, and merchandising (McCaffrey et al., 2018). The latter two streams are directly derived from fans and merit close attention as ways to boost revenue; a team's sporting success is heavily contingent on financial resources. Reports such as Deloitte's Football Money League (Jones, 2020) offer sport marketing managers a useful overview of the business units teams generate and how this revenue has developed in recent years. Yet precisely why fans generate more revenue remains unclear. This dissertation thus aims to answer two research questions. First, what are the components and consequences (including benefits and detriments) of fan engagement? Second, what dimensions of non-transactional fan engagement lead to merchandise purchase intention?

2. Theoretical Background

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundations of this dissertation. First, the term "fans" is defined to lay groundwork for further exploration. Next, this dissertation discusses the concept of engagement; the topic is addressed on the basis of extant marketing literature and examined relative to sport marketing research. Similar constructs and distinct fan behaviors will then be discussed to highlight relevant research gaps.

2.1 Definition and Importance of Fans

Hunt et al. (1999) defined a fan as an enthusiastic supporter of a consumable sport object. A fan represents a consumer and has an (emotional) connection with the sport object (e.g., team or athlete), which manifests through particular behavior (Hunt et al., 1999). Several authors have described the fan–team relationship as emotional and unique (Abosag et al., 2012; Vale & Fernandes, 2018). For this reason, and because of fans' passion and commitment to their favorite clubs, fans differ from customers in other industries (Vallerand et al., 2008). Cohen (1996) further contended that fans in the sport industry represent customers. In particular, fans tend to have long-term and highly engaged relationships with the teams they follow (Funk et al., 2016). Furthermore, the fan-team-relationship often result in beneficial behavior for the team (Funk & James, 2001). Given that two out of four revenue streams of clubs – ticket sales and merchandising – derive directly from fans, fan engagement is imperative (McCaffrey et al., 2018). Thus, if teams are not aware of how to influence fan engagement to their benefit, they will miss the opportunity to increase their sales and to build the club's future.

Fans can support their favorite team in many ways. Fans invest resources (e.g., emotional or financial) to support their team (Wann et al., 2001), as illustrated by various activities during sporting events. Such behavior includes singing (Chung et al., 2005) and clapping or cheering (Melnick, 1993). Additional activities include information consumption (Tapp & Clowes, 2002) or information exchange with others regarding one's favorite team

(Stavros et al., 2014). In the literature, these interactions fall under the umbrella of "fan engagement" (Yoshida et al., 2014).

2.2 The conceptional domain of Engagement

Engagement has been defined in myriad ways across authors and disciplines. Research on the topic has appeared in psychology, management, marketing, and other fields (Vivek et al., 2012). Terms such as "interaction," "participation," "co-creation," or "long-term relationships" are often used to describe engagement (Kumar et al., 2010; Patterson et al., 2006). In marketing, engagement has been broadly discussed in terms of actor engagement (Brodie et al., 2019). Actor engagement refers to the interplay of levels of aggregation (i.e., the micro, meso, and macro levels); in other words, businesses have relationships with other businesses, entrepreneurs interact with other entrepreneurs, and at the lowest level, employees collaborate across businesses. All these levels are engaged with each other. The field of customer engagement is especially relevant to the present work, in which the customer–business relationship is discussed. Fan engagement is a specific form of customer engagement in the sport context. In the following sections, we present a literature review on customer and fan engagement, related constructs, and non-transactional and transactional fan engagement.

2.1.1. Customer Engagement

Definitions of customer engagement vary considerably; as such, an in-depth examination of these perspectives is necessary. Some authors have defined customer engagement as a process based on and influenced by multiple antecedents (cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2006; Vivek et al., 2012). Others consider customer engagement a consequence of customer engagement marketing that is exclusively behavior-based, labeling it "customer engagement behavior" (CEB) and exploring it as a one-dimensional construct (Harmeling et al., 2017;

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Jakkoola & Alexander, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). Several perspectives also exist regarding expressions of customer engagement. Scholars who support behavior-based customer engagement associate its expression solely with non-transactional activities (e.g., product development, innovation, or word-of-mouth advertising) that go beyond consumption and purchase activities (Jakkoola & Alexander, 2014; van Doorn et al., 2010). Nevertheless, most researchers deem transactional activities such as purchase, payment, and consumption behavior as valid expressions of customer engagement (Harmeling et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Controversy persists around the complexity and scope of customer engagement as a construct. Researchers generally agree that customer engagement is based on customer–firm interactions and thus includes behavioral dimensions (van Doorn et al., 2010). Yet some authors have contended that a lone focus on behavioral dimensions as influencing factors of customer engagement is too narrow, instead suggesting that the construct is multidimensional (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Vivek et al., 2012). Whereas studies have often depicted customer engagement as a unidimensional concept, Brodie et al. (2011) recognized the behavioral dimension as an influencing factor of customer engagement but stressed it as one of five dimensions that depends on upstream conditions. The behavioral dimension is based on the psychological dimension, which reflects a customer's psychological state resulting from interactive experiences with the company (e.g., its products, brand, or social media). This psychological state leads to customer engagement processes, where in the customer and the company co-create added value; therefore, customer engagement differs substantially from participation and interaction. However, Brodie et al. (2011) emphasized that expressions of engagement vary behaviorally and are influenced by cognition and emotions specific to a given stakeholder or context. Work by Patterson et al. (2006), who described customer engagement as a driver in the service industry, supported this argument: Patterson et al. (2006) stated that customers experience different states (i.e., physical, emotional, and cognitive) when interacting

with a company (e.g., its brand, products, or employees). They also identified four characteristics of customer engagement, namely vigor, dedication, absorption, and interaction, which characterize expressions of the construct (Patterson et al., 2006).

Studies on customer engagement also differ in their perspectives. Whereas some scholars have interpreted customer engagement from a company standpoint (Harmeling et al., 2017; Jakkoola & Alexander, 2014), others have examined customer engagement based on customers' points of view or contextual factors (Pansari & Kumar, 2017; van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012). However, academic work related to customer engagement has tended to pay little attention to customers' resources. Only a few studies have addressed such attributes, including customers' networks (of friends and family), persuasiveness, knowledge, and creativity, as key tenets that might not apply outside of customer engagement activities (Harmeling et al., 2017). Given the consensus that customer engagement extends beyond the direct financial benefits of transactions, customers' resources are important to consider; these features can benefit companies' marketing activities in ways that might not be possible otherwise (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Jakkoola & Alexander, 2014). Further research is therefore needed regarding the dimensions of customer engagement.

Finally, relevant literature has also addressed the valence of customer engagement. Valence is particularly important in service industries possessing many customer touch points, such as the sport industry, within customer interaction and relationships (Brady et al., 2006). Most researchers investigating customer engagement appear to agree that the effects of customer engagement are mostly positive, whether in direct (tangible) forms (e.g., higher profits, sales growth, and market share) or through indirect (intangible) means. Intangible benefits include the creation of added value via marketing support through referrals, participation in product development, and contributions to image promotion and brand value enhancement based on positive behavior or social media engagement (Kumar, 2013; Kumar et al., 2014). However, the effects of customer engagement are not inherently positive; the valence

of customer engagement can also be negative or neutral, whether through recommendations to inappropriate target groups or unintentional customer behavior (Hollebeek et al., 2019; van Doorn et al., 2010). Although Brady et al. (2006) analyzed the negative side of valence, their study is one of the only papers to address the topic thus far.

Throughout the following sections, we conceptualize customer engagement by referring to Hollebeek et al.'s (2019) and Pansari and Kumar's (2017) definition of engagement as a person's resource investment into organizational interactions. The concept of engagement encompasses all fan–team interactions for our purposes.

2.1.2. Fan Engagement

A number of studies in the sport marketing literature have considered the construct of fan engagement and interpreted its components and consequences. In their pioneering research on fan engagement, Yoshida et al. (2014) defined fan engagement as a special form of (non-transactional) customer engagement in a sport context, specifically fan commitment and its impact on a team. To assess the validity of this concept, Yoshida et al. (2014) tested the nomological validity of the construct based on sport consumption behavior.

First, the test examined whether antecedents such as team identification, positive affect, and basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) influenced three fan engagement characteristics: management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance. Fans' team identification manifests from the cognitive dimension as their perceived bond with a team (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Positive affect is an antecedent from the affective dimension, evidenced by actions such as joyful expressions of fandom (Wakefield et al., 1996). The last antecedent of fan engagement is BIRGing (Cialdini et al., 1976), derived from the behavioral dimension to evaluate the validity of Yoshida's et al. (2014) fan engagement concept. Results indicated that team identification and BIRGing each significantly influenced management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance. Team

identification affected all three fan engagement characteristics, whereas BIRGing only boosted prosocial behavior, albeit more notably than team identification. However, positive affect had no significant impact on fan engagement (Yoshida et al., 2014).

Second, Yoshida et al. (2014) tested whether these fan engagement aspects led to consequences identified in the sport consumption literature, such as purchase intention and referral intention. The authors discovered that fan engagement could promote customers' purchase intentions. Engaged fans also exhibited stronger repurchase tendencies than non-engaged fans. However, fan engagement activities had no significant influence on referral intention as expected (Yoshida et al., 2014). As mentioned, Yoshida et al. (2014) were the first to propose a measurement of fan engagement; other studies on this concept pertained to a particular sporting context (e.g., a certain sport, team, or association) or technology (e.g., social media) and did not consider fan engagement holistically.

Our source of information for the literature review were sports management or sports marketing journals. These were the Journal of Sport Management, Sport Management Review, Sport Marketing Quarterly, European Sport Management Review, and the Journal of Global Sport Management. In these we searched for articles with the term "fan engagement" in their title or abstract. A total of eight articles could be identified. Jones et al. (2019) investigated what leads to higher fan engagement and examined the effects of controllable service quality factors on two dimensions of customer engagement behavior among Formula One racing spectators. Their results indicated that spectator interactions with the event staff and the physical environment could positively influence consumers' value perceptions and lead to greater fan engagement.

Bernthal et al. (2015) and Doyle et al. (2016) addressed sport spectator behavior. Bernthal et al. (2015) profiled professional bass fishing fans and explored the factors (i.e., motivations and fan engagement) underlying fandom. The authors found that various fan engagement variables were positively related to spectator behavior and that fans who were

engaged (vs. not engaged) in each of these variables differed in their spectator motivations. In addition, Doyle et al. (2016) investigated the benefits of sport consumption at an individual level to delineate the activation of five domains of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. In a departure from prior work, Casper et al. (2019) focused on fan engagement sustainability initiatives that influenced sustainable at-home behavior; they specifically considered values and norms related to the natural environment and perceptions of fan engagement sustainability initiatives. Anagnostopoulos et al. (2018) examined professional team sport organizations' use of Instagram for branding purposes and studied the importance of Instagram followers' reactions to these organizations' Instagram activities. In this case, the term "fan engagement" referred to Instagram users' likes and comments on sport organizations' tweets. Yim et al. (2020) later explored consumption-related decision making by taking fan engagement as one of five consumption traits that affect millennial sport fans' behavior.

The preceding discussion on fan engagement shows that most studies have focused on positive aspects; negative components have rarely been addressed with the exception of research on customer engagement (Chapter 2.1.1) and sport marketing regarding negative fan behavior and its consequences (Woratschek et al., 2014). For instance, fans who identify highly with their preferred team are often noticed for violence or aggression (Wann et al., 1999; Wann et al., 2003). McDonald and Karg (2014) examined sport fans' rituals and noted that these activities can include vandalism or intimidation. Stieler et al. (2014) examined negative manifestations of fan engagement on the basis of service-dominant logic; associated activities include verbal abuse of team managers, antisocial behavior (e.g., lighting flares and physically harming other fans), and intolerance of a team's poor performance on the pitch (e.g., staying silent when the team loses).

Chapters 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 have provided an overview of current research on customer engagement and fan engagement. Several knowledge gaps remain to be addressed. First, most

previous research on fan engagement only considered positive components of this construct and neglected dysfunctional aspects. Second, understanding fan engagement as the investment of fans' resources into their interactions with a team implies that the construct covers a plethora of activities. Due to the high abstraction of fan engagement and its associations with other constructs, these constructs can also be considered dimensions of fan engagement. For instance, engagement comprises several well-established constructs such as fan identification, satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty (Kumar & Pansari, 2017). The broadness of the construct has not been taken into account appropriately. Third, to state a concrete example, Yoshida et al. (2014) only examined three components of fan engagement and ignored other potentially relevant features. Such features include word-of-mouth (Kunkel et al., 2017; Uhrich, 2014), knowledge generation (Huettermann et al., 2019), and emotional engagement (Capella, 2002). Fourth, the measurement of the consequences of non-transactional behavior on transactional behavior is lacking so far. For instance, Yoshida et al. (2014) evaluated whether fan engagement dimensions affected customers' purchase behavior in general. However, the dependent variable has little informative value to sport managers. A domain-specific approach should enable sport marketing managers to identify the impacts of fan engagement dimensions on merchandise purchase intentions, thus helping practitioners develop and implement marketing measures to increase sales in this high-potential consumer segment. These four research gaps will be addressed in this dissertation. Next, I will present related constructs and their definitions to demonstrate how these constructs are related to fan engagement and to highlight the differences between them. Then, I will examine non-transactional and transactional dimensions of fan engagement and discuss why detailed research on the consequences of non-transactional behavior on merchandise purchase intentions is warranted.

2.1.2.1 Constructs related to fan engagement

The following chapter presents several terms relevant to fan engagement. As noted, Yoshida et al. (2014) operationalized fan engagement using their own concepts of management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance. Fan engagement can therefore be viewed as an overarching construct that is tied to several concepts. Despite its similarity with other concepts, fan engagement is a unique construct that should be differentiated from fan commitment, fan loyalty, fan (or team) identification, fan (or team) involvement, and fan identity.

The term "fan commitment" is quite similar to fan engagement. Whereas fan engagement focuses on resource investment, fan commitment constitutes one's desire to maintain a relationship with a team. Kim et al. (2013) defined fan commitment as "a reflection of a desire to maintain a valued relationship with his or her favorite sports team" (p. 173). Essentially, fan commitment describes how an individual is driven to engage in a consistent behavior, and fan engagement represents the actual behavior. Fan commitment is thus an antecedent of fan engagement.

Another related construct is fan loyalty. Mahony et al. (2000) described "fan loyalty" as "the strength of fans' commitment to a particular sports team" (p. 20). In other words, fan loyalty arises from fan commitment. Whereas fan engagement refers to resource investment, fan loyalty represents fans' current activities such as "attending a game; watching a game on television; purchasing licensed products; following a team via media, including radio, newspaper and internet; and so forth" (Matsuoka et al., 2003, p. 246).

Another construct to be distinguished from fan engagement is fan (or team) identification. Branscombe and Wann (1992) operationalized this form of identification as "the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team's performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves" (p. 1017). This definition indicates that fan (or team) identification functions as an

antecedent of fan engagement—fans are more likely to invest resources in a relationship if they can identify with the team.

Fan (or team) involvement should also be regarded as an antecedent of fan engagement. Stevens and Rosenberger (2012) defined such involvement as "the level of interest or importance a fan ascribes to sports representing the level that a fan values or believes that sports are relevant and important to their life and lifestyle" (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012, p. 11). This term differs from fan engagement given that resources are not directly contributed by fans. However, fan (or team) involvement can be considered an antecedent of fan engagement; it is similar to fan (or team) identification, and personal resources will likely be contributed if fans are involved with a certain sport or team.

Another construct worth discussing in the context of fan engagement is fan identity. Similar to the two aforementioned terms, when fans attach importance to their role as team fans, these individuals will presumably invest resources in building a relationship with their team. Fan identity can hence be defined as "the meaning individuals attach to their role of being fans of their favorite team" (Biscaia et al., 2018, p. 463). Based on this description, fan loyalty also acts as an antecedent of fan engagement.

2.1.2.2 Fan engagement behavior

Fans express their engagement in various ways across non-transactional and transactional behavior. Non-transactional behavior can take multiple forms as Table 1 illustrates. In summary, non-transactional behavior can be regarded as all actions beyond purchases, consumption, or other economic contributions.

Non-transactional behavior	Reference
BIRGing (Basking in Reflected Glory)	Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Pradhan, 2014; Snyder et al., 1986; Trail et al., 2005

CORFing (Cutting Off Reflected Failure)	Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Snyder et al., 1986; Trail et al., 2005
Communicating, socializing, and classifying oneself through objects and actions	Holt, 1995
Identifying with a team, club, or player through the objects used to display fandom	Fischer & Wakefield, 1998
Word-of-mouth	Fischer & Wakefield, 1998; Swanson et al., 2003
Supportive behavior and brand loyalty	Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Campbell et al., 2004
Tailgating parties	James et al., 2001
BIRFing (Basking in reflected failure)	Campbell et al., 2004
CORSing (Cutting off reflected success)	Campbell et al., 2004
Searching for information about teams or players	Park et al., 2011
Expressing pleasure or displeasure	Hillman et al., 2000
exchanging team- or sport-related knowledge with family, friends, and acquaintances	Melnick & Wann, 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Theodorakis & Wann, 2008
Behaving derogatorily towards opposing fans, players, or teams	Amiot et al., 2013

Table 1 - Non-transactional behavior of fans

Transactional behavior encompasses several other expressions of fan engagement. Associated actions include direct, economically measurable behavior as Table 2 illustrates. These actions carry direct financial benefits for teams.

Transactional behavior	**Reference**
Ticket or merchandise purchases, game attendance	Capella, 2002; Funk & James, 2001; Hunt et al., 1999; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Theodorakis & Wann, 2008; Trail et al., 2005

Watching games on TV	Funk & James, 2001; Hunt et al., 1999; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2012; Theodorakis & Wann, 2008
Participating in fantasy sport leagues online	Hunt et al., 1999

Table 2 - Transactional behavior of fans

Teams' sporting success is highly contingent on their financial potential. Sport clubs' primary revenue streams are media rights, ticket sales, sponsorships, and merchandising (McCaffrey et al., 2018). Ticket sales and merchandising are especially important in the context of fan engagement, as these forms of revenue are fan-generated. Merchandising in particular presents enormous promise for teams. Consider Real Madrid, one of the most successful soccer team (based on total trophies won; Flanagan & Ward, 2020), as an example: their stadium *Estadio Santiago Bernabéu* can hold 81,044 spectators. In a regular season with 19 home stadium games, Real Madrid can sell slightly more than 1.5 million tickets; however, the team boasts roughly 500 million fans worldwide (Telefónica S.A., 2017) who act as a potential target group for team merchandise. Real Madrid's potential to earn revenue through merchandise thus well exceeds possible revenue from ticket sales.

In light of the customer engagement literature, it seems pertinent to expand Yoshida et al.'s (2014) conceptualization of fan engagement by considering positive and negative components and outcomes (i.e., benefits and detriments) of this construct. Accordingly, and in line with Kumar et al. (2010), I propose that transactions should not be excluded from customer (and fan) engagement (Pansari & Kumar, 2017); a thorough assessment of fan engagement should include transactional and non-transactional characteristics (Kumar et al., 2010). Therefore, Study 1 develops a framework for fan engagement that categorizes positive and negative components and consequences of such engagement in team sports. Study 2 examines

the effects of fan engagement dimensions on merchandise purchase intentions as merchandising sales represents a tremendous profit potential for sports teams.

3. Method

A mixed methods approach was adopted in these two studies: Study 1 was qualitative while Study 2 was quantitative-confirmatory. This section outlines these approaches and their applications in each study. An overview of our sampling procedures and measures is also provided.

3.1. Study 1

In Study 1, in-depth interviews were conducted over three periods (i.e., Summer 2016, Spring 2017, and Winter 2017/2018). A systematic chain sampling strategy (Suri, 2011) was adopted to "[seek] information from key informants about details of other 'information-rich cases' in the field" (p. 6). Fans and managers of the two first divisions of the five most prominent team sports in Europe (i.e., soccer, team handball, basketball, volleyball, and ice hockey) were invited to participate. Thirteen managers and 12 fans were recruited and took part in in-depth interviews. Managers worked for sport teams in seven European countries (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland); most held positions in marketing, media, ticketing, or sales management. One manager was the team CEO. Fans hailed from three countries and supported different teams across the above-mentioned five sports.

Seven in-depth interviews were held in person, and 18 were conducted via telephone. In-depth phone interviews are generally acceptable when the interviewer and participant are geographically distant (Marcus & Crane, 1986). A so-called emergent schedule was applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), focusing on key themes that embodied a suitable structure for this interview-based exploratory study. We were as flexible as possible in the structure and timing

of interviews. During interviews, we referred to key themes in fan engagement: exploring components and outcomes, the valence of constructs, and managers' and fans' perspectives. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes; all were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Individual transcripts were then returned to each informant to allow them to review the text and make further comments as needed.

Data were processed via the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. We followed seven steps recommended by Creswell (2013) for content analysis: (1) data organization and preparation for analysis, (2) reviewing all transcribed information to gain a general sense of the data, (3) organizing the data into categories and labeling categories with a term, (4) generating a description of the setting and people to be analyzed, (5) advancing how themes are represented, (6) identifying thematic interactions, and (7) interpreting the findings.

3.2. Study 2

In Study 2, we followed a three-stage process to develop the fan engagement construct and test its predictive power. First, we conceptualized this construct based on a literature review and insight from interviews with four experienced sport marketing experts. Second, data were gathered from 206 season ticket holders (STH) of a professional soccer team in Switzerland to test the construct and demonstrate its predictive power (Study 2a). We focused on STH due to their demonstrated interest in a long-term relationship with the team as evidenced by purchasing season tickets (Lee et al., 2020). In addition, STH tend to be open to communication activities or offers that increase their engagement with the team (George & Wakefield, 2018). These fans thus represent a core market segment for sport organizations. Third, we collected data from 520 fans of professional sport teams to validate the fan engagement construct and generalize findings beyond the context of a specific team (Study 2b). This process has been used in sport management (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2017) and is based on an established approach suggested by Churchill (1979) and Rossiter (2002).

Regarding scale development, we adhered to Tian et al.'s (2001) method. We developed a list of initial items based on a literature review and presented them to a panel of four sport marketing researchers from four universities. All experts received a list of the factors, their original definitions, and the corresponding items. The panel provided feedback on the wording of each item to enhance understanding and rated each item on three categories (relevance, representativeness, and clarity) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *low*; 5 = *high*). Eight items were rated below the 80% threshold in one of the three categories and therefore removed from the list (80% threshold; Polit & Beck, 2006). The final list contained 12 items that were later applied in Studies 1 and 2.

To provide a concise measurement tool, each construct was evaluated using two items. This procedure was intended to benefit researchers and practitioners. We based our approach on prior studies recommending the use of two items per factor to achieve parsimony while still allowing for reliability assessment (e.g. Funk et al., 2009). Concise scales also help to ensure an appropriate survey length (Richins, 2004).

The chosen sport team emailed the questionnaires for Study 1 to STH with the incentive to win season tickets for the next season. Study 2a was conducted in Summer 2018. Most respondents were men (75% men, 25% women) with an average age of 26.2 years. Study 2b took place in Spring 2019: we collected quantitative data to test the fan engagement construct. Invitation e-mails were sent to 9,800 team sport supporters in Switzerland. The final sample consisted of 520 respondents (response rate: 6.1%), most of whom were men (60.9% men, 39.1% women; M_{age} = 32.5 years).

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and IBM SPSS AMOS 25. We followed a data cleaning process in which incomplete surveys, those completed in unrealistically short times, and those in which the same answer was marked for all items were removed (cf. Rossi et al., 2013). Ultimately, 206 surveys were analyzed in Study 1 and 520 surveys were analyzed in Study 2. We tested the measures' reliability and validity via

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) following Brown's approach (2006). Then, we performed structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses in the proposed model. We evaluated the model based on indicator reliability, factor reliability, and the average variance extracted (AVE) per factor. We referred to Hair et al.'s (2014) principles to assess overall model fit.

4. Essays

4.1. Essay 1

Main Author: Marcel Hüttermann

Abstract

Fans often support a team through different activities, via different channels and on different occasions. These interactions between fans and a team are summarized under the term fan engagement and this represents a central construct for customer relationship management of professional sports teams. The goal of this study is to develop a framework that categorizes positive and negative components and outcomes (benefits and detriments) of fan engagement in team sports settings. Based on qualitative interviews with 13 team managers and 12 fans of European professional sports teams in the first or second division of the five most popular team sports in Europe (soccer, handball, basketball, volleyball and ice hockey), we show that fan engagement components can be positive (fan resource integration, fan learning, and fan

knowledge sharing) or negative (fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team). These components can have the following benefits: fan resource development and fan value co-creation. Or they can have the following detriments: fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development. Both positive and negative outcomes of fan engagement practices relate to team performance on the field and business performance. In case of team performance on the field, study participants highlighted that winning a game is partly based on stadium atmosphere and loss of a game, in turn, may have its reason in the fact that the game was cancelled as a result of violent fan behavior. In terms of business performance, it was mentioned that the financial contribution by sponsors will be higher or lower depending on how well fan engagement is. Our comprehensive framework synthesizes the manifestations and consequences of fan engagement and thus contributes to our understanding of how fan engagement affects sports teams. In this way, we encourage sport managers to take a comprehensive view of fan engagement and evaluate each fan's contribution to the value of the team generally based on both transactional and non-transactional components. The contributions that a team's fans provide increase the value of the team.

4.2. Essay 2

Publication (peer reviewed, accepted): Huettermann, M., Kunkel, T. (forthcoming). The Influence of Non-Transactional Fan Engagement on Merchandise Consumption. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*.

Main Author: Marcel Hüttermann

Author contributions: M.H. designed the research; M.H. collected and analyzed the data; M.H. and T.K. interpreted the data and wrote the paper; M.H. and T.K. conducted the review and editing; and M.H. provided project administration. No external funding was necessary (resources).

Abstract

Merchandise sales have an important influence on the revenue of sport teams and enormous potential to attract new fans and increase sales among existing fans. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. We draw on existing fan engagement literature and focus on non-transactional fan engagement and its effects on merchandise purchasing as a single transactional fan engagement dimension. In doing so, we conceptualize five dimensions of non-transactional fan engagement (socialization, management cooperation, word-of-mouth, knowledge generation, and emotional engagement) that are relevant for merchandise consumption. Data were collected from 206 season ticket holders (STH; Study 1) and 520 fans of professional sports teams (Study 2) and analyzed using structural equation modeling. Findings show non-transactional fan engagement dimensions explain 51% (Study 1) and 60% (Study 2) of merchandise purchase intentions. Two findings of this study are particularly noteworthy and enrich the sports marketing literature. First, we were able to show that emotional engagement predicts the purchase intentions of sports fans in general, but not of STH. While previous research has shown that positive emotions have a positive impact on fans' consumer spending in general or for merchandise in particular, these results show that individuals who are engaged as STH make merchandise purchase decisions that go beyond emotional engagement. Second, these results indicate that merchandise purchase intentions are driven by dimensions of fan engagement that are related to the individual fan, rather than those that are influenced by others. Management cooperation and knowledge generation, two of the five dimensions of non-transactional engagement, were the only dimensions that showed a significant positive relationship with fan purchase intention in both studies. This article contributes to the sports marketing literature by providing specific insights on the relationship between non-transactional fan engagement dimensions and merchandise consumption intentions.

Thus, the findings have important implications for sport marketers as they expand the understanding of the impact of non-transactional fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions as merchandise represents a crucial revenue stream of sport organizations.

5. Findings

Study 1 was intended to develop a fan engagement framework including positive or negative components and consequences. Several key topics emerged. First, beneficial components of fan engagement included fan resource integration, fan learning, and fan knowledge sharing. The data indicated that fans contribute various resources, including operand resources such as wearing merchandise (purchased or self-made), bringing fan paraphernalia such as flags and banners into the stadium, or driving vehicles with fan-related decorations. Fans also contribute operant resources, such as using their smartphones to participate in team-related digital activities. Consistent with our notion of fan engagement, fans' financial investment is a clear component of fan engagement. Such financial investment manifests through single-ticket or season ticket purchases, merchandise purchases, subscription to a team-owned Internet television channel, travel to games, and food and beverage purchases either inside or outside the stadium. Fan learning occurs when fans acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to act, think, and feel as sport team fans. The study found that fans learn from actors such as the sport club, other fans of their own team, fans of the opponent and other teams, fans from other sports, and the media. The transfer of knowledge and skills can occur across various touchpoints from these actors offline and online: fans can learn at the stadium, through the club's homepage, social media channels, in mailings, by attending official fan club or member meetings, through stadium rules, and via other fans' behavior. Interestingly, just as fans learn from other actors, other actors learn from interacting with or observing fans. The third positive component of fan engagement is fan knowledge sharing: fans can transmit specific knowledge to the club or other actors, especially other fans. For instance, fans might

communicate with the club through fan meetings or routine team surveys on different platforms. Fans also communicate team-sport-specific information to other fans.

Second, observed components of fan engagement with negative valence include fan norm violations and resistance to the team. Fan norm violations can be unintentionally detrimental to the club. For instance, fans might set off fireworks because they enjoy this activity and consider it an important aspect of fan behavior, yet the consequences (e.g., penalties for the club or threatening others' health) are less desirable. Negative behavior that is intended to harm the club results in fans' resistance to the team. This type of fan engagement can occur when fans are dissatisfied with team-specific features and then turn against the club. Fan resistance includes behavior such as displaying insulting banners and singing insulting songs based on the team's performance. Use of pyrotechnics in the stadium is another form of fan resistance intended to harm the club.

Third, the benefits of fan engagement are fan resource development and fan value co-creation. The resources that fans devote to interacting with the team or other fans engender fan resource development. For example, fans develop resources when they are willing to learn how to sing the team's anthem, which other fans can support by sharing knowledge of how to sing the song. Fan value co-creation occurs when fans generate value for the team or for other fans. This co-creation can take various forms: by fans providing resources during games in the stadium, such as by singing and cheering even if their team is not successful; creating an additional-man atmosphere, wherein fans improve the team's internal business processes by sharing their feedback; recommending the team to others; shaping a fan culture and therefore generating a specific team image; or volunteering for game day preparation or other team events as needed.

Fourth, detriments of fan engagement include fan value destruction, fan knowledge sharing, and fan identity conflict development. Value destruction occurs when fans' team interactions destroy value, such as when fans' behavior interrupts a game and leads to a loss,

fine, subsequent games without spectators, or higher security requirements. Negative effects on the team's image can also result from fan value destruction (e.g., due to fans who have developed a reputation for misconduct). The second adverse outcome of fan engagement, fan identity conflict development, refers to discrepancies between the identities of certain fan segments, the team, and other fan segments. The dimension of fan resistance reflects fans' dissatisfaction with their team and can lead to the development of a fan identity that differs from that of the team and other fan segments; fan resistance is thus a pivotal factor influencing this outcome. Figure 1 illustrates the fan engagement components and consequences identified in Study 1.
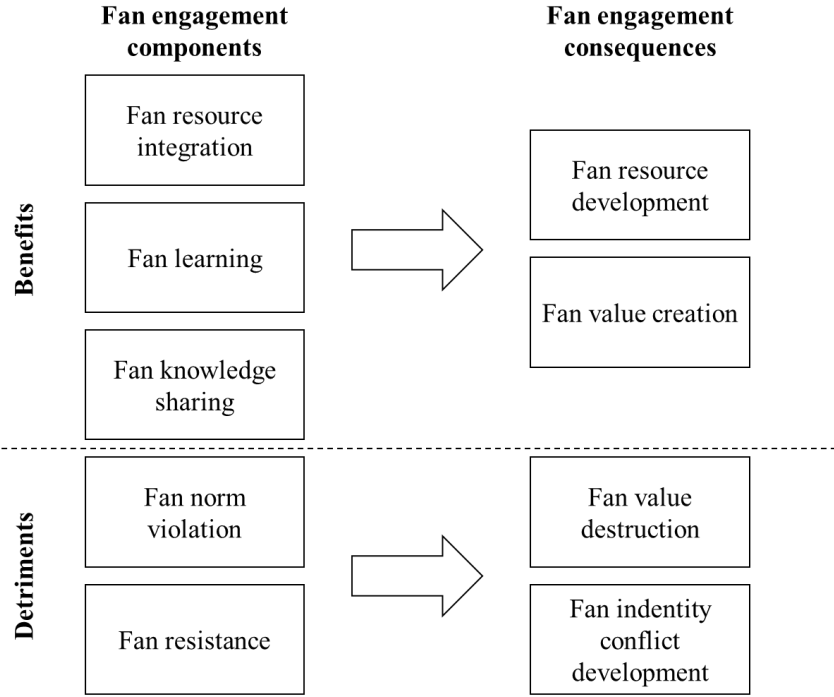
Figure 1 – Fan engagement framework (based on Huettermann, Uhrich, & Koenigstorfer, 2019)

Whereas Study 1 was designed to construct a holistic framework of fan engagement, Study 2 was performed to examine the impact of non-transactional behavior on merchandise purchase intentions. Through both sub-studies of Study 2, we assessed six individual factors. The CFA results indicated a good model fit and are listed in Table 3. All reliability indicators

(IRs), mean scores, factor loadings, standard deviations, and AVE values for the six-factor solution from these studies fulfilled all relevant criteria.

Fit statistics	Study 2a	Study 2b	Cut-off criteria	References
$\chi^2(df)$	1.217	1.173	≤ 3	Byrne, 2006
SRMR	0.0354	0.0193	≤ 0.8	Hair et al., 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999
RMSEA	0.033	0.018	≤ 0.08	Hair et al., 2006
NFI	0.941	0.979	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
IFI	0.989	0.997	≥ 0.9	Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2006
TLI	0.981	0.995	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
CFI	0.989	0.997	≥ 0.9	Bentler, 1990; Hair et al., 2006

Table 3 – CFA model fit for both studies 2a and 2b

We used SEM to examine whether the five factors (i.e., word-of-mouth, management cooperation, knowledge generation, socialization, and emotional engagement) influenced fans' merchandise purchase intentions. The fit indices conveyed a good model fit in both studies; the proposed model explained 51% of the variance in Study 1 and 60% in Study 2 in terms of merchandise purchase intentions. Table 4 presents the SEM results for both studies.

Fit statistics	Study 2a	Study 2b	Cut-off criteria	References
$\chi^2(df)$	1.738	2.293	≤ 3	Byrne, 2006
SRMR	0.0438	0.0290	≤ 0.8	Hair et al., 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999
RMSEA	0.06	0.05	≤ 0.08	Hair et al., 2006
NFI	0.913	0.958	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
IFI	0.961	0.976	≥ 0.9	Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2006
TLI	0.934	0.96	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
CFI	0.960	0.976	≥ 0.9	Bentler, 1990; Hair et al., 2006

Table 4 – SEM model fit for both studies

In Study 2a, findings revealed a significant positive relationship of merchandise purchase intention with management cooperation ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$) and knowledge generation ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$), whereas Study 2b indicated a significant positive relationship for management cooperation ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$), knowledge generation ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$), and emotional engagement ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). Word-of-mouth ($\beta = .21$, $p = .066$), socialization ($\beta = .09$, $p =$

.305), and emotional engagement (β = .03, p = .726) each had a nonsignificant relationship with merchandise purchase intentions in Study 2a. In Study 2b, only word-of-mouth (β = .06, p = .758) and socialization (β = .08, p = .218) had a nonsignificant relationship with merchandise purchase intentions. Results appear in Table 5.

Path			Study 2a				Study 2b			
			β	SE[b]	t	P	β	SE[b]	t	p
Word-of-mouth	$\rightarrow$		0.205	0.192	1.842	0.066	0.055	0.089	0.758	0.448
Management cooperation	$\rightarrow$	Merchandise purchase intention	0.345	0.091	3.622	***	0.262	0.062	4.029	***
Knowledge	$\rightarrow$		0.313	0.120	2.839	0.005	0.231	0.047	3.982	***
Socialization	$\rightarrow$		0.091	0.096	1.026	0.305	0.083	0.065	1.233	0.218
Emotional engagement	$\rightarrow$		0.026	0.213	0.207	0.836	0.400	0.067	5.788	***

Table 5 – SEM results for both studies 2a and 2b

6. Contribution

The purpose of Study 1 was to explore components of fan engagement in team sports that feature positive or negative valence and to categorize the construct's benefits and detriments. Study 2 involved a conceptually sound and practically useful fan engagement investigation to evaluate the impact of non-transactional behavior on merchandise purchase intentions. Both studies build upon prior research on customer and fan engagement and contribute to the sport marketing literature in several ways.

In both studies, I expanded Yoshida et al.'s (2014) fan engagement framework by identifying several relevant components and consequences. Whereas Yoshida et al. (2014) identified three positive fan engagement components, I delineated negative and positive components along with fan engagement consequences in Study 1. In Study 2, I measured five fan engagement components (i.e., word-of-mouth, management cooperation, knowledge

generation, socialization, and emotional engagement) relative to merchandise purchase intentions.

Second, and building on the first point, I determined that sport team managers could benefit from assuming a holistic approach to fan engagement (benefits and detriments, components and consequences). Team–fan dialogue appears especially valuable: on one hand, it can help protect the team from negative engagement, as both parties communicate their expectations and needs regularly; on the other hand, teams can leverage fan engagement to build their brand by involving fans in the decision-making process (e.g., value creation) or by encouraging fans to promote their team (e.g., word-of-mouth).

Third, I considered fan engagement from two perspectives (i.e., of fans and of professional sport team managers) for the first time. Earlier studies on fan engagement mostly focused on how fans perceive teams (e.g., Stieler et al., 2014; Uhrich, 2014) with less attention given to engagement outcomes. However, these outcomes are paramount because benefits or detriments can differ across situations and actors (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). It is hence worthwhile to account for both fans' and sport team managers' points of view.

Fourth, I measured the effects of fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions in Study 2 because this revenue stream holds the most potential for future team sales. Similar to Bernthal et al.'s (2015) investigation into how fan engagement affects spectator behavior in bass fishing, I adopted a specific measurement of fan engagement outcomes. In doing so, I identified specific implications for sport marketing managers to help them adapt their marketing activities to increase merchandise sales.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this research unveils several opportunities for future work. First, both studies involved a limited participant sample. Study 1 aimed to provide a holistic perspective on fan engagement, while Study 2 examined the effects of fan engagement

dimensions on merchandise purchase intentions. Although managers and fans are the most relevant stakeholders in terms of fan engagement (i.e., fans due to their behavior and managers for addressing this behavior), this research did not consider how other stakeholders may affect fan engagement (e.g., sponsors, media, policies, society, or innovators). The findings show that both stakeholder groups (i.e., fans and managers) see certain expressions of fandom differently. For instance, although fans might consider pyrotechnics a positive expression of their fandom, managers tend to perceive this behavior negatively. To ensure a broad evaluation of relevant components and consequences as well as associated benefits and detriments, the actor engagement approach (Brodie et al., 2019) is recommended. This method integrates all relevant team stakeholders along with their fans.

Second, neither study covered elements influencing fan engagement, such as fans' relationship with the club or specific psychological aspects. Study 2 considered STH, but the model can be further applied to assess other characteristics of the fan–team relationship. For instance, Yoshida et al. (2014) defined relationships as a third type of engagement expression. In this context, the long-term (customer) relationship serves as the basis for measuring engagement. Long-term fans display emotional attachment and loyalty to their team and consequently engage in transactional or non-transactional actions (Jowdy & McDonald, 2002). Thus, engagement drivers such as membership and affiliation (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Fischer & Wakefield, 1998; Snyder et al., 1986; Swanson et al., 2003) could be included in future evaluations to reveal fan-based differences.

In addition to relationship-oriented aspects, the literature on fan engagement has presented multiple perspectives on the determinants of engagement behavior. Individual psychological characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, balance theory, sense of identity, self-image, desire, motivation, awareness, attitude, attraction, and loyalty) could further clarify engagement behavior (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Campbell et al., 2004; Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Fischer & Wakefield, 1998; Funk & James, 2001; James et al., 2001; Snyder

et al., 1986; Swanson et al., 2003). Several studies have included additional dimensions that may determine fan engagement, such as social behavior (e.g., types of consumer behavior, prosocial behavior, supportive behavior, loyal behavior even when faced with poor team performance, temporary or ongoing behavior, and positive or negative behavior; Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2000; Holt, 1995; Hunt et al., 1999).

Moreover, scholars have recognized several dimensions that can spur fan engagement: emotion or affect in the form of fan behavior as a consequence of results (Capella, 2002), identification as emotional attachment (Fischer & Wakefield, 1998), atmosphere as a trigger for engagement behavior (Trail et al., 2005), self-perception (cognition) as a fan independent of the result (Campbell et al., 2004), and the perceived degree of team identification and (non-)fulfilment of expectations (Theodorakis et al., 2012; Trail et al., 2005). However, the above-mentioned dimensions have not necessarily been considered in isolation; several researchers have adopted a multidimensional perspective on engagement behavior and therefore cited various factors to explain fan engagement (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Campbell et al., 2004; Fischer & Wakefield, 1998; Hunt et al., 1999; James et al., 2001; Park et al., 2011; Trail et al., 2005). Most advocates of the psychological and behavioral determinants of engagement have perceived these attributes' effects as belonging to the non-transactional dimension, whereas scholars analyzing engagement in terms of transactional behavior often include cognitive and emotional/affective dimensions.

Third, I referred to existing scales in Study 2. Based on the two limitations mentioned above, we recommend a mixed-method approach to measure the full range of engagement dimensions with fans of different sports. All engagement dimensions, as well as the elements influencing engagement, could be incorporated into a qualitative research design in the future to examine their relationships using a measurement model.

8. Conclusion

The findings of this dissertation extend our overall understanding of fan engagement as well as the impact of such engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. This research correspondingly enriches the scholarship on fan engagement. In addition, Study 2 provides practitioners with a theoretically sound and concise scale that captures five dimensions of fan engagement, facilitating assessment of their respective impacts on relevant outcome variables. The literature review, findings from both studies, the contributions of this research, its limitations, and identified avenues for subsequent work collectively demonstrate that fan engagement remains a worthwhile topic for researchers and practitioners. This subject will likely continue to be appealing in the future; fan engagement is a manifold construct, and related insight can uncover strategies for sport teams to increase revenues and professionalize relationships among their fans.

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Appendix

Essay 1

Essay 2

Essay 1

Components and outcomes of fan engagement in team sports:

The perspective of managers and fans

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Components and outcomes of fan engagement in team sports:

The perspective of managers and fans

Abstract

Fan engagement is a central construct for the customer relationship management of professional sports teams. The goal of this study is to develop a framework that categorizes positive and negative components and outcomes of fan engagement in team sports settings. Based on qualitative interviews with thirteen team managers and twelve fans of European professional sports teams, we show that fan engagement components can be positive (fan resource integration, fan learning, and fan knowledge sharing) or negative (fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team). These components can have the following benefits: fan resource development and fan value co-creation. Or they can have the following detriments: fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development. Our comprehensive framework synthesizes the manifestations and consequences of fan engagement and thus contributes to our understanding of how fan engagement affects sports teams.

Conceptualizing Fan Engagement

1. Introduction

In professional team sports settings, fans often support a team via different activities (e.g., cheer for the team, work as a volunteer), via different channels (e.g., online and offline), and at different occasions (e.g., in the stadium, when following games in the media) (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Holt, 1995; Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Uhrich, 2014). The entirety of such interactions between fans and a team is subsumed under the concept of *engagement*, which can be tentatively defined as a person's (here: a fan's) investment of resources into interactions with an organization (here: a sports team) (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). While the investment of resources can have both positive and negative consequences, fans' high engagement with the sports team is generally considered to be beneficial for the team for several reasons. One reason is that engaged fans generate constant income from purchase transactions (e.g., season tickets, merchandise) despite potential ups and downs in the on-pitch performance (Yoshida et al., 2014; high BIRGing [basking in reflected glory] and low CORFing [cutting off reflected failure] tendencies among fans have been reported accordingly; Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman & Sloan, 1976; Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Another reason is the positive influence that engaged fans have on other consumers (e.g., word-of-mouth in social media; Kunkel, Doyle, & Berlin, 2017; Uhrich, 2014). Thus, engaged fans co-create value with teams in different ways (e.g., generation of stadium atmosphere; Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010; participation in open innovation practices; Wemmer & Koenigstorfer, 2016), resulting in beneficial outcomes for the teams, such as higher revenues and cost savings (Harmeling et al., 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). As a result of this positive view of engagement, the majority of previous research focuses on the beneficial manifestations (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2016) or defines the construct as a purely positively valenced phenomenon (e.g., Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; Yoshida et al., 2014).

However, engagement can also be unbeneficial toward an organization (Bowden et al.,

2017; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Sports teams are affected, for instance, by incidents of fans flinging objects onto the pitch (Fahey, 2017), setting off fireworks (Boulton, 2017) or even attacking the referee during a game (Critchley, 2016). Negative forms of fan engagement also occur beyond the stadium ground and the game day, including postings of disrespectful messages or unfavorable word-of-mouth on social media (Goodman & O'Neil, 2017) and brawls with opposing fans (Koukouris & Stavros, 2009). Insults from fans and fan violence have several undesirable social and managerial consequences, such as putting others' health at risk, increasing costs via payment of fines, and lowering team performance.

As the above examples show, fan engagement is a multifaceted phenomenon that aggregates the various ways in which fans create or destroy value for the sports team. With only one notable exception (Yoshida, et al., 2014), extant literature fails to provide categorizations of the plethora of different fan engagement components. Yoshida et al. (2014) make an important contribution in identifying three components of the construct (i.e., management cooperation, prosocial behavior, performance tolerance) and find positive correlations between these dimensions and beneficial fan responses (i.e., purchase intention and referral intention). However, the study only considers positively valenced components and, hence, neglects dysfunctional forms of fan engagement. Another aspect that limits the study's comprehensiveness is the constrained scope of the measures of the three dimensions, which include only a small selection of the conceivable manifestations of fan engagement. Beside Yoshida et al.'s (2014) research, a few other studies examine specific manifestations of fan engagement, although not all of the studies make an explicit reference to the term engagement. These manifestations include customer-to-customer interactions (Uhrich, 2014), dysfunctional forms of fan behavior at the stadium (Stieler, Weismann, & Germelmann, 2014) and user-generated content on the team's social media channels (Geurin & Burch, 2017). Oliveira Santos, Correira, Biscaia, and Pegoraro (2018) developed a domain-specific fan engagement scale through social networking sites. Since engagement, however, represents

several concepts that manifest in both online and offline channels, such as co-creation, interaction, and service development (Kumar & Pansari, 2016), we can state that the conceptualization of fan engagement in extant sports management literature is largely fragmented. This has prevented the research from moving from a context-driven generation of findings to a comprehensive framework of fan engagement and the resulting benefits and detriments.

The purpose of this article is therefore to develop a framework that categorizes both components and outcomes of customer engagement in team sports settings, taking into account the valence (positive vs. negative) of the activities. For this work, we define components as the various facets or dimensions that compose the conceptual content of engagement, while outcomes refer to the consequences of engagement. Based on qualitative interviews with both team sports managers and fans, we extend previous conceptualizations by adding negatively valenced components and detrimental outcomes of fan engagement. In doing so, we take into account the valence duality of customer engagement that has recently been recognized (Bowden et al., 2017; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). As a result, we derive a comprehensive conceptualization of fan engagement that should be less prone to over- or undervaluation of customers compared to approaches that do not fully capture positive manifestations and/or neglect the negative manifestations of the construct's components and outcomes (Kumar et al., 2010).

Another important feature of the framework is its focus on the perspective of the sports team. It has been noted that the value outcomes of customer engagement (benefits or detriments) vary across situations and actors (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Jaakola & Alexander, 2014). Previous studies on fan engagement often use the theoretical lens of service-dominant logic and center on the outcomes as perceived by fans (e.g., Stieler et al., 2014; Uhrich, 2014). However, sports teams (and their managers) are the entities that are affected by the outcomes of fan engagement practices. Thus, it is important to complement the fan perspective by

identifying value outcomes of fan engagement from the perspective of sport teams. From a theoretical point of view, this broader approach results in a comprehensive understanding of the value consequences of fan engagement because different actors are considered. From a managerial point of view, our work can help managers to focus marketing activities on those components of fan engagement that result in beneficial outcomes or prevent detrimental consequences for their team. Thus, our framework partially fills a gap by identifying the value outcomes of fan engagement from the perspective of sports team managers beside fans.

In what follows next, we first present a literature review on customer and fan engagement. We then present the results of a qualitative study with team sports managers and fans and focus on the exploration of positive and negative components and outcomes of fan engagement. We conclude by discussing the results, providing managerial implications, and giving future research directions based on the limitations of our study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Customer engagement

Due to the sparse number of specific studies on customer engagement in team sports settings, we begin our review with relevant previous work in general marketing literature. Considering the goals of the present research, the review of this literature is structured into broad areas: 1) definitions as well as components and outcomes of customer engagement and 2) valence of customer engagement (positive vs. negative).

2.1.1 Definitions of customer engagement

The extant definitions of customer engagement vary considerably, which complicates the comparison of previous findings and impedes a systematic development of the domain (Harmeling et al., 2017). For example, authors construe customer engagement in terms of only behaviors (e.g., Harmeling et al., 2017; Jaakola & Alexander, 2014) or include both

behavioral and psychological components (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2016). Definitions also vary regarding the inclusion or exclusion of transactional components. Several authors view customer engagement as activities beyond the core transaction (e.g., word-of-mouth (WOM) activity, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging, writing reviews; van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), while others include the customers' direct financial contributions (i.e. purchases) (e.g., Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Also, there are differences with regard to the motivational aspects of engagement: while some authors highlight the affective dimensions (e.g., Chan & Li, 2010) others highlight the cognitive dimensions (e.g., Mollen & Wilson, 2010).

Based on the arguments provided by Hollebeek et al. (2016) and Pansari and Kumar (2017), a person's investment of resources into interactions with an organization is at the core of the definition of customer engagement. The various definitions share this perspective (even though there are sometimes slight differences in wording). As is detailed below, the diversity of viewpoints also relates to the construct's conceptualizations.

There are various conceptualizations of the components and outcomes of customer engagement. For example, Kumar and colleagues (Kumar et al., 2010, Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017) define purchase behavior as one component of engagement beside referrals, social influence, and knowledge sharing. Accordingly, the authors propose that the outcomes of customer engagement include benefits that are directly determined by the core transaction (i.e., revenues). Further benefits are the three intangible aspects permission marketing, privacy sharing, and opportunities for personalized marketing communications (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Hollebeek et al. (2016) develop a framework that comprises three antecedents (resource integration, knowledge sharing, learning) and three benefits (individual as well as interpersonal resource development, co-creation) of customer engagement. The relationships between the framework's components are not entirely clear though because the authors suggest that both the antecedents and the benefits can coincide with engagement. Van

Doorn et al. (2010) suggest five dimensions of customer engagement: valence, form, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goals. These dimensions are characteristics based on which specific manifestations of engagement can be described, rather than conceptual components of the construct. Importantly, a specific engagement behavior such as word-of-mouth can be described in terms of its valence (positive or negative). With regard to firm-related customer engagement outcomes, van Doorn et al. (2010) identify and briefly discuss several aspects, including financial, reputational, and competitive factors. In what follows, we describe the valence of customer engagement in more detail.

2.1.2 Valence of customer engagement

A common characteristic of the vast majority of research contributions is their focus on positively valenced components and outcomes of customer engagement (e.g., Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Despite this emphasis on the positive manifestations, the valence duality of the construct has been repeatedly acknowledged (e.g., Bowden et al., 2017; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Kumar et al., 2010). Dysfunctional manifestations of the construct have been noted from the earliest studies in this realm (e.g., van Doorn et al., 2010), however, only very few studies have addressed the negative components and outcomes in more depth. For example, Juric, Smith and Wilks (2016) distinguish between negative customer engagement and customer engagement with a negative valence. The former refers to behavior with the intent to cause harm to the firm, while the latter describes behaviors that focus on co-creating value but unintentionally result in detriments for the firm. Hollebeek and Chen (2014) explore negatively valenced engagement from the perspective of the customers. They conclude that negatively valenced engagement includes unfavorable thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Despite the study's focus on the value consequences for customers, the authors propose that these negative manifestations also lead to detrimental outcomes for the firm. Similarly, Bowden et al.'s (2017) examination of engagement finds both positive and negative

manifestations, which are categorized into cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. Since the study explores customer experiences, the benefits and detriments for the firm are not directly addressed in the research.

2.2 Fan engagement in team sports

Based on a review of the sport consumer behavior literature, Yoshida et al.'s (2014) research is the only team sports-related study that focuses explicitly on the concept of fan engagement. Beside their work, Oliveira Santos, Correira, Biscaia, and Pegoraro (2018) examine fan engagement in the specific domain of social networking sites. However, several other studies contribute to the general understanding of fan engagement and its value outcomes without making explicit reference to the construct. Thus, our review of sport-specific literature first introduces Yoshida et al.'s (2014) work and then summarizes additional related work that addresses both positive and negative components and outcomes of fan engagement.

2.2.1 Yoshida et al.'s (2014) understanding of fan engagement

Yoshida et al. (2014) define fan engagement as "a sports consumer's extra-role behaviors in non-transactional exchanges to benefit his or her favorite sports team, the team's management, and other fans" (p. 403). Within the boundaries of this definition, the authors suggest three dimensions of fan engagement: management cooperation (helping the management of the team), prosocial behavior (helping other fans), and performance tolerance (supporting the team regardless of the on-pitch performance). Their conceptualization of the construct includes three antecedents: positive affect, team identification, and BIRGing. Yoshida et al.'s empirical study indicates that these antecedents predict the three proposed dimension of fan engagement and that these dimensions are positively associated with beneficial outcomes for the sports team. Specifically, except for the relationship between

positive affect and prosocial behavior as well as BIRGing and performance tolerance, all antecedents are positively correlated with the three dimensions of engagement. Furthermore, the dimensions management cooperation and performance tolerance are positively correlated with purchase intentions and prosocial behavior shows a positive correlation with referral intentions. While Yoshida et al.'s work provides an important initial step towards a first team-sports-specific conceptualization of fan engagement, the rather narrow definition ignores some potentially relevant components, including various co-creation practices and activities related to the core transaction (see introductory examples) as well as, most important to our study, negative aspects of fan engagement. In what follows, we describe both positive and negative components and outcomes of fan engagement that have been identified in the literature.

2.2.2 Positive components and outcomes of fan engagement

Several studies contribute to the general understanding of fan engagement and its value outcomes without making explicit reference to the construct. Lachowetz, McDonald, Sutton, and Clark (2001) attempt to determine the value that the fans' transactional activities provide for teams. They use the National Basketball Association as a case to show sports team managers how to apply customer lifetime formulas and use them for managerial decision-making. However, the authors neglect fan activities beyond the core transaction and, therefore, these lifetime formulas only cover a small part of the conceptual scope of customer engagement. Milne and McDonald (1997) develop the so-called relative relationship strength measure and recommend the combination of transactional figures with non-transactional indicators, such as behavioral and psychological commitment. The combination of these two dimensions that jointly determine the value that fans have for teams represents a conceptual advancement. However, the study disregards several potentially relevant components that are crucial to today's understanding of fan engagement, such as content generation on social

media channels and the influence that fans have on other customers (Uhrich, 2014).

Numerous studies have examined aspects that represent specific manifestations of fan engagement. For example, Hajli and Hajli (2013) find that social media activities of fans offer the team a source of social capital, which manifests in sharing information, knowledge, and experiences. In a case study of season ticket holders, Zagnoli and Radicchi (2010) reveal a system of relationships, where fans influence the internal dynamics of the social network that has developed around a football team. They outline different ways of how fans influence decision-making processes of the team's management. In another study, Brown and Billings (2013) take a reputation-repair perspective on social media activities. They surveyed highly identified college team fans and their Twitter followers. The authors argue that these fans can "become an unofficial arm" (p. 80) of their favorite team. As none of these and several other studies refer to the concept of fan engagement, the extant knowledge of the construct's positive components and outcomes is highly fragmented. One exception is Oliveira Santos et al.'s (2018) study, which develops a domain-specific scale for fan engagement through social networking sites. The scale covers the following components: fan-to-fan relationship, team-to-fan relationship, and fan co-creation. With regard to engagement outcomes, the study exclusively considers positive behavioral intentions (both online and offline).

2.2.3 Negative components and outcomes of fan engagement

The negative manifestations of the construct can only be indirectly derived from extant literature because no study makes explicit reference to the construct. In the sport management literature, there is widespread consensus that the value outcomes of interactions between teams and their fans are not always positive but can also be of negative valence (Woratschek et al., 2014). This finds support in a number of studies that highlight that fan engagement is not limited to activities with positive outcomes for the team. For example, Wann and colleagues examine the relationship between team identification and fan aggression and find

that highly identified fans are more often involved in incidents of violence and aggressive

behavior (Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999; Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003; Wann,

Peterson, Cothran, & Dykes, 1999). Thus, while team identification is generally regarded as

beneficial for the team, these studies highlight that it can also result in negative consequences.

Harris and Ogbonna (2008) explore the complex relationships that fans can have with

different focal objects in and around their favorite team. While fans may support the players,

they often engage in activities with dysfunctional outcomes for the team as a whole.

McDonald and Karg (2014) investigate ritual behaviors of sports fans and stress that while the

majority of these behaviors creates value for the team, others have a negative impact (e.g.,

where rituals include vandalism or intimidation). Stieler et al. (2014) provide an in-depth

examination of the negative manifestations of fan engagement through the lens of service-

dominant (S-D) logic. They focus on fan engagement at the live venue that results in value co-

destruction. Specific manifestations of such negatively valenced activities include derogating

the team manager (e.g., by barracking him or her), displaying antisocial behavior (e.g., by

lighting bengalo fires and causing physical harm to other fans), and being intolerant towards

the poor on-pitch performance of the team (e.g., by remaining silent when the team is losing).

Anecdotal evidence provides support for the occurrence of negatively valenced fan

engagement, such as punching other fans, pelting the field with various things, and peeing on

the stands (and hence offending other fans) (Babb & Rich, 2016; Bonsignore, 2012; Wilson,

2016). Some of these activities have direct value consequences for the team, when the team

gets fined for the misbehavior of their fans by governing bodies (USA Today, 2016).

2.2.4 Defining the scope of fan engagement for the present study

Construing fan engagement as the fan's investment of resources into interactions with

the team that result in benefits or detriments means that the construct contains a plethora of

different activities. This points to the character of fan engagement as a highly abstract

construct. Abstract constructs vary considerably in terms of their meaning across different contexts and raters (Rossiter, 2002). The abstractness generally increases as the number of dimensions of a construct increases (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009).

Fan engagement is related to a number of other constructs. Due to the high abstractness of the construct, these constructs might also be considered as dimensions of fan engagement. For example, in Kumar and Pansari's (2016) study, engagement (employee engagement in their case) comprises of several other well-established constructs, including identification, satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty. Yoshida et al. (2014) operationalize fan engagement via three dimensions that are constructs on their own (management cooperation, prosocial behavior, performance tolerance). Thus, fan engagement can be viewed as an umbrella construct that is related to several other concepts. Despite its relatedness to other concepts, fan engagement is a unique construct that can and must be distinguished from similar constructs. Table 1 provides definitions of related constructs and briefly describes how these constructs are related to fan engagement in order to highlight distinctions of these constructs with fan engagement.

With only one notable exception (Yoshida et al., 2014), team sports literature provides no categorization of fan engagement components and outcomes. In view of Yoshida et al.'s (2014) study, we suggest that a broader conceptualization of the components and outcomes is necessary to cover the construct more comprehensively.

We propose extending Yoshida et al.'s (2014) conceptualization of fan engagement by considering both positively and negatively valenced components and outcomes (the latter are referred to as benefits and detriments). Furthermore, in line with Kumar et al. (2010), we propose that transactions should not be excluded from conceptualizations of customer (and hence fan) engagement (see also Pansari & Kumar, 2016). A valid evaluation of a fan's (or a group of fans') engagement value should include both transactional and non-transactional features (Kumar et al., 2010). Suggestive evidence from managerial decision-making in sports

Table 1: *Constructs related to fan engagement*

Construct	Definition	Relationship to fan engagement	Operationalization (example taken from literature)	Origin of the construct outside the sport literature
Fan commitment	"A reflection of a .. desire to maintain a valued relationship with his or her favorite sports team" (Kim, James, & Kim, 2013, p. 173)	Fan engagement focuses on the investment of resources rather than the desire to maintain a relationship	Psychological commitment to team scale: fourteen-item, one-dimensional construct, validated in three studies with university students from the United States (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000)	Sociology, psychology, and marketing; commitment directs individuals to a consistent line of action
Fan loyalty	"(…) attending a game; watching a game on television; purchasing licensed products; following a team via media, including radio, newspaper and internet; and so forth" (Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003, p. 246) for behavioral loyalty (see also Gladden & Funk, 2001, p. 76). Attitudinal loyalty is the strength of fans' commitment to a particular sports team (Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000, p. 20)	Fan engagement refers to current activities, whereas behavioral loyalty is directed at future activities; attitudinal loyalty can be considered as an antecedent of fan engagement (see row below); yet, loyalty (be it attitudinal or behavioral) does not encompass the fans' investment of all the types of resources covered by fan engagement's conceptualization	Seven-item, two-dimensional construct (attitudinal and behavioral loyalty), validated in one study with subscribers of a sports magazine from the United States (Gladden & Funk, 2001)	Marketing; fan loyalty makes individuals want to re-purchase from the same company (and/or purchase the same products and services again) despite situational influences
Fan (or team) identification	"The extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team's performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves" (Branscombe & Wann, 1992, p. 1017)	Yoshida et al. (2014) consider fan identification as an antecedent of fan engagement; conceptually, resources are likely to be invested into a relationship with a team when fans are both involved and concerned with the team	Seven-item, one-dimensional construct, validated in two studies with university students from the United States (Wann & Branscombe, 1993)	Psychology (Social Identity Theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1979); an individual derives a greater sense of self from belonging to a social group; this is partly why fans identify with a team
Fan Involvement	"The level of interest or importance a fan ascribes to sports representing the level that a fan values or believes that sports are relevant and important to their life and lifestyle" (Stevens & Rosenberger, 2012, p. 230; in reference to sport; can be adapted to *teams*)	Fan involvement can be considered as an antecedent of fan engagement; conceptually, resources are likely to be invested into a relationship with a team when fans are involved with the sport (or the team)	Eight-item, two-dimensional construct (affective and cognitive), validated in one study with consumers from the United States (Shank & Beasley, 1998)	Marketing; fan involvement makes an object or an activity (here: sports or teams) meaningful, important, and engaging to an individual

Fan identity	"The meaning individuals attach to their role of being fans of their favourite team" (Biscaia, Hedlund, Dickson, Naylor, 2018, p. 463)	Conceptually, resources are likely to be invested into a relationship with a team when fans attach meaning to their role as fans of a team	Sixteen-item, four-dimensional construct (power, urgency, external and internal legitimacy), validated in two studies with sport website visitors from Portugal (Biscaia et al., 2018)	Psychology (Social Identity Theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1979); an individual derives a greater sense of self from belonging to a social group; this is partly why fans' identity is not independent from the team
Brand equity (customer-based)	"The differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (Keller, 1993, p. 1)	Sport team equity (fan-based) deals with how marketing outcomes are generated, considering team knowledge and behavioral responses; while knowledge can be a component of fan engagement, relationships are not considered in the conceptualization of fan engagement	Twenty-item, four-dimensional construct (two types of attributes, benefits, as well as attitudes) adapted to the sport context, validated in one study with soccer fans from Germany (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008)	Marketing; brand equity allows brand managers to evaluate their own activities (i.e., a brand [vs. un unbranded control condition] has a positive brand equity when customers react more favorably to an element of the marketing mix)

Notes. The definitions and operationalizations are examples. Others exist in the literature.

can be used to substantiate this claim. For example, sports team managers often have to trade off and make decisions based on both transactional and non-transactional components of fan engagement (e.g., a sports manager's decisions about ticket pricing according to the closeness of the seat to the pitch vs. fans' willingness to pay: fans who largely contribute to the stadium atmosphere may have a lower willingness to pay than fans who contribute little to the atmosphere [but who have a higher willingness to pay]). From a conceptual perspective, benefits and detriments result not only from purely transactional or non-transactional activities, but also from an interaction of the two. This is particularly true for the team sports context, as some non-transactional behaviors are only displayed when matched with certain transactional behaviors (e.g., a ticket must be bought in order for a fan to be able to contribute to an in-stadium choreography before or during the game). Our empirical exploration, which is presented in the following section, takes into account the aforementioned aspects.

3. Method

Our research into fan engagement (in accordance with S-D logic defined as a fan's investment of resources into interactions with the sports team) aims to explore positively and negatively valenced components as well as their outcomes – that is, benefits (positive in nature) and detriments (negative in nature) – from the perspective of managers and fans of professional sports teams. We consider both fans and managers, because the two perspectives can take a complementary view (or reveal differences) to better understand fan engagement holistically. The exploratory nature of our research goals indicates that a qualitative design serves the purpose of the study best.

3.1 Informants

Our informants included managers and fans of sports teams of the first or second division of the five most prominent team sports in Europe (football, team handball, basketball, volleyball, and ice hockey). A purposeful chain sampling strategy (Suri, 2011) was used for our study. Chain sampling "involves seeking information from key informants about details of other 'information-rich cases' in the field" (Suri, 2011, p. 6). Thirteen managers and twelve fans of professional sports teams were recruited and we conducted in-depth interviews with them. We did not conduct further interviews when saturation of knowledge was reached; this was the case when thirteen managers and twelve fans had been interviewed.

All but one manager (who was the CEO of the team) had the position of the marketing, media, ticketing, or sales manager. The managers worked for sports teams from seven countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland). The fans supported one of these teams. Tables 2 and 3 describe the informants and the teams that were included in the study.

The season games of the teams under consideration were broadcasted via the media. Television and internet broadcasts of the season games were available for all teams. Thus,

fans from the team's country as well as from other countries could follow the games.

3.2 Procedure

In-depth interviews were conducted over a two-month period in summer 2016, a one-month period in spring 2017, and another one-month period in winter 2017/18. They were conducted face to face (seven interviews) or via telephone (eighteen interviews), as there were large distances between the interviewer and the participant at times (Marcus & Crane, 1986). At the beginning of each interview, authorization was sought to audiotape and transcribe the interview. We assured confidentiality to all participants. All participants gave their informed consent for participation in our study.

In agreement with Lincoln and Guba (1986), we applied the so-called emergent schedule, where the focus is on key themes as an appropriate structure for our interview-based exploratory research. This allowed us to keep the structure and the schedule of the interviews as flexible as possible, but still focused: they developed as the data collection progressed; in the interviews, we focused on key themes of fan engagement: the exploration of components and outcomes of fan engagement, the valence of the constructs, and the managers' versus fans' perspectives.

The interviews began with asking informants about their personal background and what their responsibilities are at work (managers). Before we asked the informants about fan engagement, the construct was defined. Then, we asked what fan engagement means to them and their team, what the positive and negative aspects of fan engagement are, what types of behaviors occur, which are indicative of high (vs. low) engagement, and what the consequences of these behaviors are.

The interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. They were recorded and then transcribed verbatim for the analysis. Transcripts were returned to informants to check for accuracy and to allow them to make any additional comments.

Table 2: Study informants and their professional sports teams (managers)

Team	Sport	Country	League (level)	League rank at time of interview	Club members (n)	Fans on Facebook (n)	Spectators per season game (M)	Name of informant	Position of informant
1	Basketball	Greece	Greek Basket League (1st)	1st	No information	378,373	10,357	Anja	Marketing and PR Manager
2	Football	Denmark	Superliga (1st)	5th	No information	81,512	5,902	Patrick	Marketing Manager
3	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	4th	145,712	15,015,191	81,226	Frank	Head of New Media and CRM
4	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	1st	290,000	45,000,000	75,000	Klaus	CRM Manager
5	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (2nd)	12th	20,500	338,343	35,586	Rolf	Head of Marketing and Sales
6	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (2nd)	13th	22,500	573,864	29,328	Michael	Head of Marketing
7	Football	Sweden	Fotbollsallsvenskan (1st)	1st	5,500	181,379	17,545	Kerstin	Marketing and Sales Manager
8	Football	Switzerland	Raiffeisen Super League (1st)	9th	1,500	58,239	4,950	Brian	CEO
9	Handball	Germany	DKB Handball Bundesliga (1st)	14th	1,000	12,619	3,792	Rainer	Press and Public Relations Manager
10	Ice hockey	Czech Republic	Extraliga (1st)	4th	No information	22,848	4,546	Sandro	Marketing Manager
11	Ice hockey	Switzerland	NLA (1st)	1st	1,600	43,332	4,415	Roger	Sales and Consulting Manager
12	Ice hockey	Switzerland	NLA (1st)	2nd	No information	41,683	9,900	David	Head of Ticketing
13	Volleyball	Poland	PlusLiga (1st)	3rd	No information	27,317	4,557	Raffael	Marketing Director

Table 3: Study informants and their professional sports teams (fans)

Team	Sport	Country	League (Level)	Club member	Fan club member	Name of informant	Years of being a fan
14	Basketball	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	No	No	Wolfgang	23
6	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (2nd)	Yes	Yes	Ina	10
15	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	Yes	Yes	Lalith	22
16	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	No	No	Fred	10
17	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	Yes	Yes	Andrea	15
18	Football	Germany	Bundesliga (1st)	Yes	Yes	Manuel	14
19	Football	Switzerland	Brack.ch Challenge League (2nd)	No	Yes	Dogan	8
20	Handball	Germany	DKB Handball Bundesliga (1st)	No	No	Diana	10
21	Ice hockey	Germany	Bundesliga (2nd)	No	No	Jan	21
12	Ice hockey	Switzerland	NLA (1st)	No	No	Lucien	20
22	Volleyball	Italy	SuperLega (1st)	No	No	Valerio	3
23	Volleyball	Italy	SuperLega (1st)	No	No	Giulia	4

3.3 Data analysis

As our research goal was to enable the informants to provide relevant and meaningful data (but not to constrain their responses by an overly developed conceptual framework), the analysis of interview data followed a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). This allowed us to identify the key themes that relate to fan engagement components and outcomes.

The qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA was used to help analyze the data. The content analysis followed the seven steps outlined by Creswell (2013). First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis through the transcription of all interview recordings. Second, all transcribed information was reviewed to gain a general sense of the data. This offered an opportunity to develop a sense of the underlying meaning (Tesch, 2013). Third, data were organized into categories, and categories were labeled with a term. Initial codes were generated in the general inductive analysis, which were then grouped under themes (Creswell, 2013; Thomas, 2006). The fourth step involved generating a description of the setting and people for analysis. It was essential to go beyond description and form thematic connections, resulting in how these themes collectively related to the informants' experience. In the fifth step, advancing how themes are represented, we determined that narrative passages accurately conveyed the findings of the analysis. The sixth and seventh steps in the data analysis involved identifying thematic interactions and interpretation of the findings, respectively. The final interpretation of the data was designed to explain how the findings not only address the research questions, but also the conceptual relevance of the findings.

4. Results

The following themes emerged repeatedly from the data: (1) in relation to *components* of fan engagement with *positive valence*, fan resource integration, fan learning as well as fan knowledge sharing take place; (2) in relation to *components* of fan engagement with *negative*

valence, fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team occur; (3) in relation to *benefits*, there are fan resource development and fan value co-creation; and (4) in relation to *detriments*, there are fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development. In what follows, we describe these components and outcomes of fan engagement. Tables 4 and 5 provide definitions of all components and outcomes and present exemplary statements made by the informants.

4.1 Positively valenced components of fan engagement

Fan resource integration. According to Vargo and Lusch (2008), resource integration can be described as the involved actors' activities and interactions when resources are integrated and operated upon. The data reveal that fans contribute various kinds of resources, including operand (e.g., material goods such as fan equipment) and operant (e.g., intellectual property, skills) resources. Examples of the integration of operand resources include the following: fans wear purchased or self-made merchandise, bring fan paraphernalia such as flags and banners with them, drive decorated cars, and use their cell phones in order to participate in team-related digital activities (e.g. visit the team's online merchandising store) inside and outside the stadium.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed several intellectual property items and skills that fans integrate in interactions with the team. The intellectual property items consist of the application of specific knowledge across different team-sports-related platforms, such as the home stadium, the team's digital channels or the opponent's stadium during away games. Thus, the application of skills and knowledge occurs both at the live venue and on other platforms. For example, fans apply their knowledge about where to meet with other fans, how to unify to march to the stadium together, or how to get tickets for special events. The integration of knowledge and skills inside the stadium includes rhythmic clapping and jumping, singing (some fans and managers told us that many fans lose their voice during the

visit) and handcraft skills. For example, Bruno (manager) stated that, "fans help the club: they handcraft choreographies." Dogan and Giulia (fans) stated that, "we create choreographies, produce flyers, and create our own merchandise." The interviews also show that resource integration is not limited to direct interactions with the team but also occurs when fans interact with other fans, travel to attend games, or watch games on TV (Table 4).

In line with our conception of fan engagement, the data indicate that financial investments made by the fans are a component of fan engagement from the perspective of sports team managers. For example, Anja mentioned that, "the fans that we consider as engaged with, and valuable to, our team are the ones who are active in all of the following areas: single ticket purchases, or season ticket purchases, or when they buy products from our official stores." The integration of financial resources also occurs when fans subscribe to a team-owned Internet television channel, for example. Also, fans devote their time, for instance, when they decorate the grandstands with banners several hours before the game starts. An example statement for time investment is the following: "fans spend their free time when they create stickers, banners, etc. or preparing the stadium for choreographies (Michael; manager)." Manuel (fan) stated further that, "the travel to games costs money, the ticket costs money, you buy yourself something to eat and drink and you buy a jersey or a scarf. For my team I've been on the road a few times. From a time perspective, my fandom takes 10-12 hours a week." For fans, not only finance matters, but time and overcoming large distances between their home and important events matter too.

Fan learning. Fan learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge or skills that relate to team sports consumption. Specifically, fans acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to act, think, and feel as a team sports fan. For example, they learn how to act in the stadium, how to respond when they accidently meet fans of the opponent before a game, or how to compose comments in online discussion boards. In terms of in-stadium behavior, fans learn, for instance, what clothes they are supposed to wear in the stands to be accepted by other fans,

how to sing songs to support their own team or to disparage the opponent, and how to respond to decisions of the referee against their own team. As an exemplary statement, Roger (manager) stated: "Certain songs are only learned in the stands and then, of course, they sing them again and again in the following games." Our informant Michael (manager) mentioned that fans not only learn behavioral patterns they are expected to exhibit but also what type of behavior they are expected to avoid: "The fans . . . represent a kind of community of values, where certain behaviors are not tolerated." Such behaviors include whistling against their own team, throwing things on the pitch, the usage of bengalo fires and the shouting of fascist, racist and sexist paroles.

The data also show that fans learn from different actors (e.g., the club, other fans of their own team, fans of the opponent and other teams, fans from other sports, and the media). The transfer of knowledge and skills from these actors can occur across a variety of touchpoints. As for learning from the club, fans learn at the stadium, through reading club materials on the homepage, the social media channels and in mailings or by attending official fan club or member meetings. Ina (fan) stated that she "learned this (appropriate behavior; the authors) through the stadium rules and the behavior of other fans, such as respectful behavior towards women, equal rights, no insults towards players and the referee, etc." Fan learning from the club can take place online and offline. However, fans can also learn from other actors at the same online and offline touchpoints. Our informant Rolf (manager) pointed out that fans learn, generally, when they "talk about the club with friends and meet other fans on game day, for example." Frank (manager) mentioned that, "fans learn when they read the comments from others on social media." Thus, fans do not have to be physically connected to others to learn from each other. Interestingly, not only do fans learn from other actors, but these other actors can also learn from interactions with fans, observations of fans, and other practices. This brings us to another category that was identified: fan knowledge sharing.

Fan knowledge sharing. A third positively valenced component of fan engagement

that emerged from the data is fan knowledge sharing. This component refers to the phenomenon that fans sometimes pass on their specific knowledge to the club or other actors. For example, fans communicate to the club "during fan meetings, which take place on a monthly basis during the season," David (manager) mentioned. Furthermore, he stated that, "there are representatives from different supporters of the club who meet on a regular basis to exchange needs and desires." Thus, the recipients of fans' knowledge sharing engagement practices can be both the team and other fans. According to our informant Sandro, fans also share their knowledge through the participation in regular surveys that the club distributes across different platforms (e.g., social media, mailings, and homepage) to collect fan insights. In another interview, Michael (manager) said that his team would ask the fans "whether the sponsor fits the club and its values or not" as a means to initiative fan knowledge sharing. In this case, fan knowledge sharing serves as a precautionary measure to avoid reactance toward the sponsorship deal.

In addition to passing on knowledge to the club, fan knowledge sharing includes the communication of team-sports-specific information to other actors, particularly other fans. This facet of knowledge sharing helps other fans develop their competencies as team sport fans, as was described in the previous section. Thus, knowledge sharing can facilitate the occurrence of learning. The data reveal that knowledge sharing can also complement or substitute the club's own marketing communications. This is the case when fans pass on information about the club to people who are not involved in team sports. For example, fans can recruit new supporters through word-of-mouth in discussions with other people. A fan's enthusiastic report about the last game visit or an iconic victory in the past is a valuable instrument for creating awareness for the club. This is important to teams, as "the teams can reach out to people using a non-advertising path. Without these fans, they couldn't reach them," Rolf mentioned. Frank even considers every single fan as a knowledge sharer: "every fan becomes a valuable ambassador, not at least via digital media." The importance of

Table 4: Components of fan engagement identified in the study

Team	Definition	Examples from the data
Positively valenced components of fan engagement		
Fan resource integration	A fan's use and application of his or her own resources in interactions with the team and/or other fans	Operand resources: "Fans wear merchandise, decorate their cars when we have games … They use their cell phones to connect with the team" (Klaus). "The fan uses his creativity, develops pictures or stickers, and wears them." (Benjamin). Operant resources: "The fan uses his craftsmanship" (David). "If a fan sees that the club needs help, such as a repair inside the indoor hall, he joins and helps and provides some labor work" (Jens). Financial investments: "The non-monetary contribution comes first, then comes the monetary contribution" (Sandro). "Fans purchase tickets, or season tickets, and buy merchandise products from our official store" (Anja). "Being a fan means for me: Being in the stadium, standing in the fan curve and being convinced to help the team by cheering the team. On the other hand, the financial support: when I buy fan merchandise, tickets and food. The third is the perspective when I like the Facebook page and tell my colleagues about my club. Decent behavior is also part of it. The branding perspective that my behavior has influence on how the club is perceived by others. I think far too few fans think about what effect their behavior has on others and on the club itself. Inviting colleagues at home and sharing the passion and joy is also part of being a fan for me" (Lucien).
Fan learning	A fan's acquisition of new knowledge and skills that are related to the team and the consumption of team sports	"Fans register for the newsletter or follow us on Facebook … Fans spend their free time with the club, learn about the club's values, the latest information about the team and the players, learn new songs when listening to other fans, and engage with the club" (Rolf). "I learn from people who've been with longer with the team than me. I learn from them the organization of the fan club regarding away games or also the behavior in the stadium where I watch what others do (songs, claps, etc.)" (Manuel).
Fan knowledge sharing	A fan's provision of team- and/or consumption-related information within his or her network	"Fans who spread the news to everyone in their network via social media make sure that others receive up-to-date information without interference by the team's management" (Kerstin). "When a fan talks about the club, he's a multiplier, so to speak … I cannot bring as much enthusiasm into marketing and communications as the fans can do" (Rolf). "As a fan, I constantly talk about the club and explain everything around it to other people" (Ina).
Negatively valenced components of fan engagement		
Fan norm violation	A fan's violation of rules and regulations that does not intend to harm the team	"It's similar, when fans fight with or steal things from opposing fans. I cannot understand that at all, but it seems that the fans have fun with it. They are not concerned about harming the club with those behaviors" (David). "A few years ago I light Bengal fires and was banned from the stadium for two years. When I came back, I got a lot of respect and since then I have a lot to say in the group. I did this because it was an adrenaline kick and it was part of the stadium choreography. But I don't think that I harmed my team in doing so" (Dogan).
Fan resistance to the team	A fan's purposeful opposition to the team that intends to harm the team	"If the fans boo their own team, they demotivate the team, which of course does not improve the situation, but deteriorates it" (Roger). "It is problematic when fans are in conflict with us. If they boycott games and leave the fan area empty, there is an atmosphere of resistance in the air … Insults on banners or transported via large choreographies lead to a heated atmosphere and, above all, to bad publicity due to media coverage … Fans sometimes disgrace the club when they show a defaming banner or sing a defaming song" (Rolf).

knowledge sharing can also be seen in fan interviews. For example, Jan stated the following: "I always bring my team as a topic of conversation although some people may not even be interested in it at first. At work, or when I meet friends, I talk about my team and the great experiences I had." The data also highlight the role of fans' social media activities, such as the use of Twitter and Facebook in sharing knowledge with others. Fans share their experiences they had with the club by making comments or sharing pictures. Frank (manager) stated that, "it is valuable for the brand when fans share their live experience in the stadium through Twitter or Facebook. This is more credible than if we share those things." Also, Rolf mentioned that, "when fans share things we post, this is a good indicator for what fans are interested in and what not." Brian outlined that fans' intrinsic motivation to share knowledge produces a transparency "that ensures that any topic is discussed within the club, even topics that go beyond the match day," and that transparency leads to more informed and democratic decision-making inside his club.

4.2 Negatively valenced components of fan engagement

Fan norm violation. The dimension called fan norm violation is a negatively valenced component of fan engagement that emerged from the data. This dimension embraces behavior that is unintentionally detrimental for the club. For example, when fans override the fireworks ban, they do not necessarily intend to cause harm to their club. They might simply set off fireworks because they enjoy it and consider it an important component of fan behavior, while the negative consequences (e.g., penalties for the club, putting others at health risk) are not desired. This is reflected in the responses of several informants. For example, they mentioned property damage caused by fans who put up team stickers in the city or spray graffiti. "Those behaviors are not tolerated by the government or the wide public, but our fan scene is strongly influenced by the urban graffiti culture. When they spray graffiti in our district, they don't do that to harm the club," Michael stated. "It's similar when fans fight with or steal things from

opposing fans," David mentioned. He stated further that, "it seems that the fans have fun with it. They don't aim to harm the club with those behaviors though." Dogan (fan) stated that he sticks self-made "stickers on public facilities (traffic lights, etc.) in my home town or when I am away from home to draw attention to the club." He continues: "A few years ago, I lid Bengal fires and was banned from the stadium for two years. When I came back, I got a lot of respect and since then I have a lot to say in the group. I did this because it was an adrenaline kick and because it was part of the stadium choreography. But I don't think that I harmed my team in doing so."

Fan resistance. In contrast to fan norm violation, the dimension called fan resistance refers to negative behavior that is intended to harm the club. This type of engagement behavior occurs when fans openly oppose their own club because they are dissatisfied with something. Manifestations of fan resistance include displaying insulting banners directed at the team management and singing insulting songs. The use of pyrotechnic articles in the stadium can also be a kind of fan resistance when the use is motivated by the desire to do harm to the club. Our informants mentioned that fans sometimes set off fireworks in order to do something that is prohibited to signal their dissatisfaction with certain club activities or decisions. Thus, they engage in this behavior to penalize their club by causing game interruptions, fees that the club has to pay, or sometimes even an abandonment of the game. When fans have these intentions, their practices can be classified as fan resistance. Other examples of fan resistance include booing the team or boycotting the games. Roger stated that, "if the fans boo their own team, they demotivate the team, which of course does not improve the situation, but deteriorates it." Rolf mentioned that, "if our fans boycott games and leave the fan area empty, there is an atmosphere of resistance in the air." Lalith (fan) stated that, "there was a big fan group that booed and shouted 'fire the manager' because they wanted a change in the personnel." A severe form of fan resistance is when fans break ties with their club for a period of time or even permanently. Some of our informants mentioned

that fans who strongly oppose commercialization in sport turned away from their club and then encourage others to do so too. Thus, fan resistance may sometimes even result in exit strategies (Table 5).

4.3 Benefits of fan engagement

Fan resource development. The dimension called fan resource development is a benefit of fan engagement. It refers to the improvement of the fans' operand and operant resources that they integrate in interactions with the team or other fans. Fan resource development results from the two components fan learning and fan knowledge sharing. For example, if a fan is willing to learn how to sing the team's anthem (learning) and another fan provides support by sharing knowledge about how songs or the club anthem are performed, the one fan develops his or her resources (intellectual property and skills) further. It is important to distinguish fan resource development from fan learning. While the latter refers to the process of acquiring new knowledge, the former refers to the outcome of this process (i.e. improved resources that are available for integration).

Since many of the resources that fans integrate into interactions are based on very specific knowledge, there is some potential to enhance these resources even for experienced fans. Our informants reported that even those fans who have been associated with the team for many years continuously improve their specific resources. For example, our informant David explained how fans integrated a diverse range of resources in the organization of a fan event that was initiated by the team several years ago. Today these same fans do not only invest their time, skills, and knowledge in team-initiated events, but also independently suggest and organize such events: "Now they organize themselves in online forums or in fan meetings…they divide the work and invite other fans to join…they proactively engage, involve, and guide others. This means that what they bring in has become much better." Manuel (fan) stated the following: "I, as the executive director of the fan club, receive

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knowledge from the fan representative of the club, pass this on to the fan club and then, we organize ourselves to support the club in new, different ways."

Fan value co-creation. The dimension fan value co-creation refers to another beneficial outcome of fan engagement, that is, fans' creation of value for the team or other fans. The managers mentioned several facets of value co-creation. First, fans can contribute to an additional-man atmosphere by integrating their resources during games in the stadium. Brian highlighted why this provides value for the club: "the team feels that the (home; added by the authors) crowd is on their side." He outlined further that, "fans give our team extra motivation for the game or for the next games when they generate an extraordinary atmosphere, when they sing and cheer, even at non-successful times." Value is co-created because not only the fans but also the clubs integrate resources (e.g., by playing music). The atmosphere co-created by fans can then become an element of a club's image. Brian said that, "in our first year in the 1st league, each guest coach or manager mentioned the fantastic atmosphere in the arena at the press conference after the match. That is very special and a value added by the fans." The fans provide the team an additional home advantage (e.g., Ponzo & Scoppa, 2016) and influence how others perceive the club.

Second, some informants reported that their team worked together with fans to create new products and services. Roger said that there are fans "actively shaping the design of the jersey." Also, Brian told us that, "fans have the possibility to create a retro-style jersey in cooperation with the club. However, there is not only the jersey. Every year, there is at least one more item that we create together with the fans." Sandro reported that, "creating new merchandising with the fans regularly through social media" is one of the activities that bring value to the team. Furthermore, the team can improve internal business processes (e.g., ticket sales, merchandising, and service desk) based on feedback that they receive from fans. David stated that they used the feedback from fans "to improve processes (…). This is really the key to me: find a consensus with the fans and find out where we can improve." Thus, product and

service development based upon the principle of open innovation is another way how fans co-create value with the club.

Third, fans can participate in some (or all three) stages of the customer relationship management process (recruit, retain, regain). Then, they co-create value and complement the club's marketing activities. David said that, "an engaged fan can be an important marketing tool for us." Roger, among others, outlined that many of their existing fans bring new fans to the sport venues (e.g., a father takes his children to the stadium) and that this is highly valuable to the team. Wolfgang (fan) stated the following: "I brought people to my club by telling them about the team, buying them tickets, and taking them with me to the games." Michael stated further that some fans, particularly what he calls very important people (VIP) fans, are not only ambassadors, but become co-creators when they contribute to the image that the team wants to stand for by their mere personality (theoretical arguments can be found in celebrity endorsement and sponsorship literature; e.g., Gwinner, 1997). He describes the situation in which a VIP fan "finds that we are a smart club and makes it public when he wears our shirts in public. They are our fans too and they bring new fans due to their behavior." We call this co-creation by transfer of meaning from the ambassador to the team.

Fourth, the interviews indicate that co-creation takes place to shape the fan culture that is specific to the club. For example, fans develop, change, and represent the values that the club wants to stand for: "Fans influence the team's values, such as to stand up against homophobia, against sexism, or against right-wing parties (Michael)." Michael stated further that, "the development of fan resources ensures that a fan culture arises. This culture is anchored in the middle of a fan's life and ensures that a unique fan culture emerges. The fans are a very important asset for us because they sharpen our whole brand. Our city is generally not very attractive to players but the fans are our greatest good in international competitions with other clubs to get the best players."

Lastly, we found that engagement as a volunteer often goes along with co-creation of

value. According to some of our informants, fans often volunteer for activities that their team is in need of. Brian, among others, told us that his team has a pool of volunteers: "We can contact them and ask for certain activities and then some people come to help us." Raffael reported that, "during every game, the fans perform most of the activities where work is needed." Jan (fan) adds: "In the past there were events where the team needed volunteers and I helped regularly. That was a matter of course for me. I did this with friends, and it wasn't work for me." This, according to Raffael, is highly valuable to the team. David told us also that the club saves more than EUR 100,000 per year due the volunteer engagement of their fans.

4.4 Detriments of fan engagement

Fan value destruction. A detrimental consequence of fan engagement is labeled fan value destruction. This dimension refers to situations where fans' involvement in interactions with the team destroys value. Fan value destruction is often a direct consequence of the negative engagement components of fan norm violation and fan resistance. One example of fan value destruction is when fan behavior leads to an interruption of the game, which may then relate to a sporting loss of the team or to some financial loss (or lower profit). For example, bengalo fires and other practices that interrupt the game (i.e., norm violations or resistance-to-the-team practices) can result in a lost game, monetary fines, the necessity to host a future game without spectators, or higher safety requirements. In the past, clubs have received a lost-game punishment (no matter what the actual score was), or they have been fined for their fans' misbehaviors (Gladwell, 2018; Holyman, 2017). The club may then face higher costs because additional private security services that monitor or exclude fans have to be paid. Or they face a loss of profit because they have to play in an empty stadium as a punishment. Also, ticket sales may go down, because certain spectator segments could feel that it is not safe to attend games any more.

A negative impact on the team's image is another manifestation of fan value destruction. The negative image may result from away fans who have developed a reputation for misconduct. For example, Brian stated that, "it affects our image as a club if fans travel to an away game and misbehave in the city by destroying the train interior, leaving waste in the train and on the streets, and so on (i.e., norm violations)." Frank stated that media reports about such misbehaviors would transmit the negative image of the fans onto the team's image. Michael stated further that, "the club is accused of not having its fans under control. The media then turns clubs and their fans into a socio-political problem that damages all actors."

Beside sporting, financial, and image effects, there may be negative health effects. For example, Kerstin said that, "when pyro and smoke are inside the stadium many fans have problems with breathing. We had a lot of injuries when this happened. And this isn't good. Fans come for the first time or the media covers this. Then, we can be sure that there will be fewer fans at the next game." The additional health risks of bad air (or any other form of fan violence, such as burned skin and other injuries from bengalo fires) may then have negative consequences on any of the three variables described before. Yet fans who lid bengalo fires in the past (e.g., Dogan) were not aware of these negative consequences.

Fan identity conflict development. Another negative outcome of fan engagement is labeled fan identity conflict development and refers to discrepancies between the identity of certain fan segments and the identity of the team and other fan segments. A key antecedent of this outcome is the dimension fan resistance. Fan resistance reflects the dissatisfaction of fans with their team. It can result in the development of a fan identity that deviates from the identity of the team and other fan segments because the dissatisfied fans intentionally dissociate their identity from others. For example, our informant Frank reported that, "the tendencies of some fans to publicly show their opposition to the team and put some pressure on other fans to join them could make spectators leave the stadium and thus lower the atmosphere." Rolf stated that families and season ticket holders who were interested in a safe

stadium visit did not purchase new tickets or renew their season tickets if conflicts with other fan segments made the stadium visits appear dangerous.

The interviews showed that identity conflicts between fan segments are developed through fan resistance and non-conforming behavior. The fan base becomes increasingly diverse, which limits understanding for the actions of other groups. Frank mentioned that, "fan groups become more and more heterogeneous and often there is a lack of understanding between these different groups." Fans supported this view. Some informants expressed a lack of understanding for other fans regarding the acceptance of violence against other people, lighting bengalo fires in the stadium, whistling out their own team, excessive drug use, misbehaving during away matches, boycotting via lowering the stadium atmosphere, and stealing fan utensils from fans of other clubs. Detriments also include identity conflict development practices that are directed at the team. Rolf provides an example: "If both fans and the team can no longer comprehend the actions of each other, there is no common identity anymore." Beside the potential for violence, the increase in psychological distance from fans or the team for some fan groups makes it harder for the team's management to target those groups and take into account their needs and preferences. This was true for some so-called Ultra fans, fans who "felt themselves deeply tied to the colors of their team and were strongly connected to the popular supporter culture" (Brown, 1998, p. 92).

Table 5: Benefits and detriments of fan engagement identified in the study

Team	Definition	Examples from the data
Benefits of fan engagement		
Fan resource development	A fan's improvement of his or her own resources in relation to other fans or the team	Operand resources: "Some fans produce their own merchandise; they develop the fabric they us, which is often more developed than the merchandise that we sell" (Klaus). Operant resources: "Now they organize themselves in online forums or in fan meetings…they divide the work and invite other fans to join…they proactively engage, involve, and guide others. This means that what they bring in has become much better" (David). "Fans have always new ideas of how to honor good players, players that made an outstanding contribution to win a game; they develop the idea further by themselves so that we are sometimes surprised by the result" (Klaus).
Fan value co-creation	A fan's active participation in value creation for the team	"Our fans are considered as the 6th player of the team supporting the players whenever they need it" (Anja). "Fans actively shape the design of the jersey" (Roger). "Every year, there is at least one more item that we create together with the fans. This has a positive effect on our sales revenue" (Brian). "By interacting with other fans, they influence how we work, such as when we designed the non-profit museum … Fans influence the team's values, such as to stand up against homophobia, against sexism, or against right-wing parties … A fan culture arises. This culture is anchored in the middle of the fans' lives and ensures that a unique fan culture emerges … Some fans represent the club's values in public and live them in their regular life" (Michael).
Detriments of fan engagement		
Fan value destruction	Consequences of engagement that represent a reduction in value for the team	"The game flow will be interrupted when fans throw pyrotechnics, coins or other things on the pitch … This will not only disturb the other team but both [teams; added by the authors]" (David). "When pyro and smoke are inside the stadium many fans have problems with breathing. We had a lot of injuries when this happened. And this isn't good. Fans come for the first time or the media covers this. Then, we can be sure that there will be fewer fans at the next game. We can say that pyro leads to bad PR image, and bad PR leads to a generally bad image" (Kerstin). "After brawls between fans inside the stadium, it has happened more often that season ticket holders and families say: ok, I'm not going there [to the games, added by the authors] anymore" (Rolf).
Fan identity conflict development	Different fan segments develop their own identities that are in conflict with each other and/or the team	"The worst [thing, added by the authors], which I am convinced was responsible for almost being relegated to the lower league, was the increase in fans' distance to the team. For three quarters of the season, the Ultras have distanced themselves from the team, there was no support, no atmosphere, no enthusiasm" (Rolf). "When the club offers memberships and existing fans comment on this negatively and advise against this for certain reasons, fewer fans will sign a membership or are hesitant to become a member" (Frank). "If both fans and team can no longer comprehend the actions of the other, there is no common identity for the whole team brand possible … Fanaticism of fans is also an issue. It does not support our team and does not provide any value" (David).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to explore the components of fan engagement in team sports that are of positive or negative valence and to categorize the construct's benefits and detriments. The study takes the perspective of both fans and managers of professional sports teams in Europe and identified fan engagement categories using inductive coding. The results showed that fan engagement components can be positive, falling into fan resource integration, fan learning, and fan knowledge sharing, or negative, falling into fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team. There are two benefits: fan resource development and fan value co-creation. And there are two detriments: fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development. In what follows, we discuss the theoretical and managerial contributions of our work.

Theoretical contribution

The results of this study extend our understanding of fan engagement in the following ways. First, in contrast to previous work (e.g., Stieler et al., 2014), we provide a holistic perspective on both the positive and negative facets of fan engagement (as called for by Bowden et al. [2017] and Hollebeek and Chen [2014] in general management literature). The positive components go beyond the components proposed by Yoshida et al. (2014), because fan resource integration includes more than cooperation with the management (the latter variable was measured in Yoshida et al.'s scale). In contrast to Yoshida et al., we consider resource development and value co-creation as fan engagement outcomes, which may subsume pro-social activities among fans and tolerance toward poor team performance with regard to wearing the team's merchandise despite lack of success (the latter variables were measured via three items each in Yoshida et al.'s scale). Fan behaviors identified in our study are, for example, fans' contribution to stadium atmosphere and fans' open innovation activities, that is, co-creation facets that have not been considered by Yoshida et al. (2014). In

contrast to Oliveira Santos et al. (2018), who considered co-creation as a component of their domain-specific fan engagement scale, co-creation emerged as an outcome in our study. Our work also extends Hollebeek et al.'s (2016) customer engagement framework. While there is some conceptual overlap with their antecedents and benefits, we add negative components and detriments of engagement and propose some team sport-specific sub-categories.

The negative components identified in our study are fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team. These components add to the literature on negative interpretations of fan engagement. For example, Martin and Goldman (2016) describe the process of fan detachment via three stages: dissolution (including the sub-stages of trigger, breakdown, and determinant incident), exit, and post-dissolution. We provide more detailed evidence on the determinants by describing fan behaviors that lead fans to engage with the team in a way so that managers perceive a negative valence of these activities. We also extend Stieler et al.'s (2014) work by offering two components of fan engagement and two outcomes. The variables identified in their study may be categorized along these dimensions. Such categorization of the negative facets of fan engagement is completely absent in Yoshida et al.'s (2014) framework of fan engagement. As a result, in our study, we derive a comprehensive conceptualization of fan engagement that should be less prone to over- or undervaluation of customers compared to approaches that neglect the negative manifestations of engagement (Kumar et al., 2010).

Second, our framework distinguishes between components of fan engagement and outcomes. The outcomes have been defined in non-sports-related fields according to a firm's customer-directed goals (e.g., increasing the likelihood of product and service purchases, increasing positive word of mouth; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Villanueva, Yoo, and Hanssens, 2008). However, for professional sports teams, the consequences typically include various other activities, ranging from volunteering for the club to shaping the club's image via a unique fan culture. Also, facets such as boycotts of silence in the stadium to raise voice

against authorities and the team's management have been identified as outcomes that have negative valence. The differentiation between components and outcomes should also help general management literature conceptualize the construct. For example, Hollebeek et al. (2016) distinguish between antecedents and foundational processes of engagement. They suggest that antecedents and the benefits can coincide with engagement, but they remain unclear about what the components and what the outcomes of fan engagement are. We contribute to sports management (and general management) literature by proposing various outcomes of fan engagement, such as value co-creation and value destruction as well as resource development and identity conflict development. Future research may find out whether they apply to both sports and non-sports contexts.

Third, we explored fan engagement from the perspective of both fans and managers of professional sports teams. The managers' perspective adds to existing literature, because the value outcomes of customer engagement (benefits or detriments) vary across situations and actors (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Jaakola & Alexander, 2014). Previous studies on fan engagement often center on the outcomes as perceived by fans (e.g., Stieler et al., 2014; Uhrich, 2014). However, sports teams (and their managers) are also affected by the outcomes of fan engagement practices. Thus, our framework partially fills a gap by identifying the value outcomes of fan engagement from the perspective of sports team managers, and complementing it to fans' perspective. Also, the identification of both components and outcomes may add to an extension of the conceptualization of facets, such as those found in Yoshida et al.'s (2014) scale.

Lastly, our study used a broad definition of fan engagement that refers to the transactional and non-transactional activities of fans (in contrast to Yoshida et al., 2014). While this is a conceptual issue with advantages and disadvantages for one or the other (e.g., Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), we note that fans and managers were not explicitly informed about whether we considered

transactional and non-transactional behaviors or only one type of these behaviors. The interviews, however, showed that both types contribute to the engagement levels of fans with their team. While conceptual arguments are needed to make arguments with regard to the definition of fan engagement, our work should help both researchers and practitioners take into account the opinions of both managers and fans about the construct when contrasting theory-driven conceptual arguments with field evidence.

Managerial contribution

The management of fan engagement components and outcomes is central to any customer relationship management activities of professional sports teams. Our proposed fan engagement framework provides managers with a classification scheme for positive versus negative components and benefits versus detriments. As Michael noted, "[most clubs; added by the authors] would not exist without fans." Thus, they can be recommended to ensure that fans can integrate various resources into the team, learn from each other, and share knowledge. Any signs that fans violate norms or resist to the team should be used as a warning signal that negative consequences may arise if these activities continue. The managers can thus be recommended to gauge both positive and negative components of fan engagement and use tactics to influence them for the benefit of the team (e.g., hold discussion forums with fans, use social media to learn about needs and preferences and respond accordingly). The use of open innovation platforms has been particularly effective in this regard (Wemmer & Koenigstorfer, 2016).

The positive and negative outcomes of fan engagement practices relate to both the on-pitch performance of the team (e.g., win [loss] of a game as a result of a better stadium atmosphere [or an interruption of the game via violent behaviors]) and business performance (e.g., higher or lower turnover depending on sponsors' engagement in response to different fan engagement levels). Managers consistently referred to both aspects, thus, we can assume

that both are relevant to evaluate fan engagement practices (beside social effects, such as health and well-being). The tools that managers can use to profit from highly engaged fans are not limited to typical customer relationship management tools, but also include the recruitment of fans as volunteers for social activities (e.g., children's camps, refugee inclusion activities, maintenance work), open innovation activities (e.g., in relation to co-creating stadium atmosphere or co-creating designs for merchandise), and consultancy on managerial decision making (e.g., recruitment of players and sponsors).

When managers' and fans' perspectives differ (in the present study, this was the case when fans enjoy the use of bengalos or when they are violent and break the law, for example), managers should aim to communicate with fans to find solutions of how to prevent these activities and avoid the negative outcomes that go along with them. According to conflict management approaches, such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE (Management-of-Differences Exercise; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977), managers have several options to solve such conflicts: (1) competing, (2) collaborating, (3) compromising, (4) avoiding, and (5) accommodating. Two separate dimensions describe these five options: assertiveness (i.e., an attempt to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperation (i.e., an attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns). Competing is assertive and uncooperative, collaborating is assertive and cooperative, avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative, accommodating is unassertive and cooperative, and compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The most attractive (but effortful) solution that creates a win-win-situation and is appealing to both parties (here: fans and managers) is collaborating; temporary solutions may be found based on compromising. Depending on situational factors, other options may be viable too.

To manage these processes of conflict resolution, managers should be in a constant dialogue with fans. Mediators often help establish this dialogue (e.g., in roundtable meetings, online chat rooms, and on-site fan talks). Fan representatives are such mediators who act as contact persons for the fans of the team. Efforts are not only made towards solving conflicts,

but also towards preventing conflicts via a proactive commitment to common goals, such as avoiding verbal and physical fights among fans (and with fans of other teams), avoiding riots, and banning fireworks that may harm people and break the law. Therefore, the mediators often take part in safety planning meetings.

To conclude, we encourage managers to consider fan engagement broadly and assess each fan's contribution to the value of the team in general based upon both transactional and non-transactional components. The contribution of fans to the mission and the value statements of a team add value to the team.

Limitations and outlook

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to some limitations. First, the study is limited to two particular groups of stakeholders. This has important implications for the interpretation of fan engagement outcomes. For example, managers may consider bengalo fires and violence as value-destructive. Those fans who engage in such practices, however, may enjoy themselves, and these practices may create value for them, or for people that have similar interests. Politicians, public health representatives, the media, sponsors, and other stakeholders may have different opinions, and these stakeholders have not been studied extensively until now.

Second, the study did not explore the antecedents of fan engagement. For example, Yoshida et al. (2014) conceptualize BIRGing as one antecedent of engagement – BIRGing may therefore drive several other components of fan engagement than those included in their model as our findings about the complex nature of fan resource integration reveal. Other potential factors may be explored too (e.g., low levels of CORFing and other psychological mechanisms that may lead fans to invest resources into the relationship with a team, such as motives and role meanings).

Third, while we explored categories that are of positive or negative nature (either

components or outcomes), we did not study interactions between the two and the processes that make fans go into one direction or the other. Managers of sports teams may be interested in learning what situational and personal factors determine whether fans violate norms or become resistant to the team (vs. integrate their resources, learn, and share knowledge). Situational factors may include team-related aspects (e.g., new investor that is disliked, relegation to a lower league) and other fan-related aspects (e.g., uninspiring or aggressive stadium atmosphere, violence of other fans). Personal factors may include trait variables (e.g., aggression, coping, and frustration tolerance) and fan identification levels (e.g., die-hard fans vs. fair-weather fans). This would then allow managers to design tools that produce most positive effects for the team depending on the needs and preferences of certain sub-groups within their fans.

Lastly, we defined fan engagement broadly and used an inductive coding that was informed by the S-D Logic, a theory that has been criticized for its vagueness and high level of abstraction (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). The criticism in relation to the S-D Logic also applies to our research. For example, we do not propose a measurement scale that would allow researchers and practitioners to measure fan engagement beyond what Yoshida et al. (2014) have proposed. Thus, it remains unclear whether the categories are discriminant from each other from a statistics-driven scale-development perspective. Future research may address this concern and propose a multidimensional scale that assesses the components and the outcomes of fan engagement. Such scale would also allow researchers and practitioners to make comparisons between different sports. Some engagement activities (e.g., use of bengalos) may depend on whether fans watch the game in roofed arenas or roofless stadiums. Thus, depending on the contextual setting that is provided by the sports, fan engagement activities might differ.

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Essay 2

The Influence of Non-Transactional Fan Engagement on Merchandise Consumption

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The Influence of Non-Transactional Fan Engagement on Merchandise Consumption

Abstract (150 words)

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. We draw on existing fan engagement literature and focus on non-transactional fan engagement and its effects on merchandise purchasing as a single transactional fan engagement dimension. Data were collected from 206 season ticket holders (Study 1) and 520 fans of professional sports teams (Study 2) and analyzed using structural equation modeling. Findings show non-transactional fan engagement dimensions explain 51% (Study 1) and 60% (Study 2) of merchandise purchase intentions and consumption is driven by fan engagement dimensions related to the individual fan, rather than those dimensions that are influenced by others. This article contributes to the sports marketing literature by providing specific insights on the relationship between non-transactional fan engagement dimensions and merchandise consumption intentions. Thus, the findings have important implications for sport marketers as merchandise represents a crucial revenue stream of sport organizations.

How Fan Engagement Influence Merchandise Consumption

Introduction

Merchandise sales have an important influence on the revenue of sport teams. For example, football player Cristiano Ronaldo's team Juventus F.C. sold 520,000 jerseys and earned $60 million in the 24 hours following his transfer from Real Madrid, an amount constituting nearly two thirds of his transfer expenses (Campbell, n.d.). Another example of the potential of merchandising is Paris Saint-Germain F.C. (PSG), whose marketing efforts have been aimed at positioning the team as a lifestyle brand to increase its market share in North America and Asia through merchandise collaborations (Williams, 2018). After the announcement of the three-year partnership between PSG and Air Jordan, and collaborations with Beyonce, Rita Ora, and the Rolling Stones, the pre-order feature for the new collection on the team's website had to be deactivated in response to high traffic (Williams, 2018). This new collection includes 90 products across performance, training, and lifestyle and has generated over $99 million in value since its launch (Williams, 2018). These two examples show the enormous potential of merchandising to attract new fans and increase sales among existing fans; moreover, they indicate that fan engagement may play a role in driving merchandise consumption (cf. Yoshida et al., 2014).

Fan engagement has received increased academic and practitioner attention because of its ability to influence organization-consumer relationships. Fans often form long-term and highly engaged relationships with the teams they follow (Funk et al., 2016). These relationships often lead to behaviors that are beneficial to the organization (Funk & James, 2001), such as financial benefits, such as attending games or purchasing merchandise, or on non-tangible benefits, such as improving the atmosphere in arenas or engaging on social media content. For sports marketers, it is essential to understand which engagement of fans are related to each other in order to optimize their marketing campaigns.

Fan engagement is conceptualized as sport consumers' extra-role behaviors and involvement in non-transactional exchanges to benefit their favorite sport team, the team's

management, and other fans (Yoshida et al., 2014). Non-transactional engagement (e.g. product development, innovation or word-of-mouth advertising) go beyond consumption and purchasing activities (van Doorn et al., 2010; Jakkoola & Alexander, 2014). In sports marketing, non-transactional engagements have manifold expressions, such as: word-of-mouth, management cooperation, knowledge generation, socialization, and emotional engagement (Huettermann et al., 2019; Kunkel et al., 2017; Yoshida et al, 2014;). This non-transactional engagement reflects user involvement with the organization beyond mere purchase or other economic contribution. In this way, fan engagement provides an appropriate foundation to examine the non-transactional engagement that influence merchandise consumption.

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of non-transactional fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. To achieve this, we built on research that provides insights on antecedents of buying merchandise products (Kim et al., 2011; Nalbantis et al., 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2015) and conceptualize five relevant non-transactional fan engagement dimensions. We conduct two studies focused on season ticket holders of a professional soccer team (Study 1) and fans of professional sport teams (Study 2). The developed dimensions show adequate reliability and validity and results of a Structural Equation Model demonstrate the ability to predict merchandise purchase intentions. Thus, this research provides insights for academics and sport marketers.

Literature review

Fan engagement is a metric used by scholars based on insights from established marketing literature. Within this literature, the topic of engagement is often discussed more broadly, generally using the term actor engagement to involve the ways in which various actors in service ecosystems interact (customers, employees, innovation networks, brand community, etc.; Brodie et al., 2019). Especially relevant for our work is the field of customer engagement, where the relationship between customers (fans) and businesses (sport teams) is

discussed. Customer engagement is defined as a person's investment of resources into interactions with an organization (Hollebeek, Srivastava, & Chen, 2019). According to Verhoef et al. (2010), the conceptualization of customer engagement began as a new perspective on customer management, which was necessary as the importance of non-transactional customer engagement increased.

Fan engagement is as a special form of customer engagement in a sports context and an emerging concept within the sport management literature. In sports marketing the fan is the most important customer. Hunt et al. (1999) define the fan as an "enthusiastic devotee of some particular sports consumptive object" (p. 440); in this case, the fan is characterized by the fact that they represent a "consumer" and feel an (emotional) "connection" with the sports object (team, athlete). This relationship is manifested in specific engagement. Examining sport management journals, eight articles included the term "Fan Engagement" in their title or abstract. An overview of these articles and their key findings is presented in Table 1.

Most relevant to the current research are the studies conducted by Yoshida et al. (2014) and Huettermann et al. (2019), both of which take a holistic approach to fan engagement. Of particular interest in terms of consumption decision making is the study by Yim et al. (2020) who investigated fan engagement as one of five consumption traits that influence millennial sport fan engagement. While the other studies make valuable contributions, they are of limited relevance to the current research. For instance, the term fan engagement is used exclusively in the context of social media where engagement is defined through likes and comments (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018), or the focus is on fan engagement sustainability initiatives that influence sustainable at-home behaviors (Casper et al., 2020). However, in the current research, we focus on non-transactional fan engagement as a concept to reflects fan's involvement with a sports team or with other fans of the sport team. This definition and the focus on merchandising purchase intention required a construct to measure the influence of non-transactional engagement on merchandise purchase intention.

Table 1. *Relevant fan engagement research*

Autor	Sport	Focus	Participants	Key Constructs	Key findings
Yoshida et al. (2014)	Soccer in Japan (J. League)	Quantitative	Pilot Study 1: N = 64 Main Study 2: N = 428	Management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance	Team identification and BIRGing played an important role in increasing management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance. Furthermore, performance tolerance has a positive effect on purchase intention.
Bernthal et al. (2015)	Bass fishing	Paper and pencil surveys	N = 216	1. Motivation items: aesthetics, vicarious achievement, drama/eustress, escape, acquisition of knowledge, role model, family/social interaction, athlete skill, and favorite sport. 2. Fan engagement items: organizational membership, identification with a favorite player, fantasy sport participation, sport participation. 3. Items to indicate frequency of live tournament attendance and frequency of TV/online tournament viewership	Various fan engagement variables are positively related to spectating behaviors, and that those fans engaged vs. unengaged in each of these variables differ with regard to motivations related to spectating.
Doyle et al. (2016)	Australian Rules Football	Qualitative	20 + 8 fans	Five domains of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA).	Evidence for the activation of four PERMA domains: positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

How Fan Engagement Influence Merchandise Consumption

Anagnostopoulos et al. (2018)	Soccer in the UK (English Premier League)	Mixed methods	NA	Comment and Like on Instagram	Product-related attributes were used significantly more often than non-product-related attributes and encouraged greater engagement from online followers.
Huettermann et al. (2019)	(Five biggest) Team sports in Europe	Qualitative	13 team managers and 12 fans	Customer Engagement framework	Fan engagement components can be positive (fan resource integration, fan learning, and fan knowledge sharing) or negative (fan norm violation and fan resistance to the team). In addition, these components can have the following benefits: fan resource development and fan value co-creation or they can have the following detriments: fan value destruction and fan identity conflict development.
Jones et al. (2019)	Formula One	Quantitative	N = 637	Customer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010) as a guiding framework and Bettencourt's (1997) model of customer voluntary performance (CVP).	Spectator interactions with event personnel and the physical environment positively impact consumer perceptions of value and lead to greater fan engagement.
Casper et al. (2020)	Basketball in the US (NCAA Division I)	Quantitative	Study 1: N= 327 Study 2: N = 267	Value Belief Norm framework	Sport-event norms were a significant predictor of lower perception of recycling inconvenience, higher perception of recycling benefits, and positive influence of athletic department sustainability efforts while values and personal norms were non-significant predictors.

Yim et al. (2020)	NA	Mixed methods	Focus group: n = 18 Survey: n = 300	Five traits of millennial fan consumption: (a) technology-driven, (b) community-driven, (c) peer pressure (FoMO), (d) emotional consumption, and (e) fan engagement.	Differences among the three generations indicate the necessity of developing specific marketing strategies to target millennial fans.

Note. Table sorted by publication date.

Based on the reviewed literature presented in Table 1, we conceptualize five dimensions of non-transactional fan engagement (socialization, management cooperation, word-of-mouth, knowledge generation, and emotional engagement) that are relevant for merchandise consumption. In what follows, we briefly describe the five dimensions of fan engagement in relation to merchandise purchase intentions.

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has an important impact on merchandise purchase intentions. In the mainstream marketing literature, WOM is defined as oral, personal communication, between a recipient and a communicator whom the recipient perceives as non-commercial (Arndt, 1967). In sports marketing, a positive influence of engaged fans on others could be demonstrated in general (Kunkel et al., 2017; Uhrich, 2014). Furthermore, a study of 1,866 American and Canadian sports fans revealed that more than 50% of fans who saw influencers' content considered the additional information when making merchandise purchasing decisions (Imagen, 2020). In contrast to this research, we examine the influence of WOM from fans to fans with regard to merchandising purchases. Teams are already trying to take advantage of this by encouraging their fans to virtually share content such as the latest merchandising offers or by encouraging existing fans to refer new fans for the online shop through discounts. Thus, we conceptualized WOM as a factor representing fan engagement that may influence merchandise purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H1: Word-of-mouth has positive effects on merchandise purchase intention.

Management cooperation

Management cooperation has an effect on merchandise purchase intention. In the broader marketing literature, scholars have found that management cooperation is an integral part of customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011). In the context of sport marketing, management cooperation is defined as the engagement of fans who actively contribute to the

administrative management of the team to ensure its success (Auh et al., 2007; Yoshida et al., 2014). This willingness is reflected by the fact that fans give constructive feedback to team management on how to improve the team's fan experience or behave in a way that is consistent with the team's image (Auh et al., 2007). Management cooperation has a positive impact on general team-related purchase intention (Yoshida et al., 2014), but this has not been demonstrated with a focus on merchandise consumption. However, it was shown that relationship quality with the team in general is a predicator of merchandise purchase intention (Kim et al., 2011). Especially in the field of merchandising, more and more teams are inviting their fans to submit their own design concepts to crowdsource designs (KTNV, 2019). Firms can attract customers by encouraging fans to actively participate in the design of products and services, which can be very valuable as it can reduce the possibility that products and services are produced without taking the customers' needs into account (Kumar et al., 2010). For this reason, and based on existing literature, we expect management cooperation is a fan engagement that has an impact on merchandising purchase. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H2: Management cooperation has positive effects on merchandise purchase intention.

Knowledge generation

Knowledge generation has a positive effect on merchandise purchase intention. The process of customer learning represents a foundational processes of customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Knowledge generation is defined as consumers' development of brand knowledge or insight on the company (Hollebeek et al., 2016) as customers must acquire skills and knowledge to be effective in the interaction with brands (Hibbert et al., 2012). In sports marketing literature, fan learning refers to fans' active knowledge generation, which should impact team consumption (Huettermann et al., 2019). For example, baseball fans increased their interaction with the game because of the increased statistical analysis available in the sport (Burroughs, 2018). Previous research has demonstrated that the

knowledge generated about professional mixed martial arts has a positive influence on the purchase of merchandising (Andrew et al., 2009). Building on this foundation, we propose that knowledge generation related to the team and its players affects the purchase of merchandise products. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H3: Knowledge generation has positive effects on merchandise purchase intention.

Socialization

Socialization has a positive effect on merchandise purchase intention. Fans analyze and discuss past results, the game of the day, referee decisions, latest transfers, or management decisions before, during, and after games. The social aspects of fan cultures in sport is defined as a sense of belonging that replaces traditional sources of community identity (i.e., family, work, church, and neighborhood networks; Crawford, 2004). Sports marketing literature provides evidence that socialization increases identification and deepens fans loyalty to sport teams (Trail et al., 2005). Furthermore, researchers have demonstrated prosocial engagement influences purchase intention of sport consumption in general (Yoshida et al., 2014) and shows social interactions are related to increased merchandise consumption in US college basketball (Trail et al., 2005), European soccer (Derbaix & Decrop, 2011), the Olympic Games (Apostolopoulou et al., 2010), and the NFL (Apostolopoulou et al., 2012). Drawing on this foundation, we postulate that socialization in the fan engagement context influences merchandise purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H4: Socialization has positive effects on merchandise purchase intention.

Emotional Engagement

Emotional Engagement influences merchandise purchase intentions. Aksoy et al. (2018) define emotional engagement as "high arousal emotion levels" that result in certain consequences (Aksoy et al., 2018, p. 295). In an earlier study Verhoef et al. (2002) described emotional engagement as affective commitment and defined this as "the psychological attachment of an exchange partner to the other and is based on feelings of identification,

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loyalty, and affiliation" (Verhoef, et al., 2002, p. 204). In addition, several other studies include affective involvement in the concept of customer engagement (e.g. Mano & Oliver 1993; Higgins & Scholer 2009; Vivek et al. 2012). In sports marketing, emotional engagement influences how much money is spent on team interests (Capella, 2002). For example, there is evidence that teams profit from fans who enter stores in the stadium with positive emotional engagement (Milne & McDonald, 1999). Building on this foundation, we propose emotional engagement impacts merchandise purchase intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H5: Emotional engagement has positive effects on merchandise purchase intention.

Method

We develop and conduct two studies to address the research objective and test the hypotheses. We followed a three-stage process to develop the construct of fan engagement and test its predictive power. This process is based on an established approach recommended by Churchill (1979) and Rossiter (2002) and previously used in sport management (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2017). As a first step, we conceptualized the fan engagement construct, based on the literature review and the results of four expert interviews with experienced sports marketing experts. Second, we collected data from 206 Season Ticket Holders (STH) of one team to test the construct and demonstrate its predictive power (Study 1). We focused on STH for three reasons. First, by purchasing a season ticket they demonstrate that they are interested in a long-term relationship with the team (Lee et al., 2020) and are open to communication activities or offers that increase their engagement with the team (George & Wakefield, 2018), therefore, they represent an important market segment for sport organizations worthy of in-depth examination. Third, we collected data from 520 fans of professional sports teams to validate the construct and generalize findings beyond the context of a specific team (Study 2).

Measurement development

Measurements were developed following the scale development method of Tian et al. (2001). We developed a list of initial items based on a literature review and presented them to a panel of four sports marketing researchers from four different universities. Each expert received a list of the factors, their original definition, and the items. The experts commented on the wording of the item to improve the understanding of each item and rated each item in three categories (relevance, representativeness, and clarity), each with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = low; 5 = high). A total of eight items were rated below the 80% threshold in one of the three categories and therefore removed from the list (80% threshold; Polit & Beck, 2006). The final list contained 12 items, which were then used in the two studies (presented in Table 2).

In the interests of the benefit to researchers and practitioners, each construct was measured with two items to provide a concise measurement tool. This decision was based on previous research studies recommending the use of two items per factor to measure constructs as a means to achieve parsimony while maintaining the ability to assess reliability (e.g. Funk et al., 2009). Concise scales also reduce the risk of response bias from increased exhaustion due to the inclusion of too many items, and thus allow for an appropriate length of survey (Richins, 2004).

Word of mouth, management cooperation, and emotional engagement were examined with items adapted from Yoshida et al. (2014) and knowledge generation and socialization were examined with items adapted from Trail and James (2001) representing non-transactional fan engagement dimensions. Merchandise purchase intention was measured with items adapted from Bauer et al. (2008) and Yoshida et al. (2015). Items were measured on a five-point Likert-style scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Study 1

Procedures and Participants

For Study 1, we collected data from STH at a professional soccer team in Switzerland. The examined team has an annual budget of 3.9 million USD, which is comparable to the average team budget of the German Handball Bundesliga (Handball Planet, 2019) or a low budget WorldTour cycling team (Clarke, 2016). The average number of stadium attendees was 3,900, which is comparable to the lower attendance rates of a WNBA-Team (Hatfield, 2018). In addition, the team has 9,300 followers on Facebook which is comparable to a team from the lower half of the FIBA Basketball Champions League (FIBA, n.d.). To avoid the influence of a specific marketing campaign, the team did not promote their merchandising at the time of data collection. The questionnaires were sent to the STH by the team via e-mail with the incentive to win season tickets for the next season. Most of the respondents were male (75%, female = 25%) with an average age of 26.2 years.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and IBM SPSS AMOS 25. We followed a data cleaning process in which incomplete surveys and those completed in unrealistically short times, as well as those who marked the same answer for every question were removed (cf. Rossi et al., 2013). After this, a sample of 206 surveys was used for analysis. Following Brown's approach (2006) we tested the reliability and validity of the measures using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Then, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses in the proposed model. Evaluation of the model included examining the indicator reliability, calculating factor reliability, and measuring average variance extracted per factor (AVE). For the evaluation of the overall model, we used criteria presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria for CFA & SEM

Criteria	Cut-off criteria	Reference
Indicator reliability	≥ 0.4	Bagozzi & Baumgartner, 1994
Factor reliability	≥ 0.6	Bagozzi & Yi, 1988
Average variance extracted	≥ 0.5	Fornell & Larcker, 1981
Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.08	Hair et al., 2006
χ^2/df	≤ 3	Byrne, 2006
P value	≤ 0.05	Hair et al., 2006
Standardized root mean residual (SRMR)	≤ 0.08	Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2006
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.9	Bentler, 1990; Hair et al., 2006
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	≥ 0.9	Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Hair et al., 2006
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	≥ 0.9	Bollen, 1989; Hair et al., 2006

Results

First, we assessed the six individual factors. CFA results (RMSEA = .033; χ^2 = 47.463; df = 39; χ^2/df = 1.217; p < .01; SRMR = .0354, NFI = .947; CFI = .989; TLI = .981; and IFI = .989) indicated a good model fit for the six factors (Hair et al., 2014; Hu & Bentler, 1999). All reliability indicators (IR) were above .40 (Bagozzi & Baumgartner, 1994). The mean scores, factor loadings, standard deviation and the AVE values for the six-factor solution from Study 1 are presented in Table 3.

The AVE values for all constructs reached the recommended threshold of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and all Cronbach alpha values exceeded .70, supporting the internal consistency of the six constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The discriminatory validity between the six dimensions was confirmed by AVE scores exceeding the squared correlations between constructs. The correlation matrix for the six constructs is shown in Table 4.

Table 3. *CFA results for both studies*

Factor / Item	Mean score		SD		Standardized factor loading		AVE	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
Merchandising purchase							0.516	0.524
I will buy merchandising from the team in the upcoming season.	2.97	2.83	1.063	1.304	0.625	0.731		
I often wear customized products (e.g., jerseys, banners, stickers) of the team.	2.59	2.51	1.261	1.223	0.801	0.716		
Management cooperation							0.659	0.587
I try to work cooperatively with the team (e.g., provide feedback).	2.42	1.94	1.222	1.142	0.863	0.802		
The employees of the team get my full cooperation (e.g., volunteering).	2.85	2.37	1.336	1.279	0.757	0.728		
Emotional engagement							0.546	0.709
Watching games of the team makes me happy.	4.11	3.86	0.770	1.053	0.786	0.861		
Watching games of the team at the stadium gives me pleasure.	4.43	4.10	0.672	1.002	0.689	0.823		
Knowledge							0.582	0.717
I regularly track the statistics of specific players.	2.67	2.86	1.244	1.354	0.747	0.805		
I read the box scores and team statistics regularly.	3.58	3.46	1.206	1.339	0.778	0.886		
Socialization							0.655	0.585
Interacting with other fans is a very important part of being at games of the team.	3.88	3.18	1.005	1.194	0.927	0.764		
I like to talk to other people near me during the games of the team.	3.94	3.33	1.048	1.225	0.672	0.766		
Word of mouth							0.662	0.546
I share good impression of the team with my friends.	4.19	3.98	0.751	0.942	0.868	0.745		
I often say positive things to friends about the team.	4.00	3.73	0.775	0.984	0.755	0.733		

Table 4. *Correlation matrix for Study 1*

	AVE	MP	EE	SA	KG	MC	WOM
1. Merchandise purchase intention (MP)	0.52	1.00	0.19	0.07	0.29	0.31	0.28
2. Emotional engagement (EE)	0.55	0.44	1.00	0.14	0.25	0.09	0.30
3. Socialization (SA)	0.66	0.26	0.38	1.00	0.02	0.04	0.06
4. Knowledge generation (KG)	0.58	0.54	0.50	0.14	1.00	0.10	0.20
5. Management cooperation (MC)	0.66	0.56	0.31	0.20	0.32	1.00	0.18
6. Word-of-mouth (WOM)	0.66	0.53	0.55	0.25	0.45	0.42	1.00

Note. Values below the diagonal are correlation estimates. Values above the diagonal are squared correlation estimates. AVE = average variance extracted

We examined whether the five factors (word-of-mouth, management cooperation, knowledge generation, socialization, emotional engagement) influenced merchandising purchase. Fit indices (RMSEA = .06; χ^2 = 69.538; df = 40; χ^2/df = 1.738; $p < .01$; SRMR = .0438, NFI = .913; CFI = .960; TLI = .934; and IFI = .961) indicated a good model fit and the model explained 51% of the variance of fan's merchandising purchases. Results indicate a significant positive relationship only for management cooperation ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$) and knowledge generation ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). Word-of-mouth ($\beta = .21$, $p = .066$), socialization ($\beta = .09$, $p = .305$) and emotional engagement ($\beta = .03$, $p = .726$) had a nonsignificant relationship with merchandising purchase. Results are shown in Table 5 and visualized in Figure 1.

Study 2

Procedure and Participants

As in Study 1, we collected quantitative data to test the construct of fan engagement. Invitation e-mails were distributed to 9,800 team sport supporters in Switzerland. The e-mail invitations included a link to a website with the online questionnaire and yielded 520 eligible participants, which represents a response rate of 6.1%. Study 2 included fans from various professional sports teams, of which 60.9% were male (39.1% female) with an average age of 32.5 years.
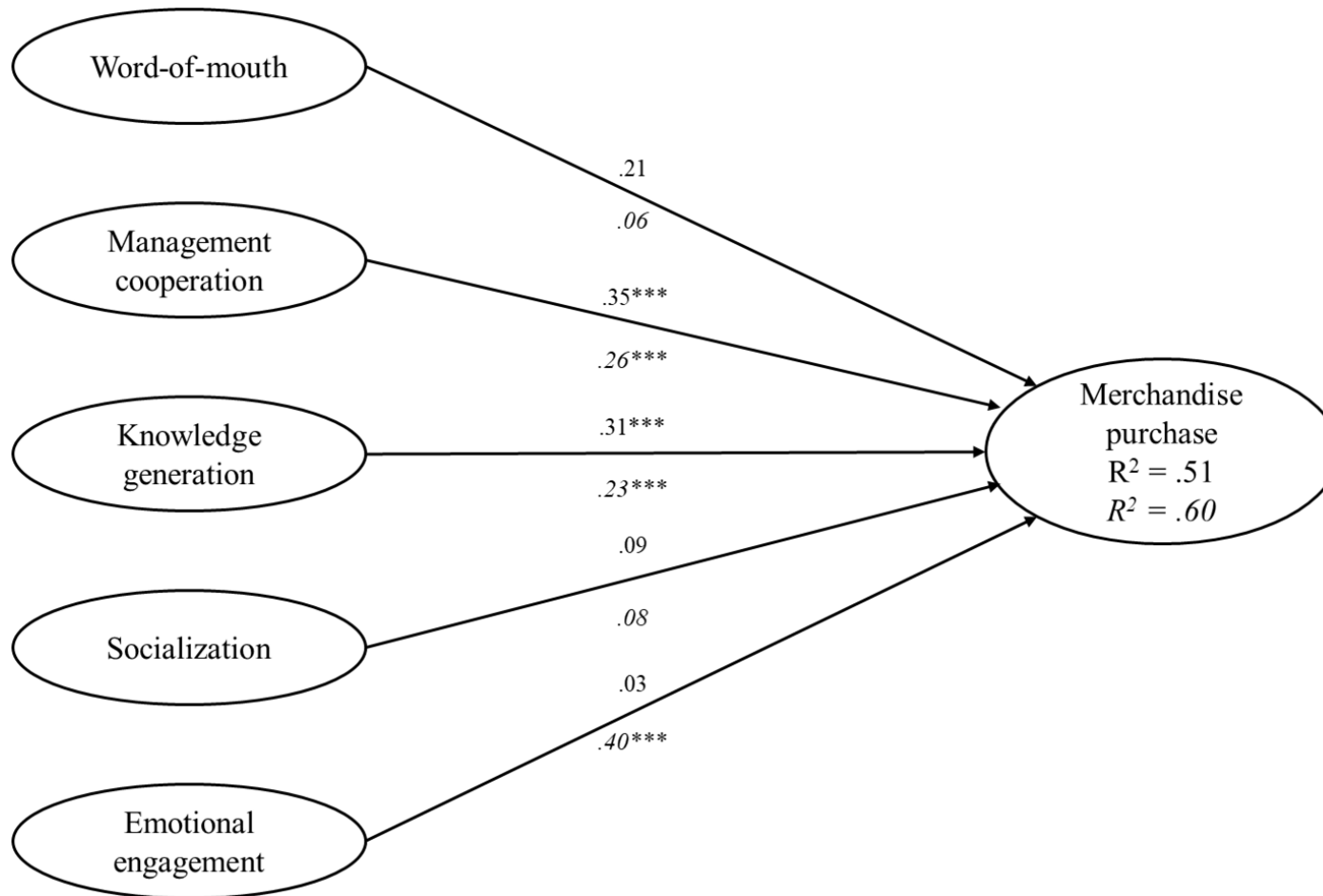
Results

We followed the same approach as described in Study 1. CFA results (RMSEA = .018; χ^2 = 45.739; df = 39; χ^2/df = 1.173; $p < .01$; SRMR = .0193, NFI = .979; CFI = .997; TLI = .995; and IFI = .997) indicated a good model fit for the six factors. All reliability indicators (IR) were above .40. The mean scores, factor loadings, standard deviation, factor loadings, and the AVE values for the six-factor solution fit the criteria and are presented in Table 2.

The AVE values for all constructs reached the recommended threshold of .50, and all Cronbach alpha values exceeded .70, supporting the internal consistency of the six constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The discriminatory validity among the six dimensions was

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Table 5. *SEM Results for Study 1*

Path			Standardized coefficient (β)	SE[b]	t	p
Word-of-mouth	→		0.205	0.192	1.842	0.066
Management cooperation	→		0.345	0.091	3.622	***
Knowledge	→	Merchandise purchase intention	0.313	0.120	2.839	0.005
Socialization	→		0.091	0.096	1.026	0.305
Emotional engagement	→		0.026	0.213	0.207	0.836

Figure 1. *Relationship between non-transactional engagement and merchandising purchase in both studies*

Note. Values that are non-italic reflect the results for Study 1. Values in italics reflect the results of Study 2.

confirmed by AVE scores exceeding the squared correlations between constructs (Hair et al., 2014). The correlation matrix for the six constructs is shown in Table 6.

In the next step, we examined whether the five factors (word-of-mouth, management cooperation, knowledge generation, socialization, emotional engagement) influenced merchandising purchase. Fit indices (RMSEA = .050; χ^2 = 91.719; df = 40; χ^2/df = 2.293; $p <$ .01; SRMR = .0290, NFI = .958; CFI = .976; TLI = .960; and IFI = .976) indicated a good model fit and the model explained 60% of the variance of fan's merchandising purchases. Results indicate management cooperation (β = .26, $p < .001$), knowledge generation (β = .23, $p < .001$) and emotional engagement (β = .40, $p < .001$) had a significant positive relationship with merchandising purchase. Word-of-mouth (β = .06, p = .758) and socialization (β = .08, p = .218) had a nonsignificant relationship with merchandising purchase. Results are shown in Table 7 and visualized in Figure 1.

Discussion

This research examined the influence of non-transactional fan engagement dimensions on merchandise consumption. In Study 1, we demonstrated the predictive ability of non-transactional fan engagement dimensions on merchandise consumption with data from 206 STH of one soccer team. In Study 2, we confirmed this conceptualization with data from 520 team sport supporters to generalize findings beyond the context of a specific team. Both studies indicated a good model fit. The focus on merchandise purchase intentions provides relevant implications for marketers to increase income through this important revenue stream.

Hypothesis 1 stated that word-of-mouth has a positive effect on the purchase of merchandise. While researchers were able to determine the positive influence of word-of-mouth on general purchase behavior in the past (Kunkel et al., 2017; Uhrich, 2014), the results of this research show that word-of-mouth as a fan engagement construct has no significant influence on the purchase of merchandise. Therefore, *Hypothesis 1* was not supported. One explanation for this result is that fans may not perceive a strong enough

Table 6. *Correlation matrix for Study 2*

	AVE	MP	EE	SA	KG	MC	WOM
1. Merchandise purchase intention (MP)	0.52	1.00	0.44	0.25	0.30	0.28	0.26
2. Emotional engagement (EE)	0.71	0.67	1.00	0.26	0.21	0.11	0.25
3. Socialization (SA)	0.59	0.50	0.51	1.00	0.12	0.16	0.22
4. Knowledge generation (KG)	0.72	0.55	0.46	0.35	1.00	0.10	0.16
5. Management cooperation (MC)	0.59	0.53	0.34	0.40	0.31	1.00	0.23
6. Word-of-mouth (WOM)	0.55	0.51	0.50	0.47	0.40	0.48	1.00

Note. Values below the diagonal are correlation estimates. Values above the diagonal are squared correlation estimates. AVE = average variance extracted

Table 7. *SEM Results for Study 2*

Path			Standardized coefficient (β)	SE[b]	*t*	*p*
Word-of-mouth	→		0.055	0.089	0.758	0.448
Management cooperation	→		0.262	0.062	4.029	***
Knowledge	→	Merchandise purchase intention	0.231	0.047	3.982	***
Socialization	→		0.083	0.065	1.233	0.218
Emotional engagement	→		0.400	0.067	5.788	***

incentive to stimulate word-of-mouth merchandise recommendations, as there were no formal incentives as part of a specific marketing campaign that rewarded referrals. Another explanation might relate to the fact that word-of-mouth is voluntary and discussions about the team are not necessarily focused on the consumption of merchandise. These results demonstrate examining a specific category of team consumption (i.e., merchandise), rather than lumping multiple consumption behaviors together, is a beneficial approach to tease out the impact of engagement dimensions on specific consumption behaviors.

Hypothesis 2 stated that management cooperation has a positive effect on the purchase of merchandise. The results of both studies supported *Hypothesis 2* and are in line with previous studies that have found strong correlation between management cooperation and general purchase behavior (Yoshida et al., 2014). In the context of merchandise, this may be because those who provide feedback or volunteer also want to support their team through other outlets, such as purchasing merchandise, or want to display their team connection through the display of merchandise (Özer & Argan, 2006). Furthermore, teams who have considered the needs and wants of those fans may have specifically designed their merchandise products with these fans in mind. This is in line with general marketing literature, where it is recommended to create products and services in co-creation with the customer to satisfy the customer needs in the best possible way (Kumar et al., 2010).

Hypothesis 3 stated that fans' knowledge generation of team and player statistics has a positive effect on the purchase of merchandise. The results of both studies supported *Hypothesis 3*. These results are consistent with the research that found a positive influence of team-related knowledge generation on purchases in general (James et al., 2002). Especially these results show knowledge generation has a positive influence on the purchase of merchandising and that it is worthy to link data and information from team and players with marketing campaigns aiming to promote merchandise products. Similar to management

cooperation these findings show that the purchase of merchandising is strongly related to individual engagement instead of that of other people.

Hypothesis 4 stated that socialization has a positive effect on the purchase of merchandise. While previous research identified a positive impact of socializing on the purchase of merchandising products (Trail & James, 2001) and general purchase behavior (Yoshida et al. (2014), and highlighted the social aspect of merchandise consumption (Trail et al., 2005; Derbaix & Decrop, 2011; Apostolopoulou et al., 2010; Apostolopoulou et al., 2012), our two studies did not confirm a significant relationship between socialization and merchandise purchase intention. Thus, *Hypothesis 4* was not supported. Similar to the findings related to *Hypothesis 1*, merchandise purchase intentions of fans of European sport teams may not be influenced by others as much as they are driven by the individual themselves. This finding may be explained by signaling theory, which describes the communication of positive attributes of a sender and how receivers interpret the "signal (Spence, 1973). While wearing merchandise is a signal, it is not a costly signal showing desirable personal characteristics and access to resources that are difficult to fake (McAndrew, 2019). Given the high average income in Switzerland, the majority of our sample would be able to afford merchandise, which means wearing merchandise is not a costly signal that elevates the wearer's status in society or as a 'real fan'. In fact, fans creating team-related products themselves may send stronger signals, as they are more costly. While this hypothesis was not supported for a consumer base with high purchase power, it may hold true for a consumer base with lower purchase power or for items that send more costly signals, such as special edition items or those with a lot of history showing the wearer is a 'real fan'.

Hypothesis 5 stated that emotional engagement has a positive effect on the purchase of merchandise. The two studies observe split findings for this hypothesis: The findings from Study 2 support the hypothesis for general sport fans, whereas the findings from Study 1 do

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not support the hypothesis for STH. This is especially interesting as our results extends previous work from Doyle et al. (2016), Lee et al. (2020), and Yim et al. (2020). Doyle et al.'s (2016) work suggests including emotions in the marketing activities of sports teams but does not make a distinction between STH and other fans, whereas Yim et al. (2020) indicate that younger generations showed more positive emotions when they thought about attending a game. Lee et al. (2020) found evidence that on-field performance has a positive effect on satisfaction as a dimension of relationship quality and that relationship quality has a positive effect on the intention to purchase season tickets. As STH demonstrate a long relationship with the team and a higher level of commitment in relation to other fans, it is possible that STH purchase merchandising not based on emotional engagement (e.g., on the base of on-field performance) given that they are connected to the club for other reasons, like group affiliation, club philosophy and values, or as part of a family tradition. Thus, although emotional engagement may be a beneficial non-transactional fan engagement to predict merchandise purchase intention of general sport fans, it is not a discriminating dimension for STH, and *Hypothesis 5* was only partially supported.

Contribution

This research contributes to the sports marketing literature by providing a conceptually sound and practically useful fan engagement examination that measures the impact of non-transactional engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. The research builds on prior fan engagement work and contributes to the sports marketing literature in several ways. First, we demonstrated that emotional engagement predicts merchandise purchase intention among general sports fans, but not to STH. This is an important new insight for researchers and sports marketing managers. While research shows positive emotions have a positive influence on the consumer expenditures of fans in general (Capella, 2002) or on merchandise products in particular (Milne & McDonald, 1999), our findings demonstrate that individuals who have committed as a STH make decisions to purchase merchandise that go beyond emotional

engagement. Thus for those, other forms of engagement, such as active collaboration with the management of the team through creating banners or other high engagement activities, provide more explanatory power.

Second, we measured the effects of fan engagement on merchandising purchase intentions as a factor of individual consumption. We focused on merchandise purchase intentions, as this revenue stream offers high potential for team revenue, even when fans are not allowed in the stadium. In this way, we focus on a more specific measurement of fan engagement outcomes, similar to Bernthal et al. (2015). However, while Bernthal et al. (2015) focus on how fan engagement affects spectator behavior in the context of bass fishing our focus on merchandise consumption with regard to STH at a professional soccer team (Study 1) and team sports in general (Study 2) provides specific implications for sports marketing managers, as they are able to increase income through this important revenue stream.

Third, our findings indicate that merchandise purchase intentions are driven by fan engagement dimensions related to the individual fan rather than those that are influenced by others. Management cooperation and knowledge generation, two of five dimensions of non-transactional engagement, were the only dimensions with a significant positive relationship with merchandise purchase intention across both studies. Notably, these dimensions are strongly related to individual behavior instead of external behavior. This is especially interesting with regard to the definition of fan engagement, as it is related to a sports consumer's extra-role behaviors in relationship to their club or other fans (Yoshida et al., 2014). Our findings show that engagement with other fans does not drive merchandise consumption. This is despite the fact that fan merchandise is becoming increasingly popular as it allows fans to demonstrate their team affiliation to others (Apostolopoulou et al., 2012). This can be explained by insights from mainstream marketing literature where in contrast to the definition of fan engagement, the definition of customer engagement refers to a person's investment of resources into interactions with an organization as the core of customer

engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2019). This implies that customer engagement is based on the engagement of the individual in relation to the organization. Although sport organizations generally benefit from non-transactional fan engagement, such as improved atmosphere in stadiums, the current research shows that fan engagement with other fans does not directly drive merchandise consumption.

Practical implications

Results show that some non-transactional engagement influence merchandise purchase intention. The positive impact of management cooperation and knowledge generation in both studies is noteworthy and relevant for sport marketing managers. We recommend that teams actively collect feedback from fans and cooperate with them. First, sport teams should provide discussion groups in which fan groups representatives meet with the club managers to discuss merchandise designs with the fans before releasing new lines to avoid dissatisfaction. The German football club FC St. Pauli went one step further and became the first club in Germany to adopt a set of guiding principles based on inputs from club members, employees, supporters, and volunteers (FC St. Pauli, n.d.). These principles put the fans first and influence how the club engages fans. For example, fan clubs and fan representatives are engaged in numerous management decisions, such as the design of jerseys or the election of sponsors, and lead to the team being the fourth-largest club in Germany in terms of merchandising revenue despite playing in the second league (Cowlishaw, n.d.).

Second, teams should establish regular fan polls and encourage their fans to design merchandising products together with them as this could lead to an increase in merchandise revenue while simultaneously better addressing fan needs (Hoyer et al., 2010). In addition, designing a team jersey can be a complex process with multiple partners involved. The Italian football club Delfino Pescara has simplified the process in which the team launched a competition for young fans to design a jersey for the team (Trenaman, 2020). As a result, the

design of a 6-year-old won, and the competition generated a lot of positive media coverage around the world.

Third, teams should offer opportunities for volunteer work given that management cooperation leads to merchandise purchase intention. Although volunteering is widely established for sports tournaments, it remains underdeveloped for teams. For instance, SCULT is an international sports volunteer movement that is engaged in the education especially for the younger generation, offers events for international knowledge exchange and learning, awards recruits volunteers for events and organizations (SCULT, n.d.). This concept could be extended for teams to strengthen the engagement and to give fans the opportunity to cooperate with the management. Given that merchandising is not costly (e.g. in comparison with season tickets) even volunteers should have the financial means to buy merchandise products while they are engaging with the club or in the future. These engagement activities may have short-term and long-term positive financial effects for the team.

The positive impact of knowledge generation on merchandise purchase intentions reveals further implications. We recommend sports teams to provide platforms where fans engage with the team and their players and gain knowledge about statistics, personal information of players, coaches and the management, team history and tradition, team values and behind the scenes information's. Platforms could integrate team-specific features with a broad range of social media platforms to engage with their fans. These features could foster interactions between fans as well as between sponsors and fans. As part of this, competitions might be organized to increase engagement and involve additional stakeholders. These activities should be connected to the team shop: Quizzes might be integrated into the web shop to offer a discount for those who answer questions correctly. Furthermore, these engagement tactics could also be extended to other communication channels. For instance, individual players might post player related information on their social media pages and ask related questions in order to provide fans with player-specific merchandise offers and

discounts. Instagram recognizes the value of sports leagues, teams, and athletes as their own type of fashion influencers (Patel, 2019). Teams and top stars have contracts with sponsors and some stars even have personal fashion brands that they promote. Linking their social media profiles to knowledge quizzes and the merchandising shop might generate more revenue.

These recommendations related to knowledge generation could also be combined with gamification elements. Gamification have been linked to positive effects on behavior and attitudes in practice (Domínguez et al., 2013). We therefore recommend that sports teams combine game elements with knowledge about the team and their players to increase merchandise purchase intentions.

Limitations and future research

There are three main limitations of this research that indicate opportunities for future research. First, our results indicate that merchandise purchase intentions are driven by individual fan engagement rather than by the influence of others. As we pointed out in the contribution, different perspectives exist regarding the definition of engagement. While by Yoshida et al's (2014) definition explicitly includes other fans, Huettermann et al. (2019) – in line with the recent definition of customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2019) – described the involvement of other fans as engagement outcome. Following our first recommendation for future research and due the various existing definitions of engagement, we recommend that researchers in (sports) marketing reexamine the definition of (fan) engagement. Specifically, the question to be answered is whether engagement arises solely from the relationship between a fan/customer and a team/organization before other actors are involved or whether engagement involves other actors from the very beginning. Also, the question about the dimensionality of the construct remains open to discussion. While we propose five dimensions, there might be other dimensions that need to be taken into account when discussing the definition of (fan) engagement.

Second, the literature review revealed that fan engagement is multi-faceted, and several non-transactional and transactional fan engagement dimensions exist. Aligned with previous studies (e.g., Yoshida et al., 2014), we built on existing scales and used them to reflect fan engagement. However, to reflect all aspects of fan engagement, a mixed-method approach might be beneficial. For instance, additional non-transactional engagement, those not yet discovered in the fan engagement literature, can be tested on the influence of merchandise purchase intention. Therefore, a qualitative study with sports fans in different sports would be useful to include the entire range of non-transactional engagement and to examine the effect of these engagement on transactional behaviors in a quantitative study.

Third, it is worthwhile to examine the underlying motivations for merchandise purchase intentions and the perception of people wearing merchandise, as our results indicate that merchandise purchase intentions are driven by the individual fan. Motives related to individual (rather than group) consumption may predict merchandise consumption. Based on Apostolopoulou et al. (2012) who examined the motives to purchase merchandising in the NFL, we recommend further exploration of the underlying motives. Especially (costly) signaling effects of merchandise should be examined in more detail within this future research. Therefore, a quantitative study with sports fans would be useful to examine the motives to purchase merchandising and the perception of people wearing merchandise, to examine effects of what makes merchandise signals costly.

Conclusion

This research extends our understanding of the impact of fan engagement on merchandise purchase intentions. Results of two studies demonstrated the predictive ability of non-transactional fan engagement dimensions on merchandise consumption and show that consumption is driven by fan engagement dimensions related to the individual fan, rather than those dimensions that are influenced by others. This research contributes to academic research on fan engagement and provides practitioners with a theoretically sound and concise scale

capturing five distinct fan engagement dimensions, which can be used to measure their

influence on relevant outcome variables.

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