



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Changing the game

The effects of a radical logo rebranding strategy on
the consumer-brand relationship in football

Master Thesis

by

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to provide an understanding of how consumer-brand relationships are affected by a radical rebranding strategy of a football club's logo. This further leads the paper to contribute to the literature of consumer-brand relationships in the special context of football.

Methodology: The interpretative nature of this research calls for a qualitative research approach so as to dig deeper into the socially constructed meanings of individuals. Aiming for methodological triangulation the empirical research utilises netnography and focus group discussion as research methods. This leads to an increased understanding of the investigated topic from different perspectives.

Findings/Conclusion: The analysis of the collected data revealed that the radical rebranding strategy of changing the Juventus F.C. logo was mainly interpreted as an inappropriate action. Therefore, a main contribution of the study is to consider the importance of context in building strong and stable relationships between brands and consumers. Elaborating on the brand-relationship quality model by Fournier (1998), the findings showed that in football contexts the relationship quality includes two additional criteria. Hence, the model was adapted by aesthetical appearance and an entrepreneurial mindset, indicating critical factors for the evaluation of relationship quality between football brands and its interested individuals.

Originality/Value: Looking at discussions between various groups of sport-interested individuals, the thesis investigates their attitudes towards the radical logo change in football. This enables to identify the underlying meanings embedded in the individual's cultural setting. Furthermore, these interpretations allow to evaluate the relationship quality between Juventus F.C. and the examined consumer groups after the logo change. Hence, the study bridges literature of consumer-brand relationships with researches on logo rebranding and football rebranding and moreover uses a sociocultural approach to provide knowledge to an unexplored phenomenon in the football context.

Keywords: Football, Rebranding, Logo Rebranding, Consumer-Brand Relationship, Brand Relationship Quality, Consumer Culture, Juventus F.C.

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1. Introduction

The first chapter provides a brief understanding of the problem discussed within this thesis. We highlight the identified problem which further leads to the presentation of the research question and the intended aim of the present thesis. The introduction chapter ends with an outline of the structure of the paper to give an overview of the forthcoming sections.

1.1 Background

“If you're going to completely change a brand that's been going strong for more than a century, in an audience where heritage, history and identity is highly valued, you'd better do so carefully and considerately. While this looks fantastic on its own, it in no way is careful, considerate or understanding of what it needed to accomplish. It doesn't tie to anything, other than current trends in design. It doesn't even read as "football club [...]”.

(Flaneurs - UnderConsideration, 2017)

An attempt to change the current market conditions within the sport rebranding field can be seen in Juventus Football Club's (F.C.) strive to be the first football club with an unconventional logo design in the football industry. The ever-growing competition requires football clubs to find new ways to gather revenue streams. Events such as “Los Rojiblancos” by Atletico Madrid (As, 2016) or the presentation of the new F.C Internazionale Milano crest (Inter, 2014) have already indicated that rebranding strategies in the football industry aim to introduce more generic logos for football clubs. This further appears as a solution to become recognised worldwide not only as a football team, but as an iconic and universal symbol to entertain and impassion even people with no direct involvement in the sport (Interbrand, 2017).

Symbolic elements of brands (name, logo, colours) are crucial factors enabling a direct recognition of the brand and its values (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). “Humans think visually. A picture is really worth a million words. And great brands have readily identifiable icons – just ask Nike or Apple or Shell – strong simple images that connect with customers.” (Peters, 1999, S. 41). The importance of visual elements in the establishment of relationships with consumers enables brands to distinguish themselves from competitors and to stand out in the market (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010).

Juventus act as a pioneer in the football industry by not only being disruptive and innovative, but also by being irreverent and radical with their approach, which has led to enormous public awareness since the presentation of the new logo in January 2017. Supporters of the club as well as sport-interested individuals from different areas are astonished by the drastic change of Juventus F.C.'s logo. This attempt further affects the future world of sports demonstrating a new era by “going beyond” as it is described by journalists and discussed among diverse online communities (McKay, 2017). The highly revolutionary characteristics of this rebranding strategy and the risk of harming the established consumer-brand-relationship are the main

reasons why this topic appears relevant for further investigations. So far we do not know how sport-interested individuals interpret such a radical rebranding strategy in the football context. In addition, no research has yet examined what effects could occur that influence consumers' commitment towards the football brand caused by the radicalness of this logo change. Therefore, this thesis studies interpretations of diverse consumer groups emerging from a radical logo change in the football industry and is based on the following research question:

How do different sport-interested individuals interpret radical changes of brand logos in the football industry?

1.2 Problematization

An ageing brand runs the risk of becoming forgotten or even disappearing from the market. Rebranding strategies, like logo or name changes of a brand, enable organisations to avoid these risks and to maintain attractiveness (Sjödin, 2007). Changes form a part of every organisation's drive for continuous success, and allow them to keep the pace needed for future developments, while acting as indicators for the vitality of the organisation (Huy & Mintzberg, 2003). Nevertheless, due to the underlying subjectivity in the understanding of change as well as the degree of its radicalness, the interpretation of changes can vary between individuals. (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Hence, these consumer interpretations are highly dependent on the individual's culture of consumption (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001), which is particularly researched in consumer culture theories dealing with consumer practices and their constructions of cultural meanings (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Studies of Fournier (1998) and Holt (1995) dig deeper into the relevance of meaning transfer from the consumer to brands and the included beliefs and commitments consumers share with those brands. Through consumer-brand relationships, forming the basis for the interactions between individuals and brands, the main discussion in this thesis is engaged with Holt (1995, 1997, 2002, 2003 and 2004), Giesler (2008 and 2012) and Fournier (1998, 2009 and 2012). These studies analysed diverse marketplace behaviours and revealed the importance of consumer-brand relationships within contemporary market environments. Consequently, literature suggests a radical or revolutionary change, for example, in the visual presentation of a brand, needs its value to be sufficiently evidenced as it challenges consumers' commitment to the brand and can potentially harm the consumer-brand relationship (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006; Fournier, 1998).

However, contemporary consumer culture demands attention to the emergence of dynamic and fast-changing developments as well as to the increased opportunities of consumers to interact with brands and other consumers (Fournier, 1998; Kozinets, 2002). This further requires an examination of new relationship styles, describing modern interactions of consumers and brands. Yet, research primarily discusses consumer interpretations of rebranding activities like name changes (Peterson, AlShebil & Bishop, 2015) or incremental changes in logo design (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010), but research into interpretations of radical changes of logo designs and its consequences on consumer-brand relationships has not yet been properly researched (Grobert, Cuny, & Fornerino, 2016; Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). Therefore,

we see a necessity in the literature for the investigation of sport-interested individuals and their underlying interpretations of radical logo rebranding strategies as well as how these strategies affect their relationships to the sport brand. By bridging the concepts of logo rebranding and consumer-brand relationships in the football context, we utilise consumer culture theory studies to investigate more sociocultural perspectives. These studies allow the exploration of ‘how consumers consume’ (Holt, 1995) in different contexts and the understanding of the cultural meanings which form their world views (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

1.3 Research Aim & Objectives

Juventus Turin’s recently undertaken logo rebranding further embeds this approach into a current context, provoked by discussions of consumer groups, who interpret the clubs’ new logo as a radical change. Based on these findings of consumer interpretations, the aim of our research is to:

Provide an understanding from a sociocultural perspective of how consumer-brand relationships are affected by a radical rebranding strategy of a football club’s logo.

Therefore, we investigate the line of reasoning of the different sport-interested consumer groups surrounding Juventus F.C. by construing the interactions which show their attitudes towards the brand after the logo change. This means we are going to consider the criteria for consumer-brand relationships between a football team and their interested parties. We further conceive that these criteria are heavily embedded in the socially constructed worlds of the individuals, forcing our research to look deeper into sociocultural understandings of relationships in football. In order to achieve this aim, we elaborate on Fournier’s (1998) brand-relationship quality model (BRQ), which provides us with decent knowledge about relationship constructions that could be ascribed to our contextual conditions. Having a closer look at cultural meanings enables us to extract the symbolic meanings embedded in subjective interpretations to gather information about consumers (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) and to identify their requirements for strong and stable relationships with football brands. Hence, we aim to contribute to the literature of consumer-brand relationships through demonstrating the effects of logo changes on the relationship quality between consumers and football brands from a sociocultural perspective.

1.4 Thesis outline

To answer the research question, we start by giving a profound understanding of the topic by reflecting upon the existing literature. Thereby, we highlight the main discussions among different authors and demonstrate their important argumentations. Furthermore, we go on to present our methodology, where we consider our research design, research strategy, and the methods used as well as describe how we collected and analysed the data. In the following chapter, we will present our findings embedded in descriptive and profound interpretations to provide an accurate picture of the gathered information. After presenting the findings, we go on with the discussion and analysis of the data. Within the discussion chapter, we elaborate on our findings by discussing them in the context of the existing literature, which allows us to further determine our contribution. The thesis finishes with a concluding chapter to cover the

most important information, to present our theoretical and practical contribution, and to give future research suggestions as well as research limitations.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

With the upcoming literature review we aim to present the main concepts and theories of a consumer-brand relationship in general, within the context of logo rebranding, and especially in the football industry. We provide a detailed theoretical background in order to make our research approach easy to follow. This review starts with an understanding of the characteristics of a consumer-brand relationship. Furthermore, the concepts of corporate rebranding and, in particular, logo rebranding will be described by linking them to the consumer-brand relationship. Due to the underlying context of this thesis, these concepts are moreover transferred into the football industry. The literature review finishes with our theoretical framework in the field of consumer culture theory and the description of using a sociocultural approach to analyse consumer-brand relationships in the context of football logo changes.

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1. The consumer-brand relationship

Multiple researchers (e.g. Aggarwal, 2004, Blackstone, 1993 Fournier, 1998; Fournier, Breazeale & Fetscherin, 2012; Giesler, 2008, 2012; Holt, 1995, 2003, 2004; Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001) argue that individuals (consumers) are willing and able to build relationships with certain brands as they do in other social contexts, like friendships or marriages. According to Rozanski, Baum and Wolfsen (1999), consumers build a relationship to a brand when the reason for purchasing products goes beyond the simple existence of need satisfaction or functionality.

The consumer builds a relationship to an object (which is defined by a certain brand) in such way that it becomes an active member and part of the life of the individual (Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) contributes to the theory of Levy (1985) and Plummer (2000) by claiming that people personify certain brands and provide them with human characteristics. This action leads to a stronger or weaker emotional attachment and furthermore to a relationship. To enable a better understanding of how consumers and brands are interrelated with each other, it is necessary to explain the basic and crucial elements of a relationship. Fournier (1998) and Hinde (1995) claim that one of the most important aspects of a relationship is the existence of a deeper purpose which is basically defined by the established meanings of a person's life. Fournier (1998) furthermore divides the consumer's meanings into three different categories: the psychological, sociocultural and relational. In addition, Fournier (1998) suggests, in her study about the importance of understanding consumers and their brands, that the personalised significance felt towards a brand expresses the quality of a consumer-brand relationship. In other words, human beings either perceive meanings from or give meanings to a brand, which describes their way of living and fits with their personality. Concluding, the main focus of this thesis lies in looking at consumer-brand relationships from a sociocultural perspective and trying to discover and analyse underlying meanings.

Fournier (1998) describes a consumer-brand relationship as an establishment of a bond between the consumer and the brand when the purchasing process is successful and convincing. This will consequently lead to repeat purchases and to further recommendations for other consumers.

If consumers have a high degree of empathy towards a brand, they are more likely to attach themselves to it and consider the brand a part of their life, as they would do for friends, family or partners. Fournier's findings (1998) are an addition and extension to the research of Holt (1995) who revealed that interactions between consumers and brands are mainly created by the acquisition of multiple kinds of objects.

Fournier (1998) presents in her research decisive factors that show how strong, stable, and durable a consumer-brand relationship can be. With her established model of "brand relationship quality and its effects on relationship stability" (p. 366) she describes six crucial factors that create the quality of a consumer-brand relationship: *love and passion, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, and the quality of the brand (partner)*.

(1) The factor of *love and passion* concerns the consumers' ability to miss brands when they have not consumed them for a long period of time. Fournier (1998) argues that consumers sometimes face situations where they miss a brand as much as they would miss a human being.

(2) *Self-connection* describes how much consumers see themselves in a brand and how much it represents their own identity.

(3) *Interdependence* is explained by Fournier (1998) as the consumers' frequency of consuming a specific brand and to what extent it is a part of daily practices or life rituals (for example the consumption of a certain brand of cereal every morning).

(4) *Commitment* shows how loyal consumers are towards a brand and how much they appreciate having the brand in their lives.

(5) Fournier describes *intimacy* as the consumers' beliefs that the specific brand they consume on a regular basis is better than all the other alternatives in the market. They give the brand a special and very often deeply-rooted meaning that no other competitor brand receives.

(6) The *brand partner quality* as the type of personality a brand represents is determined by multiple smaller factors like, for example, how reliable the brand and its attitudes are, how much trust the brand communicates or how well it manages consumer complaints etc.

Fournier (1998) concludes her model by stating that depending on how strong those factors are combined, the stability of a relationship between consumer and brand, and also its durability, can be determined.

On the other hand, by looking into consumption patterns or rituals Holt (1995) claims in his study that the consumption of specific objects can be used to show belongingness to a particular class of people. This consequent classification can be employed by consumers to distinguish themselves visibly, intellectually, and ideologically from others. Holt (1995) used in his study an example from the world of sports to show this phenomenon. Classification begins with the establishment of a relationship with a brand (a sports club) by, for example, the first attendance at a game. Through purchasing all kinds of physical objects from a specific team, in Holt's case (1995) merchandise from the Chicago Cubs (football team), individuals are able to distinguish themselves from others (rival teams) and affiliate with people from a specific class (Cubs fans) at once. By repeating this consumption procedure (going to more games, buying more physical and club-related products etc.) classification gets strengthened and consequently leads to the

establishment of a culture of consumption formed by the consumers (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001; Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt 1995). The characteristics of a culture of consumption within the concept of consumer culture theory will be described in more detail in the section of the theoretical framework.

Relationships between consumers and brands are flexible, dynamic, and context-dependent, not constant over time. The relationship stages can be described as a cycle with a phase of growth (building a strong relationship), followed by a time of saturation (reaching a point where no more value can be added) and finishing in a declining phase where the bond between brand and consumer is likely to disappear if the brand does not manage to re-strengthen it (Fournier, 2009). According to Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) all actions a brand undertakes (communication activities, design, and strategy changes etc.) lead to a flexible interplay between brand and consumer. The consequent change of consumers' meanings about the brand impacts the relationship immediately (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel, 2004).

What Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) further describe in their study are the characteristics of a brand's personality, the presence of transgression and how it influences the consumer-brand relationship. The authors distinguish between two types of personalities a brand can represent: sincere or exciting. While brands with a sincere personality demonstrate tradition, family-orientation and the signal of caring and warmth (an example would be Coca Cola), exciting ones are rather wild, youth-orientated, and dynamic (e.g. MTV). Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) claim that the latter type of brand personality might be less appropriate for long-term relationships with consumers than the former one. A sincere brand personality communicates more security and trustworthiness for the consumer and builds stronger relationships with them for a longer period of time. Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) observed in their research how the presence of transgression (a type of action that is against the law, rules, moral standards or codes of practice) influences the relationship between the consumer and the sincere or exciting brands. According to their findings, transgression leads to damages in the relationship with sincere brands because consumers feel that the brand abused their high degree of trust. Being more strongly attached to the brand, consumers are more likely to get upset with undertaken actions that are completely unexpected and untypical for the brand. On the contrary, exciting brands achieve with transgression a higher public recognition and spread the message of being refreshing and invigorating. However, Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) claim that the relationship does not get stronger through transgressional activities. Exciting brands remain the ones with a short-term orientation and lower degree of trust in the eyes of the consumer, they just temporarily achieve greater excitement and awareness (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004).

2.1.2 Consumer-brand relationship in corporate rebranding

Corporate rebranding activities have gained increased attention over the last years, not only in the literature, but also within the business environment (Bolhuis, de Jong & Van den Bosch, 2015; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006; Phang Ing, 2012). The concept of corporate rebranding is defined as a marketing strategy embracing changes in the name, logo, slogan or design of an established organisation and aiming to develop a new, distinct identity in the minds of different stakeholders (Keller, 2003; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Rebranding is also described as a

statement of the company announcing an approaching change in the organisation's current business (Lomax & Mador, 2006).

A brand's revitalisation process reflects a natural and necessary task for modifications in the management due to continuously varying market conditions (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). Muzellec & Lambkin (2003) discuss in their paper the main drivers for corporate rebranding strategies. According to them, drivers encompass decisions, events or processes requiring a change in the organisation's identity. Mergers and acquisitions can be one stimulus for the introduction of a new name or logo (Airey 2009; Murphy 2013). Also, shifts in marketplace relations due to competitive pressure as well as new internal strategic directions often call for changes in company's visual performance (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2003 & 2006). Moreover, another driver for corporate rebranding is an ageing image or identity of the organisation (Müller, Kocher & Crettaz, 2013). Hence, corporate rebranding strategies enable organisations to actively prevent gaining an outdated brand image (Sjödin, 2007). Nevertheless, Sjödin (2007) also highlights the fact that an approach to stay attractive might also lead to confusion and problems among a group of stakeholders (especially loyal consumers) if the brand identity changes tremendously. Considering that rebranding activities empower an organisation to reach new stakeholders (consumers, sponsors, partners), those strategies should lead to success. However, beneficial effects on the success of a brand or organisation cannot be guaranteed (Phang Ing, 2012).

Therefore, decisions about whether to implement a corporate rebranding strategy need careful consideration to avoid damaging effects on the brand. There is a high risk in the lack of congruence between stakeholders' perception of a brand and the desired brand image held by the organisation when presenting a new visual identity (Lomax & Mador, 2006). Corporate rebranding failures can be seen in Coca Cola's "New Coke" introduction or Tropicana's logo and design change. Both examples led to drastic revolts of long-term customers and resulted in a return to the old visual identity (Consumerist, 2016). Due to Muzellec & Lambkin (2006), rebranding sends a strong message to stakeholders and allows the organisation to announce future modifications or strategies of the company or brand. Thus, it has a relevant impact on the customers and stakeholders attitude towards the brand (Phang Ing, 2012).

2.1.3. Consumer-brand relationship in logo rebranding

Besides the name, a logo is the most recognisable component of an organisation's visual identity (Henderson, Cote, Leong & Schmitt, 2003). Van Riel and Van den Ban (2001) and Heijmans (2001) argue that logos allow for the communication of an organisation's identity. According to Henderson and Cote (1998), strong logos incorporate certain characteristics to be successful: *Recognition* (immediate classification), *affect* (stirring reactions), *meaning* (consistent interpretation among stakeholders), and *familiarity* (similarities to well-known objects). Concluding, all of these logo characteristics contribute to the value of the organisation's reputation (Henderson & Cote, 1998; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001). Hence, logos constitute an efficient tool for businesses to demonstrate desired appearances towards various stakeholders, especially the consumers (Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001).

However, several issues have been argued by Stuart (2003) and Keller (2013) who state the challenge of abstract logo designs often lies in the lack of stakeholders understanding of the meaning behind the logo. With well-made designs an organisation is able to transmit information about the brand or the company and enables the communication of power, experience, confidence, and tradition (Stuart, 2003). Additionally, a good logo design can induce strong positive attitudes towards the brand and it encourages stakeholders to act more favourably towards a brand, if they consider an organization's logo rebranding as a positive change (Stuart, 2003; Phang Ing, 2012).

Looking at the perception of change, Van Grinsven and Das (2015) examined in their rebranding studies the process of logo design changes and distinguished between two degrees of change that have a different impact on the consumer: evolutionary and revolutionary degree of change. The first one concerns the brand's approach to make slight changes without losing the brand identity in the eyes of the customers (e.g. using brighter colours in the logo). Well-known and strong brands (e.g. Coca Cola) rely on this type of logo rebranding in order to rejuvenate rather than regenerate their brand. The second degree of change – revolutionary redesigning of a logo – comes into play when major actions (e.g. company takeovers, mergers, and acquisitions etc.) lead to big alterations in the environment of the brand and further to a brand identity change (Airey, 2009; Murphy, 2013, Van Grinsven & Das, 2015).

Another perspective is offered by Shields and Johnson (2016) who observed the consumer-brand relationship by including the factor of nostalgia that a logo may represent. Nostalgic feelings, developed by a consumer over years, can be decisive for a positive relationship according to the findings of the study. The researchers analysed how a change in design of popular brands would affect the relationship between consumer and brand. The results show that consumers with a strong nostalgic feeling towards a brand are not welcoming towards high-degree and radical logo changes. The major reason for this phenomenon is the visual connection individuals have built up in the early stages of their relationships with brands which reminds them of positive past experiences, for example in their childhood.

Furthermore, Van Riel and Van den Ban (2001) argue that it is crucial for consumers to recognise a fit between the logo and the service offered by an organisation or brand. Through the stakeholders' attachment to a brand, the emotional bond between the brand and its stakeholders frames the responses of the latter when changes of brands' visual elements, like logo redesigns, are implemented (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). Walsh, Winterich and Mittal (2010) consider this emotional bond as the construction of brand commitment and its "moderating role of consumer response to logo redesign" (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010, p.78). Consumers who are strongly committed to the brand and who value it as a part of their life (Fournier, 1998) are more likely to reject redesigns of the logo and change their attitudes towards the brand in a more negative way (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). Similar findings were revealed by a study by Peterson, AlShebil & Bishop (2015) about the emotional commitment of an individual in a brand relationship. They argue in their results that consumers who are strongly attached to a brand perceive logo changes as a personal attack, and suffer feelings of anxiety that the brand will lose its core values.

2.1.4. Consumer-brand relationship in football club logo rebranding

Football, as a constantly growing business (Bridgewater, 2010), takes a specific stance in the marketing and branding field. A football brand incorporates several characteristics like a history, traditional values, a team, a stadium, and a visual identity, heavily intertwined in emotional relationships among individuals and communities (Bridgewater, 2010; McDonagh, 2016). A football brand's logo generally takes the form of a badge or crest, which is traditionally rooted in the football club's history (Bailey, n.d). Rebranding efforts – especially changing the logo – in the football industry are performed on a continual basis, but rather with an evolutionary than with a revolutionary degree of change (Bridgewater, 2010). This is because logos induce significant connections between football teams and its existing as well as new stakeholders (consumers, supporters, sponsors) and represent the football club's modified values (Ahn, Suh, Lee & Pedersen, 2012; Bridgewater, 2010). Compared to corporate rebranding strategies, the drivers for rebranding within the football industry are similar. A new ownership of a football team, the increase in sales of merchandise or a symbol of a new start and demarcation of bad seasons (Ahn et al., 2012), can be indicated through a logo rebranding.

In football, the consumer's value towards the brand consists of several intangible and tangible elements, including the sense of belonging of team supporters as well as the merchandise and the match results of a football team. Building brand equity, a football team is able to leverage the emotional commitment of its supporters to encourage customer loyalty and long-term relationships (Richelieu, Pawlowski & Breuer, 2011). The literature states that only in religion, politics, and entertainment the emotional commitment from supporters is stronger than in football. Moreover, this strong emotional link between a football club and its supporters along with connected symbols demonstrates the evidence for regarding football teams as brands in their own right (Richelieu & Desbordes, 2009; Richelieu, Pawlowski & Breuer, 2011).

Reale and Castilhos (2015) observed in their studies two football clubs in Brazil to investigate how deeply factors like belonging, heritage, and familiarity are rooted in the relationship between a fan and its local club. Identification starts – according to the findings – very often before the individual has any influence on the decision whether to support this club (brand) or not. Passing on the heritage of belonging to a specific club, as initiated by family members (fathers, grandfathers etc.), was one of the major reasons for an intensive and deep attachment right from the beginning. The emotional bond develops over the years through rituals either ordinary (e.g. getting news about the club through media) or extraordinary (e.g. going to the stadium). Therefore, football fans follow a specific consumption practice which does not primarily concern purchasing products, but consuming the brand and its values through socialisation (Reale and Castilhos, 2015).

Several researches (e.g. Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Williamson, Zhang, Pease, & Gaa, 2003) have been conducted to observe the deep sense of attachment and identification between fans and a sports club throughout the years. Ahn, Suh, Lee and Pedersen (2012) revealed in their study (of the logo rebranding activities of two clubs in the North American Basketball league and the consequent impact on the fans) that loyal and long-term fans see their supporting sports club as a big part of their life. According to the findings of Ahn et al. (2012), highly committed fans are not welcoming major logo redesign activities especially when their opinion is not taken into consideration. The consumer-brand

relationship consequently suffered in a negative way, even though the club tried to tie the logo more deeply into the city of origin with their approach. However, the deep sense of attachment to the club does not change as such. After a period of adjustment and “getting-used” to it the relationship grew stronger again, especially when other events (for example victories) put the redesign of the logo in the background (Ahn et al., 2012).

Based on our objective to investigate the interpretations of diverse consumer groups, we divided the types of observed sport-interested individuals according to the established model of Giulianotti (2002). This model puts individuals in four different categories regarding their commitment to a sports club: supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs. According to Giulianotti, *Supporters* have the strongest emotional commitment to a club, claiming that it is the most important part of their life and the stadium is considered as their home (Bale, 1994; Giulianotti, 2002). They are described as “hot supporters” and “traditional fans” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 33) which means that those individuals have been building a long-term relationship with the club for years, are as close to it as to their family and friends, and show a thick solidarity at any point in time. The second category, the *Followers*, are not only supporting a club per se, they are following also specific players, managers etc. Their sense of solidarity is thick and they appreciate the feeling of being in a community (especially in nationalistic terms), but they would rather appear in the digital space (online forums, web blogs etc.) as contributors to the club than in the actual stadium. In the model, they are characterised as “supporters, but from a distance” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 35). The *Fans*, as the third category, can be described as the modern fan of a club, a player, or a group of players. They are mainly showing belongingness by consuming all kind of club-related merchandise and are discussing rather the lifestyle and performance of certain players than happenings around the actual club. They share a love and intimacy towards a club but are more distant when it comes to the description of their relationship with it. The last category of the model, the *Flaneurs*, do not have a personal relationship with a club and interactions mainly take place through channels like TV or the internet. Solidarity is very thin and they are looking for the sensation of football (victories, trophies etc.). They would forsake football and a club if a different kind of entertainment (which does not have to be football-related) would provide them with more satisfaction (Benjamin, 1999; Giulianotti, 2002).

The model of Giulianotti (2002) provided us with ideas about how to characterise different sport-interested consumer groups. However, we do not strictly follow the categorisation of Giulianotti and moreover adapted his model to our specific needs allowing us to identify four groups of individuals which were appropriate to our research. Our categorisation will be described in more detail within the methodology chapter.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

We indicated through literature that the logo of a brand is, next to the name, the most representative component in the visual identity of a brand (e.g. Henderson, Cote, Leong & Schmitt, 2003; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001; Heijmans, 2001). Rebranding a logo causes changes in the consumer-brand relationship in either a positive, negative, major or minor way, depending on the individual’s interpretation of the change and how deeply connected he or she is to the brand itself (e.g. Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004; Fournier, 1998 & 2009; Holt, 2002

& 2003; McFarland & Pals, 2005 etc.). It is hard for brands to keep their (positive) brand personality constant over time (Holt, 2004). Either they force a change from their side (e.g by undertaking rebranding strategies like a logo redesign) or it happens unintentionally, initiated from the consumer side, according to Sicard (2013).

Inconsiderate actions from the brand side are more likely to lead to a conflict between brand and consumers followed by a bad reputation and a changing brand identity among the consumers in their specific culture of consumption (Holt, 2002; Sicard, 2013; Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010; Yohn, 2014;). As a main researcher in the field of conflicts between brands and consumers, Giesler (2012) states that some consumers consequently create a doppelgänger brand image which could put the brand into a negative light for the general public. According to Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006), a doppelgänger brand image is characterised as “a family of disparaging images and stories about a brand that are circulated in popular culture by a loosely organised network of consumers, antibrand activists, bloggers and opinion leaders in the news and entertainment media” (p. 50). Giesler (2012) reveals with his findings that the occurrence of negative stories around a brand more strongly influences the brand image created by the consumers than the one expected and promoted by the brand itself (Holt, 2002; Giesler, 2008 & 2012).

On the other hand, Holt (2002) states that conflicts arise especially when the brand focuses too much on the fulfilment of corporate rather than consumer needs, which leads to a development of consumer resistance and disturbance or even to a change in the relationship. According to Giesler’s research (2008), change develops through four stages in an undefined period of time. First of all, an expected or unexpected action (e.g. a pioneering approach) from a brand takes place in the market and disturbs the current relation to the consumers. This stage is followed by a crisis where mainly people with a strong relationship or attachment to the brand show a high degree of resistance. Giesler (2008) describes stage number three as the time period where the brand tries to slowly convince and reintegrate the still-resistant group of consumers. The last stage is characterised by compromises between the two sides (brand and consumers) and the final reintegration (Giesler, 2008; Holt, 2002).

By using a sociocultural approach for our research, we are more eager to understand the behaviour of individuals in a consumer-brand relationship in the context of football logo rebranding than understand it from a (corporate) branding perspective. Consequently, our work takes place in the field of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), a concept that allows the understanding of relationships between consumers, market interactions, and the types of meanings produced by culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Arnould and Thompson (2005) describe a consumer culture as “a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets” (p. 869). In other words, the consumption of various types of commodities (produced by the market) creates groups of consumers with collective and similar consumption practices, identities, and meanings. The characteristics of a particular group of consumers determine an individual's lifestyle and show which culture of consumption they belong to (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2001). One established research program that appears interesting for our study is the “marketplace culture” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 873). It concerns the study

of how mutual beliefs and behaviours create a collective of consumers that distinguish themselves from others (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002). Our consumer collective and subject of study consists of sport-interested individuals that support, follow or are just interested in the football club of Juventus (to a more or less strong extent) which distinguishes them from other consumers in the market.

Deeply rooted in the field of sociology and cultural studies, our sociocultural approach describes how certain cultural factors determine an individual's behaviour (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Geertz, 1956; Waude, 2016; Vygotsky, 1980). Waude (2016) explains this as the researcher's attempt to focus on the observation of the human's cultural mind in order to find out why people behave how they behave. The sociocultural type of communicated meaning in a relationship, as the most dominating one according to Fournier (1998), concerns an individual's anthropological characteristics which are created by the environment (culture), family structure (upbringing), personal aspects (gender, age, sexual orientation), and personally established networks (friends, partners, education, work). The combination of these factors determines how strongly a person desires the existence of relationships, how intensely he or she engages with such a relationship and how high the degree of commitment is towards, for example, other human beings or even, determined in commercial terms, a brand (Fournier, 1998; Dion & Dion, 1996).

Holt (1997) argues that such a culture of consumption consists of shared consumption patterns shaping certain lifestyles. According to his studies, which build on his previous work that consumption can be seen as an act of classification (Holt, 1995), those patterns consist of specific and repetitive consuming behaviours (the way that individuals consume or even deny consuming certain objects). He furthermore claims that even though consumption patterns are individually related to the person itself the resulting lifestyle with its values puts the person into a specific collective with similar people. In addition, Holt (2003) claims that some brands manage to build a strong and deeply rooted image in the consumption culture which enables a constant consumer attitude towards the brand. The author describes this as the ability of a brand to create a certain kind of myth that always comes to mind when people are confronted with the brand. What Holt (2004) highlights in his book "How brands become icons" is that "iconic brands have been guided by a set of tacit strategic principles" (p. 13). He further calls this the cultural branding model, portraying a model which puts emphasis on building an iconic brand and strengthening the myth around it (Holt, 2003 & 2004). The consumer should be brought to a stage where the myth gets adopted into their personal life and kept alive by the repetition of consumption actions and rituals (Holt, 2004).

Holt (2004) expands his own myth theory from 2003 by adding the factor of loyalty and how especially iconic brands deal with it in terms of the relationship they have with their consumers. He describes loyalty towards a brand as the "customer's willingness to stay with the brand when competitors come knocking with offerings that would be considered equally attractive had not the customer and brand shared a history" (Holt, 2004, p. 149) and furthermore claims that it is produced by the social network of the individual. The concept of brand loyalty is also discussed by Fournier (1998) as similar to brand relationship quality, both concepts trying to embrace the strength and stability of relationships between brands and consumers. Fournier (1998) further highlights these attitudinal connections in her brand-relationship quality model (described in

the literature review) by showing for example how love captures a strong bond between a consumer and a brand.

As demonstrated in the paragraphs above, consumer-brand relationships are influenced by various factors and can differ between different types of consumers. What the aforementioned theories and concepts around consumer-brand relationships have in common is that consumers created a (stronger or weaker) emotional bond over a specific period of time to a brand which they consume on a regular basis (Fournier, 1998; Giesler, 2008 & 2012; Holt, 1995, 1997, 2002, 2003 & 2004; Sjödin, 2007; etc.). The analysis through a sociocultural approach claims that the strength of this bond mainly depends on the individual’s past experiences, the level of interaction with the brand and the meanings given to and perceived from it (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Fournier, 1998; Giesler, 2008; Holt, 2002 & 2003; Waude, 2016; Vygotsky, 1980; etc.).

Our whole research refers to the “synthesized coherence” approach established by Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997, p. 1030) characterised by a research which bridges various literature streams in order to investigate and explain a phenomenon in a particular and not yet explored context. We position ourselves at the point of intersection between the research streams of rebranding (in our case logo rebranding) and consumer-brand relationships in the context of football. Furthermore, we follow a sociocultural approach embedded in consumer culture theory, which represents our theoretical framework and which is demonstrated graphically in figure 1.

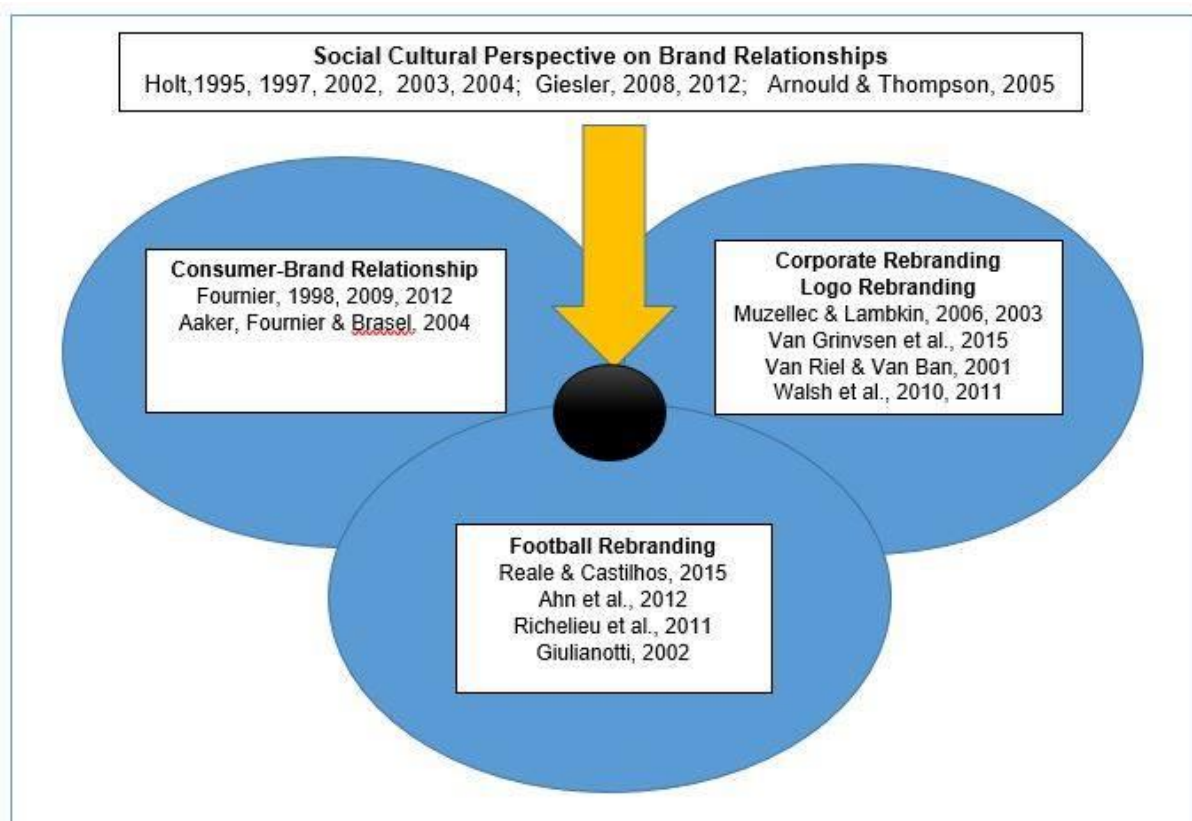


Figure 1: Our Theoretical Framework

3. Methodology

In the following chapter, we give profound explanation of the methodology used for our research. We start with the research design and argue which stance has been taken in this thesis. Going on, we demonstrate our selected research strategy with a description of the underlying research methods and moreover we elaborate on the data collection by explaining our selection process of the individual community groups. We further describe our sampling method for the identified communities in more detail and show how we analysed the collected data by giving several examples of our coding process. The last part will cover ethical considerations as well as reflexivity and limitations of our methodology.

3.1. Research Design

Dealing with subjective understandings of a phenomenon in a distinct context accounts for a qualitative research design and appears to be the most applicable one for our thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A qualitative approach allows us to dig into naturally occurring conversations between individuals and get to know their underlying meanings concerning our research topic (Bryman & Bell, 2015). By using the concept of “thick description”, we engage in seeing the world through the eyes of those studied and consider their shared understandings (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003) with profound descriptions in our findings part.

With the help of a clear research philosophy, we are able to apply an appropriate qualitative research design leading to a better understanding of the approach taken for our study. Hence, the main philosophical debate relates to the ontological and epistemological stance of our research. Ontology describes the philosophy about how human beings receive aspects of nature in terms of reality and existence. Epistemology implies the theory of how human beings construct knowledge and therefore aids researchers enquiring into the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

According to our thesis, the presented observation follows a *strong constructionist* research design which is rooted in a *relativist* ontology due to the fact that the research demands a high degree of personal engagement to gather new insights (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). We identified that a strong constructionist view is moreover beneficial for our research, where the role of language and discourse in the creation of individuals’ interpretations of their world view is of high relevance. The aim of such an ‘interpretive’ approach embedded in social constructionism is to compare individuals’ interpretations and to draw meaningful conclusions at the end (Stake, 2010). The essence of strong constructionism lies in the diversity of human experiences and understandings about the world, as opposed to the positivist stance representing a social world which constructs knowledge of entities only through objective and measurable observations without considering reflection or intuition (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2015).

Moreover, our qualitative study requires the integration of an interpretive approach, where the meaning construction of individuals is based on situational and context-specific details

(Thompson, 1997). The emphasis on context within our research provided us with better knowledge of social behaviours and their actions (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Arnould, Price & Moisio, 2005). In addition, contexts encourage us to develop and test theories in research studies by using activities like abstracting, relating, explaining or synthesizing theories. Through bridging the different theories of consumer-brand relationships and logo rebranding our explored context of football facilitated the demonstration of authenticity and truthfulness within these literature streams (Arnould, Price & Moisio, 2005). Football represents a context with high cultural significance in our society, one that a vast number of people feel engaged and connected with or at least at some point related to and interested in (Bridgewater, 2010; Reale & Castilhos, 2015). The engagement of human emotions and senses further implies the power of this context field (Arnould, Price & Moisio, 2005). Hence, we perceive theoretical and practical support for our research reflecting an unexplored phenomenon in a powerful context leading to consequences on the lives of many individuals.

Critical qualitative researchers like Denzin (2001) describe interpretive interactionism in a qualitative approach as an endeavour to simplify activities, emotions, and views of the research subjects. However, our ontological relativist position claims that there is not one absolute truth out there, which can be discovered as emphasised by realistic views, but rather the truth is created by the investigated people and discussions among them. Stake (2010) argues that the interpretive characteristic defining a qualitative research, denotes a “struggle with meanings” (p. 38). Our observation is that different meanings and constructions of individuals’ social worlds take a crucial role in the consequences of contributions in our research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Consequently, we feel obliged to take a strong constructionist and relativist stance, perceiving this as the most appropriate approach to understand the subjective meanings of the identified community members and the interactions between them.

3.2. Research Strategy

Due to the fact that we want to enable a variety of interpretations regarding the undertaken logo change, we are engaged to look for the best methods available. Therefore, we identified four groups of individuals characterised by their involvement to the football brand (detailed description in data collection and sampling method) and ended up with a combination of two qualitative methods which allowed for methodological triangulation and the best application covering our research aim.

3.2.1. Netnography

Since our investigated topic refers to a recently occurring event, the available information is rather limited at the moment. With the presentation of the new logo design by Juventus F.C. in January 2017 and its introduction to the market (through merchandise and jerseys) following in July 2017, we identified that relevant information concerning this event is particularly obtainable via online sources. Therefore, the first method we used for data collection, puts the main ideas of ethnographic observations in an online and virtually-supported environment (Kozinets, 2002). Aiming for an understanding of underlying meanings in cultural settings and utilising “thick descriptions” are essential qualitative characteristics of ethnography

demonstrating its importance in several research fields (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003). Taking the ethnographic conditions into virtual places, which is labelled as netnography, is the perfect fit for our research.

Netnography as a research method became well-known through one of the main leading researchers Kozinets (2002), who introduced it as a new concept of observation. The author defines it as “a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications.” (p. 62). We apply this method to make use of publicly free conversations of individuals on diverse internet platforms in order to analyse their behaviours and understand their meanings as demonstrated by textual comments (Bowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2002). The internet representing a place of information, belonging, and emotional support turns online communities into central meeting platforms of social groups, where its participants perceive having real conversations with real people and thus allowing the researcher to observe real meanings and interpretations made by individuals (Kozinets, 2010). Taking this into consideration, a main objective for us using a netnography approach is to get as close as possible to the focus of interest and gather first-hand information from the perspective of discussants in an online community (Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003).

Moreover, the use of a netnographic study enabled us to gain a greater sense of availability of data and also provided us with the opportunity to observe discussions arising among the members (Kozinets, 2010). Compared to ethnography methods which collect data mainly through face-to-face observations or longitudinal field studies, our netnography study required far less time to investigate an online community and we were able to conduct it at any place, where we just had to sit in front of a technical device with internet access (Bowler, 2013). Through discussions and argumentations about certain topics in online public spaces, we were able to collect insights into naturally occurring conversations without becoming involved in them (Kozinets, 2002). This enabled us to avoid the “researcher effect”, where researchers become visible in the observation field and could influence the behaviour of those studied and thus the outcomes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Looking at the research process, we refer to Kozinets (2010), who claims that “there are very few, if any, specific, procedural guidelines to take a researcher through the steps necessary to conduct an ethnography of an online community or culture and to present their work” (p. 5). However, he suggests the use of certain guidelines and procedures which allow to shape our netnographic research. Hence, we deployed the guidelines which include (1) starting with an entrée by our search for the appropriate online communities, (2) collecting and analysing data through the use of our coding process, (3) guaranteeing reliable interpretations encouraged by our intention to reflect multiple times upon the individuals’ comments, (4) ensuring ethical standards by respecting anonymity and privacy among the investigated communities and (5) allowing for member feedback which was in our case not implicitly necessary (Bowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2002).

For the analysis of netnographic data it was important for us to keep in mind that the collected information observes textual discourses within online community members (Kozinets, 2002). Therefore, we took into consideration that the netnographic analysis contained some issues as participants were able to present themselves in hidden facets, because they knew the conversation would be publicly available (Kozinets, 2002; Solomon, 1996; Toledano, 2017). According to Solomon (1996) this can be argued an advantage as our individuals were able to freely share their concerns, which might have been inhibited during face-to-face interviews. However, it encouraged us to be very critical and reflexive in our interpretative approach during the whole research process by reading the comments multiple times as well as by discussing them in a group to avoid one-sidedness of the researcher (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

3.2.2. Focus Group

The second method used for our research concerned a focus group. This approach allowed us to take an open discussion among a group of individuals without having a strict structure. By using questions only as starting point for consequent discussions and the participants' willingness to share experiences towards certain topics we were able to engage in interactions and discover the underlying interpretations of the participants (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, it was our intention to only act as a helping hand if guidance was needed and to avoid any kind of intervention that could influence the discussions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Powell & Single, 1996; Walker, 1985).

As Kitzinger (1995) described the nature of focus groups, he highlighted the researchers' opportunity to discover of participants "how they think and why they think how they think" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). Thus, through the implementation of a focus group we were able to ask and analyse a homogenous group of participants (detailed description in the following chapter). Our aim with this approach was to get individuals with a similar way of thinking which made it easier for everyone to freely talk about and further personally contribute to a specific topic (Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger & Casey, 2014). Kitzinger (1995) claims that individuals are more willing to share experiences and meanings truthfully if they can act, talk and behave in the way they do in their everyday life. Hence, this research method enabled us to discover sport-interested individuals in a casual, relaxed, and informal atmosphere to gather as much significant information as possible about them and their interpretations regarding our topic (Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Powell & Single, 1996). However, according to Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) who account for a minor disadvantage through the presence of an interviewer in focus groups, we had to take into consideration that the discussion would not refer to a complete observation as with the method of netnography where we had the opportunity to observe without any degree of intervention (Kozinets, 2002).

3.2.3. Methodological Triangulation

By looking at the identified groups of individuals, we recognised that netnography turned out to be suitable for three (followers, fans, flaneurs) of the four groups. Due to the fact that the one community (supporters) does not appear to be very active on social media or online forums, we had to think about a second qualitative method of data collection. Bryman & Bell (2015) claim

that using a mixed method approach can help researchers to balance out limits that may occur by focusing on only one method. Moreover, a mixed method approach allows for methodological triangulation, a technique where the researcher takes advantage of using more than one method or source of data within a research process (Denzin, 1973). We apply in our research a within-method study indicating that we use two qualitative methods (netnography and focus groups) for our data collection (Casey & Murphy, 2009).

With the help of methodological triangulation, we were able to check the findings gathered in the online communities against the findings from the focus group. This further enabled us to gain comprehensive data and an increased understanding about the investigated research topic by looking at the interpretations from different perspectives (Case & Murphy, 2009). The identification of similarities and differences in individuals' interpretations allowed us to strengthen our overall categories and themes stemming from the coding process (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In addition, methodological triangulation provided our research with a higher degree of validity and with the opportunity to eliminate the weaknesses of an individual method approach (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Case & Murphy, 2009). Consequently, the combination of netnography and focus groups appeared to be the most appropriate solution for our research in order to get accurate data and the most reliable picture possible (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3. Data Collection

For the purpose of understanding individuals' interpretations, our intention was to discover different communities in order to provide a variety of perspectives. Hence, for the identification of these communities we used the model of Giulianotti (2002), who described four sport-interested individual types according to their involvement with a sports team/brand (description of the model can be found in the literature review). We used the model as a starting point and adapted it further to our research needs, where we especially defined the categories of followers and flaneurs in a slightly different way than Giulianotti. As a result, we identified three suitable online communities for fans, followers and flaneurs that fitted in with our research field (see description in sampling method). These communities offered numerous comments and discussions with thorough information that enabled us to observe interpretations and meanings related to our research topic. The data collection of the supporter community occurred through a focus group delivering real-life conversations between individuals who demonstrated their personal interpretations of the logo change in a group discussion.

3.3.1. Netnography

Our approach to investigate the interpretations of fans, followers and flaneurs was concerned with gathering information by entirely examining textual comments written on the diverse online communities. Specifically, we started by looking at 13 different online blogs, communities and forums, where we found discussions related to our topic. A lot of these platforms offered only little information (e.g. only 3-5 comments or no qualified content) which we did not count as relevant or meaningful for further investigations. Consequently, after identifying the communities we started to dig deeper into them in order to gain an understanding

of the members' behaviours, interactions, and relationships. We further used a passive approach by acting as complete observers without intervention or participation in any discussion (Kozinets, 2002). This allowed us to gain insights into the interactions without influencing the participants (Kozinets, 2015). We collected data entirely through direct transcription (archival data) of the comments and used coding methods to identify categories and themes. The use of only archival data types ensured that we did not inhibit the naturally occurring discussions within the communities. Furthermore, the existing comments on the observed online platforms were thoroughly analysed and filtered to get a clear picture of the situation (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3.2. Focus Group

The focus group was set up and implemented on the 14th of April 2017 in Villach (Austria) having four Austrian members of the Drughi fan section as participants (their characteristics and the reason why we chose for them will be described in more detail in the sampling method section of this paper). As Powell et al. (1996) recommended in their work, we were aiming for the creation of a relaxed atmosphere for the participants to provide them with feelings of comfort and informality. Therefore, we conducted the focus group in the apartment offered by one of the participants.

By having prepared five major questions (see appendix D) as starting points for discussions and coming up with two additional ones during the focus group, we were only present as a helping hand and some sort of guidance for the participants. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Powell & Single, 1996; Walker, 1985). We recorded the whole session via dictation device and transcribed it immediately after the focus group was done. In the consequent analysis, we followed the two-stage process recommended by Powell and Single (1996). First of all, we analysed the raw material and highlighted the most important and convincing aspects each individual contributed in answering the questions. Then, we used coding methods to discover categories and themes as we did within the netnography approach.

3.4. Sampling method

Every data collection process needs decisions about which individual results are necessary to answer the underlying research question. Hence, we had to decide on a certain sample of individuals. Our sampling method intended to make statements about the population from which the sample was drawn and enabled us to determine in which setting the findings were relevant (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

3.4.1. Netnography

For the purpose of the data collection, we wanted to investigate a variety of individuals' interpretations, not only from one community, but rather from diverse ones to achieve broader insights. With the help of the Giulianotti (2002) model, we identified three online forums which were suitable for a netnographic observation:

Juventuz (2017) is a popular and big international fan forum of the football club Juventus Turin. With a large member base and new conversations daily, this forum became relevant for the conducted study by considering the members as *fans*. We describe the fans as individuals who are in favour of one specific club or team, but do not have as strong involvements to the club as supporters do. They talk about latest competition results, transfer deals, management news, and everything that relates to Juventus F.C. In addition, fans appear to carry a strong feeling of responsibility and belongingness by demonstrating thoughts about financial and future developments of the club. However, they are principally interested in commercial achievements (Giulianotti, 2002) and mainly participate in online discussions about the club, certain players and their lifestyles. We focused on a discussion in the forum referring to the logo change which comprises 692 posts (status 12th of March 2017). We observed a huge amount of data including contradictions as well as agreements between the fans, allowing us to gain deep insights about how these individuals see Juventus F.C.s' new logo.

The Guardian (2017) is a platform reflecting the group of *followers* in our approach. Individuals of this group do not carry strong connections or relationships to a club and rather have a low involvement. We define them as mainly interested in discussions with others to obtain new insights or new perspectives. Moreover, they like to comment and tell their opinions about topics they are interested in. The interactions of followers take place in digital spaces, because they offer an ease of accessibility and a variety of relevant topics (Giulianotti, 2002). The Guardian is a British daily newspaper providing information on the latest news about different areas (Politics, Business, Sport, Environment, etc.). Due to the huge amount of comments and active discussions, the online website of the guardian is a commonly used platform for individuals to share their meanings and opinions. This platform enables individuals to communicate and discuss with each other on a certain topic or article they are interested in. For our research, we examined one article concerning Juventus F.C.'s logo change, which was published on the 16th of January 2017 in The Guardian's sport segment. The article provoked a discussion resulting in 346 comments within two days between the 16th of January and 18th of January 2017. We were able to discover rich and detailed information about how these discussants - in our case labelled as followers - see the logo change by observing their meanings and trying to understand their underlying interpretations.

UnderConsideration (2017) is an independent website dealing mainly with branding and rebranding strategies in various areas. We consider this online community members as *flaneurs* and describe them as having a low involvement with the club or the team which indicates a non-personal relationship (Giulianotti, 2002). Moreover, they are mainly interested in rebranding strategies and the underlying reasons of Juventus F.C. for conducting this strategy. Flaneurs do not necessarily have to be interested in the area of sport. In our context, they act and appear as design-attracted people, proclaiming a special knowledge in rebranding. The website fits into this research field due to the fact that it provides insights into the topic of rebranding designs letting the community members freely express their positive, negative, constructive or deconstructive interpretations of a shared topic. Hence, our observed research subject consists of all the discussants on this online community participating in the conversation around an

article about Juventus F.C.'s logo change. With 275 comments (between 17th of January and 27th of February 2017) we were able to obtain a large amount of data.

3.4.2. Focus Group

The conducted focus group consisted of four participants which we put in the category of *supporters*. We describe supporters as having a high emotional involvement to a club or a team. They regularly go to games and know the traditions, histories, and values of the club indicating a strong, long-term relationship and deep knowledge about it. Supporters reflect the traditional fan as characterised by Giulianotti (2002) and are often called hard-core or die-hard supporters. They identify themselves with the club, structure their free time according to game days and they integrate their children into the cultural values of their favourite team. Due to their active involvement in the club, we discovered that the supporters do not have main interests in online discussions and prefer to meet at club houses or other meeting points on a continuous basis to talk about their interests (Giulianotti, 2002). Our four participants are active members of the *Drughis* (the hard-core fans of Juventus F.C.) and have the following characteristics:

- *Participant One*: Law and economics student, 25 years old, Austrian citizen
- *Participant Two*: Accountant, 29 years old, Austrian citizen
- *Participant Three*: Logistics student, 25 years old, Austrian citizen
- *Participant Four*: Shop assistant and part-time student, 27 years old, Austrian-Italian citizen

There are a number of reasons why we picked those four individuals as participants for our focus group. One important aspect was that they are members of the most-supportive fan fraction of the Juventus club. According to the official website of *Drughis Ulrà Curva Sud* (2017) and *Drughis Store Juventus* (2017) those fans share the passion and the support for Juventus on and off the field. The main aim of these supporters during the game is to create a unique atmosphere in the stadium, support the players with motivational chants, and cheer for Juventus F.C. Through connections in the circle of acquaintances we got access to the group and found in the end four supporters who were willing to participate in our focus group. The chosen supporters regularly go, even though they work and live in Austria, to home games of Juventus F.C. in Turin and especially travel to Udine for away games against *Udinese Calcio*. They are always within the group of the (Italian) *Drughis* in a specific section of the stadium and are officially accepted members. They have been fans since a very young age and never switched to any other team during their life. Thus, they consider themselves as very loyal and strongly-attached supporters with the club being an important part of their lives.

Our participants are all under the age of 30 and have at least finished high school with their university entrance diploma and have either a regular job or study at university. The reason we chose this particular age range with educational similarities was because we wanted to have a homogenous focus group, as recommended by the literature (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Kitzinger, 1995). We needed them to talk freely about the logo rebranding and encourage each other in the discussion which we thought would occur more easily if they were in group with

people from a similar background. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that the supporters of a younger age were more open to contribute to our academic research and were happy to support us with our data collection.

3.5. Data Analysis

For our approach, we followed the codes-to-theory model proposed by Saldana (2009), which displays a coding process (see figure 2). This process is based on a grounded analysis approach aiming to code the collected data, create categories, and find themes in it without having any predefined concepts in mind (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Consequently, we started by first reading through all the comments (online communities) and statements (focus group) to get familiar with the content and to receive an overall impression of the discussions. We were mainly looking at interpretations and meanings of individuals towards the implemented logo change of Juventus F.C. (Saldana, 2009). We screened the content multiple times individually as well as in a group and came up with suggestions for codes which expressed these meaning constructions in the form of significant wordings (Initial Coding). Discussing these codes in-group and arguing for their relevance allowed us to see the conversations from various perspectives and to gain better understandings of the social worlds created by these groups (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

In a second step, we dug deeper into the selected codes by using a combination of focused and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009). These follow-up coding techniques build on the first cycle coding and try to develop a conceptualisation of the identified codes. “Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). In addition, we used theoretical coding, a process where central categories of the data are filtered out and compared across all identified community groups in order to enable the introduction of themes, which signify relationships between the empirical data and the theories underlying the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saldana, 2009). The identification of similarities and differences among our investigated communities supported our thematization and made it easier to get an in-depth understanding of the messages and their interpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The tables with our codes, categories, and themes can be found in the appendix A.

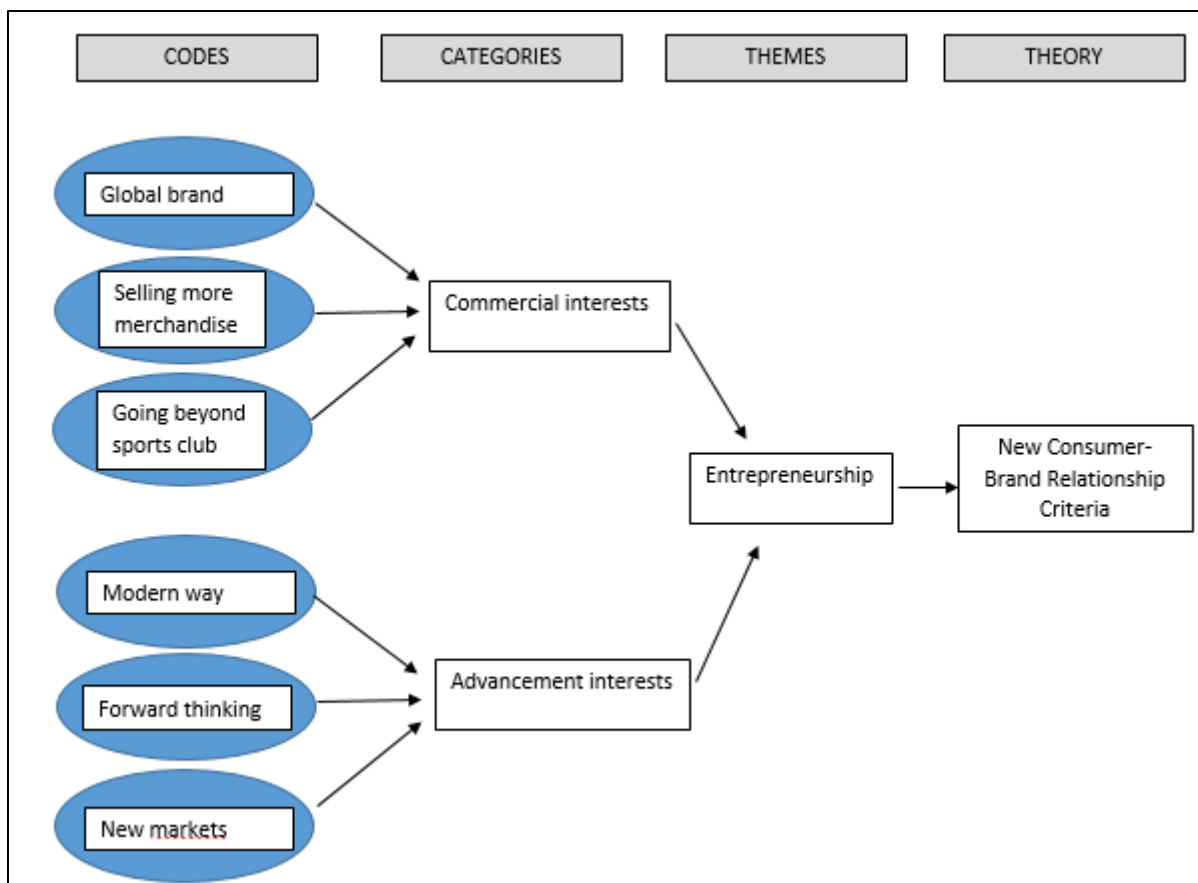


Figure 2: Our coding process according to the coding-theory-model by Saldana (2009)

Its not just about the logo, in general it seems like we're **slowly losing our identity** and this is the most obvious symbol of this pop transformation.

Fan community

17 Jan 2017 6:27

2 ↑

That's the new juventus badge, pretty much defines everything that's wrong with the world today, what a load of pish, **no history, no identity**. It tries to be smart with the j looking like the black and white stripes but come on you can't go and change your badge to that it's shite, why do football teams feel the need to change their badge these days, man city, west ham and now juventus. Next season maybe Madrid, barca, Ajax and bayern will all change their badge and European football will **completely lose its identity**. Bet the chinese clubs keep their traditional club badges...

Share

Follower community



Figure 3: Examples of Initial coding on all three online communities. (1) Fans, (2) Followers, (3) Flaneurs; Codes: Loss of identity, Loss of heritage

3.6. Ethical considerations, Reflexivity & Limitations

3.6.1. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations take a vital role in the quality of business researches. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), there are some main ethical principles which have to be addressed:

- “whether there is a harm to participants;
- whether there is a lack of informed consent;
- whether there is an invasion of privacy;
- whether deception is involved.” (p. 134)

Ensuring ethical considerations, we aimed for a high awareness of ethical concerns in our research field and for continuous reflections in all our decisions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Considering netnography with the huge amount of data freely available on the internet, we saw ourselves confronted with the questions of what is private and what is public in online places (Bowler, 2010). Looking at the literature we elaborated on Kozinets (2015) who argues for the importance of considering personal privacy and legacy when obtaining information over the internet. Furthermore, he provides guidelines how to manage the use of online sources for netnography studies (Kozinets, 2002). Thus, we looked at the different policy regulations stated on the investigated online platforms and we considered the community rules for our observations.

The present research has been realised by not explicitly informing the community members. Through this approach we wanted to ensure unobtrusiveness by not influencing the

conversations through our appearance which could frighten the discussing participants or even destroy the whole conversation (Langer & Beckman, 2005). As a consequence, we did not mention any names within our data presentation in order to guarantee anonymity of the discussants and we only used information that was publicly available to us (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Kozinets, 2002; Langer & Beckman, 2005; Toledano, 2017). Within the focus groups we clearly specified the guidelines at the beginning of the discussion to inform the participants about the further use of their contributions. They could individually decide if they wanted their names to be stated in our thesis or not. Furthermore, we transcribed the focus group discussion and sent it to the participants in order to receive their confirmation and permission to publish. All four participants requested to stay anonymous which we respected in the presentation of the findings as well as in the transcription of the focus group.

3.6.2. Reflexivity & Limitations

Every research study requires some form of verification of the research quality. This is usually undertaken by applying reflexivity, described as continuous awareness and attention to the construction of political, linguistic, social, and theoretical foundations which are intertwined in the creation of human understandings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In other words, we had to be critical about the stances we used during the whole research process. Dealing with subjective understandings of individuals as the main characteristic of our applied qualitative research involved the risk of taking personal opinions into account when we interpreted these understandings. Hence, it was necessary for us to apply reflexivity in our construction of meanings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This was achieved by constant discussions between ourselves and comparisons of the collected data at all stages of the research process (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

In order to employ quality criteria to our research, we utilised the approach of Guba and Lincoln (2000), who introduced an alternative concept of evaluating the quality of researches. They indicate in their approach that in qualitative research due to its subjectivity there are many truths in the social world and not one single absolute as proposed by traditional research quality standards (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Their alternative concept consists of trustworthiness and authenticity. We are going to apply the four criteria of trustworthiness to our thesis: *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability*.

Our multiple accounts of interpretations of a social world required a confirmation of congruence between observations and concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Consequently, we used a member validation for our focus group (sending them the transcripts and findings for confirmation) to ensure that we understood their interpretations correctly and to strengthen our credibility. For the observation of the online communities we did not use any active participation aiming for an unobtrusive research approach. Thus, we did not confront the members with our research in order to prevent influencing the naturally-occurring conversation. However, to avoid any potential harm to them, we ensure full anonymity by not stating names in our thesis and by only taking information which is publicly available (Langer & Beckman, 2005; Toledano, 2017).

Providing external validity or generalisability in qualitative research is critical because such studies are usually embedded in unique contexts and single cases (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Utilising the concept of “thick description”, mentioned within our research design, we tried to deliver profound and significant information about the social worlds of our subjects of study. The description of our four groups of individuals (supporters, fans, followers, flaneurs) accounts for several communities not only in the football context. A lot of brands, especially in the sport context, possess interested parties with different degrees of commitment. Additionally, the rich interpretations we offered for the underlying meanings of these groups regarding a logo change can be transferred to other contexts, where emotional and traditional beliefs are of high value. Nevertheless, providing profound generalisability within our research could not be fully achieved as our study is embedded in the context of football, which comprises a unique setting and dealing with human interpretations is heavily dependent on contextual situations, making an application to overall contexts hard to achieve.

Dealing with social worlds in qualitative research raises challenges concerning replicability as the circumstances vary in every situation and make it impossible to repeat the conditions in the exact same way (Bryman & Bell, 2015). With regard to the idea of dependability, we adopted the ‘auditing’ approach, suggested by Guba and Lincoln (2000). We tried to strengthen the reliability in our research process by providing a full transcription of the focus group data, the recording of all codes in first-cycle as well as in second-cycle coding and by the detailed documentation of selecting online communities and focus group members. Through the use of an interpretive approach we discovered the meanings of our subjects of study and tried to grasp their underlying understandings. This further indicated that we engaged in our interpretations of these understandings to answer the research question. Internal discussions about our codings, focus group notes, and the conclusions we made about the meanings of those studied encouraged us to reflect and to see different perspectives, thus accounting for higher trustworthiness and increased objectivity.

4. Findings

In the following section we present our empirical data collection and the consequent findings. We highlight the identified themes by giving an introductory description and use our defined categories to provide a good structure. The data presentation is based on the interpretations gathered from the diverse consumer communities, which we name, according to the model of Giulianotti (2002), as *Supporters* (Focus Group with members of the Drughi fan club), *Fans* (Juventuz community), *Followers* (The Guardian community) and *Flaneurs* (UnderConsideration community), described in the first chapter. Within the categories we discuss the collected insights and by the help of several excerpts from the community discussions we try to strengthen these categories and provide deeper understanding of the interpretations which arose due to the undertaken logo change of Juventus F.C. More excerpts, describing our discovered themes, can be found in appendix C.

4.1. Betrayal

The majority of the people within this theme interpret Juventus' logo change as betraying the brands' essence. They claim that with this action, Juventus destroys traditional values of the club which have been built over years through achieved successes and failures. Although the examined communities try to grasp the brands' strategy behind the logo change, the observation showed strong rejections. We identified two categories to describe how Juventus F.C.'s logo rebranding strategy is interpreted as 'Betrayal' by the investigated communities.

4.1.1. Loss of core values

The loss of core values through the logo change was one main issue found in various statements among all the communities. Flaneurs interpreted Juventus' logo change to be a clear statement of turning away from the club's tradition and heritage – which are supposed to be essential values in football brands. They argued that the new logo does not carry any historical values in it. This impression further indicates that these individuals reject such types of unconventional logo changes. Taking away the traditionally established emblem of a club gave them the feeling of removing the memories and myths connected to the football team as well as its iconic status. Narratives and myths constructed around brands are crucial elements for consumers to build interpretations and personal relationships with brands (Holt, 2004).

During the observation, we deduced that supporters and fans of Juventus as well as followers and flaneurs interpreted the logo change of the club as far too extreme. Discussions about the importance of a management considerate of established visual elements indicated the sensitivity of this rebranding issue. Careless rebranding activities are more likely to result in damage to the value of a brand if there is no congruence between the perception of brand consumers and brand managers (Lomax & Mador, 2006). The communities around fans and supporters further highlighted that they feel betrayed by the club giving up tradition and heritage which has been created over years. Statements representing disappointment, anger, and sadness within the identified communities led to these conclusions. Contemporary society has changed the

branding industry in so far that the former interpretation of branding concepts as the establishment of a name which represents the ongoing business as well as the treatment of consumers as naive human beings is no longer true (Holt, 2002).

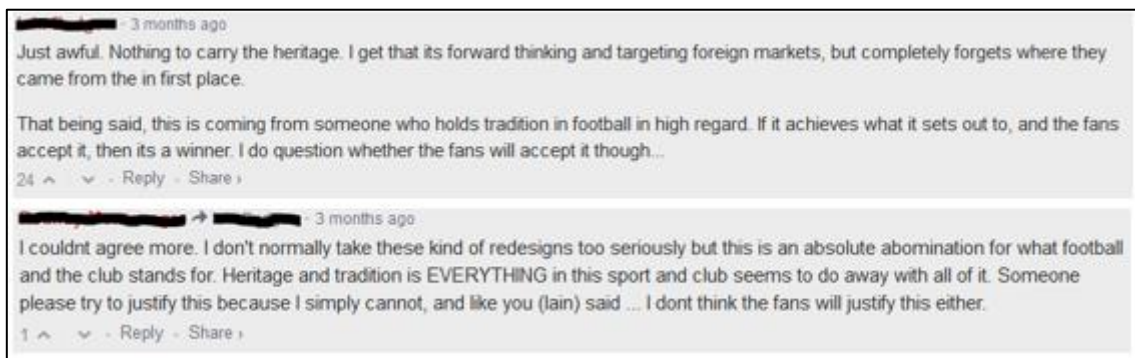


Figure 4: Flaneurs discuss the loss of Juventus' core values (UnderConsideration, 2017)

This discussion displays an argument shared by flaneur community members and illustrates the relevance of brand values. Individuals carry certain expectations of brands in their minds and, especially in the context of football, with high emotional commitment. Historical and traditional values are part of every club and its team (Bridgewater, 2010). These values are usually implemented in the presentation of a football club's badge or logo. Sports people immediately link the visual element to a team, when it appears in newspapers, TV or advertisements. That's why visual elements play a relevant part in every sports team not only to increase recognisability, but also to enable familiarity and meaning transfer (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Changing the visual element in a radical way is interpreted by several community members as an attempt to destroy the current brand values and the established recognisability. Sincere brands like Juventus F.C., based on tradition, history, and long-term achievements, are more likely to be damaged by managers' activities which do not match with established rules and which are carried out in careless ways (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004). We found statements in all communities describing the conducted logo change as Juventus losing its identity. This further implicates the risk of harming the relationships with existing stakeholders.

Although the flaneur community appeared to have a lower brand connection and a more design related discussion about the topic, a huge amount of the members saw the change as failure, especially in the context of football. They claimed that the context needs to be taken into consideration when dealing with logo rebranding strategies. Juventus' new logo is seen as completely different to the old one and the individuals perceived this drastic change as an inappropriate performance. We conducted similar insights by examining the follower community, where the members stated that the new badge holds no history, no identity, and no connection to football anymore. Moreover, statements of both highly involved fans and less involved flaneurs argued for the loss of identity when the logo has been changed in such a way Juventus did it. "The single most debilitating mistake that managers can make in regard to the long-term health of an identity brand is to develop a strategy so abstract that it yanks the brand out of its social and cultural context." (Holt, 2004, p 218).

Destroying the core values linked to a brand logo bear a high risk of confusing brand consumers and moreover losing the connection to them (Holt, 2002). Fans argued that the new logo incorporates no core values at all and gives the impression that they are disappointed and depressed about the change. However, we found that discussions of supporters and fans exposed that these communities are not that strict in the impression of losing core values through the logo change than followers and flaneurs are. The observation of flaneurs and followers revealed that losing the essence of a brand's identity leads in bad directions. Flaneurs and followers discussed the need for a balancing act between keeping up with time and staying authentic in regard to holding on to traditions and heritage of a team and a football club.

“Because I am a real fan for the beginning. It made me angry, a little bit upset and disappointed as well. [...] I mean they could have asked the fans before.” (Participant 1, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

“To come up with some suggestions and ask.” (Participant 3, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

“Exactly, that would have been nice. Now from one day to another “This is our new logo. Now we are turning the world around with it and want to be a new brand, a huge brand. Now we want to sell fashion”. For me that was a little bit too much and too fast. But I will be a fan till the end, fino alla fine.” (Participant 1, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

Supporters discussed the importance of informing stakeholders of the football club when deciding upon such radical changes. They argued that the logo change has led to a lot of confusion within supporting communities because no one was expecting it to happen and no one saw any values of the current brand in the new logo. Through the participation in games at the home ground or competitor fields, supporters perceive themselves as often being part of the production process of consumption experiences (Holt, 1995). Thus, the examined supporter group argued that as highly committed stakeholders they should be informed about impactful changes like this logo change and the club should have asked them in advance about their opinions. Now with this attempt it seems like the club wants to make its own new chapter in the brand's life cycle by forgetting the past achievements of the club, which have strengthened the bond between supporters and the brand of Juventus F.C. over years. Holt (2004) argues that brands should be careful when trying to reach out to new populist worlds because they might end up looking foolish or inappropriate when the new world does not fit in the cultural and political authority of the brand's identity. The statements and discussions of the diverse communities shed light on this interpretation of Juventus F.C.'s endeavour to change the logo in such an unconventional way. They felt that the new logo did not fit into Juventus F.C.'s world.

4.1.2. Selling out

‘Selling out’ reflects the anxiety of community members that Juventus F.C. has transformed into something different than a football club; that it has become mainstream and generic. This commercial characteristic of the logo change is termed as mainly negative by several communities. Highly brand-conscious consumers are very attentive when it comes to any

changes of their brand. With several expectations of their brands in mind, they are sensitive to unfamiliar and inappropriate changes (Van Grinsven & Das, 2015). This can be illustrated in the interpretations of fans and supporters who saw Juventus' new logo as step far away from football. They argued the change was an attempt by the brand to look like a fashion brand which was partly clarified as inappropriate for a football brand. Moreover, our investigation discovered that also flaneurs and followers read Juventus' approach as a demonstration that football becomes more about money than passion. Powerful words like "abomination" or "total waste of money" have been used to describe the logo change. We were able to identify that a radical change to increase commercial interests was negatively understood by the majority of these communities. The different members felt unhappy, sad, and frustrated with the logo change, as demonstrated by partly aggressive statements.

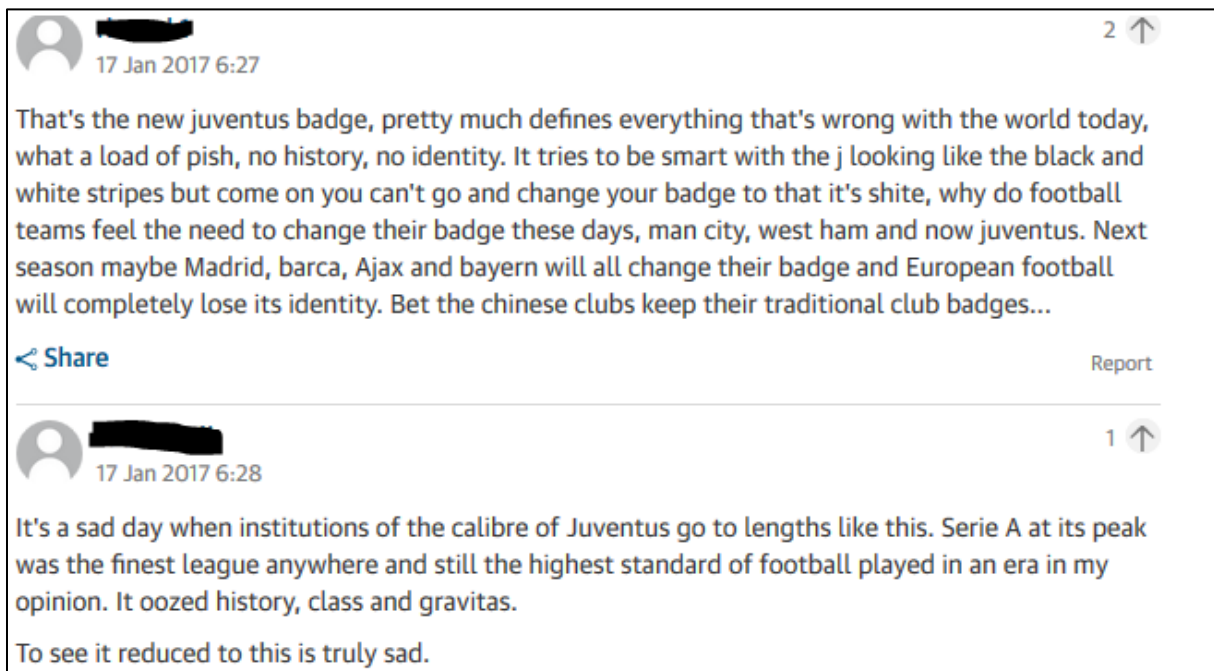


Figure 5: Followers complain about the clubs' approach of selling out factors like tradition and history (The Guardian, 2017)

In addition, followers argued the change was merely being executed to gain in commercial aspects leading the football club to behave as a competitive organisation without respecting the interests of its stakeholders. As the heart of every sports team, supporters and stakeholders in general play a crucial role. Playing foul with their memories and expectations is negatively conceived. Brands based on traditionalism, trustworthiness, and dependability (sincere brands) carry a certain responsibility to their consumers and stakeholders (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel 2004)

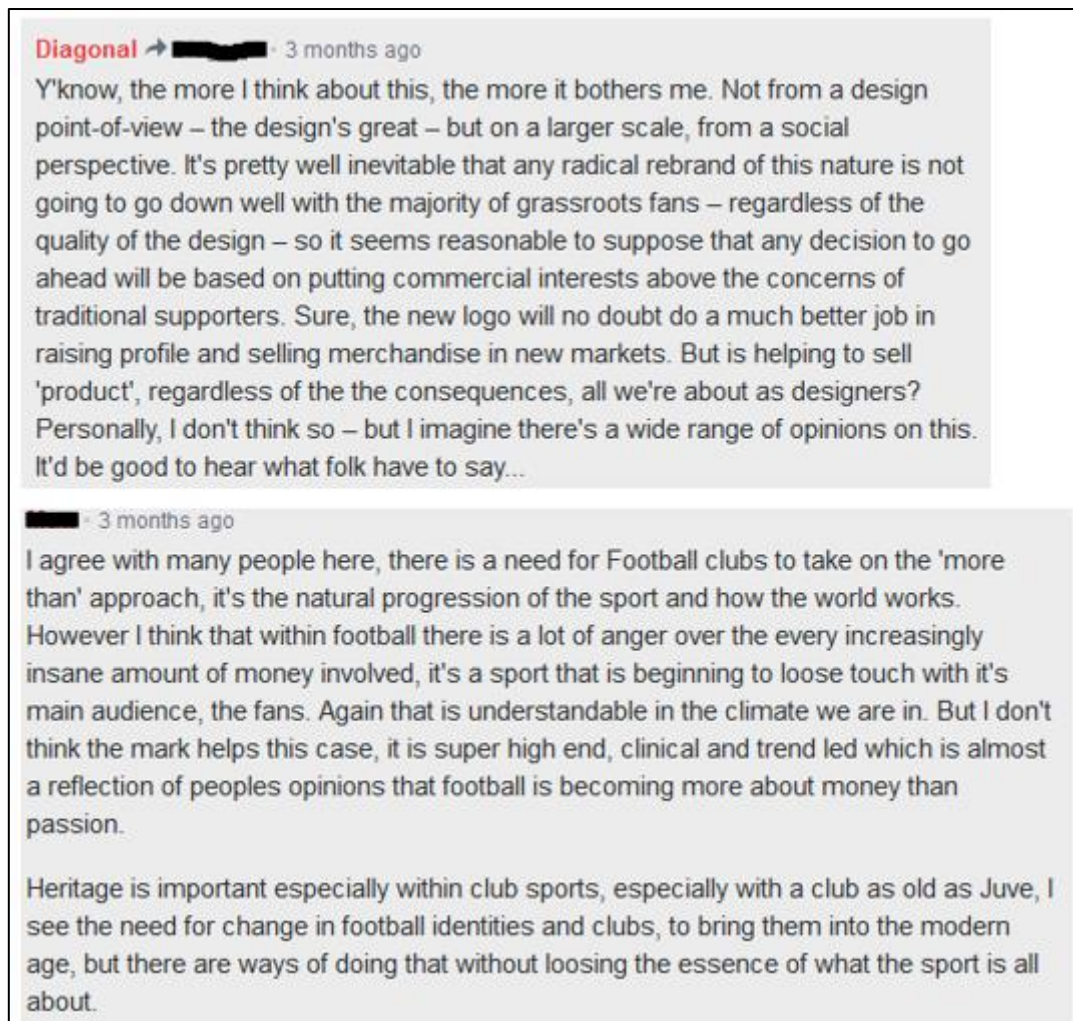


Figure 6: Flaneurs discuss the loss of connection to the club (*UnderConsideration*, 2017)

The discussion between the flaneurs in figure 6 reveals good insights into how they understood the change. By using the power of money to engage in further developments of a football club this change reflected an emerging approach of losing the connection to stakeholders. In this context, we found out that the flaneurs highlighted the question of the social perspective within the rebranding strategy of Juventus (see discussion in figure 6). It was rather surprising that the flaneurs brought up these concerns, as we expected individuals with higher involvement to the brand to address it. Nevertheless, this demonstrated that the affection, meaning, and familiarity of a visual element get lost through such an endeavour destroying some sense of consumers' belongingness (Henderson & Cote, 1998; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001). The flaneurs claimed that Juventus' attempt to change into a lifestyle brand without a connection to football led to the impression of "selling out" and feeling betrayed by the club. Setting commercial interests above all other concerns provoked diverse discussions within the communities. Whereas followers and flaneurs both demonstrated a rejection of the new logo due to the misguided transformation of football into more commercial areas, the fans had a more favourable and positive attitude towards commercial interests.

Concluding, within the theme of "Betrayal" the majority of all community statements argued for a higher relevance of keeping the tradition, heritage and, history in the logo of a football brand as well as the importance of the context underlying the rebranding strategy. Supporters

and fans strongly argued for an early inclusion of highly committed stakeholders in the process of such radical changes. Moreover, communities around followers and flaneurs denounced the modern transformation of football clubs because it reflects the tendency to become primary commercial organisations who are “selling out” the values of their core audience.

4.2. Entrepreneurship

The new logo shows that Juventus acts as a game changer and brings soccer into the future. The logo change assists in the disruptive creation of a brand, which takes football into new spheres and makes it visible in new countries as well as to people who do not know Juventus and what the club stands for. Moreover, the new logo opens the way into the future of football and Juventus wants to become a lifestyle brand competing with big brands like Nike, Adidas or fashion brands like Armani. People from the four different categories interpret the change as Juventus’ performance to show independence, individuality, and uniqueness. At Juventus F.C., they are no followers, they are inventors and leaders. Change does not necessarily have to be bad– it shows that the club is iconic and ahead of other football clubs. Two subcategories will present the major concerns and contribute a better understanding of the communities’ interpretation of the logo change within the theme of “Entrepreneurship”.

4.2.1. Commercial Interests

Within this category, we found flaneurs who perceived the rebranding of Juventus F.C. as a great opportunity to be different and to make a statement on the future of soccer. They argued that the new logo will become a “game-changer” (UnderConsideration, 2017) with powerful advantages. By changing the game they mean that Juventus is going to break with old habits and if there is a need to achieve something new and innovative, they argued for a development of seeing things with a “fresh pair of eyes, divorced from any historical context.” (UnderConsideration, 2017). Demonstrating a revolutionary strategy of logo rebranding, the new logo represents a change in Juventus’ brand identity or signifies new growth paths (Van Grinsven & Das, 2015). However, favouring rebranding design topics, flaneurs did not prioritise financial success as the main objective of this logo change. The presentation of the new logo as a different and unique identity is more essential to them than for other categories e.g. fans and supporters.

Some flaneurs argued that good design is not immediately related to higher revenues. Nevertheless, we found arguments by flaneurs that good logo designs were able to improve the marketability and commercial applicability of a brand. Yet, the interpretations demonstrated that modern logo designs, regardless of the industry, are aiming for simplicity and recognisability (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Moreover, followers pointed out that particularly in digital times, minimal, simple logos are important for a brand’s appearance. They saw the logo change as partly necessary for brands who want to become recognised in the wider world and they argued that if the club’s intention is to grow in market shares, this logo guides the way. Additionally, several followers stated that stakeholders will accept the change due to its objective of generating growth.

We identified that several fans appreciated the club's approach to develop from a pure football-focused entity to a globally recognised brand. According to them, factors like history, heritage, and tradition are important, however, they argued that those characteristics are grounded in the club and do not depend on the design of a logo. Thus, for them the new logo represents Juventus F.C. becoming more than just a football club in the future. It has been argued by fans that the club will grow into a globally-known brand and become recognised as such rather than just a simple sports club. Being more than just a football club offered several confrontations between community members. The increased opportunities were standing in opposition to the loss of traditional values, whereby the majority of fans and supporters saw more opportunities in comparison to the examination of discussions within flaneurs and followers.

“In terms of merchandising , just take that Yankees cap for example which has been by far the most popular and the coolest accessory ever. People who have no clue what it means love to wear them. Now imagine if we could dig into the mainstream market with our own sets of accessories. Kids for example would become more inquisitive about us and it'd go a long way in attracting a large stream of fans who otherwise normally wouldn't have bothered about wanting to know anything about an Italian football team.” (Fans, Juventuz, 2017)

“That's actually a great idea. Right now we buy jerseys, training stuff really. They [the club] could make a brand of this for casual clothing indeed. That's great. I'll most certainly will get a black shirt with just the logo on it.” (Fans, Juventuz, 2017)

A significant part of the Juventuz fan community argued that the introduction of the logo will provide the club with new financial sources in the long run. They claimed that the potential of the fresh logo will indirectly generate new stakeholders and investors which leads to an increase of the club's revenues due to growing sales and higher brand awareness. We identified similar discussions within the other communities, but the highest relevance of commercial interests provided by the logo change can be seen in the interpretations of the fans.

Selling merchandise is a major business in the contemporary football industry. Jerseys, training clothes or shoes with a club's logo and name on it are very important for consumers to identify with their favourite football club (Bridgewater, 2010). Individuals who perceive materialism as an important factor of consumption practices prefer a larger amount of diverse consumption objects of a brand (like various kinds of merchandise) than personal interactions or other experiences with brands (Holt, 1995). Fans and supporters discussed the opportunities offered by the new logo ranging from dresses or necklaces for women to regular polo shirts or casual t-shirts. Hence, fans and supporters interpreted the change as enabling Juventus F.C. to become a worldwide recognised brand where people start to use it as a fashion statement. In their discussions, we discovered a number of comparisons with the “Nike swoosh” or the “Yankee symbol” seeing the Juventus logo as a possible competitor.

Claiming to be rebranding experts, the flaneurs contended that the new logo of Juventus incorporates a well-performed design and we further interpret this as saying it will attract fresh stakeholders, contributing to the financial success of the club. However, they also argued to

keep attention on existing stakeholders where the flaneurs accounted for a risk of the new logo leading to increased confusion and rejection.

4.2.2. Advancement interests

Fans among this category argued for an increase in attractiveness of Juventus F.C. accomplished by the new logo, not only in the football industry, but also in other industries like fashion and design. According to them, there is great potential for the logo to become an individual fashion line where people all around the world are wearing polo shirts or dresses with the new Juventus logo. Flaneurs had more cautious interpretations in terms of seeing the logo change as new potential. They talked about the consequent loss of traditional values and what football is all about. However, they argued that with the visualisation of the new logo Juventus definitely “leapfrogged” (UnderConsideration, 2017) all other football brands in regard to the design. Brands have a hard time to manage the complex environment with strong competition and disruptive innovations (Holt, 2004). Thus, it is important to avoid becoming an ageing brand, something which can be achieved by providing a considered rebranding strategy to maintain attractiveness and competitiveness (Sjödin, 2007).

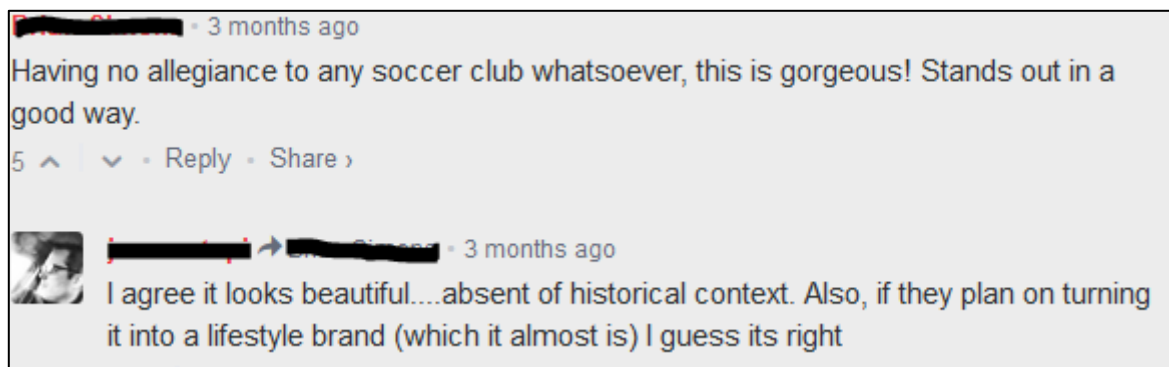


Figure 7: Flaneurs highlight the new potential of the Juventus logo (UnderConsideration, 2017)

All communities have in common that they mentioned some forms of potential in the new logo towards a modern and forward-thinking brand that becomes the first-mover in possible future football logo redesigns. Since the development of rebranding strategies allows organisations to reach new opportunities (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2003), fans and supporters interpreted this change as enabling Juventus to take a new stance in the sports world by trying to compete with brands like Nike, Adidas or Armani. Some fans furthermore stated that a change does not have to be for the worse and could be seen as a new chapter in the club’s history.

Additionally, followers claimed that the club manages to promote the whole brand in an easier way with this more generic and less traditional logo. People in different countries who have no idea about football or the club are thus able to consume this brand without having any kind of background knowledge. This also leads the brand to be present in the market throughout the whole year and not only during the times of competition. Main driving forces behind this type of rebranding approach can involve shifts in market situations demonstrated by increased competition or internal reconstructions (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2003). Our observation showed

that fans especially put high expectations on the increased possibilities of the new logo and how it encourages diverse people to become engaged in the Juventus spirit.

Changing a logo does not destroy our tradition it creates new tradition, the old versions will always remain part of our tradition/history. People have always been afraid of change so it is no surprise that there is dissatisfaction when there is a big remake like this on something we strongly associate with the club. On top of that we are all emotionally connected to our current version of the crest or the one that was before it which was pretty similar and that creates an even bigger feeling of deprivation.
I've never been afraid of change as I feel it keeps you from trying and learning new things which can lead to progress. I'm happy our management shows this bravery to try new things instead of just sitting still without any clear vision how to move forward.
Yap true that. Change is not always for the worse. I don't like google or facebook's logo but I couldn't care less, I still use it. And we have always been a club that does things first. So who knows if not more clubs will follow this model Also I trust our management, who have done everything to create a great income and close the gap with the giants. And they have done so in a league that is far behind and no one outside of Italy really takes seriously

Figure 8: Discussion of Juventus F.C. Fans about how the club achieves to develop through the new logo (Juventuz, 2017)

The fan statements (illustrated in figure 8) claim that it is sometimes necessary to break up with old, outdated habits in order to be able to strive for new progress and development. Giesler (2008) talks in this context about the idea of cultural change arising through situations of contradictions and conflicts between market actors, and leading to new market formations. Furthermore, it has been claimed by several communities that there will always be people who do not understand changes and will be angry or disappointed in the first place. But, with the majority of fans arguing that the logo change is a great potential for Juventus F.C., they were highlighting the club will take the pioneer position in the football industry reaching out to new spheres. Above this, it is mostly the fans who say that with the new logo Juventus F.C. is able to do “crazy” things to catch attraction and a lead position in the football industry.

Summing up this section of “*entrepreneurship*”, we made several insights into how community members interpreted the logo change as a new way for Juventus F.C. into yet unexplored areas of football organisations. Fans perceive a great opportunity for the logo change to contribute positively to the club’s success by selling more merchandise and by reaching out to new stakeholders. Followers interpret the logo change as necessary for modern brands who want to become recognisable in other industries and thus state that being the first football club making such an attempt does not only demand courage, but also sophisticated future planning. More defensive interpretations can be identified in the discussions of flaneurs and supporters. Flaneurs see increased potentials and forward-thinking in the logo change. However, they argue for the risk of going too far away from the core business and by being the first club undertaking such an attempt, the entire spirit of Juventus can be harmed. Moreover, supporters claimed they would not see themselves wearing polo shirts or casual outfits with the new brand logo at nightclubs. They stated that there is a line between being a supporter of a football club and going out in the evening with friends or family.

4.3. Aesthetics

The individuals of this theme were discussing the new logo in relation to the brand and if it still represents the football club itself. As we discovered during our research, there are two very opposite interpretations which are targeting the new visual design of the Juventus logo.

Consequently, the discussions were about the symbol itself which has changed from the traditional football emblem with its original colours of black, white, and yellow and its core elements (the bull, the crown, and the golden stars) to a bold, generic, and minimalistic one. We will present now the two discovered categories and showed how the individuals of the four different communities formed an aesthetical interpretation towards Juventus F.C.'s new logo.

4.3.1. Rejection

In order to be able to create the first category, we were observing the four different communities by focusing on codes within statements which relate to negatively and rejecting interpretations of the new logo design. Important keywords like “*shit, awful, poor, abomination, ugly, and no traditional fit*” were communicated throughout the posts and determined the pessimism some individuals had towards this change.

We discovered in our research that the fans from the online fan blog Juventuz and also the supporters from the focus group – both groups of individuals with a higher connection to the club – shared strong rejecting interpretations towards the new logo. This implies similarities found by the studies of Walsh, Winterich and Mittal (2010), who examined that consumers with higher brand commitment also have higher tendencies to reject new logo designs. According to the communities of fans and supporters, the new logo seems “ugly” in such a way that it is not able to communicate the values and history of the club. They shared a high sense of reluctance to having the new logo on the football jerseys instead of the traditional one. The new one does not have the potential to show the belongingness to the club's city of origin (Turin) or the region (Piemonte) visually. Logos should represent the value and the identity of a brand and through their presentation, logos allow the transfer of power, experience, confidence, and tradition which should encourage stakeholders to trust the brand (Stuart, 2003; Phang Ing, 2012). The supporters feel the new logo is design-wise so far away from the traditional crest that it is not even able anymore to communicate the club's values and past successes, which were represented by the golden stars above the old one. This further indicates that they are disappointed by the club's attempt. Phang Ing (2012) describes that consumers having negative attitudes to a brand or its marketing activities, like rebranding strategies, can lead to adverse outcomes for the brand.

“I still want to represent Juventus. I might buy clothes and everything but I think if it comes to the jersey I would prefer the old logo.” (Participant 3, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

„I think it lost its whole recognition. Cause you are used to the old one. If you come with the new one, no one would recognize that you are from Juventus. That's what I want to show when I wear a jersey.“ (Participant 2, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

*“Yes, if you put the letters away it could be anything. A brand like Tommy Hilfiger or something like that. It is nothing from a football club. Very simple and easy designed.“
(Participant 4, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)*

„And it is so easy exchangeable.“ (Participant 2, Supporters Focus Group, 2017)

The fans and the supporters were mainly expressing their dissatisfaction towards the aesthetic appearance of the logo by claiming that the design is not appropriate for the club. In other words, they blamed those responsible for choosing a poorly designed logo that does not communicate the values of the club anymore. Firstly, the supporters claimed that the new logo is not easy to read or to understand because of the far too simple design. Secondly, the new logo only includes the colours of the traditional one, whilst erasing all the other core elements that have been there in place for years. Thus the new one does not show the history, heritage, and success of Juventus F.C. anymore. Brand logos should represent a certain fit demonstrating the service which is offered by the brand and the values the brands want to communicate to its environment (Stuart, 2003). If consumers do not recognise a fit between the visual presentation of a brand and its image, then they are more likely to have non-favourable attitudes towards the brand (Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001). According to the supporters, there is no visual relation anymore between the club, the brand, and the logo which is poorly interpreted and leads to increased confusion.

Abstract logos bear the risk of getting “lost in translation” when the logo designers carry a distinct meaning in mind which the consumer cannot recognise in the presentation (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). As we discovered in our research, many of the community members showed a high sense of confusion towards the new design of the logo. Particularly, followers hold an adverse interpretation of the aesthetic performance. Those individuals agreed with the rejecting points mentioned by the supporters that the new logo design is not appropriate for a football club and leads to misunderstandings. Due to the opinion of numerous followers, the outcome of the design change is “awful and not very well thought through” (Followers the Guardian, 2017). For them, it is a minimalistic design which harms the visual recognisability of Juventus as being a football club and not just a simple (for instance) fashion brand. There is no visible connection between the logo and the football club because of the missing traditional elements which should help to represent football clubs to everyone externally (Bridgewater, 2010).

Furthermore, during the observation of the flaneur community, we identified several posts discussing the visualisation of the new logo. They argued in their comments that a traditional entity (in this case a football club) has to have a self-explaining symbol that immediately shows which club and team it belongs to. A high sense of recognition value is important for existing brand consumers, but also for the club, if they want to reach new markets and new stakeholders (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). With a recognisable logo, a brand is able to stay in the minds of consumers and is more likely to triumph against competitors with less recognisable ones (Holt, 2004). The flaneurs stated that, especially for individuals that do not yet follow Juventus, a logo which can be easily linked to a brand and its values is a necessity.

[...] “There is nothing overtly football about it. [...] it feels too much of a lifestyle consumer brand (à la Nike or Lulu) than an F.C. Perhaps there is a bit too much focus on the identity itself, and not quite enough on the game, the team, or the heritage behind it. ”

(UnderConsideration, 2017)

“[...] Minimal-chic crap that some overpaid graphic design wanker has put together on his Macbook in 10 minutes. There's nothing about it which tells you anything about Juve and it's history. No bucking steed or yellow or blue colours to pay homage to the city of Turin [...]”
(Juventuz, 2017)

The strong rejection of the flaneurs (and also to some extent of the supporters) arose due to the members' shared meaning about an emerging mismatch between the new design of the logo and the club itself. They claimed that a football club symbol has to contain some traditional elements in order to show the club's values and be representative for a broader audience.

4.3.2. Appreciation

The second category within the theme of “Aesthetics” shows some supportive interpretations among the four different types of communities towards the new Juventus logo and how it fits to the club. Keywords like *“bold statement, simplification, brilliant and gorgeous”* were used by the individuals in their comments to express that they are welcoming the new design of the logo. According to them, there is a perceived fit between the brand and the logo.

Having a higher interest in and attachment to the club the community around fans share their personal thoughts about the future of Juventus F.C. Posts from the category of fans argued for the simplicity of the new logo design which was not achieved in such a way by the old football logo. They claimed that the new logo design will support the realisation of competitive advantages. This further leads to the interpretation that they think simpler logos are easier to merchandise and to remember, not only by football interested people, but also by ones who are not into Juventus or football per se. Some of the fans appreciated the high degree of modernity communicated by the visual design of the new logo which allows Juventus to gain a rejuvenated identity. Being better and ahead of the other teams not only in terms of sportive aspects, but through a better commercialisation of the club in a global context appears as one of their biggest appreciations.

In comparison, the findings of supporters showed different results. Supporters mainly highlighted that for them it might be possible to sell more club-related products to consumers who are looking for simple and not too conspicuous logos. However, supporters did not mention any other significant interpretations leading to appreciating attitudes towards the new logo design, thus inducing our interpretation that they do not extensively favour the change when it comes to aesthetic terms. The flaneurs favourably judged the new logo design based on the fact that it is modern and manages to get away from the old-fashioned crests football clubs used to have. Some posts on the blog tackled the fact that Juventus achieves being new and innovative in an industry that is known to be stable as well as rooted in tradition and heritage. Having a football club logo with an innovative degree of design seemed to be of high relevance for them, which consequently indicates an easier marketability to a broader audience.

“It's not awful. it's classy. modern. fresh. unlike any other deadbeat football emblem logo. it's great. its application is great [...]” (UnderConsideration, 2017)

*“[...] Italians rock at design and I think they wouldn't have signed anything off unless they knew how people would respond to it. I think it kicks a**! It's bold. It's bad a** and it just kicks all other lame-o teams that still have shields on their shirts in the face.”
(UnderConsideration, 2017)*

As claiming to be more into the topic of good rebranding visualisation the majority of the comments within the flaneur community were targeting the design of the logo. Hence, they appeared as individuals who see more in the new logo than the fans, followers, and supporters. According to the posts concerning supportive interpretations of the aesthetic appearance, the club changed the logo in a bold and drastic way (going away from the traditional elements) while simultaneously managing to keep the heritage of the club. The flaneurs further argued that even if the basic elements of a traditional football logo are visually gone, a football club is still able to communicate its core values and history by using design elements rather than traditional core elements the old logo used to have.

“My first reaction was like: “Man, where's the shield? What have they done?”. Then I stopped a moment and realized that the Juventus heritage isn't the shield. It's the stripes. They nailed it” (UnderConsideration, 2017)

In addition, the community of followers, with a high degree of appreciation for the new logo, claimed that Juventus became more unique and distinct with the new logo. According to them, the club improved the new logo through the redesign strategy by distinguishing it visibly from their local rival Torino F.C. As visual elements generate several feelings (positive or negative), they can further determine the brand commitment of consumers (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). Moreover, followers argued that the new logo carries a potential to visually stand out in the football industry and they agreed upon Juventus' chance to be immediately recognisable with the new design (which stands completely opposite to what the fans and supporters claim). However, they pointed out that the introduction of the new logo did not manage to demonstrate the connection to Juventus right from the beginning without raising any kind of confusion and ended up in several problems.

“[...] The old one is definitely too symmetric and cannot be taken in one look. So definitely and improvement [...]” (The Guardian, 2017)

“[...] Fair call on the symmetry aspect of the old crest. I just assumed one of the main reasons for the change was to avoid confusion with the Torino crest by taking out the bull. Juventus. No bull. [...]” (The Guardian, 2017)

Summing up the theme of “aesthetics” and how the different types of communities interpreted the new design of the logo, we discovered rejecting and appreciating interpretations. What can

be highlighted is that supporters have more rejecting positions towards the new logo because they do not “see” the club and its tradition as well as the club’s core values being represented through it. The fans agree to a certain extent with the supporters that tradition and heritage should be symbolised by a football logo, but they did also see the club’s opportunity to sell more merchandise and enter new markets with a simpler logo, not solely related to football. Flaneurs also argued for the importance of traditional values when it comes to football team logos. However, they are more open to the new logo design and contend to “see what others cannot see” thus partly appreciate the bold action of Juventus’ new design and the arising opportunities (e.g. entering new markets). On the other hand, the followers were mainly confused with the new logo and share some of the thoughts mentioned by the supporters. Both supporters and followers struggled with the clubs attempt to use only letters as the symbol of Juventus F.C. and did not support the aesthetic design of the new logo.

5. Discussion

In this part of our work we are eager to discuss our research findings and reinforce them with the previously discussed literature. We build this discussion on the brand-relationship-quality model by Fournier (1998) which appeared for us in our research as the best available model to explain the relationship between consumers and brands. However, taken our unique context of football into consideration we used the model as basis and identified, with the help of our findings, a need for expanding it in order to explain the effects on the relationship between the investigated consumer (sport-interested individuals) and the brand (a football club and in this particular case Juventus F.C.).

5.1. Our adaptation of the brand-relationship quality model

Fournier's brand-relationship quality model (1998), already explained in detail in the literature review, deals with the main elements that reveal the quality of a relationship between the consumer and a specific brand. This is done by examining six elements that are, according to Fournier (1998), crucial in order to understand why consumers build relationships and furthermore how strong they are (in terms of quality, stability and durability). Figure 9 below shows the initial model with the elements determining the quality of a brand relationship.



Figure 9: The brand-relationship quality model by Fournier (1998)

Literature states that the emerging materialistic consumer culture accounts for alternate relationship qualities embedded in contextual conditions (Fournier, 1998). Considering that “relationships both affect, and are affected by the contexts in which they are embedded.” (Fournier, 1998, p. 346), we critically reflect on the interpretations of our investigated sport-interested individuals in order to locate their criteria for a desired relationship with their brand. Our observation discovered that sport-interested individuals focus on particular aspects which are more important for them in a relationship towards a football club than for regular consumers when it comes to non-football-related brands and their products. According to this, we adapt the model of Fournier (1998) in such a way that we do not include one of the initial aspects love and passion because our research discovered that sport-interested individuals do not stress high importance on this specific interpretational element. Love and passion in Fournier's model (1998) concerns the situation where consumers start missing the consumption of the brand's physical products which is more applicable to various fast moving consumer brands than a football club. However, due to our findings, we found two additional elements which appear as important for those type of consumers: *entrepreneurial mindset* and *aesthetic appearance*. The first one concerns the degree of the desire to be ahead of, more successful and different than

rival club consumer by showing belongingness to and being part of a club. The latter aspect relates to the appreciation of the visual aesthetic statement which is represented by the brand logo. As can be seen in figure 10 our version of the Fournier (1998) model consists of seven crucial elements that are most relevant in the consumer-brand relationship within the context of football relationships: entrepreneurial mindset, self-connection, commitment, interdependence, intimacy, brand partner quality, and aesthetic performance.

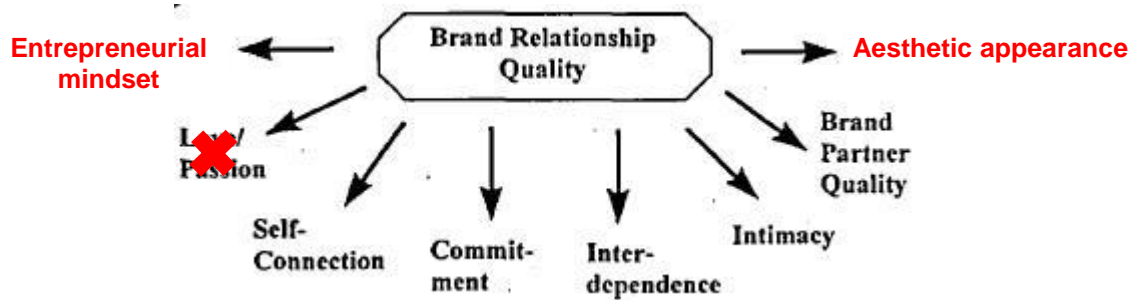


Figure 10: Our version and extension of the model by Fournier (1998)

In the upcoming pages of this work, we discuss our findings, link it to the aforementioned literature, and provide through this a sociocultural understanding of how a radical rebranding strategy of a football club's logo affects the consumer-brand relationship. We examine it according to the seven crucial elements of a brand relationship in the context of football.

5.1.1. Entrepreneurial mindset

The first factor which determines the quality of a relationship between a consumer and a brand in the football context is the entrepreneurial mindset. For our specific need, we characterise this element as the desire to be forward-thinking, open to change, successful, distinct from other consumers, to set new paths and break through the status of being average or normal. Fournier (2009) states that relationships are dynamic and not constant over a longer period of time. Both the brand and the consumer go through stages (growth, saturation, and decline) determining dynamic developments and changes in the relationship. Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) argue that actions undertaken on the brand side (in our case a logo rebranding strategy of a football club) lead to flexible changes in the relationship and to a new way of thinking for the consumers. Yohn (2014) highlights that the market power nowadays lies on the consumer side and so any action from the corporate side should be well-thought through because it could lead to disapproval by focusing only on own interests (Holt, 2002). According to our findings, fans and followers generally welcomed the undertaken logo rebranding as a dynamic approach to be commercially better off with a simpler logo. While on the opposite side supporters and flaneurs do not really share this entrepreneurial mindset by stating that this change goes too far and also too fast. However, it is Muzellec and Lambkin (2003) as well as Sjödin (2007) who describe this situation of a revolutionary change as a necessary step for a brand to rethink and reorientate themselves. This allows to simultaneously face the danger of drifting further apart from the stakeholders and especially the consumers.

The entrepreneurial mindset further concerns the commercial interest in a relationship by creating a situation where the brand can be merchandised in a broader perspective. As Holt

(1995) strengthens with his findings, consumers show their belongingness to a specific class or group of consumers through the acquisition of specific brands and their physical products. Holt (1997) further extends this by claiming that it brings the consumers closer to the brand, creates similar consumption patterns and determines their specific lifestyles. In our case this reflects being a sport-interested individual that (to a more or less extent) belongs to the club of Juventus. Arnould and Thompson (2005) call this the creation of a “marketplace culture” which indicates the establishment of a collective, characterised by consuming the same brand, and sharing mutual beliefs that distinguishes them from other consumer groups.

Sharing a competitive thinking unites the four examined communities on the point that being able to merchandise club products more easily through the new and simple logo would lead to more profits in the long run. The category of fans, especially, claims that selling more club-related products creates profits which could be reinvested by the club into better players or infrastructure. Buying more products that do not necessarily have to be football-related (for example shirts) with the new Juventus logo on it gives them the opportunity to show the belongingness to a class and create a boundary of exclusivity. Success plays a crucial role in both the context of football and business, and in addition sport-interested individuals are more likely to follow a club that is successful, on and off the pitch (Ahn et al., 2012; Sjödin, 2007). The aforementioned classification theory by Holt (1997) concerns in our case the consumers desire to consume a brand (support a football club) which achieves and promotes more success than other brands. As the categories of the followers and fans stated, being the first football club that undertakes such a tradition-breaking approach could provide Juventus with a competitive advantage against the others in the industry (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2003 & 2006). According to our findings, this competitive advantage has also been stated as a positive influence on the relationship between consumer and brand due to an increased sense of pride and feelings of domination.

However, we discovered the category of supporters and flaneurs are not claiming that being commercially successful, open for change, and tradition-breaking is necessarily positive to establish a stable relationship towards the brand. For them the club is a deeply-rooted entity in their culture of consumption and not a mainstream brand that is going to be used mainly for generating revenue, and therefore should focus on the core purpose of being a traditional football club (Holt, 2003). As Ahn et al. (2012) describe it in their studies, changes of a logo (for obvious merchandise purposes) are not appreciated by long-term and deeply-involved fans of the club, especially when their opinion is not taken into consideration. Individuals feeling that they are not being heard by the brand harms the relationship (Fournier, 1998).

5.1.2. Self-connection

Self-connection in a relationship determines how much consumers see themselves in a brand and how strongly it influences their identities (Fournier, 1998). According to Shields and Johnson (2016), the nostalgic feelings of consumers demonstrated by the consequence of a long period of product consumptions determine strongly how much an individual already identifies with a brand. By starting to get in touch with the football club at a very young age (for example

through the participation at a first game as a child), it becomes a significant part of their lives as Reale and Castilhos (2015) describe in their research.

In accordance to our findings, especially supporters represent the category of sport-interested individuals that integrated Juventus in early stages of their lives. In alliance with the category of the fans, they are eager to present their connection to the club at any point in time. In their studies, Arnould and Thompson (2005) describe that consumers create specific meanings through the connection to a brand and create a unique ideology that communicates their way of living to the public. The rebranding of the Juventus logo was an unexpected action which created an identity and self-connection crisis, especially for the highly-attached sport-interested individuals (supporters and fans). This further leads into a consequent situation of increased resistance.

Even if the supporters and fans feel that the connection they have to Juventus is damaged now (and maybe also in a conflict), Giesler (2008) and Ahn et al. (2012) revealed in their findings that after a time of adjustment, the resistance the self-connection between the brand and strongly attached consumers will be re-established. Our findings revealed that those sport-interested individuals do show resistance and rejection, but they would never abandon their relationship to the club they have been supporting for almost all their life.

5.1.3. Commitment

In accordance with our findings we discovered that the emotional bond between sport-interested individuals and brands in the context of football plays a crucial role in the establishment of a relationship. The literature defines this emotional bond as commitment (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2011) which further describes the consumer's attempt to maintain a strong relationship with the brand (Aaker et al, 2004; Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). The degree of commitment is deeply rooted in the cultural meanings of individuals, which consist of their past experiences, their networks, their environment as well as their individual social aspects (Fournier, 1998). With the supporters seeing themselves as co-producers of the culture of consumption through frequently visiting games and taking active part in discussions or demonstrations, we discovered strong connections to the football club. These types of connections form the strong relationship between Juventus F.C. and its consumers and should always be taken into consideration in any managerial actions from the brand-side (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2011). Additionally, this indicates that brand relationships with consumers are not simply based on the intentions of what managers want them to be, rather they are constructed by the meanings these consumers attach to the brands (Fournier, 1998).

In this regard, we identified that myths and stories take a central role in the constructions of consumer-brand relationships in the football context. Strong committed consumers (supporters, fans) tend to create their own stories around a football brand, carry their own rituals with them, and usually pass their constructed myth over to their children (Holt, 2004). Through these established rituals and myths, football consumers collect memories and meanings engaging in their culture of consumption. Additionally, these memories are able to enhance the credibility of their relationships to the brand (Holt, 1995). Consequently, the emotional bond within these

relationships is perceived as very strong. Less committed consumers (followers, flaneurs) do not have these strong attachments to a football brand and their relationships are majorly based on common expectations in the brand like presenting certain values (tradition, heritage, identity; Holt, 1995; Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010).

However, these specific values are then interpreted as very important in the establishment of a stable relationship with football brands as they carry trust and reliability, displaying relevant characteristics of relationships (Fournier, 1998). The identified consumers' awareness of Juventus' values and their importance are seen as typical indicators for loyalty, a concept that defines the strength of a relationship (Fournier, 1998). A brand's communicated values which are interpreted as relating to the identity of a brand provide consumers with trustworthiness and account for a stable and loyal relationship (Fournier, 1998). We discovered that all communities claimed that there is a need for a perceived fit in the communicated values of a football brand. The communities also postulated that these values should be provided by brands which desire to build long-term relationships with football consumers (Richelieu, Pawlowski & Breuer, 2011). Thus, we can argue that in football the values of a brand have a huge influence on the consumer loyalty towards a brand and therefore affect the relationship among the brand and its consumers in either positive or negative ways. The collected interpretations of the individual communities allowed us to see that the logo change of Juventus F.C. led to perceived loss of values, which were established between the old logo and the club. Surprisingly, we observed that all the communities - strongly and weakly committed - indicated the loss of core values as major issue of the new logo affecting their relationship to Juventus in a negative way.

Nevertheless, we detected an interesting aspect with our findings, which is not fully in accordance with the literature of Walsh, Winterich and Mittal (2010). They showed in their research that consumers with strong commitments to a brand are more likely to be threatened by rebranding strategies and perceive it as harm in their relationships. However, we found strongly committed individuals (supporters, fans) who did not entirely reject brand information which mismatches with the brand values. We examined certain aspects of disappointment and anger regarding the logo change, but we also observed that they claimed their relationship to the brand was stronger than the feelings harmed by a simple logo change. Their interpretations showed that the visual presentation of a football brand, meaning the logo design, is not the only element representing the values of a football team. In addition, this shows that the core values are rooted in the team and the club itself, connecting the individuals to the football brand. Furthermore, similarities could be found in the studies of Ahn et al. (2012) demonstrating that consumers with deep attachments to a club are not going to change their relationship with the club just because of a logo transformation.

5.1.4. Interdependence

According to Fournier (1998) this factor in the relationship quality model describes the frequency of interaction between the consumer and the brand. In other words, how strongly the brand and its consumption is rooted in the daily life of the consumer. In the context of football, it concerns especially ordinary and extraordinary rituals which are conducted by the sport-interested individuals to a certain extent according to the research of Reale and Castilhos

(2015). In our findings, we discovered that particularly followers and fans are interested in interacting with the club through ordinary rituals like gathering news (especially online) and discussing it with members of the same community.

In contrast, supporters favour extraordinary rituals (like for example going to the stadium or organising choreographies for the next game) in order to feel closer to the club and maintain the relationship. Reale and Castilhos (2015) further highlight that deeply-attached supporters favour spreading the message about how deeply connected they are to their club. The researchers describe this extraordinary ritual as passing on the heritage of intensively supporting a football club to the people in the closest environment of the supporter, like to the children. Holt (2004) explains this in his cultural branding model as the adoption of a brand in the personal life through repeating context-dependent consumption practices (in this case rituals in the field of football club support) which determines the factor of interdependence (Fournier, 1998). Arnould and Thompson (2005) argue in their studies that following a specific consumption practice (consuming a brand in a certain way, in a certain routine) creates collectives with stronger or weaker (depending on the frequency of consumption) degrees of involvement in the relationship. Fournier's (1998) factor of interdependence includes furthermore brand-related activities that are in our case in accordance with the statements of Reale and Castilhos (2015), not preferably around the consumption of physical products of Juventus. They state that this type of consumption is rooted in the daily routine of the consumer and created by socialisation with like-minded people sharing the same interest.

As Stuart (2003) reveals in her research a well-designed logo can communicate positive attitudes and encourage the consumers to strengthen the relationship with the brand. It was the fans and flaneurs who principally interpreted Juventus' rebranding approach as positive. They stated that with a simpler logo that does not immediately show the character of a football team they could imagine integrating more club-related merchandise in their everyday life (for example wearing shirts with the logo on it for work). In this case, the higher degree of interdependence would influence the relationship quality between Juventus and them mainly positively. On the opposite, followers and supporters view the club's approach to be more present in not purely football-related sectors of the market as rather negative. In accordance with the studies of Sjödin (2007), those sport-interested individuals face problems with maintaining the former beliefs they had towards the brand. They criticise that entrenching in a more mainstream market could harm the factor of interdependence in the relationship because of the unique culture of consumption embedded in the tradition of Juventus (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2002).

5.1.5. Intimacy

Another factor determining the quality of a consumer-brand relationship, according to Fournier (1998), is the level of intimacy. This element describes the deeply-rooted beliefs of the consumers that a specific brand with its attitudes and features is better than all the other available alternatives. In our special context of football, we discovered that the sport-interested communities of supporters and fans would never change the club they are supporting while followers and flaneurs are not exclusively related to one (and only one) specific club.

Intimacy can further be explained as the degree of loyalty a consumer has towards a brand. Holt (2004) and Fournier (1998) describe it as the consumer's unwillingness to abandon a certain brand even if other brand alternatives would offer better conditions. Supporters and fans in our findings claimed that they are not very happy with the rebranding of the Juventus logo but they would never switch to a different team because of this approach. This argument is strengthened by the research of Ahn et al. (2012) where a logo rebranding has negatively affected the relationship between the loyal fans and the club but only for a limited period of time. According to their and also in compliance with our findings, it can be stated that loyal and strongly attached sport-interested individuals would not switch to the competition (another football club) even if they interpret an action from the brand-side as negative and not appropriate.

Furthermore, Fournier (1998) claims that intimacy is strongly linked to the sociocultural type of meaning in a relationship which is created by the culture and environment around the consumer and which determines how strongly a person desires to engage with a relationship (Dion & Dion, 1996). In our research, we discovered the supporters as being the sport-interested individuals with the highest degree of engagement, followed by the fans, followers, and flaneurs. As Reale and Castilhos (2015) discovered in their research the sociocultural influence, especially by the people in the immediate environment of the individual (for example growing up in a specific region or part of a town), can determine already in early ages which football club to support. The investigated community around supporters confirmed this by stating that growing up with the spirit of being a fan of Juventus built an intimate relationship between them and the club already at a very young age.

A significant part of the sport-interested individuals claimed that the logo rebranding was too unexpected and provoked a conflict between them and the brand. Giesler (2008) states that especially unexpected actions from the brand establish a crisis where strongly attached consumers (supporters and fans) show the highest degree of resistance at the beginning. However, supporters and fans stated they will reintegrate into a strong relationship with the club after other events (e.g. victories, trophies etc.) overshadow the debates about the design of the new logo (Ahn et al., 2012; Giesler, 2008).

5.1.6. Brand Partner Quality

The last factor that influences the quality of a consumer brand relationship is determined by the quality of the brand partner. In other words, the type of personality a brand represents. According to the research of Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004) we describe Juventus F.C. as a sincere brand, which means that tradition plays an important role and the relationship is more long than short-term orientated. In our research, we discovered that especially the supporters and fans highlighted the tradition and history of Juventus and they shared deep feelings with the club that can be compared to the ones between them and family members or friends (Reale and Castilhos, 2015).

Fournier (1998) explains this as a strong sociocultural type of meaning an individual gives a relationship, shaped mainly by the environment, upbringing, culture, and the social network. In

our specific case, sport-interested individuals are influenced by those factors and guided in being attached (to a more or less extent) to Juventus F.C. Trust and reliability are important characteristics for a sincere brand personality as argued by all of our four categories (Aaker, Fournier, Brasel, 2004). The rebranding of the logo can be interpreted as an act of transgression (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel 2004) where the brand risks the high level of trust it has built up over years with its stakeholders. In particular, the supporters and fans from our research feel betrayed by this drastic step, mainly because they have not been taken into consideration throughout the whole process of change. However, in regard to our findings all four categories claimed that a brand with a sincere brand personality should communicate trustworthiness due to the long-term orientation of the relationship (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel, 2004)

The (public) image of the brand strongly influences the quality of the brand partner and is difficult for some brands to keep constant over time (Holt, 2004). Giesler (2012) claims that the public is able to create a brand image that contradicts the image the brand actually intends to communicate. In our findings, the supporters described Juventus as an influential Italian club which was well-known to represent Italian values like tradition and heritage, but harmed this image through the logo rebranding. Negative reactions towards this change create, according to Giesler (2012) and Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006), a so called *doppelgänger* brand image, which is created by a consumer community and differs from the actual (desired) brand image. In order to avoid the creation of such an image and a consequent negative influence on the brand partner quality, Holt (2004) states that especially the stakeholders who are strongly attached to the brand (supporters and fans) need to be satisfied and their voice must be heard at any point in time. Their opinion and actions have a strong influence on the less attached and low involved stakeholders (followers and flaneurs).

All categories of sport-interested individuals in our research mentioned (to a greater or lesser extent) to face some feelings of anxiety that Juventus could sell out their core values. Especially sincere brands with characteristics like trust and tradition (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004) are more likely to face rejection towards their strategies of changing essential brand elements according to Fournier (1998). In our research, we discovered that mainly the supporters and fans are anxious that Juventus risks the tradition in order to be more successful in commercial terms. The followers add to this by stating that gaining profits has become more important than taking care of the stakeholders. Holt (2002) argues that the consumer-brand relationship gets in conflict when the consumers receive the feeling that their needs are less important than commercial interests. Hence, we can argue that existing strong connections between brands and consumers do not provide a *carte blanche* to organisations accomplishing new decisions imprudently. Moreover, the establishment of stability and durability in relationships demands considerate decisions by an organisation's management (Fournier, 1998). Our findings revealed that the examined communities requested a certain degree of involvement in the club's decision to change the logo. This would have further encouraged Juventus F.C. to strengthen the bond with its current consumers and would have avoided negative reputation (Ahn et al., 2012; Holt, 2002).

5.1.7. Aesthetic appearance

The context of football revealed the importance of aesthetics in the relationships between a football brand and its consumers. Aesthetic values within our investigated communities are defined by the design, colour, shape and the overall visual appearance of the brand. Throughout our analysis it could be identified that these values are shared by several collectives and, moreover contribute to the quality of the relationship between them and the football brand. Therefore, we claim that the aesthetic appearance is a criterion for determining the quality of consumer-brand relationships in the special context of football.

With the logo as the second main component in the visual identity of a brand (Henderson et al., 2003), it demonstrates a fundamental role in a brand's presentation and hence in the connection between a football brand and its consumers. Furthermore, especially in the football context, logos play even more valuable roles, characterising iconic symbols (Holt, 2004) where individuals add certain meanings and attitudes to them (Bridgewater, 2010). We found that these symbols are strongly embedded in the individuals' culture of consumption by being displayed on merchandise like jerseys or flags, but also on any publications in media or other brand-related appearances. Additionally, these logos establish the bond between consumers and football brands, thus forming the relationship as well as providing the visual distinction to other football clubs. In our study, the majority of the communities argued for the importance of being visually distinguishable from other competitors as well as for being visually attractive in relation to others. The collected interpretations let us presume that this form of attractiveness in a football logo affects the relationship between football brands and its consumers by encouraging a more positive attitude towards the club if the visual identity looks appealing.

Our findings discovered that sport-interested individuals heavily rely on football logos. They interpret these logos as carrying values like tradition, heritage, success, and failure in one single symbol and thus triggering various meanings and reactions in its consumers (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Moreover, a certain degree of recognisability, familiarity, and meaning transfer shown in a well-established football logo is crucial for inducing positive attitudes towards the brand (Phang Ing, 2012). Our results discovered that specifically recognisable logos have additional impact on the reputation of a brand. The community around flaneurs heavily argued for the fact that a logo should account for a coherent fit between the brand and its identity (Holt, 2004). Moreover, managers should avoid rebranding strategies that lead to increased confusion among consumers. Throughout our observation, we detected that the revolutionary attempt to change the logo of Juventus F.C. leads to the risk of losing the visible values of the club, which resulted in several negative responses. Unexpected and incoherent actions of brands foster confusion amongst consumers and also loss of trust and reliability in the brand. Having more negative attitudes towards a brand caused by such actions (e.g. bad logo rebranding strategies) end up in consumer acts adversely affecting their relationship with the brand (Stuart, 2003).

Additionally, based on the results collected, we identified that the majority of the examined communities interpreted the radical change of the football logo as influencing their relationship to the club. They claimed that the new logo does not carry any traditional and historical values

anymore. This appeared to them as the club's endeavour to cheat on the main characteristics of the football brand and further on the consumers' beliefs in the brand. Moreover, the consumers convey several meanings and expectations in the visual identity of a football club (Ahn et al., 2012), which are destroyed by the logo change and hence negatively interpreted. The interpretations of supporters clearly showed that they did not favour the new logo of Juventus because it does not read like a football logo and through the unexpected introduction the club caused confusion and, moreover, insecurity among the supporter community.

6. Conclusion

The underlying thesis discusses the effects on consumer-brand relationships provoked by a radical logo change of a football brand. The investigation in football comprised a significant aspect of our research as it displayed a context where a vast number of people are affected to. This further indicated the theoretical and practical importance of our research to allow the development of new knowledge. Based on literature of consumer-brand relationships as well as past research on logo rebranding and football rebranding strategies, we used a sociocultural approach to develop our theoretical framework. Furthermore, we considered empirical research in discussions between different consumer communities arguing about the logo change of the Italian football club Juventus F.C. Thereby, we used a categorisation, inspired by Giulianotti (2002), of sport-interested individuals who discussed the undertaken logo change of Juventus F.C. within their communities. Using netnography and focus group discussion as research methods encouraged us to dig deeper into socially constructed meanings of individuals. With the help of the collected data we identified how the relationship quality between the brand Juventus F.C. and its diverse interested groups was influenced by the undertaken logo change. By elaborating on the brand-relationship quality model of Fournier (1998), which points out important criteria for evaluating relationship strength, stability, and durability between consumers and brands, we discovered that within the context of football two important criteria - entrepreneurial mindset and aesthetic appearance - to improve the relationship quality are missing. The next paragraphs will demonstrate the theoretical and practical contributions of our research.

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

With our theoretical framework (figure 1), we engaged in bridging our main theories in order to provide answers to undeveloped research fields (Locke & Biddle, 1997). Our sociocultural approach allowed us to dig deeper into consumer interpretations rooted in cultural settings and further enabled us to identify relationship developments which have not been anticipated (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). These - let us call them - alternate *relationship styles* (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel, 2004), which are emerging through vibrant and fast-changing features of modern consumers' consumption patterns have gained increased importance over the last years, but did not yet find empirical and theoretical evidence in the literature (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004).

The observation of effects on relationships between football brands and its consumers guides the research process of this thesis to elaborate on the criteria of strength, stability, and durability in the investigated relationship styles. Through the examination of the relationship quality between these two, we encountered the need for critical quality conditions constituting these relationship styles. Hence, we intended to expand the brand-relationship quality model of Fournier (1998) in order to meet the criteria for evaluating the relationship quality among football brands and its consumers. Thereby, we detected that the *aesthetic appearance* of a football brand or, more specifically, the logo plays a crucial role for consumers in establishing a connection to a football brand. Interpretations showed that the visual identity of football

brands is responsible for communicating brand values (Walsh, Winterich & Mittal, 2010). According to the identified relevance of tradition, heritage, and identity in football, these values maintain key characteristics of football brands providing consumers with increased reliability, trustworthiness, and responsibility (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004). Thus, they should be represented in a football brand logo. Moreover, the aesthetic appearance indicates the quality of a visual presentation of a football brand and denotes a very important criterion for relationships between football brands and its interested consumers.

Entrepreneurial mindset in a relationship between a football brand and consumers describes the brand's willingness to think ahead, to stay competitive, and to continually search for improvements. This relationship quality criteria comprises core values in common sport industries which are rooted in commercial and success interests. The findings showed that these interests displayed vital characteristics in the strength of relationships between football brands and its interested consumers. However, a football brand should concentrate on delivering responsiveness and thoughtfulness to a relationship (Holt, 1995 & 2002) by taking considerate decisions in management actions. Consequently, we revealed that the quality of an entrepreneurial mindset denotes competitive skills of a football brand which account for the development of a strong and long-term relationship between the brand and its consumers.

6.2. Practical Contribution

For the practical contribution, we found out that throughout all investigated consumer communities the call for a considerate management of rebranding strategies, especially in the context of football, was argued as highly important. The findings showed that the emotional commitment involved in football communities requires special treatment when it comes to changes of well-established conditions. Inappropriate and unexpected managerial actions increase the risk of insecurity and lead to loss of trust and reliability in the brand (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004; Holt, 2004), which further harms the relationship between the brand and its consumers. We identified that the radical change of Juventus F.C.'s logo raised doubts and confusion among the studied communities resulting in disappointment as well as negative expressions about the brand in public. Moreover, the research study revealed that particularly strongly committed football communities negatively judged Juventus' attempt to change the logo in an inappropriate way. Therefore, managers performing in emotionally laden contexts, should take explicit care to considerately manage their brand activities to avoid damage to their relationships with consumers.

Furthermore, consumer-brand relationships as main constructs in contemporary consumer culture (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004) have a major effect on the brand's success. By recognising two crucial criteria for evaluating relationship quality between football brands and their consumers, we unveiled the huge influence of context. Moreover, the results demonstrated that it was these criteria of relationships postulating for an attentive consideration of contextual conditions when assessing relationship qualities (Fournier, 1998). Hence, we revealed that the aesthetic and entrepreneurial aspects of a consumer-brand relationship in football contexts are of high importance to marketers, who desire to achieve strong, stable, and long-term bonds with their interested consumers.

In addition to our study, we discovered that a perceived fit (Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001) between the football brand and its identity demonstrates high significance in consumers' interpretations and further contributes to a strong relationship. The argumentations found within several examined communities demonstrated the task of a brand to display its core values in the visual identity in order to assist consumers in immediate recognition and familiarity. It also enables the brand to engage in long-term relationships with consumers as it strengthens the bond between consumers and the brand (Van Grinsven & Das 2015; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001). Consequently, with the intention to "change the game in rebranding", we call for the attention of football brands to preserving an apparent fit between the brand and its values. This allows sport-interested consumers to insert the brand's meaning in their culture of consumption without the fear of being betrayed.

6.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

Our work faces some limitations that are necessary to mention and we also present suggestions for further research. As we conducted our research in the specific field of football club logo rebranding and the consequence on consumer-brand relationships, we cannot draw a general conclusion for other (not football-related) areas. Numerous past researches focused on logo rebranding activities in the context of football (e.g. Ahn et al., 2012; Bridgewater, 2010; Van Riel & Van den Ban, 2001; Van Grinsven & Das, 2015 etc.) and through this work we contributed knowledge by observing the effects of radical logo changes on the relationship between sport-interested individuals and their club. In order to guarantee a higher degree of generalisability, it would be recommended to observe other areas where logo rebranding could have strong effects on consumer-brand relationships due to a high degree of emotional commitment (for example in the art or music industry). This would encourage us to take more general conclusions about how important it is for corporations, football clubs etc. to take the factor of a strong bond between consumer and a brand into consideration if radical logo rebranding strategies are to be undertaken.

Furthermore, we focused on two qualitative methods for data collection (netnography and focus groups) which gave us detailed and rather unbiased insights, but also faces limitations. In future research the implementation of either other qualitative methods (for example in-depth interviews) or a combination with a quantitative study would allow for across-method triangulation and could provide new and undiscovered insights. It would also be interesting for further researches to observe if there are any major differences in gender and age when it comes to logo rebranding strategies of football clubs and the impact on the relationship towards the fans. In the conduction of the focus groups, we only focused on males under 30 who are either students or new in the labour market. Looking at people from different age ranges, with a different gender and background (workers, students etc.), would enable increased understanding that can be compared in order to develop new theoretical or practical insights.

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APPENDIX A

NETNOGRAPHY RESEARCH

CODE (INITIAL CODING)	CATEGORY (FOCUSED CODING)	THEME (THEORETICAL CODING)
Loss of heritage/history	Loss of core values	Betrayal
Loss of tradition		
Loss of identity		
Nothing of football anymore		
Abomination		
Football becomes more about money than passion	Selling out	
More fashion/lifestyle than football brand		
Putting commercial interests above		
Waste of money		
Going beyond being a pure sports club	Commercial interests	
Juventus is a brand not just a team		
Global brand		
Breaking with tradition		
Selling more/new forms of merchandise		
Appealing to emerging markets		
Meeting new stakeholders		
Modern way	Expansion/Advancement interests	
Forward-thinking		
Break through to new grounds/markets		
Better suited for marketing (digital marketing)		
Shit	Rejection	Aesthetics
Awful		
Abomination		
Ugly		
No tradition in the logo		
Bold statement	Appreciation	
Simplification		
Brilliant		
Gorgeous		

Coding summary

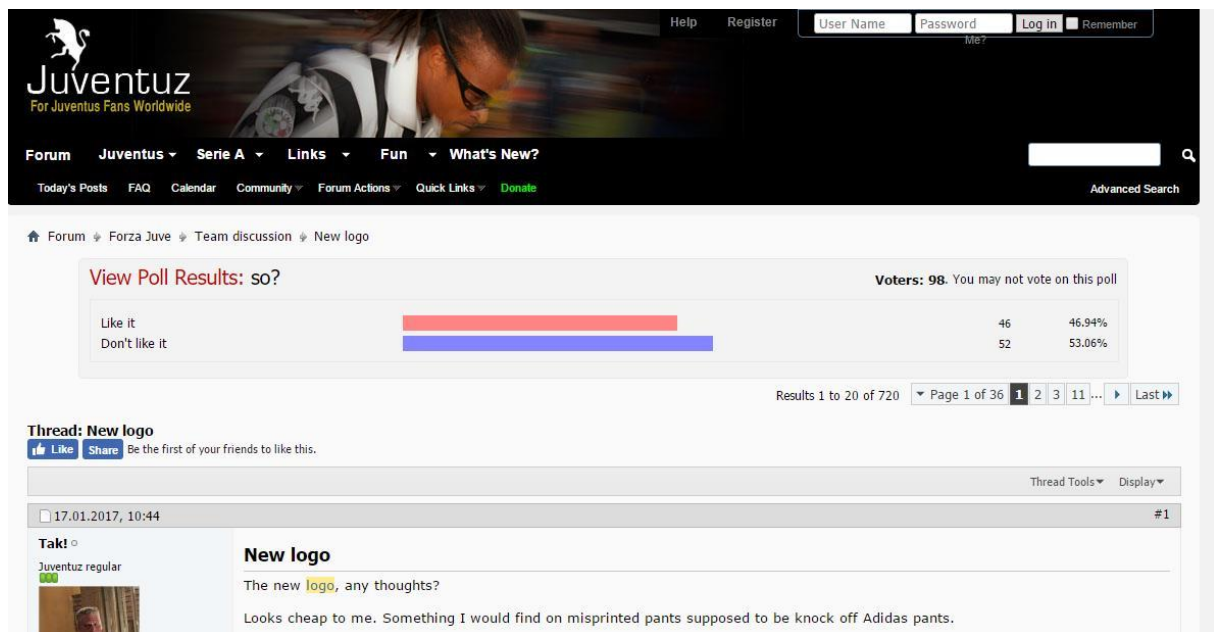
Fans		JUVENTUZ	
2nd round	1st round	Hits	
Go beyond the character of football	Develop to more than a football brand		102
	Pioneer (first never follows) approach		57
	Design is simple and modern		19
Core values are gone	Loose the identity		129
	Forget the history		34
Commercial perspective is positive	Sell more merchandise		51
	Create more awareness in new markets		21
Logo has nothing to do with football anymore	It is poorly designed		18
	Ugly		6
Followers		The Guardian	
2nd Round	1st Round	Hits	
Loss of core values	Loss of tradition		13
	Loss of identity		18
Selling out	Looks like a lifestyle brand		7
	Waste of money		6
	Only for commercial aspects		8
	Does not look like football		5
More than just football brand	It's a brand, entertainment business		1
	Appealing to emerging markets		3
New potential	Aspiration how to manage redesigns		1
	Better suited for marketing/ ahead in marketability		5
	Perfectly suited for digital marketing		4
Attractive Transformation	modern		6
	Bold statement		4
	Simplification		5
	Future		2

Non-attractive Transformation	Shit	10
	Awful	13
Confusion	It reads like 'JI'	4
	Why is the presentation in milan?	15
Flaneurs	Under Consideration	
2nd Round	1st Round	Hits
Loss of core values	Loss of heritage/history	17
	Loss of tradition	4
	Loss of identity	4
	Nothing of football anymore	13
	Abmoniation	4
Selling out	Football becomes more about money than passion	
	More fashion/lifestyle brand	4
	Putting commercial interests above	4
More than just football brand	Going beyond being a sports club	4
	Meeting new stakeholders	2
	Global brand	5
	Breaking with tradition	2
	Juventus is a brand not just a team	1
New potential	Modern way	4
	Forward-thinking	8
	Break through to new grounds	3
Attractive Transformation	Beautiful/Gorgeous	4
	Bold statement	9
	Amazing	4
	I love it	5

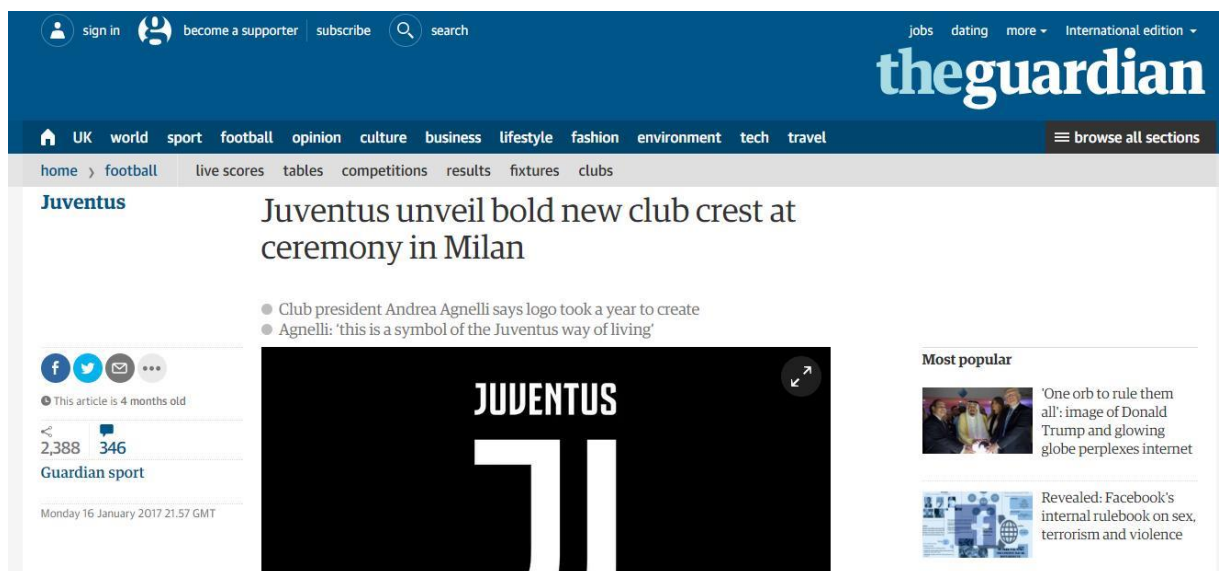
Coding on the websites

APPENDIX B

INVESTIGATED WEBSITES FOR THE NETNOGRAPHIC APPROACH IN OUR RESEARCH



Juventuz, 2017 (<http://www.juventuz.com/threads/42910-New-logo?highlight=logo>)



The Guardian, 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/jan/16/juventus-unveil-new-crest-serie-a>)

Share

Facebook 3K

Twitter

Email

Pinterest 805

+ More 5K

New Logo and Identity for Juventus by Interbrand

Reviewed

Stripped Stripes



UnderConsideration, 2017

http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new_logo_and_identity_for_juventus_by_interbrand.php

APPENDIX C

SCREENSHOTS OF THE DISCOVERED THEMES ON THE WEBSITES IN OUR NETNOGRAPHIC PART OF THE RESEARCH

BETRAYAL

Its not just about the logo, in general it seems like we're slowly losing our identity and this is the most obvious symbol of this pop transformation.

#86

We were all worried that we could never catch up with Bayern, Barca, Real and BPL teams in revenue. One of the areas we lag far behind in is merchandising revenue. All this brand marketing or "selling out" may be a necessary evil in today's football.

#183

Originally Posted by [REDACTED]

Our logo is not our identity. It will still be about "winning is the most important thing", an Italian core, team above the individual, hard work and sacrifice, etc etc

Yes but it's those little things like crests and logos which remind a club or even a whole country about its identity. Things like tradition and identity are virtues you can't take for granted lest they are lost forever.

#213

The badge doesn't fit the tradition and history of the club.

I'm all for creating a brand and pushing new markets but not at the expense of our tradition. This akin to something an MLS club would do or Manchester City, I think the board has forgotten that football fans care about the history of teams.

Maybe we should use the logo as a brand for non-football activities only.

#92

I don't understand why we throw away 100 years of brand awareness and resources allocated to our logo. We've changed it over the years, of course, but there have always been semblances. To reach that level costs A LOT of time and money. There's an intangible value in it that has developed and grown for 100 years. I don't like the new logo, but even that is sort of beside the point. Moving forward, reaching same level of value, authenticity, awareness, etcetera, in the logo will take many - many - many years and investments. Time and money that could be made and invested elsewhere. I can't see why we would throw it away unless we had just made something horrendous and were trying to reposition ourselves as something new and different in comparison to whatever bad we were before. But that is not case, so I really don't understand why we're trying to reposition. Stating that there's a lot of years put into marketing research without working with the real stakeholders is just very poor from a marketing management

#81

It looks like the kind of logo you see on 500 euro shirts worn by assholes in overpriced clubs. We are in many ways a premium brand so I suppose that fits, and for me some of the branded gear posted in this thread looks good but what the hell has it got to do with football or our philosophy? The current crest is a traditional football badge to go with a traditional football powerhouse club.

#86

We were all worried that we could never catch up with Bayern, Barca, Real and BPL teams in revenue. One of the areas we lag far behind in is merchandising revenue. All this brand marketing or "selling out" may be a necessary evil in today's football.

Fan community on Juventus (2017)

18 Jan 2017 12:22

0 ↑

As a marque, I like it. It's well crafted, simple and clear and is applied in a brave, confident and iconic matter. All good. However, it's football team first, brand second. Always put the game first not the necklace, hat, t-shirt, and skis the renders show on Interbrand's website - F***ING SKIS!!

Even as a designer you have to realise that modern and slick design, whilst aesthetically pleasing to me, isn't right for the audience. You simply cannot water down over 100 years of history just because you want to position the logo to help sell a pair of skis. It's better than the current badge, but that doesn't mean it was the right thing to do.

 **[Redacted]** 16 Jan 2017 23:27 51 ↑

'this is a symbol of the Juventus way of living'
That statement has me completely befuddled!

[← Share](#) [Report](#)

[Redacted] → **[Redacted]** 62 ↑

The right-hand line must represent a hand depositing cash into the receiving hand of the left-hand line ...

[Redacted] → **[Redacted]** 6 ↑

who cares about brands? just money men like yourself. fans want tradition and authenticity and history of a club respected. this logo is a joke. it doesn't look like football clubs crest - it looks like some material product which you can buy in a grocery store logo.

[Redacted] 17 Jan 2017 14:05 6 ↑

I don't agree with the new crest. It is also far from the genius others claim it to be. Football's history & tradition is what sets it apart from "soulless" American sports franchises. If you're in any doubt, take a tour through Anfield or over at the Asian marketing gurus at Old Trafford. The club crest is part of this oh-so marketable heritage.

Juve's club crest is already a recognisable symbol. The name, classic stripes & the bull. I can understand if it was one of the over-elaborate club crests laden in minute crap nobody can see/understand, but this doesn't apply.

[Redacted] 17 Jan 2017 23:50 1 ↑

Wow that is one crap club badge.

I would haved thought a large 'C' would have been more apt...

CORRUPTION.

CHEATING.

That is the Juve way....

Follower community on The Guardian (2017)

[redacted] - 2 months ago
Soccer...

You can take the review serious when you call the football soccer. If you onfy focus in the graphic design is great you could use the logo in so many forms but the Juventus is not only a brand, is one of the greatest club in the history, they have a history i dont see any of that history in the logo. The logo fall in the most important thing communicate the history of the club, so is a awfull result.

[redacted] → [redacted] 2 months ago

No need to get aggressive there bud. While I completely get the usual "What about Apple!!" statement, the level of history, loyalty and heritage european clubs like JUVE have is considerably stronger than say... GAP. Now, I will never ask for literal logos or footballs on every shield but I agree with most here, this is not a good rebrand for an organization like this. It feels like they are trying too hard to appeal to a younger (what's that word... millennial?) demo and transform a historic club into a lifestyle brand - just look at the photos: Spotify, jewelry, skis, records...

[redacted] 2 months ago

Out of context, most designers will agree this is a strong design. But judging it out of context is a mistake. Tradition and heritage matter in football—immensely. And because of that this is huge mistake.

[redacted] 2 months ago

As an ardent Juve tifoso and graphic designer, I can see the value in the rebrand. I can't for the life of me see how they missed on carrying through the heritage of this icon team in the rebrand. Its lost its heritage. The image above with the new logo amongst the other Serie A teams is as stark as it can get. Roma, Fiorentina etc, would NEVER mess with their scudetti. If you want a good example of how to rebrand an iconic team, look at what the Toronto Maple Leafs did to their logo. They went back in time, and updated an older one...giving us iconic heritage with a crisp new feel. Good grief...forza Juve.

[redacted] 2 months ago

It's the same case as Atletico de Madrid. Ok, is a nice rebrand but for a football team crest is a completely different situation. This is awful, there's no respect for the club's heritage.

[redacted] 2 months ago

I think the main problem here is GREAT DESIGN vs TRADITION, you can design the best logo in the world, but it doesn't change the fact that you SHOULDNT destroy you your legacy, your esence, that is what SOCCER is all about, Im sure that most of Juve fans that don't undesrtad DESIGN must be destroyed right now...

Flaneur community on UnderConsideration (2017)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

#257

I can understand the idea behind the change, which is to expand our brand. However we can discuss its execution. Change is good if it is well executed.

In this case, I like the idea of going for a minimalistic, simple design but I just don't like the Jj.

It would be interesting to see if Juventus expand their operations and essentially become an apparel manufacturer. It's a long term, large investment with a big payoff if successful.

#146

I guess they designed this so they can start selling casual clothes.

#149

sooo...from what i've read it's not only the logo, the club wants the brand to be more. make things alone (without adidas etc..) ... if it's succesfull the club will be filthy rich.

#65

Changing a logo does not destroy our tradition it creates new tradition, the old versions will always remain part of our tradition/history. People have always been afraid of change so it is no surprise that there is dissatisfaction when there is a big remake like this on something we strongly associate with the club. On top of that we are all emotionally connected to our current version of the crest or the one that was before it which was pretty similar and that creates an even bigger feeling of deprivation.

I've never been afraid of change as I feel it keeps you from trying and learning new things which can lead to progress. I'm happy our management shows this bravery to try new things instead of just sitting still without any clear vision how to move forward.

As long as they make a nice jersey and fit it all nicely and clean, people will start to like it.

I like the logo but **not a the club's crest**. At the end of the day I don't mind it as long as it brings the desired effect. People have to realize the **change is not for us**, old farts **but for new fans** who will join soon, sometimes even without knowing they did. I hate the globalization stuff but it seems for Juve it's somewhat a turning point. We've kept growing with decent pace for the last 6-7 years but we're still failing to catch up with the big dogs; it's even worse because we're falling behind. **If you want to stay competitive and sign top class players, we need to do something extra, to catch up and eventually surpass other clubs**. Serie A is holding us back and it's not going to change so if we don't do anything, the gap will become even wider.

The funny thing is that people in here realize we're far behind financially but don't applaud the change which can only do us good.

Funnily to become a top-top club in the world of football, we can't be 'only' a football club anymore if you know what I mean. J-Medical, J-Hotel and stuff like that suggest exactly that. People are jealous of the money the MU/RM/Barca brands bring but at the same time expect Juve to join them while doing nothing?

we as classic football fans, are not accustomed to this kind of drastic changes.... but if this improves our brand and makes our **logo** more userfriendly and well known (but less footballistic)...then so be it.

if the marketing teams believes this can make the brand more marketable around the world, then do it.

We will be one of the first team to take this route and i find it at least **interesting**. **This way we can market the team in a lot of ways, merchandising mainly. And not only as a football team.**

This will not take fans away, what makes fans stay is the sporting results-

Fan community on Juventus (2017)

ligas 17 Jan 2017 9:22



0 ↑

Looks great! It's time for football shirts to **feature more of their club logo and personality and less of the sponsor**. **Going forward**, the sponsor can have adverts all around **the pitch**, but the club shirt needs **to be about the club**. There are too many team shirts with large logos from companies which the fans have very little interest and no connection. A Nike swoosh or Adidas triangle is fine, but having the name of some unknown insurance company or betting company or pharmaceutical giant is just silly on a football top.

Team 17 Jan 2017 9:45

1 ↑

Not that surprising. **The market is obviously global, mostly Asian**, and you can see it through the logo. **It's just a brand**. They make football, other ones make clothes, cars, computers, or phones. Football is **Entertainment business**, if you see the bigger picture through the developments of the last 10-20 years, you understand how they want to sell it in the near future. Your old football is dead, you have to understand it... and maybe to accept it if you want to keep on being part of the system, you consumer.


17 Jan 2017 9:45  4 

This is genius. The rejection in this section is interesting and only natural but very wrong and here's why.

It's digital friendly and perfectly suited for social media. It's sleek and attractive to potential sponsorship partners. It's modern and forward thinking. With the aim of evolving into a lifestyle brand, Juventus are leading the way into new market territory for football clubs.

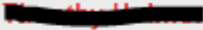
With time, as the brand grows and attracts new followers, and as the new generation grow up with it, it will become the symbol of Juve, a symbol which feels just as precious and automatic as the current one does now. (People can be very shortsighted).

The question is; will the logo enhance the club's global branding and expansion into new markets and territories? To me, it's an obvious Yes.

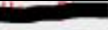
17 Jan 2017 18:50 0 

One thing missing from this story - Why?
(Other than for to make people buy more Juve "stuff")

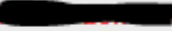
Follower community on The Guardian (2017)

 - 2 months ago




Love it. Bold statement. Bringing a soccer brand into the the future.

 - 2 months ago

Look at the middle of the first row of the shields grid! AS Bari? "kick ASS Bari" more like. That chicken! OMG the chicken. Anyhow, on topic, as a non-football/soccer fan this has no particular impact on me apart from seeing the mark as more fashion-forward and glamorous: probably something the players themselves will appreciate. We must remember that Juventus is a brand and not just a team.

 - 2 months ago


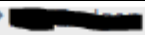
Brilliant! Every drastic change drags a certain backlash from the ones who don't understand.



   - 3 months ago

"Beyond entertainment. Beyond lifestyle. Juventus is an identity"
"Black and white and more, Juventus is fearlessly embracing its potential as an identity brand."

These are statements used in their presentation. It is obvious that it is intentional to go beyond being a sports club, and move forward to become a global brand. That can only benefit the football team anyway if they manage to eat up market share to other clubs like Real Madrid, FC Barcelona or Manchester U..

I say "bravo", boldness is greatly rewarded nowadays...

 →  · 11 days ago
 you say you get but it does not look you do. The logo is breaking with tradition and will require some getting used to but it is a great execution of the strategy behind it and it has a potential that the old one could never have. Most fans will soon get it
 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 →  · 10 days ago
 I do get it, I can assure you, All the points you have listed above is exactly why the have done what they have. I understand this.

But also stated as somewhat of a traditionalist, it carries nothing of the old into the new. The only potential you are referring to is trying to break foreign markets, that are already crowded with other teams with logos that have remained relatively unchanged. What they are asking audiences in these emerging markets is to relearn what Juve is about which is a risk in itself.

Honestly, I wouldn't be surprised if they reverted to a revised version of the old logo in a few seasons time with this current version as some sort of secondary/complimentary logo.

The Flaneur community on UnderConsideration (2017)

AESTHETICS

Besides, no one will forget about the past if we dominate the future.

Our trophies and legends won't disappear if we change our emblem. They'll only disappear if we become irrelevant like Nottingham Forest.

#244

Yeah that's cool man like I said to the other guy not liking the logo from an aesthetic POV is cool, some people will need to warm up to it or just flat out hate the design. It's the ones who hate it because change is scary and they don't like change yet to actually compete outside of this tinpot league we need to change that are a pain in the ass.

It will take some adjusting definitely, we're all accustomed to seeing what is an actual football badge on our kits. But this new badge could turn out to be a symbol of serious success, which is great.

I loved the old logo too, well especially the logo before the last one from the 90's - 2000's. As far as a strictly football club logo goes, i'll miss our recent ones.

#167

Hideous. Minimal-chic crap that some overpaid graphic design wanker has put together on his macbook in 10 minutes. There's nothing about it which tells you anything about Juve and it's history. No bucking steed or yellow or blue colours to pay homage to the city of Turin.

And BTW I'd never wear something casual with Juve badge on it, with the new logo I just might.

Fan community on Juventuz (2017)

I don't think any football fan in the world needs to be told who Juventus are and their current logo is already iconic and instantly recognisable, as they used to say long ago, if it isn't broke don't fix it.

17 Jan 2017 15:18
For a corporation the new logo would be fine. It is not suitable for a football club. Not the slightest hint of football - they should have stayed with the traditional style logo.



17 Jan 2017 10:19

Really not happy with this at all, if it really is to replace the shirt crest (by the way Italian media makes this sound like a logo for corporate activities) it's a terrible decision, Our badge is iconic and instantly recognisable, it's been with us for our greatest triumphs and to leave no trace of it is pretty scandalous.

There isn't much to complain about as a Juventino these days, they are doing so much at world class standard then they have to do something like this!

< Share

Report



17 Jan 2017 10:20

Looks like a Juve fan taking a dump...

Take the moral high ground by appealing to sentimental values all you like but the only thing that matters is whether the logo is going to help the club grow. I believe a true fan would agree.

The logo is better suited for marketing and therefore attracting new followers.

Besides, I disagree that it's not respecting the history of the club. It's simply adapting to a modern world, building on top of history, not erasing it.

16 Jan 2017 23:07

That is quite astonishingly awful.

Follower community on The Guardian (2017)

2 months ago
If this was designed for designers... OK, I get it. Clever and clean. A legendary team like Juve deserved something less generic.

That J could be used on any type of branding.

2 months ago
Love how the stretched letters turn into stripes on the shirts. I love this so much. I understand the heritage aspect and everything, but if we were more worried about heritage than effective branding we would never do anything besides update logos. Every major re-brand trades in heritage for a better foundation for the brand. In this case I think it was definitely worth it and I wouldn't be surprised at all to see many European powerhouses join them in the next couple years.

2 months ago
I hope it works on the jersey and other football stuff.
This presentation has almost nothing to do with football.

Reply · Share ·

2 months ago
Should have placed the Stallion under the arm of the J. The new mark is sleek and eminently applicable, but it's also bland and doesn't look like it belongs on a football shirt. Looks more like it belongs in a fashion store.

2 months ago
It might be a well executed project but the result is never a football club badge. It could be a fashion and lifestyle brand, but a club crest - no. And, well, sorry Armin, I don't think people from the other side of the pond really understand European clubs branding.

3 months ago
I mean, I don't think good design is just a commercial selling point, and I certainly don't view this rebrand as just that. Then again, there isn't necessarily anything wrong with having a design allowing for more commercial applicability or marketability. I think the best part of this design is that it is a significant transition between an exclusive heritage of die-hard fans and a wider, more accessible reach of fans across the globe both old and new who follow them on and off season. It's also not just fresh or modernized for the sake of being a relatively unconventional design in that universe, but it carries its own weight and works effectively as a mark that looks great across multiple applications (uniforms, towels, shirts, bags, etc.) with better technology to allow for these kinds of applications to happen in the first place. I think this is an update I would be proud of, especially if my team was the first to step away from the traditional combination of graphic elements that denote "heritage" while not completely alienating that aspect. It's good design for the sake of being good design to me (which is probably another discussion, but I provided some examples/criteria that suggest what "good design" might be).

2 months ago

The mark itself feels like it's going to tip to the left. I think bringing the top horizontal in a bit to balance it would have been a better choice than leaving it to define the mathematically proper top edge. Other than that. I like what's happening here. They built a real brand, which is not common in this industry. I think they could have left more heritage in the mark, but overall, I think the direction is right. It obviously stands out amongst their league opponents, whereas it used to blend in with the half dozen other ovals and vertical stripe fields.

Flaneur community on UnderConsideration (2014)

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH FOR THE SUPPORTER COMMUNITY



Illustration of the old logo (left) and the new one (right, UnderConsideration, 2017) as a comparison for the participants

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. The logo change of Juventus arose a lot of discussions in January. How did you perceive this action?
2. What kind of advantages/disadvantages do you see?
3. Would you go to for instance a club a proper event with a shirt and the new logo on?
4. How do you interpret the fit between the new logo (the design of it) and the club itself?
5. What is the relationship now with the club? Did it change after this action? And if yes, how?
6. Do you think that other clubs will follow?
7. Would you be angry if you see people in the street wearing shirts with “your” logo on it?