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# **Staying Authentic in a Commercial Industry: A Case Study of the Danish Superliga**

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# Abstract

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With commercial development of the football industry, it has become increasingly difficult to stay authentic as a club in the eyes of the supporters. However, the actions of the clubs under the commercial pressure in an industry which builds upon authentic communities around the clubs leads to an alienation of the clubs as commercial brands in the eyes of the supporters. Previous research have failed to consider that the supporters' perceived authenticity is a result of what moves and resonates with the supporters emotionally. By utilizing the concepts of actions by Jürgen Habermas and the concept of resonance by Hartmut Rosa, the study investigated how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established between Danish football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization of football. The study is a case study which relies on qualitative research interviews with representatives and supporters of Danish football clubs. The results shows that if the clubs create initiatives and take decisions which resonates with what the supporters perceive as club values, then it resonates within the supporters making the initiative or decision perceived as authentic. The negotiation and establishment of authenticity happens when communicative action is utilized where club and supporters reach common ground as the supporters then acknowledge and recognize a certain action as aligned with the club values. The study provides new knowledge to the existing research by explaining how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization of football.

*Keywords: Authenticity, commercialization, football clubs, football supporters, Danish Superliga, Jürgen Habermas, Hartmut Rosa*

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# 1. Defining the research problem

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## 1.1 Introduction

In today's world, the football is a complex industry. From being just 11 players on each side of the characteristic, white-painted centreline with a circle in the middle of the grass field and a referee making sure that the match rules are being followed, the green grass is now surrounded by stands filled with crowds willing to pay quite a bit to follow their beloved football teams wherever they play next and often more than once a week. The popularity of "the beautiful game", the term used and popularized by Brazilian football icon Pelé (Suarez Sang, 2016), also makes it an obvious way to brand and advertise products and companies to the supporters and viewers of football matches leading to a higher commercialization. The combined revenue of the highest earning football clubs in the world rose from €3.9 billion in the season 2008/2009 (Deloitte, 2010) to €9.3 billion in the season 2018/2019 (Deloitte, 2021) which could lead to questions as if the clubs are more businesses than actual football clubs as it's not just about winning the next match on Sunday, but also about the prizes, sponsorships and commercial rights that follows.

The commercialization of the sport has changed how the management of the club acts as the commercial opportunities become more attractive in an ever-competing experience economy (Junghagen & Leal Lillo, 2017). The modern-day football club is highly commercialized as clubs constantly need to strengthen their economic position in order to stay competitive on the football pitch by buying better players, managers and improving the facilities of the club. The change in the scope of the management is the result of the improvement of communication, development of technologies both on and off the pitch, the overall growth commercially and globalization which all have been factors in the development of a more complex industry (Beech & Chadwick, 2013). However, as a result of the commercialization, the traditional supporters of the clubs have seen themselves often substituted by tourists and, especially, corporate clients as clubs wants to create a better and more comfortable VIP experience for their corporate clients which the traditional supporters often criticize (Junghagen, Leal Lillo, 2017).

One could argue that these traditional supporters are the only authentic part of the products which a football club offers. As you buy your ticket, a brand will probably be presented as the 'match of the day' sponsor, when you enter the club shop and buy the club jersey, the logo of biggest sponsor of the club is printed onto the middle of the front of the jersey, when you buy a plastic cup of beer, the beer served is from the highest paying beer company in order for them to secure that only their beer is served at the stadium and when find your seat within the stadium, the low screens around the pitch and the large screen placed in the corner of the stadium will show commercials during the match (Bridgewater, 2010). Almost everything within the experience of watching a football match is commercialized with the exception of when the supporters sing their songs, shout, cheer and create an atmosphere around the match as the traditional supporters are not sponsored, not affiliated with a brand, and do not promote anything but the club. It is also important in this paper to not confuse supporters with spectators as spectators are those who watch sport while not changing cognitive, affective, or conative behaviour and, most importantly, do not develop any loyalty (Bridgewater, 2010).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

According to Edensor and Millington (2008), it is strategically important that the football club expresses authenticity and values of social and cultural character to successfully brand itself since culture and identity are imbedded in a local context. Edensor and Millington (2008) found that local identity is what creates the relationship between the supporters and the club, but they also argue that the football club needs to be aware of the risk that supporters perceive a decision made by the management as a corporate exercise which only has the goal of earning more money. Therefore, one could argue that the above could lead to a distancing in the relation between club and supporters if the club is then no longer perceived as authentic.

As the commercialization is growing, the authenticity of the clubs seems to get undermined (Söderman & Persson, 2016). Banet-Weiser (2012) argues, that when something is understood and experienced as authentic it becomes authentic as it is not considered commercial. She furthermore argues that authenticity is mirrored in the inner self of the consumer. If supporters i.e., the consumers, of a club think that a certain decision that their preferred club make is more commercial than authentic, one could argue that what the supporters perceive as authentic is merely just an experienced feeling of authenticity, thus opening a possible discus-

sion about if it is just the understanding of the supporters that are wrong. It further opens the discussion about if the conflict that might occur if a supporter perceives that the action taken by the club goes against the authenticity of the club, that the action actually goes against the values of the supporter itself.

Davidson and Hammer (2020) claims that as supporters comes from all parts of society, they all have different sets of values making it impossible for the club management to effectively appeal to the reason of all the supporters. They claim that the sooner the management realizes this, the greater the likelihood is that the management will not be pinned in a corner in relation to the club's supporters. If the supporters end up in a conflict with the management, the management always ends up losing the conflict as the supporters are the consumers who buys the products, both as experiences and the physical products, that the club offers. But if they feel and experience that what the club is doing goes against the values that the supporters perceive and associate with the club, they might not want to help the club economically and they might put the club in a bad light on, e.g., social media (Davidson & Hammer, 2020).

The importance of how the supporters perceive the club cannot be understated, and it might be difficult for the club to make the supporters understand why a certain action, sponsorship etc. is important for the continued development of the club as supporters often are resistant to change (Cova & Dali, 2009). The supporters decide themselves what is of importance to them in order to perceive the club as something authentic and, as cultural carriers, they even establish their very own set of values of authenticity (Alivizatou, 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization in football and how far a club can go commercially before the supporters perceives the club management, and thus the club brand, as too far from the values and authenticity that the supporters believe are associated with the club.

The field within the relation of football clubs and their supporters in relation to authenticity has been a growing interest among researchers since Marxist such as Taylor and Critcher located the claim of authenticity within class as football before the 1990s often was characterized as the 'people's game' (Davis, 2015). But with the growing commercialization, one can

argue that football is evolving into more of a commercial game where the commercial aspects are to be preferred over the authentic aspects.

The sponsors of a football club and the club itself has to opportunity to use the values widely associated with the club brand to explain why a particular sponsorship is a good match between the two letting the supporters know that they share some of the same key values, possibly making the supporters more eligible to buy a product or service from the sponsor brand. But sometimes the club and its supporters do not agree about the match of values in a new sponsorship deal which might evolve into a conflict on e.g., social media and in the press. The negative effects and critique that arises from online and offline discussion might have a negative impact on both the club, and possibly it's new sponsor as ethical discussion could affect the public's view and opinion.

### **1.3 Aim and research question**

The study aims to research and investigate how the growing commercialization can affect authenticity exemplified with a case study of the Danish top-tier division 'Superliga'. It is of importance to examine how a club can stay financially competitive without being perceived as inauthentic as supporters might choose not to buy the tickets, the products from the club shop and publicly denounce the actions taken by the club thus devaluing the product that the club sells to its VIPs, sponsors, and spectators. The study aims to provide a more thorough and deeper knowledge on the subject of commercialization's impact on authenticity and how it can change how supporters perceive their club. This study is based on existing studies and an analysis of the relation between Danish football clubs and their supporters to get a deeper understanding on how authenticity is created by football clubs in order to keep appealing to supporters and how certain actions such as a new sponsorship deal can make the supporters perceive the club in a negative way.

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the author wants to answer the following research question:

- RQ1: How is authenticity understood, negotiated, and established between Danish football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization of the sport?

The aim of the study is to practically understand how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization in football clubs as the clubs might perceive the commercialization differently. To answer this thesis' research question, I rely on the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with representatives and supporters and the aim will be accomplished through examples from the highest ranked Danish football league Superliga. The theoretical framework for this study is based on theory of Jürgen Habermas and Hartmut Rosa and an analysis which examines the commercialization's effect on authenticity in the relation between supporters and clubs. The case study will be based on Superliga clubs who branded themselves and communicated using authenticity while trying to stay competitive financially.

#### **1.4 Relevance of the study to the field of Strategic Communication**

This study is highly relevant to the field of strategic communication as authenticity of football clubs seems to be an important part of how the football clubs use strategic communication. Strategic communication can be utilized as a mean that helps organizations, and in this case, football clubs, reach their overall objectives, mission, and vision as their stakeholders needs to be in on the journey towards accomplishing those goals (Hallahan, 2007). Authenticity is an important element to reach the feelings of football supporters as clubs often communicate by appealing to the feelings, the irrationality, of the supporters rather than the rational within them (Edensor & Millington, 2008).

This analysis will focus on the authenticity and commercialization of football in a communicative context and will contribute to the field of studying football from a communications perspective. Football clubs and strategic communication professionals would benefit of knowing how to be perceived as authentic in a highly commercialized industry as it helps create, maintain, and develop the relation between organization and follower, donator, customer, or supporter. As they want to associate themselves with the organization, they help create awareness of the brand, spread the word, and possibly create new customers. This study will examine the effect of commercialization on authenticity by exploring how companies in the form of sponsors, decisions, and outside stakeholders can affect how the consumers of the football clubs perceive them as authentic. It can help the clubs, and possibly organizations in

other industries, understand and know how to stay competitive financially without losing their core consumers in the form of supporters if perceived as inauthentic.

To conclude, this thesis will expand the knowledge within the field of communicating strategically in the football industry, as it is difficult to find any study of how the growing commercialization of football influences the authenticity of the clubs thus affecting the relation between club and supporters. As strategic communication is a complex communicative discipline which covers both how organization, owners, management, employees, and other stakeholder communicate in order to reach the individual goals, the study will contribute to the field by examining parts of an enormous industry which has yet to be fully understood from a strategic communications perspective.

## **1.5 Delimitations**

Authenticity is often utilized to strengthen the credibility of the relation between brands and its consumers (Marwick, 2011). The study will examine how authenticity can be created in inauthentic situations and how this can be understood. The study will not examine the authenticity of the individual football clubs included or mentioned in this thesis since universal authenticity does not exist (Marwick, 2011) but instead research how the authenticity is experienced by clubs and supporters through application and analysis of Habermas' communicative and purpose-rational action and Rosa's resonance.

## 2. Literature review

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In this literature review, theories and relevant research which could be utilized to better understand the conflict between the authentic supporters and the commercialized management of the club will be presented. Each source and field will contribute with definitions, conflicts, and key concepts within the research field. Lastly, a synthesis and research gap will be presented outlining a key problem which has yet to be thoroughly analysed.

### 2.1 Authentic branding of commercial football clubs

Viewing football clubs as commercial brands is a fairly new practice. In 2010, Sue Bridgewater wrote a book that shed light on why football clubs needed to be considered as brands arguing that while most supporters would probably find it as a negative word to connect to their clubs, being a brand does not necessarily mean being commercial. Instead, she argued, that both clubs, associations, competitions, and tournaments needed to be perceived as brands to understand and discuss their positions, values, and communicative behaviour to better serve their consumers. In her book, Bridgewater (2010) further describes that the current market environment is a result of three effects: Rising customer expectations, speed of change and blurred boundaries. This applies to football as well as supporters are consumers of the club brands. Regarding the rising expectations, Bridgewater argued that the expectations of supporters might be unrealistic as they might exceed the realistic performance of the club, football managers, and players which instead turns to a negative pressure as supports can have unreasonable expectations to the performance of the team. The second effect, the speed of change, refers to how quickly players change clubs, regulations is changed and how fast supporter can run out of patience with the manager. Lastly, the blurred boundaries refer to football being interconnected across national associations, international competitions and regulated by both regional and global football authorities. This means that football goes beyond the football match itself while creating a need to understand the bigger picture around football as businesses, sponsorships, and the celebrity aspects of both players and managers (Bridgewater, 2010).

Clubs have their own colour combinations, logos, hymns and so on. Together with the exposure that the clubs enjoy every week on TV, through articles etc., football clubs are distinguishable. As they also seem to be able to create a sort of unity between supporters standing side by side with the same identifiable shirts on, according to de Chernatony and McDonald (1998), football clubs can be perceived as successful brands: *“A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person, or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique, sustainable added values which match their needs most closely* (de Chernatony and McDonald (1998).” The uniqueness of football brands was called “customer-based brand equity” by Keller (1993). He argued that a customer-based brand equity is when supporters, or consumers, both have favourable, strong, and unique associations with the brand in mind. Keller (2001) further claims that the customer-based brand equity is dependent on how well the consumer knows the brand which can be determined when the consumers ask a brand four questions: Who are you, what are you, what do I think or feel about you, and lastly, what kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you?

Edensor and Millington (2008) analysed the campaign ‘Our City’ from 2005 by Manchester City Football Club. The goal of the campaign was not to expand the supporter base neither nationally nor internationally but to activate the local supporters. The campaign sought to build on already existing culture and myths surrounding the club where Manchester City was portrayed as ‘cool’ and ‘authentic’, indirectly aiming at the neighbour club Manchester United Football Club as a commercially driven club with statements such as “Réal Manchester”, “Pure Manchester”, “This is our City” and “Greater Manchester”. The club wanted to promote itself as the local, authentic Manchester club in contrast to the global image that the rival Manchester United had (Edensor & Millington, 2008).

Robson (2000) found that Millwall supporters, who have a reputation of being somewhat fascist, masculine, violent and hooligans, have succeeded in alienating middle-class management and support to stand in opposition to the bourgeois classes keeping them away from Millwall. Edensor and Millington (2008) discovered, that in the case of Manchester City, the ‘Our City’ campaign tapped into a working-class identity. Not as extreme as the example of Millwall, but the campaign embedded values, localness and community which reaches a more local audience. Historically, it is also important to notice that after World War II, Manchester City’s

support consisted mainly of working-class people and communities from northern England (Brown, 2002) which continued up through the 1960s. Through the 1980s, Manchester City established a charitable organization which provided health and educational programmes for local schools working with gender equality, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. In 2006, Manchester City even became the first football club to make official steps towards appealing to homosexual supporters while combatting homophobia in football (Edensor & Millington, 2008) which stands in sharp contrast to its owner since 2008, Sheik Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, a member of the Emarati royal family and deputy prime minister of Abu Dhabi (Bower, 2020), whose home country have made same-sex marriage illegal (Stonewall, 2018).

The Manchester City campaign from 2005 showed that football supporters see themselves as traditional, working-class communities with values and pride of supporting a local team. Giulianotti (1999) found that the supporters claim to be ‘locals’ which resonates with what Edensor and Richards (2007) found, where class-based claims of authenticity are more of a rhetorical expression of identity which shows the difference between supporters of different clubs.

## **2.2 Supporter authenticity**

Commercialization of football is not something new but actually seems to be a repeating phenomenon. During the 1960s and 1970s, Ian Taylor and Chas Critcher provided, separately, a set of Marxist arguments which tried to explain problems within the football industry in England. The two main issues were hooliganism and declining attendance at the English stadiums. They found that the support was changing as clubs were seeking wealthier audiences to the matches (Giulianotti, 2002). Taylor (1971a) found that football had become more commercially driven beginning in the early 1960s were the working-class supporters, who valued the local aspect, active participation, and victory, were getting replaced by middle-class spectators, who rather valued family football, skill, and efficiency in performance. After World War II, Taylor found that clubs wanted to adapt the product that they offered, moving from a culture of participation where the working-class supporters during the 1930s often were members of the football clubs, to a new “society of leisure” where football clubs started competing with other cultural offers (Taylor, 1971b). This led to an internationalization and pro-

fessionalization, where clubs would start to play matches against clubs from other countries and sign celebrity players.

Critcher (1979) found that traditional supporters often saw themselves as members of the football clubs where the supporter becomes a representative for the club. The traditional supporter was perceived as being authentic as they were tied and indebted to their club as it was from their hometown and their part of the city. But consumers have less loyalty where a lack of satisfaction that a consumer gets from being a part of a club can lead to the customer moving the money and emotional investment (Giulianotti, 2002). Giulianotti argues that there is none or little brand loyalty as the consumer is more rational calculating where which product that grants the biggest benefit which can be considered as less authentic.

Sociology widely believed in the 1990s that football was a working-class sport, but this belief was impossible to up-keep with the introduction of the FA Premier League in 1992, where high-priced ticket fees, new ways to manage stadiums as venues and the emerging middle-class surveillance combatted the working-class hooliganism while also excluding the non-hooligan working-class supporters (Davis, 2015). The new middle-class supporters, who paid inflated ticket prices, started perceiving the working-class supporters' behaviour, which was considered norm in the mid-1980s, as strange in the early 1990s. As the working-class supporters began getting excluded from the stadiums with the higher prices, Critcher argued that football had lost its autonomy as it became more of an unvarying product by capitalism losing its authenticity which underlines the Marxist view of football as a working-class sport where the real supporters are working class (Critcher, 1979).

With what Davis (2015) calls post-modern football, a blurring of the social classes has followed taking away the working-class aspects of the stadiums to a point where all classes integrate with each other. Davis further claims that it is more common for lower classes to attend theatre plays or opera today where they integrate with higher classes which also happens at football stadiums. According to Redhead (1997), this has only been possible as football-related hooliganism since the mid-1980s became less fashionable and marginalized in the surrounding culture with the first clear signal of a mix of classes at the 1990 FIFA World Cup Final where the opera trio Three Tenors performed before the final. According to Giulianotti (2002), a supporter is the type of spectator that resembles the traditional working-class sup-

porter the most, as the supporter perceives the support of their chosen club as ‘a key preoccupation of the individual’s self, so that attending home fixtures is a routine that otherwise structures the supporter’s free time’.

Kennedy and Kennedy (2012) found that supporters typically are against the increasing commercialization of the sport where supporters in many clubs have witnessed the transformation of their beloved clubs from parts of the community into profit-maximizing businesses where the supporters less and less identify themselves with their clubs. Arnaut (2006) claimed that the original values of football are disappearing.

### **2.3 The commercialization of football clubs**

By the 1990s, broadcasting of any type of sporting events became an efficient way to attract audiences, making it attractive to marketers and advertisers who wanted to advertise or communicate certain products or messages (Williams, 1993 & Sandvoss 2003). Further, the Bosman ruling from 1995, where the European Court of Justice ruled that a player’s new club did not have to pay any type of transfer fee after a player’s contract expired with his old club if the player signed with the new club before the contract expired (Brand, 2015), changed the sport and made way for the commercialization of football that we see today as both players and staff could suddenly move freely.

Dejonghe (2008) found, that the football industry was changing focus to profit-maximizing and consumer-oriented services as the player salaries started to change rapidly in order for the clubs to attract better and more expensive players. Baroncelli & Lago (2006) found that player salaries from 1996-2002 in the Italian Serie A increased by more than 700% in both Juventus, AC Milan, Inter, Roma, Lazio, and Parma culminating with an aggregated operating loss of the Italian Serie A clubs of -982,2m EUR in the season 2001/2002. But a close cultural and political bond between clubs in Italy and both authorities and politicians have led to overspending, over-borrowing, and financial rescue plan which were put in place to secure the success and survival of the clubs (Baroncelli & Lago, 2006).

Giulianotti and Robertson (2004) refer to most valuable clubs in the world as “glocal transnational corporations” which derives from the emergence of globalization in football economi-

cally. Croci and Ammirante (1999) found that football clubs are turning into publicly owned corporations which only reflect the market that they are a part of. The clubs expand their product range beyond the football match itself to locals who at the same time turn into consumers of the club brand while creating new approaches to the commercial possibilities and opportunities (Dolles & Söderman, 2005). The top clubs today offer a wide arrange of commercial partnerships, merchandise, and better and more appealing facilities for both supporters and sponsors.

The supporters, or consumers, are crucial when clubs need to find new capital which makes marketing and branding an important part of the football clubs today. The clubs manage to respond to the irrational and emotional feelings from the supporters which, according to Underwood et al. (2001), is greater than in any other type of industry. The clubs manage to exploit the feelings of their supporters by positioning themselves as brands, and by having and enforcing a strong brand, the loyalty of and relationship with their supporters is easier to build and reinforce which opens up to additional sources of income by selling more products and services (Burton & Howards, 1999; Gustafson, 2001; Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2000).

The main clash between clubs and their supporters is to be found where the clubs are profit-maximizing companies while still trying to maintain a public image as a social organization and institution (Morrow, 2003). Kennedy & Kennedy (2012) found that the conflict is created when the clubs want to be included in the local community with the identities and traditions that follows while still actively searching for a higher profit. But the clubs cannot have a main goal of creating higher profits as the role of the club goes beyond the one of finances in the local area (Arnaut, 2006). Arnaut (2006) further finds one of the problems as being the club's business model of ownership as the clubs are easy to take over where a solution could be a business model where supporters are granted partly ownership of the club. This model can better prevent corrupt individuals from owning clubs. Another problem is that it is doubtful whether minority shareholders and supporters have any influence on the operation of the club. Lastly, there is extensive evidence in professional football that the general corporate model does not do well in any traditional way. Many football clubs usually have poor financial status and high debt levels, which illustrates this point (Arnaut, 2006).

Edensor and Millington (2008) wrote that when clubs initiate new strategies, they need to be aware of not alienating the supporters by insisting on more and more commercialization but instead appeal to the social and cultural values. The main challenge of the clubs is the coordination and integration of success with a good brand image (Edensor and Millington, 2008) and supporter loyalty and commercialization (Jacobson, 2004). Instead, the football clubs need to find a balance between commercialization of the club, and the financial advantages that follows, and meeting the needs and expectations that the supporters have (Hamil & Chadwick, 2010).

Hamil and Chadwick (2010) further describes how the increasing profits of football clubs are results of the supporter's willingness to spend money and time on the sport. Both matchday, broadcasting and merchandise revenue is all a result of the supporters, while they also become an integrated part of the match product itself when attending matches and creating an atmosphere (Hamil & Chadwick, 2010). Kennedy and Kennedy (2012) link the increasing revenue directly to supporter loyalty where football and the club is consumed by the loyal supporters despite increasing prices of match tickets as well as access to watch the matches on TV. By co-creating a better product with the clubs, the supporters also make it attractive for sponsors. But the commercialization is driving supporters away from clubs acting more as business while still feeling affiliation to a specific club and its financial struggles to stay competitive (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012).

## **2.4 Synthesis and research gap**

This literature review shows that football clubs as brands have emerged from the blurring of social classes attending football matches in post-modern football. The growing interest and popularity of sport on TV in the 1990s led to the financial globalization in football which have turned the clubs into profit-maximizing businesses. The globalization where players and staff can move freely around makes it possible for clubs to hire better and more exciting players which in turn leads to more interest in the club from both supporters, broadcasters, and sponsors.

This, however, leads to a clash with many of the original supporters who often perceive themselves as working-class supporters fighting against the growing commercialization. As the original values in football are disappearing, supporters find their clubs less identifiable. But the football clubs still need to appeal to the supporters by tapping into working-class identities. Authenticity and values are needed when communicating to the supporters or else the supporters perceive the clubs as something fake. If inauthenticity is perceived by the supporters, they are less likely to show up to matches and buy products, merchandise, and TV-rights thus making the clubs main product, the football match, a less attractive products to offer as the supporters themselves are part of the products.

This research will analyse how the football clubs can create and communicate authenticity while still maintaining their economic competitiveness in an industry where commercialization is affecting the authenticity needed to attract consumers. How authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization is yet to be fully understood, especially in an industry that relies on authentic products, services, and communication. In addition, so far, studies have regarded authenticity as a stable and ubiquitous content. Few studies have realized that the authenticity needs to be created and maintained, and the researcher will study the phenomenon in the process of staying commercial while both establishing and preserving authenticity.

# 3. Theory

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In this theory section, Jürgen Habermas' concepts of action and Hartmut Rosa's concept of resonance will be introduced together with related terms. This is relevant when studying how football clubs can keep being perceived as authentic by the supporters while also staying commercial. If the supporters do not perceive what the club is doing as the right thing to do, a conflict might occur. Therefore, Habermas and Rosa will be used to examine if and how supporters and the clubs reach a mutual understanding of each other. The following sections will be used as framework for further analysis in the thesis.

## 3.1 The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory

The thoughts and views of Habermas came from the 1930s in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, where the critical theory was created by Theodor W. Adorno, leader of the institute from 1930-1933, and Max Horkheimer, leader of the institute from 1949-1958, based on Marxist and psychoanalytical theories (Berendzen, 2017).

Adorno and Horkheimer criticize the cultural history of Europe in their book 'Dialektik der Aufklärung' as being a dialectic battle between reason and enlightenment on one side and myth and nature on the other (Berendzen, 2017). The book perceives enlightenment in two different ways. On one hand, mankind has always had to control nature and have by the use of reason inserted order into nature and divided the world into categories, but the enlightenment and reason have, through time, alienated mankind to what it controls thus alienated mankind to its own nature. The enlightenment is characterized by two different sides where one drives mankind forward towards enlightenment while the other encapsulates mankind in fear. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, this means that the concept of enlightenment can be both liberating as well as slave-binding. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve true enlightenment as it seems too closely connected with the myth. Adorno and Horkheimer believes that with the advancement of technology in the 19th and 20th centuries, reason was instrumentalized and the individual was enslaved by the manipulative power of industry, which made the individual

fall into a natural state of fear where the myth once again takes the place instead of reason (Wiggerhaus, 1994).

At the same time, they believe that liberalism is something which comes with a promise of rescue as it secures personal freedom and liberty as well as self-determination, but they perceive liberalism as being a hiding place of oppression which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is inevitably buried within the nature of liberalism. They further characterize the cultural industry as an expression of oppression as the escape from the everyday life, the 'paradise', offered by the cultural industry, is designed to lead back to starting point as pleasure evokes the resignation that it was supposed to help forget (Wiggerhaus, 1994).

The rationalization of the society and the adaptation to the market structures give mankind a very narrow margin of manoeuvre which makes it impossible to reach the utopian idea of solidarity (Bohman, 2013). For Horkheimer and Adorno, this analysis of genealogy and liberal society ends in a very pessimistic view of the future, in which mankind has poor opportunities regarding emancipation and liberation. This is because mankind is tied to a system which does not grant mankind opportunities to criticize it. But Adorno and Horkheimer do offer alternatives to the problem, as Adorno believes that mankind will become conscious of its situation through avantgarde art while Horkheimer believes that it will happen through a religious ideal about identification with all suffering beings (Bohman, 2013).

### **3.2 Habermas' construction of concepts of action**

Habermas constructed a variety of concepts of action where some are new, but others are extensions from the thoughts of Marcuse and Weber. Firstly, Habermas creates a divide between work and interaction (Habermas, 2005). This divide is essential as Habermas believes that the formation of the spirit and mankind depends on the relation between work and interaction. Habermas bases his concepts of action on the divide between interaction and work. One concept of action is the purpose-rational action which is based on Marcuse and Weber which he almost uses in the same way as they did. Habermas uses the terms 'work' and 'purpose-rational action' interchangeably. More specifically, Habermas positions purpose-rational action opposite a form of rationality which is more reflective and less specifically targeted (Habermas, 2005).

The rationality is called ‘communicative rationality’ by Habermas which is based upon communicative interaction. This is central to how Habermas thinks as he considers the communicative action as a solution to many problems. One of these problems, among other, is the rationalization of the modern society. Habermas strongly believes that a liberation of the productive forces needs to happen through communicative action (Habermas, 2005). Where Marcuse believed that the institutionalization of technical-scientific progress in society was the source and legitimation of fake needs, and Weber believed that it would lead to the disappearance of spontaneous enjoyment of life, Habermas instead feared that the disappearance could allow for purpose-rational action to absorb communicative action leading to society being controlled by science and technology with the purpose of organizing, categorizing and control nature. According to Habermas, it could only be avoided through communicative action because it is open to humanization through an everyday-language mediated interaction (Habermas 2005).

### **3.3 Communicative rationality and purpose-rationality**

While communicative action is about reaching collective understanding of views and opinions between interacting subjects with the goal of agreement, for Habermas this means reaching a common understanding of each other’s lifeworlds (Nørgaard, 1996). For Habermas, an individual’s lifeworld is the subjective perspective which consists of the subjective experiences of an individuals throughout that individual’s life. A lifeworld can be affected by three elements:

1. The society which an individual is part of and the individuals that you surround yourself with as well as the rules of the society.
2. The culture which is basis of understanding between individuals.
3. The personality which affects how the individual perceives itself and its identity (Nørgaard, 1996).

#### ***3.3.1 Three types of rationality***

The three elements lead to three types of rationality which are the cognitive-instrumental, the moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive rationality. The first is used within science to evalu-

ate truths that are recognizable. The second is related to things that are related to normative aspects in social settings. The third one is relevant regarding art and literature as well as the translation of mankind's inner nature (Nørgaard, 1996).

### ***3.3.2 The communicative action***

Communicative action is to Habermas a type of action which is free from domination which means that subjects are involved without force or limitation of the individuals which leads to a true consensus (Nørgaard, 1996). The theory of communicative action is based on theories of teleological, norm-regulated, and dramaturgical action. Habermas describes the teleological action as something that presupposes relations between an actor and the world of existing facts that the actor finds itself in. This type of action revolves around the individual's opportunities to influence other actions through speech which makes the individual both develop opinions about certain conditions but also intentions with the ultimate aim of produce certain desired conditions (Habermas, 1996).

Whereas teleological action is based on the objective world, the norm-regulated action is based on a world of social norms. Habermas describes that the norms are represented by injunctions which counts as just among the addressees of the norms which means that the norm-regulated action is accepted as being valid in a given context (Habermas, 1996). But norms, according to Habermas, are not always universal since norms to some degree varies in different cultures and social contexts. The norm-regulated action works from the rationality that Habermas calls moral-practical.

Lastly, the dramaturgical action is to understand a social interaction as a meeting where individuals within create a visible audience for one another while presenting for each other. This means that the presentation becomes a performance where the individual let the audience into its subjective world giving them an opportunity to experience how they experience the life-world that they are in (Habermas, 1996). But what one individual expresses through this dramaturgical action is affected by other action. An action which is not socially accepted, thus not norm-regulated, can be connected to personal feelings like guilt and shame which relates to the dramaturgical action (Habermas, 1996). To act in a way that is not accepted in not desirable as the purpose of performing, or dramaturgical action, is about being socially accepted.

The dramaturgical action is related to the aesthetic-expressive rationality. These types of actions have all been a part of creating the theory of communicative action, as it is mentioned in several of his works, even though Habermas never used the actions in his theory.

Habermas creates a clear divide between communicative action and body movements as communicative action is not just a movement but communication which only consists of speech (Habermas, 1996). Habermas believes that the ideal way of communication is through a conversational situation free of domination where all individuals who are part of the conversation have the opportunity to talk freely and express views and opinions without anyone talking disparagingly of these and without anyone taking social status into consideration when listening. Instead, it is about understanding other participants lifeworlds.

### ***3.3.3 Habermas' system***

In order to understand the purpose-rational action, Habermas' term 'system' is important. To Habermas, the system is the political and financial aspects of society which is controlled by the means of money and power (Andersen, 2007). Money creates opportunities to coordinate complicated processes such as production of goods and the incitement to work. Power, according to Habermas, can be utilized to coordinate people's action through authority and status that a human possess. Money and power have characteristics like independence from a rationally reasoned consensus on norms. Because of the lack of consensus, both money and power are effective as they do not need much communication. Both means of control are anonymous and can be utilized to organize large and complex control systems in a stable and effective manner. Both are closely related to Habermas' purpose-rational action (Andersen, 2007).

### ***3.3.4 Purpose-rational action***

According to Habermas, purpose-rational action is an action that presumes that the actor is orientated towards achieving a goal (Habermas, 1996). Habermas' makes two distinctions of purpose-rational action where one is a strategic action, which Habermas' perceives as a social type of purpose-rational action, and an instrumental action, which he considers non-social.

According to Habermas, a strategic action affects other individual's intentions and actions. It is an action where the interaction participant through its lingual actions tries to achieve an action of speech and effect with the recipients (Nørgaard, 1996).

Habermas further divides the strategic action into two different types, where one is an open strategic action, where one tries to affect openly through e.g., a speech, and a closed strategic action where you try the same but hidden through regular conversation (Habermas, 1996).

Purpose-rational actions are actions that have to do with the means of control which are carried out from a cost-benefit point of view. Norms, personal achievements or other are not considered in the actions and this type of action is not reflected communicatively as only the final result is relevant (Andersen, 2007). An action is purposeful if it is based upon the type of rationality which Habermas call purpose-rational according to which an action is rational if it most effectively reaches a predefined goal (Habermas, 2003).

### ***3.3.5 Habermas' system's colonization of the lifeworld***

Mankind have fought for survival through evolution. This logic of evolution is what Habermas believes created the basis of strategic action and that it is gaining more ground in the modern society due to evolution (Andersen, 2007). As power and capital is essential to the survival of mankind in present-day, both are what the individual human is trying to acquire. The tendency to do strategic actions is a consequence of the modern system as the system has this effect on the rationality of individuals which Habermas call the "colonization of the lifeworld" as it is an invasion of the personal sphere and space of individuals (Andersen, 2007). The system which makes up our society has to change constantly to stay present as companies have to gain customers and consumers, to create growth and that the employees are the ones who fights this battle. The modern society have affected the lifeworld of its citizens to change from communication rationality towards strategic purpose-rationality which leads to the means of control becoming the controlling elements which controls people to move away from dialog and rational conversation. Habermas do not consider that a positive change even though he manages to find positive aspects by this, and he does not point out individuals who are responsible for the tendency (Nørgaard, 1996).

### 3.4 Rosa's resonance

While Habermas warned about the systems colonization of the communicative lifeworld, Hartmut Rosa presents a solution; his term 'resonance'. Resonance is the potential to, anthropologically, connect one human with another, with its lifeworld and the object within it. Resonance has the ability to combat several of the problems of the modern society and the alienation (Fuchs, 2020). Resonance is a mutual relation where individuals can be touched emotionally through actions. Resonance exists where the world "strikes a chord" in the individual and the other way around. According to Rosa, individuals have the desire to both create and experience resonance equally (Rosa, 2019).

Resonance is not tied to a relation between two individuals but can include several at the same time and describes a way of individual and lifeworld to start a relation. Rosa believes that the individuals in the relation, in a vibrating space, can affect each other equally which creates an understanding of 'responding' to each other while each individual speaks with its own voice (Rosa, 2019). While Rosa aligns resonance with intimacy, closeness, and authenticity, experiences of resonance have dependencies of availability of stabilizing axes of resonance in the social domain (Fuchs, 2020). For Rosa, resonant axes only exist where a type of relation makes it possible for a repetition of resonant experiences to be created and stabilizing between the individual and the segment of the lifeworld. These axes are both horizontal, which includes family, friendship, and political relations, diagonal, including the world of work, school, and consumption, and vertical, which include religion, nature, and art (Rosa, 2019).

Rosa's theory is designed for the modern society, but his resonant axes do not include present-day communication technology. Instead, all electronic devices, social media, and internet is not included in his resonant world as they function as alienation and acceleration of society which keeps individuals from realizing their intersubjective potential (Fuchs, 2019). As Rosa says in the first sentence of his book: "*If acceleration is the problem, resonance might be the answer (Rosa, 2019).*"

Where the modern society is depending on growth, increasing innovation, and constant acceleration it is threatening mankind's relation to the world and makes it mute and alienated. But Resonance is not in complete opposition to society's acceleration: "*Modernity cannot just be*

*told as the story about an acceleration-related ‘resonant catastrophe’ because it at the same time has greatly increased the sensitivity to resonance – in many cases the modernity have created the ability to resonate (Rosa, 2019).”* The vibrations and the resonance are created when we actually love our lives or an actual situation, no matter if it is experiences of nature, happiness about work or the songs from football supporters.

#### ***3.4.1 Rosa’s criticism of Habermas***

While Habermas’ theory is about coordinating society through communicative and purpose-rational action, Habermas seems to create his arguments without opposition. Habermas considers the purpose-rational action a mean to counteract the systems’ colonization of the life-world in order to recreate authenticity and legitimacy. But Habermas does not account for the effects of time and barely mentions time.

Instead, Rosa considers time an important aspect as time infinitely accelerates and presents resonance as a solution to the problems that Habermas identifies. Habermas’ own solution is a rational solution to the alienation of modern society, but the alienation can be avoided if individuals are synchronized, i.e., vibrates and resonates with each other. According to Rosa, resonance establishes relations between individuals even though modern society in its nature leads to alienation.

## 4. Methodology

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The following section details how the research was conducted, and the methods used for material analysis. Therefore, this chapter will include epistemological perspectives, data collection, data analysis and methodological reflection. It will further consist of the author's methodological approaches, how these tools are understood and used in the project as an aid to get closer to the phenomenon.

The thesis will answer the research question using methods from the qualitative tradition such as interviews with representatives and supporters and the aim will be accomplished through examples from the highest ranked Danish football league Superliga, where there have been several cases of supporters who did not perceive a club's action as corresponding to the authenticity and values that they associated with the club. The case study will be based on an analysis of clubs in the Danish Superliga who branded themselves and communicated using authenticity while trying to stay competitive financially. In order to examine the relation between clubs and supporters, Habermas' terms 'communicative action' and 'purpose-rational action' will be utilized together with Rosa's 'resonance' to get a better understanding of the phenomena.

### 4.1 Epistemological approach

The term 'phenomenology' comes from the Greek phrases 'phai'nomenon', meaning "teachings of what appears to us", and 'logos' meaning "to learn". Phenomenology is about learning what appears before us. It was created as a counter-reaction to positivism and is about the fact that mankind only knows the reality which is observable, and that mankind constructs an image of reality. Mankind is a subject, which senses and experiences the world where only the observable reality exists. A truer reality, or something more real than the observable, is considered as speculative nonsense by phenomenology while the objective realization will be found through human's subject experiences (Juul & Pedersen, 2012). The purpose of phenomenology is to understand other human's subjective opinions and views and to get to know

other human's lifeworld which is the reality that they live within and experience. In the phenomenological world, experiences are what counts, and it is not possible to assert without evidence. Instead, humans need to ask and listen carefully (Jacobsen et al., 2015).

The theory of phenomenology uses the term 'cogitation', which refer to our conscious experiences, meaning that whatever is experienced cannot be doubted and that it is important to understand what you experience. Within cogitation, the phenomenological cognition becomes the experiential subject in the world (Juul and Pedersen, 2012).

Phenomenology is based on experiences where the purpose is to create a world without any prejudice. This is secured through the phenomenological 'epoch' through human assumptions where perceptions do not take over the truth. This can be done through 'transcendental' reflection meaning that there is no further interest in the topic but only an objective spectator present. The individual is something that is created through 'intersubjectivity' meaning that which is recognizable. Mankind does not experience the world as being its own but through intersubjectivity which through its objects is accessible to everyone (Juul & Pedersen, 2012).

#### ***4.1.1 Phenomenology as qualitative research***

Phenomenology within qualitative research have been developed by Amedeo Giorgi whose purpose was to open the researcher's consciousness making the phenomenon free of the researcher's prejudices and understandings. Giorgi developed four methodological rules for the qualitative phenomenology (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014):

1. The first rule is about choosing a phenomenon. The phenomenon must be experienced by an individual which can be done through a qualitative interview. The researcher's purpose is to set aside the epoch and thoroughly get into the interview.
2. The second rule is about keeping focus on the qualitative interview where the researchers read the material thoroughly to create units in the material meaning topics.

3. The third rule is about categorizing and finding terms which the purpose of moving beyond the interviewed individuals own language where you read between the lines. This is done through the three types of coding in this study.
4. The fourth and last rule is about finding the overall structure of the phenomenon. This is found through the third rule, through the categorized material.

## 4.2 A case study

The study is based on the Danish league, which makes it relevant to include the understanding of a case study. This section will therefore consist of an account of what a case study is and what misunderstandings typically arise from the use of the methodological approach.

A case study helps to investigate a single or more phenomena (Usinger & Sønderbæk, 2018). The methodological premises of the case study provide a clarification that the control of a given phenomenon or the context in which it takes place is not possible. The case study can therefore help to study the phenomenon in natural surroundings, where a more in-depth study can be made (Usinger & Sønderbæk, 2018). According to Yin (2012), all case study research starts from the same belief, which is the desire to make and understand an in-depth study of a single or multiple case. This takes place in a “real-world” context, where the possibility of learning new behavioural actions and opinions can take place. This can be seen in Yin's overall and brief explanation:

*"An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a "case"), set within its real-world context - especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin 2012)."*

It is thus not possible to reduce the study of the phenomenon to isolated variables that are well-defined, but the phenomenon must be studied in its complex context. It is therefore important that when using a case study, it is relevant that the empirical evidence itself is based on several sources and not just one (Yin, 2012). As a starting point, a case study provides a detailed description of the given phenomenon, but it can also contribute with solutions in the longer term.

As there have been several misunderstandings about the usefulness of a case study for many years, the definition by Yin will be strengthened by the involvement of Flyvbjerg. The general misunderstandings about a case study are defined and compiled by Flyvbjerg in five general points (Flyvbjerg 2006):

- *"Misunderstanding 1: General, theoretical (context-dependent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge."*
- *"Misunderstanding 2: One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; Therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development."*
- *"Misunderstanding 3: The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first phase of a total research process, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypothesis testing and theory building."*
- *"Misunderstanding 4: The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions."*
- *"Misunderstanding 5: It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories based on specific case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006)."*

These five misconceptions broadly define the scepticism that takes place around the creation of knowledge through a case study. Flyvbjerg argues against these misunderstandings, which claims that the creation of knowledge in a case study is not relatable, valuable, nor generalizable (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The above statement thus helps with the understanding of a case study. This understanding is simplified by incorporating Yin's definition and Flyvbjerg's counterarguments to general misunderstandings. Coherently, Yin's definition helps to gain an overall understanding of a case study, where Flyvbjerg's counterarguments provide a broader understanding of the applicability of the case study. By using a case, it can be easily generalized, but at the same time the possibility of further research arises, as long as the empirical data is not based on a single isolated variable. The very characterization of the case study therefore helps the study's purpose to get closer to the investigated phenomenon.

### 4.3 Selection of participants

In order to examine the relation between clubs and its supporters, both supporters and clubs had to be represented in the interviews. This meant that the supporters had to be associated with the active supporter community in order for them to be relevant for this study. The club representatives also had to have experience with communication decisions.

The role of the interviewees allows for Habermas' concepts of actions and Rosa's concept of resonance to be utilized to analyse and understand the relation between commercialization and authenticity since both sides will be presented by respectively club representatives and club supporters.

The two supporters were selected through search on Twitter where it quickly became clear that certain profiles debating Danish football had more followers than others. Furthermore, these two profiles were both deeply engaged in debating their clubs as well as Danish football in general. As it turned out that one was supporter of AaB Fodbold (AaB) and chairman of Danske Fodbold Fans [Danish Football Fans] and the other a Brøndby supporter, had a background as an employee at Brøndby I.F. (Brøndby), where his job were about communicating with the supporters on behalf of the club, and as former chairman of Fanafdelingen [the Fan Department] which is an association of Brøndby supporters who also have a designated seat at the board of Brøndby, these two proved a good fit for the study.

The two representatives from the clubs were difficult to reach. Firstly, the eight out of fourteen clubs in the Superliga were contacted both through email, Twitter, and LinkedIn. None of these messages were answered. Instead, Dan Hammer, former CEO of F.C. København (FCK), was contacted with his background in mind. Hammer recently published the book 'Hvor Svært Kan Det Være?' [How Hard Can It Be?] about how to successfully run a financially stable football club. At the interview with Hammer, he further provided contact details to whom he believed would be useful for the study. Trine Hesselund Hopp Møller, Co-CEO of Nordsjælland, were interested in participating in the study. No other clubs or representatives from the clubs have responded before deadline of this study.

All four interviewees received a one-page document with the topic, aim and purpose of the project explained as well as the interview guide (Appendix 1) making it possible for them to prepare for the interview.

#### **4.4 The qualitative research interview**

In order to acquire relevant empirical data, which the project can make use of, the author has chosen to make use of qualitative research interviews for the study. The purpose of the interviews is to obtain new relevant knowledge, which is acquired through dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees with relevance to the case study, as these possess a unique knowledge within the project topic (Poulsen, 2016). Through the qualitative research interview, one can access an interviewee's perceived lifeworld, knowledge and experiences that cannot be accessed in any other way, which makes this kind of empirical data unique (Poulsen, 2016).

The project will more specifically rely on semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a form of interview that mixes a fixed structure of questions and natural conversation. This requires that the interviewer has prepared an interview guide before the interview itself takes place, which ensures that the interview questions stay within the project topic itself, making sure that the interview does not deviate from what you want to investigate. The advantage of the semi-structured interview is also that the interview guide does not have to be precisely followed, but it provides flexibility and the opportunity to ask in-depth questions that may arise during the interview thus moving beyond the interview guide itself, as answers from the interview guide's questions can lead to new questions (Poulsen, 2016).

The interview guide is a methodological tool, where the use of language in particular can be decisive for which answers one acquires. Therefore, the language should not be too advanced, and questions and topic should be treated carefully so that any misunderstandings about questions can be avoided (Poulsen, 2016).

A disadvantage of this type of empirical collection, however, is that the interviewer must not have too much focus on the interview guide, as this prevents a continuity in the interview,

which could otherwise have turned into an in-depth and developing conversation (Poulsen, 2016).

The interview guide will include both ‘question blocks’ and ‘grand tour’ and ‘mini tour’ questions. Question blocks are a way of dividing the interview questions into topics, categories, or themes. This provides a clear division of the interview topic, so that the conversation is limited to what is relevant. This also makes it easier to transcribe and code the interview afterwards, as the questions are already divided by topics (Poulsen, 2016). Grand tour and mini tour questions are concepts that can divide the interview into short and long answers. Grand tour questions, for example, give rise to more in-depth answers, at the same time as the interviewee gives a tour of his or hers perceived world and thus also the way he or she experiences that world. The questions here must be open with the possibility that the interviewee can open up about what was asked (Poulsen, 2016). The mini tour questions are very similar to grand tour questions, but do not give rise to equally open answers, but more concrete and detailed answers instead.

#### ***4.4.1 Ethical considerations***

Prior to the interviews conducted, the interviewees have been informed about the focus point and the topic of the interview. In addition, they have given their consent for the author to record the interviews with the purpose of transcribing the interviews for later analysis. Furthermore, the interviewees have been informed about the possibility of making their identities anonymous if desired, so that information given at the interviews can be kept inaccessible to the public, as their statements could contain confidential information about which the public has no right to know (Poulsen, 2016).

#### ***4.4.2 Conducting an interview***

Prior to conducting the interviews, the author consulted with the interviewees about the location and facilitation of the interviews. The author wanted the interviewees to be as confident and open-minded as possible, so that the possibility of further elaboration of questions was possible. Therefore, the interviews were conducted through Zoom, at Royal Arena, Copenha-

gen, Denmark and Right to Dream Park, Farum, Denmark. This is important so that the interviewees are in familiar surroundings so that their lifeworld regarding the project topic can be explored (Poulsen, 2016).

## **4.5 Kvale and Brinkmann's seven thematization phases**

The interview itself is structured according to an understanding of Steiner Kvale and Svend Brinkmann's seven phases. These phases help in a systematic planning of the interview itself by obtaining useful knowledge that the subject possesses about the organization. The seven phases can therefore help with the inclusion of relevant data material so that it is not forgotten in connection with the analysis and the interview study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

### ***4.5.1 Phase 1 – Thematization***

The first phase deals with the thematization of the interview, where the form of the interview and the actual execution apply. It is therefore important in this phase that the interview questions are formulated according to reported relevance, and that the interview planning is based on an exploratory or hypothesis-testing purpose. The planning of the interview focuses first and foremost the interview's; *why, what and how* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The *why* is the very purpose of the study, which is to clarify what the purpose of the study itself is (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The *what* is the acquisition of the prior knowledge considered relevant to the subject before the actual study takes place. Here it might be necessary to relate to the subject's surroundings and situation to make sure that the subject of the study is correctly understood by the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The *how* deals with what are required to obtain the intended knowledge, which is an acquisition of different theories, techniques, and decisions, each of which strengthens the interview and the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

#### ***4.5.2 Phase 2 – Design***

In the design of the actual interview, the actual *how* is expressed. As already mentioned, it includes how the actual planning for obtaining the intended knowledge. It is therefore important to plan how the interview should proceed, which can be specified using several factors such as the number of interviewees, overview, etc. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

#### ***4.5.3 Phase 3 – Interview***

The third phase focuses on the actual production of the interview. During production, it is important to keep in mind that the subjectivity of the interviewees can be perceived as part of the product, as it contributes to the context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). It is therefore important to consider the interpersonal relationships of the interview situation.

The interview is based on *the factual interview*. As the interview guide helps to ask the correct questions to obtain relevant empirical data, subjectivity contributes to the context. Since all interviews are different, it is important to remember that all good qualitative interviews require spontaneity, as not everything can be planned in detail (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

#### ***4.5.4 Phase 4 – Transcription***

The interview takes place face to face, which highlights the need to transcribe the interview itself. This is done through digital audio recording and subsequently by means of transcription, so that the interview is considered basic empirical data. As one switches from spoken language to written language, this shift has been considered in the study, and any corrections from the recorded to the transcription will be highlighted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The actual sampling of the interview for the transcription will, as mentioned, be directed to more formal language so that "uh" or laughter is not transcribed directly. To increase the reliability of the transcript, the completed transcript will be sent for review to the interviewees so that they can confirm their statements. Validity of the transcript is expressed through empha-

sis on the facts and the interviewees' acceptance. Ethically, sensitive information will not be used without the consent of the interviewees (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

#### ***4.5.5 Phase 5 – Analysis***

In this phase, it is important to determine which method of analysis that is used, which is decided on the basis of the study's topic, purpose, and the nature of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The selected analysis method consists of three coding forms: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

#### ***4.5.6 Phase 6 – Verification***

It is not certain that a similar interview will be able to ensure a reproduction of the exact same knowledge at another time, since that development and changes occur continuously (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). However, this reliability is increased by the fact that the author has been able to ask follow-up questions if necessary, should speculations regarding the material arise. The division of interview questions into question blocks helps to increase the validity of correctly asked questions and also by including second-hand empirical data to compliment the answers from the interviewees. If the sources are examined for invalidity, this may increase the validity of the interview, however, only if what is being examined actually fits with the topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The generalizability is based on and the understanding of a case study.

#### ***4.5.7 Phase 7 – Reporting***

Reporting takes place through ethical compliance, where informed consent, confidentiality and consequences of reporting have been discussed in more detail with relevant interviewees (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). At the same time, reporting is done with respect for the interviewees and their job title.

## 4.6 Coding

This section consists of a brief account and highlighting of the three forms of coding used as analytical tools. The actual execution and the documents where the coding has been performed are shown in Appendices 2.1, 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1. The generated data (interviews) are processed using the three forms of coding that generally help to clarify the empirical material and the actual classification of the material. The three forms of coding are inspired by Merete Watt Boolsen, who has written a chapter on coding. This chapter is in the book *Qualitative Methods* by Svend Brinkmann and Lene Tanggaard (Boolsen, 2015).

### *4.6.1 Open coding*

Open coding, which is the first form of coding used, helps to divide the data material into topics so that a simplification appears through the main topics discussed during the interview (Boolsen, 2015). This form of coding fits well with the theoretical perspective of science, as the second method is usually clarified from a phenomenological point of view by creating topics in the material. The open coding thus deals with what goes on in the qualitative interview and the speech elements of the text itself. Here, main topics, also called main categories, are found to create an overview of the transcript (Boolsen, 2015). The open coding thus helps to simplify the transcription, so that main topics either divide the transcript or create an overview.

### *4.6.2 Axial coding*

Axial coding, which is the second form of coding used, is helpful in going more in depth with the main categories of open coding. This coding helps to connect the main categories of the phenomenon with the subcategories found under the axial coding (Boolsen, 2015). This coding further helps to create a categorical overview that connects the two categories to the phenomenon being investigated, so that a development takes place in extension of the causal condition of the subject (Boolsen, 2015). The axial coding can be described as a form of coding that supports the project's investigation, as the third method rule in phenomenology is

about categorizing the material and its concepts, so the interviewee's language is included correctly, by removing the barriers that overshadow the meaning between the lines.

The main categories from the open coding are in the axial coding divided into different colours, including the subcategories mentioned, which helps to see which areas specifically exemplify it with relevance. Each colour therefore represents main categories and subcategories thereof.

#### ***4.6.3 Selective Coding***

Selective coding, which is the third and final form of coding used in the project, deals with highlighting elements in the data material such as theoretical or methodological methods. The selective coding is the collection of the open coding and axial coding, the selective coding incorporating elements from both previous coding forms (Boolsen, 2015). The selective coding is divided according to the same principle as under axial coding, but the focus here will therefore be on theoretical and methodological approaches that the interviewees include in their statements. The actual colour combination used will therefore resemble the axial coding, but significant areas are highlighted that deal with the procedures in question.

### **4.7 Methodological reflections and limitations**

The study is based on interviews with current and former stakeholders from the Danish Superliga who voluntarily without any earnings agreed to participate in the study, meaning that the needed information is publicly available. As the phenomena is something that is on-going without the presence of the researcher or this study, the phenomena is not influenced in any way. The views and opinions of the interviewees can, however, be modified by external circumstances in the future if their belief requires them to try to change a future outcome in the future. This could be a limitation for future studies or replications of the study. The methodology and the interviews used are the most suitable and fitting for the study as they give unique insight into how stakeholders perceive commercialization and authenticity in the Danish Superliga.

The research is done in a European society which means that the generalizability might be limited to the commercialization of European clubs.

## 5. Analysis

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In this section of the study, the transcriptions from the interviews will be analysed through Habermas' communicative and purpose-rational actions as well as Rosa's resonance term. The analysis will focus on finding the system's colonization of the lifeworld of the supporters as well as where the resonance is. The analyses will create the basis of a further discussion of the topic and is based on empirical material through the coding of the transcriptions.

### 5.1 The lifeworld of Danish supporters

In the lifeworld of the two supporters, the researcher identified certain values that they perceive as something authentic. These values are important in order to examine the impact of commercialization and how it clashes with their lifeworld. As Habermas pointed out, an individual's lifeworld is the subjective perspective which consists of the subjective experiences of an individuals throughout that individual's life (Nørgaard, 1996).

*“I have been, since I got my season ticket in 08-09, regularly at the stadium to every home match. [B]efore corona I had only missed one home match. (...) Before that, we were just a couple of guys who went to every third home match (Appendix 2.1)”*

The AaB supporter Rothmann, and also chairman of Danske Fodbold Fans, are regularly attending home matches with friends. This means that both Rothmann and his friends live close to AaB which point out the localness as a value. This seems to be an important part of the lifeworld of the supporters:

*“What started it for me, was when I started seeing everyone else change between foreign clubs according to who won. Then you were a supporter of Manchester United when Beckham played for them, then everyone supported Real*

*Madrid's Galacticos. And I thought it was too artificial and too fake, so I bought into the narrative of Brøndby as a big community (Appendix 3.1)."*

As Brøndby was not a glocal but local brand, Bauer bought into the story of Brøndby. Again, we find that localness as a value is something that both supporters highly appreciate. Localness evoke certain feelings in both supporters and is an important part of their lifeworld. For Rothmann, the potential scenario of the neighbour's son playing for AaB is another thing that he values (Appendix, 2.1). This has also something to do with localness, as he can both attend matches with his friends while, potentially, cheering for a player that he could personally have a relation to.

The lifeworld of both supporters includes the community around their clubs. While Rothmann enjoys the community around AaB with his friends, Bauer joined the local community rather than a more global community. This is what Giulianotti and Robertson (2004) calls 'glocal transnational' clubs. Neither Rothmann and Bauer can be accused of following their clubs due to a lot of success, as Aab and Brøndby in the last 20 years combined have won the Danish Superliga four times, two each. However, it seems like the local community have attracted both of them to their clubs. Bauer elaborates on this:

*"Brøndby has always made sure that they took care of the area near the club and the local area of Vestegnen (the western suburbs of Copenhagen), and now football has become global rather than local. Now it's more about (...) life that is around Brøndby with all the friends and acquaintances I have out there. [...] You are looking for something you can identify with (Appendix, 3.1)."*

This localness of the clubs seems to be a continuous point that makes the clubs interesting for people who live within the local community as you can identify yourself with the club because it resonates with people who you might know personally. At the same time, the attendance of home matches as a routine is also resembling the more traditional working-class supporter as it becomes a key preoccupation of the supporters (Giulianotti, 2002).

Rothmann further highlights, that at AaB they value that it potentially could be the neighbour's son who are playing for the club (Appendix, 2.1). This localness of the clubs seems to

be a continuous point that makes the clubs interesting for people who live within the local community as you can identify yourself with the club because it resonates with people who you might know personally. At the same time, the attendance of home matches as a routine is also resembling the more traditional working-class supporter as it becomes a key preoccupation of the supporters (Giulianotti, 2002).

Despite being a representative from the commercial system, Hammer's experience with growing up is also worth considering regarding the values of the supporters. Hammer grew up on Amager close to the football club Fremad Amager. But Hammer has some perspectives regarding values that he associates with authenticity. He repeatedly talked about how the localness and working-class identity influenced his relation to Fremad Amager which he still supports today:

*“We came from petroleum heating to district heating, bathtub, nice big apartment and to an environment where all the others were like us. That is, working families. My father was a taxi driver at the time, but is a trained blacksmith, and my mother later became a nurse. [...] Sundby Idrætspark (home stadium of Fremad Amager) was on the other side of Englandsvej in relation to where I lived, and my parents did not want me to start [at Fremad Amager] before I was 10 years old. So, all my friends started in Fremad Amager a year or two before me (Appendix 4.1).”*

The working-class identity, which Edensor and Millington (2008) found that Manchester City tapped into in their campaign from 2005, is another important factor when considering supporters as something authentic. As Taylor (1971a) found that the working-class in the early 1960s in England, who valued localness and active participation, were getting replaced by the middle-class spectators, football clubs could risk the commercialization in the football history repeating itself. Rothmann highlights the working-class aspects as well:

*“If you wish to build a club with a healthy and strong supporter culture, which is not just tied to championships and selling cheap sausages, it is incredibly important that you consider what our values are and what our supporters think that we should do regarding decisions. It does not matter that you are from a*

*working-class town if you have the [private] worker unions on your chest, which I think was a problem in [FC] Midtjylland (Appendix 2.1)."*

Hammer highlights how there was only one club for him as it was the biggest club in the area at the same. While some could potentially consider Brøndby and FCK as close as Fremad Amager when growing up in Copenhagen today, one could also argue that a 'localization' happened where the clubs who once seemed distanced today, because of social media, TV, etc. are closer to the consumers. Furthermore, Hammer talks about the localness as a thing, together with club colours and club name, which you cannot and should not change:

*"If you just imagine the value community in a football club between all the stakeholders as a house in curling. And in the inner circle you have some very basic things. The club is called this, play this place, play in these clothes. It should also preferably be well-run and win some football matches. It's next (Appendix 4.1)."*

This localness as a value, where a club interacts with the local area, is what the supporters perceive as authentic. The coding of the transcriptions found that the values that they identify themselves with, e.g., localness, have led to both Rothmann and Bauer becoming parts of the active supporter groups. Rothmann describes how he became a part of the local tifo group, a group who creates mosaics at the matches with e.g., plastic sheets which are hold up to create a collective image or message, because he went to all the home matches:

*"Then you become part of the active environments and you get some acquaintances through it. [I] became part of the active tifo group, ATK, and through that the official [supporter] scene. I had been a member of the fan club for many years prior and I have been with the unofficials (non-registered supporter groups) at [away match] train trips around the country (Appendix 2.1)."*

Especially the away matches seem to be an important part of actively participating in the social parts of the supporter groups. Bauer claims that the trips to away matches is where "you get this authentic experience of being a football supporter (Appendix 3.1)." If we consider what both supporters claim are the authentic parts of being a football fan, the localness, taking

part in the active supporter groups and going on away trips, we can isolate these as some of the core parts of being an authentic football supporter. Further, Bauer characterizes being a Brøndby supporter with being part of a story:

*“It is the boys from Vestegnen and not the boys from Denmark, if you characterize it. It is that story. A worker-against-the-superpower-attitude (Appendix 3.1).”*

Here, we find Habermas’ communicative action. The reason for the supporters to go to home and away matches, to be part of the active supporter community as well as the local community while attending matches and perceiving this as part of the authentic experiences is done without having any specific end purpose. The supporters do not seem to gain anything for perceiving these things as authenticity or part of something authentic. But the actions of the supporters have a value to them meaning that they are value-rational actions. As the communicative action is rational in its own sense, since it has value to itself, it is normative, as the supporters’ actions are. Attending matches home and away, the importance of supporting a local club rather than glocal, of having friends in the community and perceiving the clubs’ actions within the community as important, these values pose as irrational and solely value-based in a society which is rational.

Being AaB supporter while being from Aalborg, Brøndby supporter while growing up in the western suburbs of Copenhagen or cheering for Fremad Amager while growing up almost across the road from the stadium is considered authentic because it has value in the pride of the localness within the supporters. They seek pride in their local community. It might not be a unique community, but they find value in it thus valuing it higher than the glocal communities. The value of authenticity is free from the political and financial aspects of Habermas’ system as it seems to rather be linked to social norms or at least a social dimension.

But if we see the actions of the supporters through the eyes of Rosa, then their actions might rather be from a resonance perspective. In a constant accelerating world, where increasing commercialization is affecting the football industry, the social dimensions are of importance to these supporters. The relation between the supporters and what they consider as authentic is depending on the resonant axes that Rosa finds with possibly friendship on the horizontal ax-

is, consumption on the diagonal, and religion on the vertical. They are not part of the communities because they find irrational value but because the communities around the football clubs resonates within them.

Compared to what Habermas claimed affects a lifeworld, the two supporters seem to both have experienced how the friendships and community that they became a part of formed around their club. One could argue that this becomes a sub-society to the actual society where it is important to attend home matches and to go on trips around the country to support the team at away matches. This correlates with the first element of what affects an individual's lifeworld where the society, the local supporter groups, that one becomes a part of as well as the rules following that society affects the lifeworld of the individual. This society contains a culture which creates the basis of understanding, which correlates to the culture of supporting the team no matter where they play. Lastly, the personality affects how the individual perceives itself can also be found, as the supporters perceive themselves as part of a group, supporter of AaB and Brøndby while containing certain values, such as localness, the identifiable aspects of the players etc. which impact how they see themselves. Their lifeworld appears to be what they consider authentic.

## 5.2 The commercial system

Despite Hammer growing up in working-class conditions at Amager, he later became a part of a club which had a very different view on how to tackle the problem of staying authentic while being commercial. At FCK, Hammer became CEO in a club which, according to his own words “stood on the shoulders (Appendix 4.1)” of the two clubs which were put together as a superstructure to create FCK:

*“It was like big arm movements. Big city club. Kind of like New York-ish almost. The story was at least a postulate. [...] Our own story was short, and the arm movements were somewhat larger than the trophies. [...] So, we pursued quite a lot that angle that we are who we are. And we have big ambitions, and we know we can fill them, and it's the business that has to do it for us. We aim higher than just the Danish duck pond. So, in that way it also becomes somewhat of a*

*value that we became a big city club, and it was like given in advance (Appendix 4.1).”*

In the early days of FCK, the club management including Hammer decided to rather be part of the commercialization rather than building on authenticity. The club decided that the business aspects were important which is in line with how Habermas characterizes money and power as independent from rationally reasoned consensus on norms. Being a business-orientated club was unusual and Hammer clearly states that FCK were built differently than other clubs in the Danish Superliga. FCK wanted to be a big club where the commercial aspects were built in before anything else. This turns the traditional view of a football club upside-down as you do not transform a club from a local community to something profit-maximizing as Kennedy and Kennedy (2012) claims happen with most clubs. Instead, this probably made it easier for the supporters to know that if you valued working-class, local, community clubs then FCK were probably not the right club for you. But Hammer also claims that FCK were in fact authentic and that a club can be both commercial and authentic as long as it clearly states that it is in fact commercial to its core:

*“If authenticity is not a postulate, one can actually postulate authenticity much more than one thinks, because it is not just a question of whether one was first or something like that. You can own a position that makes you authentic. We were a business-oriented football club. It was authentic. So, you can say that I do not think you will be really good commercially if you are not authentic, but you also have to be honest with yourself. It would not be authentic if FCK tried being like Brøndby [regarding] the community and all those things. It would not be authentic if Brøndby suddenly became a business-oriented football club (Appendix 4.1).”*

Here we see that authenticity is not only something that is free from money and power but that a commercial focus can also be considered as authentic. But Hammer clearly states that money follows authenticity. You might decide to become a business-orientated football club, but if you are not authentic, according to Hammer, you will not be authentic. This is where we can find Habermas’ system in the football industry as money is used to coordinate complicated processes such as production of goods, football matches, experiences, and trophies, and the

incitement to work, paying the salary of better players. But here we also find an issue. If you cannot be successful commercially as a football club if you are not authentic, you could risk never becoming authentic if you are only profit orientated. But as Habermas does not consider time as part of his theory, we might instead look to Rosa, as the success of the club, and possibly the location, over time will resonate with some potential supporters. The resonance could create a snowball effect where more and more supporters will show up if you are successful in football thus leading to more authenticity and in the end commercial success. So, one might argue that commercial investments could lead to commercial success over time in football clubs.

Here, Nordsjælland is a great example where instead of having commercial success as an overall purpose-rational goal, authenticity is the end goal. Nordsjælland act in certain ways which expresses authenticity and does not have commercial success as a goal. Instead, Møller from Nordsjælland claim that social responsibility and being a value-based football club is something important in football clubs today, which Nordsjælland tried to utilize to brand themselves as a more modern version of a football club:

*“We try our best to equate our men and women, and it's a journey, [...] we try to create the same opportunities for our male and female players. That is why International Women's Day is also important to us. Some of what we did e.g., at International Women's Day, where the other years the players themselves have defined which female name, they want on the back of their jerseys. [...] Then it is Oprah they have on their backs or Serena Williams or Caroline Wozniacki (Appendix 5.1).”*

What Møller states is that you can also construct a club with built-in strategies which promote values which the supporters perceive as authentic. This is, according to Møller, not done with a commercial goal in mind but instead with a socially responsible goal:

*“It is about the social responsibility and being a value-based football club where we work towards a sustainable ecosystem (Appendix 5.1).”*

But, according to Møller, Nordsjælland's supporter base is not that big (Appendix 5.1). This could be a result of a lack of resonance in the communication of the club. The clubs can have the value-creation as part of the strategy where you try to create value to the community rather than the community creating value for your club which used to be the case in many other clubs. Actively trying to create an authentic, community-orientated image of the club is a way of turning the effects of commercialization around where the authenticity is what affects the commercialization as the authentic is suddenly the goal rather than the commercialization. But the goal of Nordsjælland comes from a lack of supporters which Møller believes is a result of the overall strategy of Nordsjælland. While the authentic supporters might value victory (Taylor, 1971a), Nordsjælland's strategy is more about doing the right thing which still does not appeal to their target audience:

*“We might have fans, who have the expectations that we should always play to win, and we always want to win. We do not want to win by compromising with what we basically believe in. [B]ut we have to be more local in our communication (Appendix 5.1).”*

Møller acknowledges that Nordsjælland does not manage to appeal to their supporters. Neither with sporting success nor by being responsible as a club rather than financial. This can lead to a lack of supporters which in turn also creates less pressure on the club. But with fewer followers, Nordsjælland also risks losing their ability to stay as commercially attractive to their sponsors as their products becomes less attractive. If the supporters do not show interest in the club, buy merchandise, and do not attend matches hence not creating an atmosphere at the stadium, Nordsjælland ends up with a worse product while not resonating with current or new supporters. Nordsjælland could potentially gain new supporters through their socially responsible strategy but this study did not manage to find any example of this attracting new supporters in previous research.

### ***5.2.1 The commercialized system's colonization of the supporters' lifeworld***

The two supporters have their opinions about the commercialization where both mention concrete examples. One of these examples, which Rothmann mentions, is where FCK changed the previous sections reserved for supporters of the away team to a family section while mov-

ing the away section to a position close to the roof of the stadium. In his position as chairman of Danske Fodbold Fans, he became the spokesperson on behalf of all Danish supporters, except the supporters of FCK:

*“In Parken they moved the away section to A11 because they changed the D-stand to a family stand. [T]here was a lot of commercial interest from FCK since they created a dedicated family stand and found a [sponsor] partner where the fans were left behind (Appendix 2.1).”*

The away supporters felt like they were replaced with families, who probably are not as loud as away supporters would be i.e., not participating in creating an atmosphere at the stadium. This could be a way to show the authentic supporters, the working-class supporters, that they are less welcome because FCK managed to find a company and families who, probably, could lead to a higher revenue. This introduction of families to stadiums is also something which Bauer recognizes at Brøndby:

*“[T]he worst example is if you go with bouncy castles [...], where football becomes secondary. There can be a party, there can be a lot going on around... I thought it was cool with a family lounge [...] because children can also only stay concentrated for such a long time (Appendix 3.1).”*

Bauer, the authentic supporter, recognizes the families as part of the community around the club, but he fears that the families will be of higher interest than the authentic supporters:

*“[F]ocus should still be on what is happening on the pitch. If families are having a good time, it is no different from supporters standing, singing, or drinking beer before the match, the most important is just that football is in the centre of it all. [...] For me, it's [...] contradictory that a football club, that makes a living from attracting people to the stadium, has to promote an event or a sport which does [not] take place at the stadium. Which is primarily something kids sit and play at home. [...] And if that is not the story, then you have to retell the whole [story] of Brøndby, and that is not what they did. They just made an e-sports team and then ran with it (Appendix 3.1)?”*

His concern comes from Brøndby creating an e-sports team (Appendix 3.1), which probably is something done to attract a new and younger audience who does not care as much about football. Instead, like the example of FCK, they attract families who, probably, have more money that they are willing to spend at the stadium thus creating a higher revenue. But these new approaches, like creating a family stand and an e-sports team, is what Dolles and Söderman (2005) talks about when the clubs expand the range of products beyond the football match itself to the locals in the community around the club, who then turns into consumers of the club brand, which suddenly offers more than just the match and a beer, which creates new approaches to the commercial possibilities.

These actions done by the club to attract families are not resonating with the authentic supporters. Instead, Brøndby have acted purpose-rational trying to profit-maximize which, over time, might lead to a worse product as the club could fail resonating with the authentic supporters who are part of the product today. The club needs to resonate with the authentic supporters in order for the club to have a product which is attractive enough to attract the families as well. The club could find out how to resonate with their supporters if they focused more on communicative action rather than the purpose-rational action where they start having open and free conversations with their supporters. Otherwise, Brøndby risks getting perceived by their authentic supporter thus having a worse product to offer.

### ***5.2.2 The commercial authenticity***

But not all commercial actions taken by the clubs are perceived as something negative. Both supporters have examples of how their clubs made a commercial initiative which the supporters also enjoyed. For Rothmann, his example is from when AaB when the sponsor of the club, SparNord, a bank, chose to sponsor one of the end stands at the stadium in Aalborg, where the authentic AaB supporters stand at every home match:

*“SparNord have been on the shirt of Aalborg for nearly 20 years and have given the stand, Vesttribunen, back to the fans so it is called ‘Vesttribunen’ and the only place where it says “SparNord” is on a small plate where it says: “This stand has been donated by SparNord.” That is where you tap into the set of values where you went from that the sponsors could not be big enough to saying:*

*“Okay, what can we do to change something here? We can create value for the fans. They want their own stand. Good, let us give them the name” (Appendix 2.1).”*

Almost the exact same thing happened in Brøndby, where the beer company Carlsberg became new beer sponsors of the club. Carlsberg are sponsors of Brøndby’s rivals FCK meaning that the supporters have a hard time recognizing brands who sponsor the other club. The former sponsor had named the authentic Brøndby supporters’ stand after a soda brand, and now Carlsberg had the opportunity to name the stand after their brand:

*“Personally, I still do not drink Carlsberg. [T]here is still a leftover of resistance towards Carlsberg but they did do something good because they used to be connected with FCK [...] and then they said: “Listen, we know it is your stand,” and then you acknowledge and say: “Okay, this is actually your space we are entering now, so you get the name (Appendix 3.1).”*

Carlsberg gave the supporters the opportunity to name the stand whatever they would like afterwards while declining the opportunity to name the stand something related to Carlsberg. Regarding FCK, Rothmann mentions an initiative in collaboration with a sponsor that he liked. FCK made a documentary about their player Mohammed Daramy and his struggle of getting a Danish passport as a guy with non-Danish parents:

*“We saw that they now collaborate with Unibet (betting company) and also Christopher Cloos (eyeglass brand) and his struggle with citizenship. There is still a lot of exposure as a sponsor and there was their [YouTube series] with Unibet about [a] grassroots football team which they trained under professional conditions which were a betting commercial without betting. So, you could say it was covert marketing, and is that better (Appendix 2.1)?”*

Both the SparNord, Carlsberg and FCK examples are examples where the clubs managed to combine the commercial aspects of sponsors with an authentic perspective. The struggle for citizenship, training local, small, part-time football players under professional conditions and giving the supporters some of their authenticity back while gaining acknowledgement from

the supporters are all ways of hiding the commercial aspects and thoughts behind the initiative while staying authentic in the eyes of the supporters. While this could be genuine from the brands, as there are real people with real feelings behind the brands, it is impossible to know why they agreed to sponsor the initiative if it is not to get a higher revenue by being perceived more positively by the authentic supporters. As Rothmann mentions FCK, a competing club in the same division as his own preferred team, they managed to cross the boundaries of values and authenticity which he prefers as Copenhagen is far from Aalborg while still managing to be perceived as something somehow authentic.

When analysing the interviews, it becomes clear that communicative action seems more often to happen between the supporters themselves rather than between club and supporters. We find the communicative action as it only consists of speech, and while the supporters communicate with each other during matches and in associations like Danske Fodbold Fans, they can influence each other's opinions and views. But this could be a result of the supporters looking for someone to resonate with where other supporters are better at understanding each other because they have the same emotion and affection for a football club. Then the communicative action is a result of the resonance between supporters.

Further, it seems to happen quite rarely that the clubs communicate through speech with the supporters. It is of course impossible for a club as an organization to use speech, but the people involved e.g., the CEO of club, could speak more frequently with the supporters. This would create a dialog where all stakeholders and individuals who are part of the conversation would have the opportunity to talk freely while experiencing each other's lifeworlds. But the clubs seem to focus on using purpose-rational action where profit-maximization is the focus while excluding communicative action. As mentioned earlier, the use of communicative action between club and supporter could result in resonance which would then lead to greater perceived authenticity and potentially greater commercial profit.

During the early 2000s, the Eurovision Song Contest were using FCK's stadium, and the club had to borrow another stadium for a single match. Hammer discussed it with the manager of the team and ended up choosing to rent the stadium of the rivals from Brøndby:

*“We have to accommodate our fans and sponsors so they can watch the match. Therefore, it will be Brøndby Stadium because it has capacity, there are proper facilities and there is a proper pitch. It was a wrong decision. We should have taken the costs that followed and told [the fans and sponsors]: “You cannot attend the match. We have to refund you.” And then we should have told Roy [Hodgson, the manager at the time]: “You have to play this match at a [muddy and worse] pitch and we should have played in Gladsaxe or somewhere else because F.C. København cannot play home matches at Brøndby Stadion without breaking the pact [with the supporters]. Well, I fully recognized that afterwards. It was a clear mistake that cost me and others a lot on: “Do you have football in your heart?” (Appendix 4.1).”*

This is an example of how the club did not use communicative action but purpose-rational action. The club prioritized a better sporting result with a possible financial gain. This is an example of how the commercialization influenced the authenticity as the club allowed for commercial advantages to influence the authenticity as Hammer states that they broke a ‘pact’. This pact is with the supporters who consider everything related to other clubs than their own, especially if it is the rivals, as something you do not want identified with your brand. Something which you do not resonate with. As Bauer said, Carlsberg were considered an FCK-connected brand which were not just accepted at first instance at Brøndby. But in the Brøndby-Carlsberg example, the supporters accepted the commercialization as the brand ‘donated’ the name of the stand to the supporters after talking with them. Carlsberg managed to utilize communicative action to gain financially as it was not just a decision that they made without involving the supporters. Instead, they asked the supporters what they wanted the stand to be named thus trying to experience the lifeworld of the supporters.

But the interviews show no sign of the clubs asking the supporters what they would think about a certain decision. Instead, they show how the sponsors manages to use communicative action to reach common ground with the supporters. The clubs leave out the individual’s opportunity to influence others through speech as no arena to facilitate this conversation was ever presented.

Instead, it seems that the clubs only act purpose-rationally where the predefined goal is to be reached. The example of FCK changing the previous away section to a family section and where Brøndby includes e-sport and bouncy castles is more appealing to the families that the supporters with the predefined goal of appeal to a middle-class supporter segment with more money rather than the authentic working-class, i.e., not resonating with the authentic working-class.

This development in how clubs act seems to follow what Habermas perceives as the system's colonization of the lifeworld. Here, clubs' actions are colonizing the lifeworlds of the supporters as the communicative rationality is put aside while strategic purpose-rationality is moving people away from dialog and rational conversation. As the conversation is non-present and as the supporters express fear of 'their' clubs appealing to middle-class families, the system, the commercialization with money and power, is in fact colonizing the authentic experience of football matches.

Both AaB, Brøndby, FCK and Nordsjælland seems to not be aware of the risk of alienating their own supporters as they do not appeal to and resonate with the supporters on social and cultural values, which Edensor and Millington (2008) found essential. This could potentially lead to tension being created between clubs and supporters thus leading to public criticism from supporters of their own clubs.

### ***5.2.3 Clashes of values and understandings***

An example of where the clubs' actions created tension between the clubs and supporters are to be found in the interviews. In the beginning of 2020, FCK, F.C. Midtjylland and Brøndby all publicly announced that they would go on training camps before the spring season in Dubai. This created a lot of public criticism from the supporters of all three clubs:

*“If you are faithful to your values and you care about how society is feeling, you do not go to Dubai. [E]ither Brøndby is Brøndby at we care about [...] who follows Brøndby, that they are feeling good, our community needs to feel good because it leads to growth, and then you have certain values which you cannot just put aside by going on a training camp to Dubai (Appendix 3.1).”*

Bauer is very clear that a trip to Dubai, because of lack of human rights, are something which he cannot identify himself with as a Brøndby supporter. Rothmann agrees:

*“[We] saw how mature the club and its supporter culture are and I think that it was exemplified the best through the Dubai debate where you saw Brøndby and FCK where their supporters became very vocal about that it was a bad idea (Appendix 2.1).”*

This mismatch of values is especially where clubs and their supporters can clash as they do not have the same understanding. While clubs act purpose-rationally by planning on going to Dubai where the best training conditions and facilities probably can be found instead of staying home during the Danish winter, the decision does not resonate with the supporters as they do not understand the need. They prioritize the values associated with the club higher the sporting success. The same example was seen when Mr. Green, a betting company, became sponsors of AaB:

*“We saw that when Mr. Green came to Aalborg, [...] and Mr. Green stated that: “We believe that AaB is a good match because we share value.” But what the hell are Mr. Green’s values? The only time the talked about the values was when they signed the sponsorship. We do know that [the club needs] money (Appendix 2.1).”*

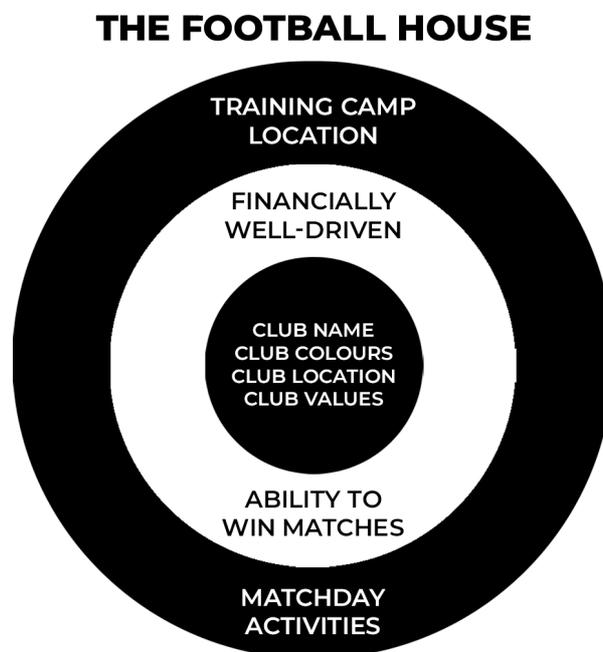
If the clubs do not manage to communicate to and with the supporters about the reasons for their decisions to go to Dubai or to get a betting company as sponsor, the supporters might not agree that it is necessary thus leading to supporters, the consumers of the brand, criticising the brand. Supporters might choose not to buy the tickets, the products from the club shop and publicly denounce the actions taken by the club publicly thus devaluing the product that the club sells to its VIPs, sponsors, and spectators. This is also said by Bauer when talking about when rumours started appearing that Red Bull, an energy drink company, potentially would buy and take over Brøndby:

*“Had Red Bull bought Brøndby, then I would have seen my last match at Brøndby Stadion. Then it breaks to much with the values and the identity I connect with [the club] (Appendix 3.1).”*

### 5.3 The Football House

Following what Hammer explained as a curling house, we can create a model of ‘The Football House’ which consists of thing which, if changed, can affect how the supporters perceive the club. The Football House also has the ability to show which elements of the club that resonates with the supporters the most.

In the inner ring, we place the name, the colours, values, and the location of club. These four will have the biggest impact on the perception of the club by the supporters. In the second ring, we place the financial aspects and winning abilities. In the outer ring, training camp location and matchday activities are placed. Here, bouncy castles, e-sport and training camps are placed as these, when changed, have led to conflicts and clashes between clubs and supporters.



This model is also capable of showing how to build a club in the long run. An amateur club does not need to be well-driven financially nor to be able to win. But it does needs something

which can turn into traditions which would be name, colours, location, and values. The third ring is only needed when the two other rings are established. They are not essential, but they become part of the club. These are also the things which are the easiest to change without the supporters perceiving the club as less authentic.

But if the club changes one of the things in the outer ring and it is linked to some of the things placed in the inner circles, the authenticity perceived might change in the eyes of the supporters. The example of a training camp being linked to club values, is the example of Dubai. The supporters perceive that the clubs' actions of planning a training camp in Dubai is in contradiction of the club values, and since the club have not used communicative action but purpose-rational action, the supporters do not agree with why Dubai was found as a suitable location.

If a club desires to resonate with supporters, it could follow The Football House as the outer ring is what resonates the least with supporters with resonance increasing the further towards the centre you go. However, resonance can only be accomplished if communicative action is used to gain mutual understanding between clubs and supporters. If The Football House is used with purpose-rational action, a predefined goal, the model will not work as the club will never truly understand what the supporters resonates with. The model is therefore a supplement to communicative action and resonance.

## **5.4 Summary of analysis**

The analysis found that communicative action and purpose-rational action is both present in Danish football. Communicative action is found when supporters communicate with each other in a conversation free from domination where they experience each other's lifeworlds. Communicative action is also found when sponsors of clubs create initiatives which acts both as a commercial activity while being perceived as an authentic initiative by the supporters. This is important for the supporters to perceive the sponsor brands as authentic as supporters buy into the authenticity.

Purpose-rational action was found in the clubs specifically which do not manage to use communicative action. Instead, the clubs have turned to profit-maximizing organizations which

utilizes purpose-rational action in order to stay competitive financially. This, however, creates a divide between clubs and supporters.

Furthermore, the analysis found that when supporters perceive something as authentic it is because they resonate with whatever they perceive as authentic. The resonance seems to be the result of communicative action. But while purpose-rational action seems to only be inauthentic to the supporters, the analysis found that resonance can be created over time as supporters can perceive purpose-rational actions as authentic in the long run.

## 6. Discussion

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### 6.1 Relation to previous knowledge

This study examined and analysed the commercialization's effect on authenticity through communicative and purpose-rational action as well as resonance. Specifically, a thorough analysis has been conducted to understand how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization in Danish football.

The literature review presented the phenomenon as to how it has previously been understood. Here the analysis looked at how Edensor and Millington (2008) found that clubs need to be perceived as authentic instead of commercial. The analysis, however, showed that their findings were correct but with modifications. Clubs need to be perceived as authentic for the supporters to buy into the story of the club, but the club can also be established with a commercial aim from the start, as the example of FCK showed. This is not something which has been researched before as clubs are viewed as part of a community which then turns profit-maximizing. This is not the case with neither FCK nor Nordsjælland. Instead, this study finds that the commercial aspects can be part of the values of the club but if the club does not succeed over time, resonance will not be established. And if the club only acts purpose-rational, the club will never understand what the supporters desire in order for them to perceive the club as authentic. However, the authenticity of the commercial club will disappear if the club's name, location, colour, or core values are changed.

Where Giulianotti (1999) found that the supporters claim to be locals, and where Edensor and Richards (2007) found that working-class-based claim of authenticity is more of a rhetorical expression, both seem to be the case with AaB and Brøndby supporters as they both consider the local aspect as an important part of being an authentic supporter. But none of the previous research looked into the perceived authenticity as something that is a result of how the clubs act. This study instead analysed the significance of communicative and purpose-rational ac-

tion from the club and between supporters which seems to have a great impact on how the effects of commercialization on authenticity is considered. Supporters both perceive themselves as authentic because they are locals but also because of how you act as a supporter. Regularly attending home matches and especially going on away matches seems to play an important part in what supporters perceive as authenticity.

Furthermore, the analysis found that it is the lack of resonance and communicative action which can make the supporter move away from the club. While Giulianotti (2002) found that the customers will move elsewhere with financial and emotional investment. This does not seem to be the case, as the supporters included in this study rather wants to step away from the club than go to a new one. Both the Brøndby and AaB supporter expressed concerns with their clubs' actions but none of them showed any signs of changing the preferred club. Instead, they talk about how a purpose-rational action such as getting a betting sponsor, or a new ownership can make the supporters move away from the club. Giulianotti does not take sponsors or ownership into account but instead focus on the supporters leaving as a lack of satisfaction from not being a part of a club.

Another result of this study which does not seem to reflect previous knowledge is the study by Arnaut (2006) which found that clubs cannot have the main goal of creating higher profits while seeking to be included in the local community. Arnaut seems to follow Habermas' understanding of the problem of the modern society. The development of commercial interests leads to less communicative action and more purpose-rational action. But from the perspective of Rosa, this is not true. Resonance can in fact combat the problem of alienation as supporters can still perceive the club as authentic as long as they resonate with it. But this depends on the club acting in a communicative way to understand what the supporters want. This study found that the commercialization in clubs which did not start with profit as a goal leads to authenticity being perceived differently. The authenticity disappears in those clubs if they only act purpose-rational. But when the clubs' sponsors, who are part of the commercialization as they also seek to maximize the profits they earn from the exposure at the club, communicate openly with the supporters, the supporters perceive these actions as less commercial and more authentic. This means that a club can, through its sponsors, end up being perceived as acting communicative without actively engaging in an open conversation with the supporters. But this comes with great risk and depends on the sponsor. Mr. Green in AaB was never

perceived as anything authentic but only as something commercial. This was not because they are a betting company but because they do not engage with the supporters. Unibet, also a betting company, created betting commercials by making videos for entertainment for the supporters which do not show anything about betting. But the fact that Unibet is part of something which resonates with the supporters, the local grass-root football team and the player struggling to get a citizenship, shows that authenticity can be created in an ever-increasing commercialization of the industry.

One could argue that the commercial development of the Danish Superliga is mirroring, with some delay, the development of English football which Edensor and Millington (2008) and Hamil and Chadwick (2010) studied. But this does not seem to be the case as the Danish clubs instead, through their sponsors, are perceived as authentic even though they act purpose-rationally. While supporters are part of the product, this product that touches or resonates with them are produced by themselves in collaboration with the club.

## 7. Conclusion

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The presented analysis and research in this study demonstrates how Danish football clubs can create and utilize authenticity which attracts supporters despite the commercialization of these very same clubs. Therefore, the study builds on existing research by understanding how commercialization of the football industry affects authenticity for the supporters. When considering that the existing research did not consider that the supporters perceived authenticity is a result of what moves the supporters emotionally, by using Habermas' concepts of actions as well as Rosa's concept of resonance, the researcher was capable of exploring the phenomenon examining the effects of commercialization on authenticity. Through the understanding of how supporters perceive authenticity and what they perceive as authentic, it was possible to understand why the supporters consider the commercialization as influencing the football industry in Denmark. After the analysis and the discussion, it is possible to answer the research question examining the commercialization's impact on authenticity.

The answer to the question of how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization of the sport, is related to how the supporters perceive the values and actions related to the club. The study provided a model of The Football House which maps out which elements of a club that, if changed, will affect the perceived authenticity by the supporters the most. If the club create initiatives and take decisions which resonates with what the supporter perceive as club values, then it resonates within the supporters making the initiative or decision perceived as authentic. The negotiation and establishment of authenticity happens when communicative action is utilized where club and supporters reach common ground as the supporters then acknowledge and recognize a certain action as aligned with the club values. These actions are often indirectly made by the club through its sponsor who are establishing authenticity when negotiating with the supporters. The negotiation is a communicative action as sponsors ask the supporters what they prefer is the outcome of a certain action.

The study further concludes that the clubs mostly use purpose-rational action when trying to profit-maximize through commercial initiatives. The commercialization of the club's action is purpose-rational as it is strategic action with the purpose of making the club competitive financially. As the financial competitiveness provides the basis of a better product which is more appealing to the supporters, it can also lead to sporting success of the club which can resonate with the supporters.

In conclusion, the analysis and the results examined the field of commercialization and authenticity regarding branding of football clubs and helped explore what the supporters perceive as authentic, how authenticity is created and how clubs can use it to resonate with its supporters. Examining the relationship between supporters and clubs will help individuals, organizations, sponsors, and other professionals who desire to create, strengthen, and recover authenticity with the supporters of a football club while maintaining and justifying commercialization of the football club. The authenticity of the supporters is understood when exploring the lifeworld of the supporters with the values, experiences, and resonance that it contains.

## **7.1 Suggestions for further research**

The focus of the thesis was to examine and understand how authenticity is understood, negotiated, and established among football clubs and their supporters in an era of increased commercialization in football. Since this thesis focus on Danish football, it would be interesting to examine if the same methods and theory was used to replicate the study in other countries. Here, authenticity might be understood, negotiated, and established differently perhaps due to cultural differences.

As the research was limited to a European country, a broader understanding of the phenomenon could be gained if the same study was conducted in non-European countries or in other sports with the same supporter affection. This thesis can be utilized as a point of departure to develop a more advanced model of which elements that will influence the authenticity the most with the introduction of commercial elements.

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