

The Race to Success: Navigating the Roadblocks to Formula E's Popularity

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Abstract

Purpose: Formula E, the electric counterpart to Formula 1, has not achieved the same level of popularity among consumers. The purpose of this paper is to understand why Formula E has not been as successful as Formula 1 and the barriers to consumer adoption of Formula E.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This paper employs a qualitative approach through multiple case studies on Formula 1 and Formula E. Additionally, parallels from the popularity contrast between American football vs. flag football are drawn to identify commonalities with the success disparities between Formula 1 and Formula E.

Findings: The paper identifies that Formula 1 has a rich history that contributes to its strong brand identity and has large media exposure while Formula E is still in the process of establishing itself. Attributes such as noise, speed and an overall sensory experience contribute to Formula 1's appeal that Formula E seems to be lacking.

Theoretical implications: The paper delves into the underlying mechanisms to shine a light on consumer behavior, brand heritage and brand loyalty. It paper also explores a deeper understanding of the cultural, technological and emotional shifts in the dynamic evolution of motorsports.

Practical implications: This paper offers practical implications for Formula E, as they are seeking to leverage sustainability as a cornerstone of their brand messaging. The managerial insights derived from this paper will essentially facilitate a deeper understanding of the strategies and approaches that can be adopted when comparing a shift in an industry where one area of the business has focused on sustainable operations.

Originality/value: The originality of the paper lies in its unique comparative analysis of Formula 1 and Formula E and offers an understanding of the commonalities and differences behind the sports' popularity, sustainability and fan engagement.

Keywords: Brand loyalty, Corporate Brand Identity, Sustainable Messaging, Media Influence

Type of paper: Research paper

Introduction

Motorsport, a billion-dollar global industry, has captured the interest of millions of fans all over the world. Within this industry, Formula 1 (F1) has maintained its number one status, with 445 million people tuning in to watch the races in 2021 (Statista, 2023). It has a long history with origins in Silverstone in 1950, where the inaugural race was held (*History of the Grand Prix*, n.d.). Throughout the years, F1 has successfully gained popularity with substantial viewership and a devoted fanbase of loyal motorsport enthusiasts. With the rise of electric vehicles and the continued technological innovation, the electric counterpart of F1, Formula E (FE) has emerged. With a mission to race through the streets of the most iconic cities in the world with the best racing drivers and teams, while accelerating the world's transition to sustainable energy, FE made its debut in Beijing in 2014 (ABB FIA Formula E World Championship, n.d.). It introduced a revolutionary concept, electric-powered cars racing on city streets while committing to sustainability. With this concept, FE has the potential to position itself at the forefront of the electric vehicle revolution. However, despite its innovative approach, FE has struggled to achieve a comparable level of

popularity and a passionate and strong fanbase that F1 has established.

The primary objective of this paper is to delve into the two racing series, F1 and FE, with a focus on gaining insights into why FE has not achieved the same success and consumer adoption that F1 has enjoyed. While there is research into the drivers behind watching sports and why people become fans of certain sports, there is a lack of a comprehensive understanding of why certain versions of a sport, in this case F1, have a global presence and large fanbase, while FE does not.

In this paper, the aim is to bridge this gap by drawing on existing literature and analysing cases to get a better understanding of the factors that contribute to their differing levels of success and popularity. Moreover, it's critical to discover the factors and challenges that have hindered FE's rise to prominence in the motorsport industry.

The findings of this paper can offer valuable insights into the potential barriers to achieving widespread popularity in sports and how to overcome these barriers. It may also offer an understanding of what motivates fans to support a particular sport or team, and the drivers behind loyalty in the context of sports.

Literature review

Brand loyalty in sports

Just like products, sports, and a sports team can be viewed as a brand and fans as their customers (Javani et al., 2013). The product is the actual game between sports teams and the consumption is experiential and emotional. Fans engage with sports emotionally through feelings of excitement, disappointment or joy. These emotional connections and following sports for a long time are what drives loyalty to the sport. Brand loyalty and having a stable fanbase are important in sports as it ensures a

stable following and reliable viewership (Gladden and Funk, 2001).

First, it is important to provide an understanding of brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is defined by Jacoby & Chestnut (1978) as "the biased, behavioural response, expressed over time, by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological decision-making, evaluative processes". It is a deep commitment and preference for a brand, which results in repeat purchasing of that brand and resistance to change the choice of the brand over time".

Brand loyalty was explored by Oliver (1999) as a multifaceted concept through four stages of loyalty: cognitive, affective, conative and action loyalty. The researcher suggests that brand loyalty should not be considered a one-dimensional construct but a combination of cognitive, emotional, intentional and behavioral aspects. The first stage is *cognitive loyalty*, which represents knowledge-based aspects of loyalty. Consumers have a strong mental awareness of a brand, its attributes and features. Based on the information they have of a brand, customers can decide to purchase a brand. Through various interactions and experiences with the brand, customers cultivate emotional bonds with the brand. This is *affective loyalty*. Next is *conative loyalty*, which is the intention and commitment to engage in repeat purchase behavior. Lastly, *action loyalty* is a cumulation of the previous three types of loyalty. It represents the actual behavior of repeat purchases of a brand.

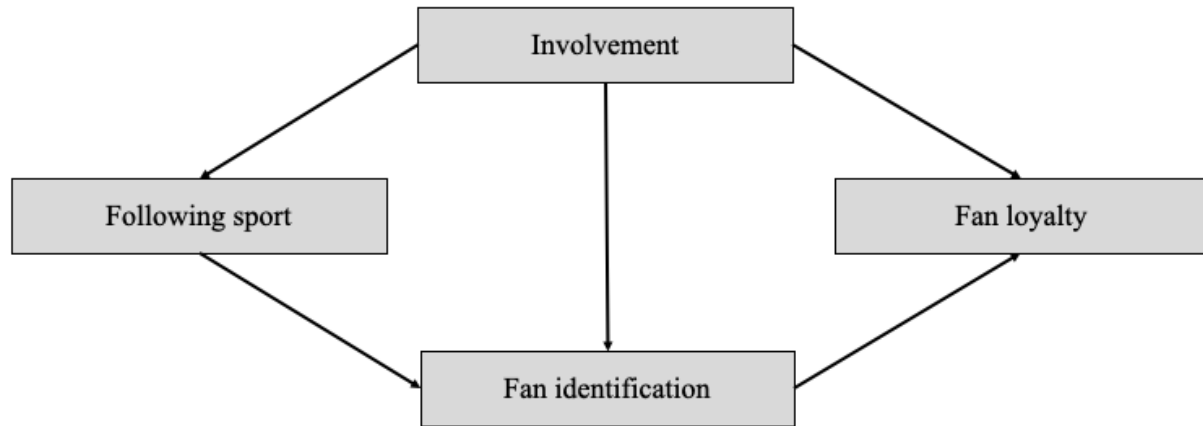
Oliver's view (1999) of brand loyalty as a multifaceted concept has been explored further throughout the years. Stevens et al. (2012) proposed a conceptual model that focuses on fan identification, involvement and following sports as the antecedents of fan loyalty in sports.

Fan loyalty includes game attendance, purchasing team merchandise and positive attitudes toward teams (Stevens et al., 2012), reflecting both attitudinal and behavioral aspects. This is in line with previous research on brand loyalty that suggests that brand loyalty incorporates attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Punniamoorthy and Raj, 2007). Brand loyalty reflects favorable attitudes and

an emotional connection toward a brand as well as actions such as repeated purchase or engagement with a brand (Oliver, 1999). *Fan identification* is characterized by the personal commitment, perceived connectedness and emotional involvement a person has with a team (Stevens et al., 2012; Wann & Schrader, 2000). Fans feel deeply connected with a team and view being a fan as a fundamental part of their identity. Another important factor is sports-related knowledge and the extent to which fans engage with media channels to collect information. This is conceptualized as *following sport* (Stevens et al., 2012). *Involvement* in the context of sports reflects the extent to which consumers perceive sports as a central and meaningful part of their lives, with a strong sense of engagement and importance. Highly involved fans actively seek information about the team and sports and engage in discussions with others about it.

The findings of the study indicate that fan identification, following sport and involvement positively influence fan loyalty (Stevens et al., 2012). Following sports keeps fans informed but also strengthens their identification with the team. High identification in turn is a strong indicator for loyalty. Involvement plays a mediating role in the effect of following sport on loyalty. Involvement also has a positive, but weaker, effect on loyalty. This model can be used to understand the strengths of F1 and the drivers behind their strong fanbase. Alternatively, it can be used to identify why FE has not achieved the same level of popularity. This model is useful for examining areas where FE falls short in building brand loyalty and why F1 has succeeded.

Figure 1. Fan loyalty model (Stevens et al., 2012)



Corporate brand identity matrix

One major framework will be used: the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM). In this section, the relevant concept to know about the framework and why it can be useful in this article will be explained.

The CBIM finds its origin by consolidating, comparing and using the various available literature and frameworks that already exist (Urde, 2013). It is composed of 9 elements on a matrix of 3x3. Each of these elements are interrelated with each other. The CBIM is used to better understand, define and align the brand identity.

The Elements of the CBIM

First at the bottom of the matrix are the internal elements. They come from the enterprise and their values. They are composed of the mission & vision, culture and competences. The *mission* is related to the core purpose and motivation of the company. The *vision* goes further than the mission; it is a future direction that the company is inspired by to keep moving forward. The *culture* is the organization's values, attitudes, beliefs and it is the way of working and behaving. Lastly, the *competences* represent the company's core capabilities and processes that enable the

company to gain a sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors (Urde, 2013).

Next are the internal-external elements, which are composed of the expression, core promise and core values, and personality. The *expression* part of the matrix focuses on the tangible and intangible aspects of communication and identification. It represents how the company communicates verbally and visually. The *promises* and *core values* are the bridge that links every element of the matrix together. The brand core represents the core value that will support and set direction a promise. Lastly, *personality* refers to the characteristics and qualities that shape the character of the brand (Urde, 2013).

Lastly, the external elements are related to how the brand wishes to be seen externally. The value proposition refers to the benefits a company is offering to its customers while the relationship illustrates the organization's attitude and how it acts toward building brand relationships. The last element of the matrix, the position refers to how the corporation wants to be seen in the consumer's mind. (Urde, 2013)

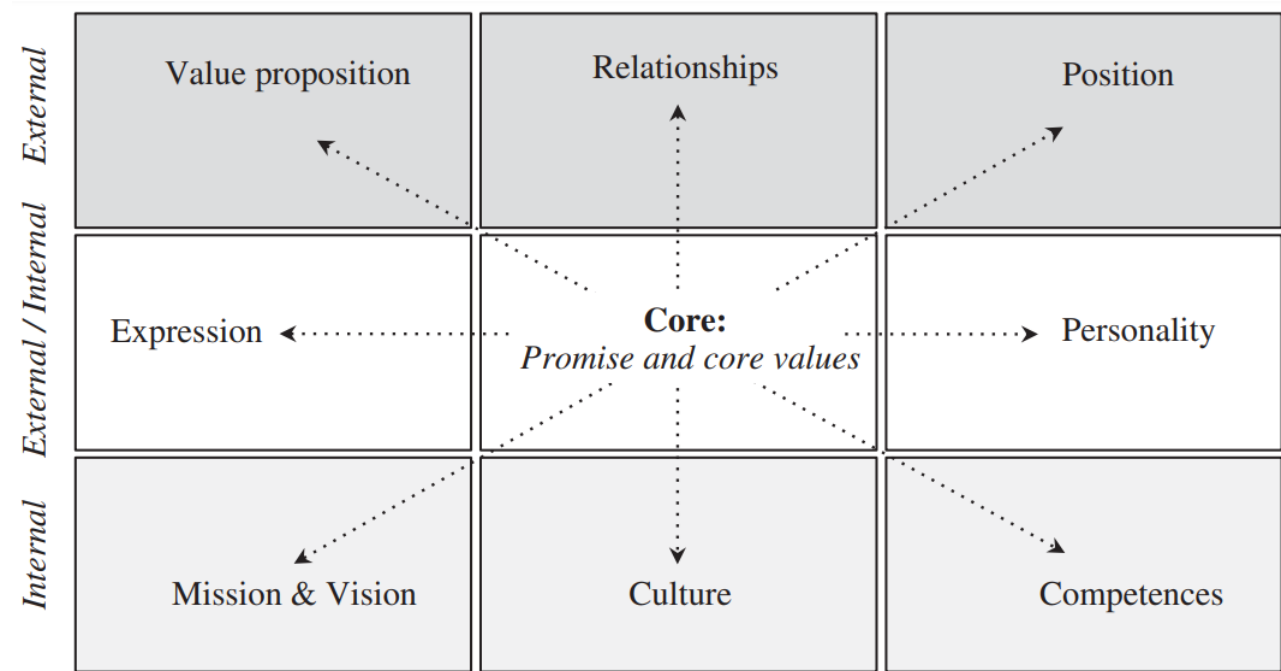
As stated before, each of these elements are interdependent with each other, especially the core. Each of the elements, internal and external, has to be aligned, coherent and

cohesive with the brand core in order to achieve a robust corporate brand identity. (Urde, 2013).

Now that the framework has been explained, what is its relevance in this paper? The goal is to use the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix on F1 and FE. F1 has had time to establish itself and develop given its rich history. Recently, it has even been subject to a complete marketing shift towards a more fan-based

approach (Axelsson & Reinholdsson, 2022). By establishing the matrix for the two industries, the aim is to discover insights into how Formula E can strengthen its brand management, ensuring consistency in delivering its brand offer.

Figure 2. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013)



Methodology

This paper delves deeper into the factors behind the success of F1 and the barriers that have hindered FE's success. A qualitative method was chosen to fulfill the purpose as qualitative methods are suitable for a more in-depth examination of a situation or preferences (Bazen et al., 2021). It is useful to answer more complex and open-ended questions such as how and why. This method allows for a thorough exploration of the

factors, contexts and nuances involved in these motorsports.

A case study is a method that involves an in-depth analysis of specific situations of a phenomenon in a social context (Meyer, 2001). Data is collected through various sources; in this case through analysing literature, news articles and social media content. Case studies can either use single or multiple cases (Meyer, 2001). A multiple case study was chosen as it allows the examination

of a phenomenon across various contexts (Yin, 1984). The case of F1 and FE will be analysed and compared to gain a more comprehensive understanding of certain attributes of both motorsports and the factors behind the success of the brand or the lack of it. Next to analysing F1 and FE, the case of American football vs. flag football will be introduced. The popularity divide between these variations of the same sport can be used to identify similar dynamics between F1 and FE. By examining why one version of a sport

Cases

Formula 1

Formula 1 has a long history and is one of the most known, and iconic motorsports. F1 has evolved many times since its birth, not only in terms of regulation but also in the car's technological capabilities. Its rich history along with its iconic races helped build its strong brand heritage.

Success Factors of Formula 1

(1) Technological innovations

One of the main aspects of Formula 1 since its inception has been the constant attention to technological innovation and technological prowess. The sport has been at the forefront of developing cutting-edge racing technology, which has not only improved the safety of the drivers but also enhanced the overall racing experience. The research conducted by Schneiders & Rocha (2022) highlights the importance of innovation in Formula 1, emphasizing how it attracts fans and sponsors alike. However, innovation that gives one team a competitive advantage and renders the race imbalanced, is something F1 managers have to be wary of as it decreases fan commitment.

(2) Global appeal

Formula 1 can be regarded as a brand, and its beginnings in 1950 marked the start of its globalization. Similar to sports like football or

garners more popularity than another, commonalities, patterns and factors that influence the success and consumer adoption of a sport may be discovered. These insights may be translated to the context of motorsports. The concepts introduced in the literature study will be used to guide the analysis of the cases.

the Olympic Games, one of the notable factors of Formula 1 is the fact that it manages to bring together fans from many different backgrounds under the same team. Everyone can feel included, partly thanks to the fact that there are Grands Prix on 5 of the 7 continents. These factors enable F1 to reach and engage with a wide range of different audiences.

(3) A Sensory Experience

Formula 1 is not simply a car race. It is a set of sensory elements that capture the spectator's full attention. The sensory experience is multidimensional. The sound of the engines roaring and vibrating can be felt throughout the fans' bodies. The spectacular speed of the cars is what gets the adrenaline flowing. The bright colors of the different teams' cars captivate the fans' eyes. The smell of rubber and petrol in the air adds an olfactory dimension to the race. On top of all that, the races are often held in breathtaking locations.

The culmination of these elements creates an emotional atmosphere for each fan, as they are no longer watching a car race, but a sensory spectacle.

(4) Iconic drivers and teams

The sport's success does not rest solely on the car and its technology. It is also down to the charisma and skill of its drivers, as well as the heritage and history behind each team. Over the years, F1 has nurtured many legendary

drivers through their achievements such as Michael Schumacher, Ayrton Senna, and Lewis Hamilton. Additionally, teams like Ferrari, Mercedes, and Red Bull Racing have left an indelible mark on the sport's history.

(5) Marketing

Although Formula 1 has always been very popular, its impact on the fans was in decline from 2008 to 2017 (Statista, 2023). Research by Axelsson & Reinholdsson (2022) explains that the F1 management team remained focused on the old media, and their original demographic instead of putting more emphasis on digital media. It was only in 2017 when Liberty Media bought Formula 1

Brand loyalty in F1

Motorsport fans, and F1 fans in particular, represent some of the most highly identified and passionate sports fans (National Motorsport Academy, n.d.). This translates to high levels of engagement such as TV subscriptions to watch the races, following social media, live attendance and purchasing merchandise. F1 has effectively placed the drivers at the core of their strategy, in order to generate human interest stories and keep fans engaged, informed and involved (National Motorsport Academy, n.d.). F1 drivers are actively using social media platforms to connect with their fans. Through regular updates, behind-the-scenes footage, and sharing personal moments, they foster a sense of closeness and relatability with their fans. It's not about just sharing their big wins, but also including the audience in their daily routines, and their lifestyle. Their engaging content makes their fans feel like they are part of the driver's journey and share their achievements with them. Next to leveraging

Formula 1's CBIM

At its core, Formula 1 offers thrilling and emotionally charged racing, delivering an entertaining experience with cutting-edge racing cars that push the boundaries of

that the gears started turning in the direction of change. Since the takeover, the number of channels available for fans to get more involved in the sport has increased. Their strategy to attract a younger audience has been to create short posts on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, to create emotional links between drivers and fans. Another example of this is the Netflix series 'Drive to Survive', which has bridged the gap between fans and drivers (Aditya, 2021; Seymour, 2023). Liberty Media has understood the difference between a consumer and a fan very well: passion. In the end, this is what drives sales.

social media platforms, F1 drivers are good at cultivating and growing their media presence. They often appear in interviews and articles for non-sports publications such as Vanity Fair and Time (Heath et al., 2022). They make vlogs, do live Q&A sessions, and play popular games like the 'never have I ever challenge' in their YouTube videos. This helps expand their reach beyond a sports audience and attracts a different segment that might initially not be interested in motorsports. The constant stream of diverse, engaging content, makes it easy for fans to seek information, and share among their social circle. It broadens engagement to the community and not just the consumer. Moreover, the Netflix documentary shows the behind the scenes of the teams and drivers and shows a more human side of the sport as it can sometimes appear as mechanical and impersonal (Yeomans, 2021). It fosters a stronger emotional connection between fans and the sport.

technology and speed. F1's relationships aim for long-term partnerships.

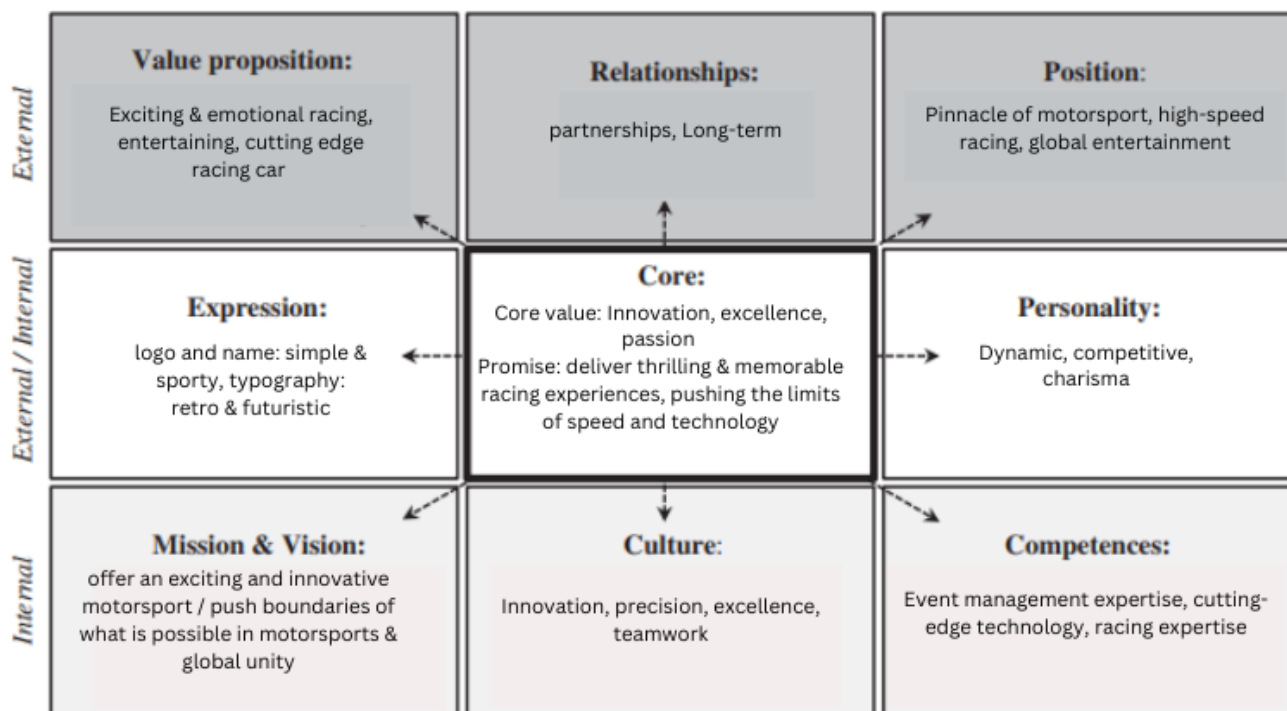
The brand's expression combines simplicity and sportiness in its logo and name while incorporating typography that blends retro and futuristic designs, symbolizing both its

rich history and its constant pursuit of innovation. Formula 1's brand core is founded on values such as innovation, excellence, and passion. It promises to deliver thrilling and memorable racing experiences while continually pushing the limits of speed and technology. The brand's personality is dynamic, competitive, and charismatic.

The brand mission and vision of Formula 1 is to be the world's most exciting and innovative

motorsport by consistently pushing the boundaries. The corporate culture within Formula 1 is defined by innovation, precision, excellence, and teamwork. Formula 1 excels in event management expertise, cutting-edge technology car related, and possesses a deep understanding of racing at the highest level. These competitions solidify its position as the global standard in motorsport.

Figure 3. CBIM applied to Formula 1



Formula E

Formula E saw its start in 2014 with its first race in Beijing. Formula E is exclusive to electric vehicles, as opposed to the F1 race cars that run on fuel. What is distinctive about Formula E is its capacity to run races in the streets of well-known cities and its willingness to push the boundaries of sustainability in racing cars and across the entire spectrum of electric mobility (Fia Formula E, n.d.).

Lack of brand loyalty in FE

In contrast with F1, FE has struggled to attain a similar level of loyalty. One problem FE has is a lack of visibility and exposure, indicating a lack of involvement and following sports. FE races are not consistently broadcast on TV channels, which hinders fans' ability to follow the races (Southwell, 2022). Motorsport fans often turn to YouTube to watch the races or highlights from the races. Yet, the full races from before 2022 were removed from their

Youtube channel. Consistency and accessibility are paramount in keeping fans engaged, so creating barriers to viewing the content may discourage them from actively following the sport (Southwell, 2022).

Since 2020, the breaks between seasons lasted more than 6 months which proved problematic (Southwell, 2022). Fans need regular interaction with the sport but when FE disappears for extended periods, fans will turn their attention elsewhere. Another issue is when FE events sometimes overlap with F1 races, for example, the Rome Eprix taking place while F1 was in Australia. The different time zones are not favorable, but also fans

Formula E's CBIM

Formula E's corporate brand identity is a dynamic and compelling representation of its mission to revolutionize motorsport. With a clear value proposition focused on delivering thrilling racing experiences while promoting sustainability, innovation, and clean energy, Formula E stands at the forefront of sustainable motorsport.

Formula E has built strong relationships with companies aiming to promote sustainable technology through partnerships (Racing for Better Futures - FE Sustainability Report Season 8, 2022). Their fan base primarily consists of environmentally-conscious millennials and Gen Z enthusiasts (Standaert & Jarvenpaa, 2016; *Introducing the Offset Formula E's New Influencer Collective*, 2021), forging a deep and meaningful connection with their audience.

Positioned as a leader in sustainable motorsport, Formula E's identity is a testament to their commitment to driving environmental progress through exciting races. The brand's expression is characterized by a logo that symbolizes collaboration and innovation, and typography that exudes

will prioritize the more established F1 races when timings coincide. FE drivers are often ex-F1 or -F2 drivers who were less successful (Raymond, 2023). While in theory, it could be a good strategy to benefit from the visibility that ex-F1 drivers bring, it creates a perception that the series lacks talent and quality which can deter fans from becoming more involved with the sport. Having former F1 drivers also leads to more comparison between the two motorsports. Fans who strongly identify with F1 may view FE as an inferior alternative which can weaken their identification with FE.

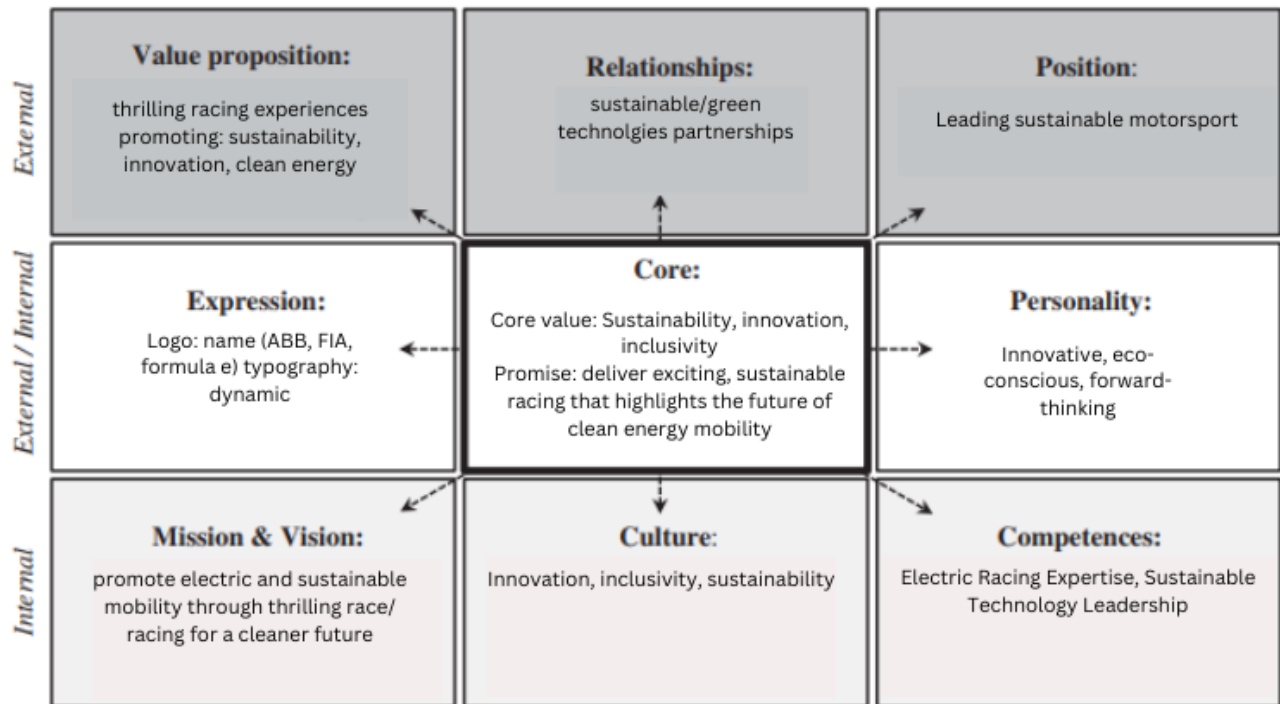
energy and forward momentum (*Formula E revitalises brand identity ahead of the debut of the ground-breaking Gen3 race car*, 2022).

At the heart of their brand core lie elements of sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity, underpinning the excitement of sustainable racing that showcases the future of clean energy mobility. The personality of Formula E is best described as innovative, eco-conscious, and forward-thinking.

Their mission and vision are laser-focused on promoting electric and sustainable mobility through thrilling races that inspire a cleaner future. The corporate culture within Formula E is deeply rooted in innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, shaping every aspect of the organization.

Formula E's competences are highlighted by their expertise in electric racing and their leadership in sustainable technology. This comprehensive corporate brand identity paints a vivid picture of Formula E's commitment to revolutionize the motorsport industry while championing sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity.

Figure 4. CBIM applied to Formula E



American Football vs. Flag Football

American football and flag football are variations of the same sport, primarily differing in the level of physical contact involved. While American football is characterized by its full-contact nature, with players tackling to stop the opposing team, flag football is a non-contact version, where players remove a flag or flag belt from the ball carrier to end a down. This modification significantly reduces the risk of injuries and allows a wider demographic to engage in the sport, making it a more inclusive and accessible option (*Understanding the Differences in Rules, 2020*). This aspect of inclusivity and reduced physicality parallels the contrasting approaches of Formula 1 and Formula E, with Formula 1 emphasizing high-speed, combustion engine-powered racing, and Formula E focusing on sustainable, electric-powered racing. The comparison between American football and flag football, therefore, provides insight into how varying levels of intensity and accessibility can shape the overall appeal and

sustainability of a sport, similar to the contrasting principles between Formula 1 and Formula E in the realm of motorsports.

Success Factors In Football

Ultimately, there is a reason why American football is perceived as the superior sport when compared to its counterpart. Success factors in American football include the physical prowess of the players, strategic gameplay, team coordination, and a strong emphasis on aggressive, high-impact tactics. These elements contribute to the sport's popularity, fostering a culture of intense competition and athleticism. However, the shift to flag football is driven by the need for a safer and more inclusive alternative (Bachman, 2015). Flag football offers a reduced risk of injuries, making it accessible to a wider demographic, including children and individuals - or parents - who might be deterred by the high-impact nature of American football. Overall, the importance of inclusivity, safety and the alternative of a more sustainable and community-oriented sporting environment cannot be underscored.

Nevertheless, American football has garnered such popularity but it begs the question, why does flag football fall short in this regard?

On one hand, there's a reason why American football is nicknamed the 'traditional counterpart' when comparing the two sports. It has a long-standing history within the sports industry, and its longevity has given them the most important brand-building aspect of all - *time*. Speaking strictly about the NFL, (National Football League), the first-ever game was played back in November 1869, starting it all (Steinsworth, 2022).

Overall, the factors that truly show a disparity between both Formula 1 and Formula E as well as American football and flag football, have been narrowed down to three: heritage/traditional history, media involvement, and danger levels.

Tradition

It all boils down to *time*. Both Formula 1 and American football are steeped in tradition due to their long history in the sport. Formula 1's decades-long legacy has fostered a powerful connection with fans worldwide, encompassing iconic races, legendary drivers, and historic rivalries that transcend generations. This rich heritage serves as a cornerstone of its branding, evoking a sense of prestige and time-honored excellence. Conversely, Formula E, a newer series, is navigating the process of establishing its brand identity and cultivating comparable emotional resonance and fan loyalty. While making strides in promoting sustainable technology, Formula E faces the ongoing challenge of creating a legacy that can rival the profound cultural impact of Formula 1's long-standing tradition.

From a branding perspective, American football's entrenched legacy within American sports culture has solidified its position as a national pastime, embodying tradition, competitiveness, and resilience. This rich heritage, characterized by historical

narratives, celebrated rivalries, and legendary players, has fostered an enduring brand identity, creating a strong emotional connection with fans across generations. In contrast, flag football, a derivative of American football, lacks the same historical depth and cultural heritage. While sharing gameplay similarities, its recent introduction and limited historical context position it as a more recreational and inclusive alternative, catering to a diverse and inclusive audience, but with a diminished ability to evoke a comparable level of cultural significance and emotional attachment.

Media Involvement

Football is largely in the media, and the trajectory doesn't show any signs of stopping. There have been social media teams created purely to boost team accounts through content creation featuring the roster of their players. This aids them with their fan base because social media is giving them a behind the scenes look into the sport, entertainment, and a level of access that is not normally seen. This is helpful to their brand-building efforts, and establishing connections between the teams and their viewers (Voth, 2023). The fact that the games are televised, and the level of advertising that is poured into the sport plays a significant role in promoting American football and its exposure both domestically and internationally (Weissbrot, 2022).

In addition, the NFL recently witnessed a huge jump due to the interconnection of pop music with their sport. The media plays a huge role in the fanbase, as well as the engagement with the sport. It was reported that when Taylor Swift recently showed up to a Chiefs game, her presence was a factor in boosting ratings and delivering the sport a higher viewership within the female demographic (Bell, 2023). Compared to flag football, there is hardly media coverage, let alone celebrity status that is associated with it.

With media attention come lucrative sponsorship deals as well. Unfortunately for

Formula E, because of their niche in sustainability, it eliminates some of the biggest sponsors that currently sponsor the F1 circuit/teams. Gas companies like Shell, Aramco, and more simply cannot align themselves with sustainable racing, because of the messaging misalignment. While Formula 1 can target practically any sector, there are therefore certain limitations that prevent Formula E's associations with specific sponsors (*F1 Partners*, 2023).

Danger Levels

With each sport, there is a level of physicality that one would expect as a spectator, however, there are certain sports that increase the intensity. With football, with all the tackles and plays that involve extreme displays of athleticism, it is evident that American football has a higher degree of intensity than flag football where there are smaller stakes. Exploring it from an injury lens, in the NFL, players suffered roughly 149 concussions in the 2022 season. It is across 271 games throughout, meaning there is a chance for players to earn a concussion at least once per game (Seifert, 2023). On the other side of the spectrum, "among 269 flag players, 3 concussions were diagnosed" (*Flag Football FAQ*, 2020). While head impacts are commonly seen in flag football, concussions are a rare occurrence because the players simply do not play at such an intense level (*Flag Football FAQ*, 2020). From an audience standpoint, with an increased level of danger, they are likely to watch more because of the adrenaline it brings (Ferry, 2022). Hence where the higher media attention and bigger fan bases are justified.

Formula E cars may be fast, but the cars driven by the drivers in F1 are definitely faster. An F1 car runs at around 230 mph whereas an FE car runs at roughly 30 mph slower (*Formula 1 versus Formula E*, 2023). Therefore, in extreme weather conditions during races, it's not a far assumption to see

how F1 has a higher danger element, which is yet another attractor for their spectators.

Moreover, from a noise level, F1 cars are known to be the noisiest cars on the tracks, and it's what captures the attention of the spectators, because it's part of the experience. However, it can pose a serious danger to the spectators, the drivers, and the workers working in the garages. According to scientific journals, noise levels can go up as high as "140 dB, enough to cause permanent hearing loss," meaning that everyone is affected simply by going to a race (Dolder et al., 2013). It is the noisiest out of all the motorsports in the racing industry, and when compared to Formula E, it is definitely the safest option to attend as a spectator. However, when previously discussing where spectators straddle the line of health, and getting the adrenaline despite adverse health effects, they tend to lean towards the latter.

Similarities Between Football & F1

F1 enjoys a similar presence in the media as American football. In fact, with its growing television audience, it has reached new heights, as seen from the Netflix documentary, as well as its new agreements with ESPN. They've overtaken their 2021 viewership record, with a 28% increase across US networks for 2022 per race (Brown, 2023). Formula 1 is on ESPN - a network that is known industry-wide - while Formula E is on Channel 4, showing how the numbers are definitely going to be higher when a more well-known network shows coverage to their audience (Notizie, 2022).

Furthermore, F1 and American football both have rich histories, making them the preferable sport to watch out from their counterparts, as well as the fact that their fan base is built in at this point.

Discussion

It's clear that both F1 and FE have distinct brand identities and value propositions. F1 has a long history and focuses on the excitement and high-speed entertainment of motorsport. In contrast, FE is newer and focuses on sustainability, innovation, and clean energy, targeting a younger and more environmentally conscious audience.

To manage its brand effectively, Formula E should continue to emphasize its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity in order to build brand awareness. It should nurture its green technology partnerships and maintain a strong focus on the younger audience. Formula E's consistent brand management should revolve around being a leader in sustainable motorsport, and its competences should continually showcase its expertise in electric racing and sustainable technologies.

How Can Formula E Improve

Formula E has consistently demonstrated a commitment to driving positive change in the world of motorsports, positioning itself as a leading platform for promoting sustainable mobility and technological advancement in the context of electric racing. It has done so by championing sustainable practices whilst growing its fan base with live, on-demand, and global coverage that allows the love for motorsport to be shared across borders. Further, it has succeeded in gaining love from its fans and growing whilst maintaining its standard of net zero emissions since 2020 (*Seven Ways Formula E has always been Accelerating Change*, 2021). However, whilst the Formula E division is definitely gaining traction amongst racing enthusiasts, it simply does not hold the same brand heritage as its counterpart, Formula 1. One has been on the circuit and in people's hearts since the early 1900s, whereas the more sustainable version of Formula E was only conceptualized in 2011, with the first race being held three years later in 2014 (Baer, 2018). It's a newer, more

sustainable version of the sport, and while it is making strides from a sustainability perspective, their history and media coverage has simply not gotten them anywhere near the type of attention Formula 1 gets.

This begs the question - what can Formula E do from a branding perspective to grow, and garner more attention from the already large, built-in fan base from Formula 1?

Innovation & Technological Advancements

Continuously investing in research and development will go a long way to improving electric vehicle technology. Encourage teams and manufacturers to push the boundaries of innovation in battery efficiency, power management, and overall vehicle performance. Foster an environment that promotes competition not just on the track but also in technological advancements. F1 cars are currently touted as the faster, and more powerful cars on the track, as well as the lightest when comparing weights with drivers inside. The latest Gen3 vehicle on the electric circuit can reach top speeds of 200 mph whereas the gas-guzzler in F1 has a speed of 230 mph (*Formula 1 versus Formula E*, 2023).

Global Expansion & Partnerships

Actively seek opportunities for global expansion by organizing races in key international markets to attract a diverse fan base. Forging strategic partnerships with leading automotive manufacturers, technology companies, and sustainable energy providers to not only secure financial backing but also demonstrate the relevance and significance of electric vehicle technology in the broader context of sustainable mobility and environmental conservation.

Sustainable Practices and Environmental Advocacy

Their goal should to emphasize their competitive advantage. They can capitalize on the importance of sustainability and

environmental conservation, by capitalizing on their eco-friendly practices across all aspects of the sport. According to their Sustainability Report, they have already reduced their carbon footprint by 24% across three seasons simply by adapting certain managerial elements such as reducing staff travel, freight, and more (*Racing for Better Futures*, 2022).

Collaborating with environmental organizations to raise awareness about the benefits of electric vehicles and the role of clean energy in combating climate change will bring more attention to their cause and brand. Additionally, by encouraging teams/stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices in their operations, they can promote green initiatives within host cities as well.

Impact Of Sustainable Messaging In Brands

Sustainability has emerged as a powerful driver of brand messaging, significantly impacting how companies communicate their values, ethos, and commitments to a global audience. Embracing sustainability not only aligns brands with the growing global consciousness around environmental and social responsibility but also enhances their reputation as ethical and forward-thinking entities. By integrating sustainability into their brand messaging, companies can cultivate a positive brand image, fostering trust and loyalty among consumers who prioritize ethical and eco-conscious practices. Demonstrating a genuine commitment to sustainable initiatives can also differentiate brands from competitors, providing a unique selling proposition that resonates with environmentally conscious consumers. Moreover, sustainability-focused brand messaging can effectively communicate a brand's long-term vision and dedication to creating a positive impact, thereby fostering deeper connections with stakeholders, fostering a sense of purpose, and contributing to the establishment of a strong and enduring brand identity.

A study found that integrating sustainability within corporate communications is a powerful tool that has now been coined as 'green marketing' (Holder 2023). Sustainability seemingly became a 'buzzword' where it has an "amplifying effect" on the audience, and invokes feelings for the brand. What's more impressive is how "sustainability claims in advertising messaging significantly expand brand reach by between 24 and 33 percentage points by bringing in new consumers" (Holder, 2023). Applying this statistic to Formula E means they are on the right track to garnering more brand visibility and reach by highlighting their sustainable focus in the sport because the tide is turning.

The concept ultimately rests on the idea that these 'green messages' will improve consumer perception of the brand, and *that perception* is the tipping point for brand loyalty, and awareness for the consumer (Danciu, 2015). From a corporate communications perspective, Formula E has the right tools in its arsenal to successfully attract perception towards the sport, it's just a matter of time.

Conclusion

This paper explored the dynamics between Formula 1 and Formula E and delved into the factors that played a role in their differing levels of success. Formula 1's rich history contributes to its strong brand identity while Formula E is still in the process of establishing itself. Both Formula 1 and Formula E represent two distinct, yet complementary facts of the evolving motorsports landscape, each leaving its own mark to the global narrative of automotive innovation and sustainability. Formula 1's enduring legacy in the form of high-speed racing, iconic drivers and track continues to captivate audiences around the globe and inspire passion for the sport. However, Formula E emerged as the trailblazer in

sustainable racing by redefining the idea of environmentally-conscious mobility while showcasing the full power and potential of EVs to be competitive. Together, the two series ultimately embody the duality of modern racing, balancing speed with a commitment to a more environmentally conscious future for the automotive industry at large. As it continues to evolve, both F1 and FE have earned their spots as the enduring spirits of innovation, competition and relentless pursuit of excellence both on and off the track.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This paper makes significant contributions by exploring the intersection of sustainability and brand messaging in a contemporary business context, and narrowing down on the phenomenon of similar sports that have made similar shifts. It delves into the underlying mechanisms to shine a light on consumer behavior, brand heritage and brand loyalty. By synthesizing literature, this paper provides a unique theory on how brands can evolve with the times. It also explores a deeper understanding of the cultural, technological and emotional shifts in the dynamic evolution of motorsports. The paper highlights the complexities associated with reconciling the legacy of F1's high-speed, gas-guzzler engine-driven heritage, with the progressive model FE employs that focuses on sustainability at its core. Overall, the paper underscores the valuable perspectives on the transformative nature and potential of sustainable racing initiatives and their broader implications for the future of the automotive industry.

This paper offers practical implications for Formula E, as they are seeking to leverage sustainability as a cornerstone of their brand messaging. There's valuable guidance on effectively integrating sustainability messaging into their branding initiatives, as well as emphasizing the importance of authentic and transparent communication for brand building. This aids in their quest to drive and build upon consumer trust and loyalty. The managerial insights derived from this paper will facilitate a deeper understanding of the strategies and approaches that can be adopted when comparing a shift in an industry where one area of the business has focused on sustainable operations.

Limitations and future research

The research has certain limitations, notably relying on secondary data which may restrict the depth of analysis. To address this, the recommendation is to incorporate primary data collection through surveys and interviews with motorsport fans, industry professionals, and athletes for a more comprehensive understanding. Moreover, as the focus was almost exclusively on Formula 1 and Formula E, the findings might not apply universally to more conventional sports. Future research could encompass a broader range of sports to explore factors influencing sports popularity and examine brand sustainability strategies that can adapt to evolving business dynamics.

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