

Who Owns The Brand?

The active role of stakeholders in the strategic brand management of a professional football club

– An identity-based brand gap analysis featuring Brøndby IF



Master's thesis

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Executive summary

Sport management research increasingly recognizes the importance and impact of stakeholders on the strategic management of sports organizations. In light of increasing sports commercialization, football clubs are constantly challenged and held accountable by both internal and external stakeholders, who can be vociferous in claiming ownership of the brand and expressing their opinions about the club, its organizational purpose, and performance. Those involved in corporate branding recognize that active interaction with stakeholders is crucial when managing, negotiating, and co-creating a club's brand identity and image.

Combining insights from both brand- and stakeholder management, this Master's thesis investigates the role of stakeholders in the strategic brand management of a professional football club. Danish Superliga's Brøndby IF (BIF) is chosen as a single cross-sectional case study. Based on nine in-depth interviews with key representatives within BIF's stakeholder network, thematic network analysis is conducted to construct and analyze pertinent components of BIF's brand identity and image. Supplementing the qualitative analysis, findings from factor-analytic personality research are applied to the case of BIF. Based on a quantitative stakeholder survey ($N = 51$), a brand personality scale for BIF is generated. We interpret the resulting five-factor solution of BIF's brand personality as follows: *Loyal Family*, *Fierce Alternativism*, *Civilized Narcissism*, *Honorable Obedience*, and *Honest Work*.

The study finds that brand management is largely beyond the club's direct control and outside the club's sphere of influence. With multiple internal and external stakeholders involved in shaping the club's brand identity and image, eight strategic brand tensions are identified. Caused by differing stakeholder interests, inter-stakeholder power asymmetries, as well as an imbalance of dependencies, these tensions result in a number of brand consistency gaps, disadvantageous to BIF's internal brand management function. The study concludes by proposing the *TACTIC-Model of Pro-Active Brandholder Engagement*, identifying six "red flags" for BIF to consider when actively involving stakeholders in the process of brand management: Tolerance, Alignment, Communication, Transparency, Internalization, as well as Consistency and Continuity. Implications and limitations of the findings are discussed in context of the professional sports club setting.

Keywords: Identity-based brand management, brand identity, brand image, brand personality, stakeholder management, gap analysis, factor analysis, thematic analysis, strategic tensions, Brøndby IF, brandholder

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¹ Two USB memory sticks including all appendices (i.e. SPSS outputs, thematic networks, other attachments) and interview transcripts was submitted alongside this thesis

1. Introduction

In light of “researching” for our Master’s thesis, of course we made sure to attend a Brøndby IF (hereinafter BIF) match. On April 17, 2017, we witnessed BIF make headlines around the world for the actions of a few of their particularly enthusiastic supporters. During a local derby match between Brøndby IF and FC Copenhagen (hereinafter FCK), four dead rats were thrown onto the field during a corner kick in the second half of the game when the visiting rivals were leading 1 : 0. Within minutes of the game’s conclusion, news footage had already circulated the internet, showing images of dead rats being carried away in front of the *Carlsberg* sponsor logo. With all the attention, officials within BIF were forced to respond to this turn of events: “We were, and still are, annoyed that the focus for the derby was directed against the few who may not be able to behave decently and not at the actual match” (TV2 Sport, 2017) This incident shows just how influential a group of individuals can be in diverting the football narrative and how quickly the actions of the few can cast shadows over an entire organization.

Despite this seemingly irrelevant incident above, BIF’s “Rat-gate” highlights the involvement and influence that different internal and external stakeholder groups have on a club’s brand image. Today’s football clubs therefore exist in a complex environment, in which multiple stakeholder groups make club management a difficult practice (Senaux, 2008; Gammelsæter, 2013), “because each stakeholder holds a set of expectations on how for club [management] to handle the various challenges a club faces during the season” (Nissen, 2017, p. 533) and beyond. Whether it is TV stations purchasing the broadcasting rights, news outlets interested in exclusive stories, fans spending money on tickets and merchandise to offer their support, sponsors wanting to associate with the club brand, or the municipality providing their share of infrastructure, a football club is very dependent on a series of influential stakeholders surrounding it – not least financially (Nissen, 2017; Gammelsæter, 2010).

This being said, literature on brand management suggests that an organization’s stakeholders have an enormous influence on the core identity of the organization’s brand as well as how it’s perceived via the brand’s image (Burmman, Halaszovich, & Hemmann, 2012). Just like the professional football experience being a product of co-creation between various stakeholders (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010; Mehus, 2010, Mehus, 2005, King, 2002, Guttman, 1986), this brand conceptualization builds on the idea that brand identity and image are relational constructs that can only be understood in interaction with others (Eder, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Therefore, the football industry is interesting in the sense that, despite increased commercialization, clubs can be seen as “cultural institutions with fans, owners, and even investors often deeply engaged in the (sporting) welfare of their clubs” (Storm, 2011, p. 738). Reinforced by increasing national and global media coverage (Boyle & Haynes, 2004), this makes professional football clubs attractive to sponsors and external investors, who are willing to associate with club values and it’s constituents. Linked to commercialization, however, the move of sport towards entertainment is also

regarded as a negative development by many (Mehus, 2010), bringing in new middle-class consumers and marginalizing the traditional and “real” fans (King, 1997). In light of that, debate has gone on for decades as to what the primary objective of the professional team sports club (PTSC) should be: “For the most part, European scholars seem to continue to stress utility (i.e. winning) optimization as the main goal of the PTSCs, and scholars from the American tradition tend to weight the profit maximization goal” (p. 737).

The extent of commercialization today has led to the European football market to generate revenues in excess of 22 billion Euros during the 2015/16 season, and is expected to reach 25 billion Euros in revenue during the 2016/17 season (Boor et. al., 2016). Accordingly, brand management and branding must be considered integral facets of the sporting industry (Byers, 2013). Particularly with regards to team sports, branding represents one of the most recent and dynamic developments within the marketing discipline (Richelieu, Pawloswski, & Breuer, 2011). Furthermore, the economic importance of club branding has been documented by the empirical studies of Gladden and Milne (1999) and Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt (2004). Case in point, a recent study by *Brand Finance* (2016) finds that the top five most valuable football club brands to date are Manchester United (USD 1,170 million), Real Madrid (USD 1.148 billion), FC Barcelona (USD 993 million), Manchester City (USD 905 million) and Bayern Munich (USD 867 million)². Despite such staggering numbers, studies in sports management regularly indicate a range of deficits in day-to-day professional club brand management, especially in smaller and less commercialized leagues (Schilhaneck, 2008) such as the Danish *Superliga*³ (Storm, 2011). Arguably, one of the strongest driving forces in the commercialization of football clubs has been television (Söderman, 2013). Money generated from television rights creates massive incentives to perform on the world’s highest stages, thus in order to remain competitive both on- and off-pitch, clubs need to extend their managerial grip on the world (van Uden, 2005). In short: “Many more than just eleven players prepare for what happens on the field” (Söderman, 2013, 2013).

Recognizing stakeholders’ important role and differing interests in professional football, exactly how the interplay between internal and external stakeholders affects identity-based brand management in the context of professional football clubs, has not yet been examined. With this research gap in mind, this Master’s thesis aims at shedding light on the important role that stakeholders have in the corporate brand management of a professional football club. Picking Danish Superliga’s Brøndby IF as a case, it is the purpose of this thesis to explore the club’s brand identity and image in context of it’s specific internal and external stakeholder network.

² The brand values are calculated using the so-called *Royalty Relief Method*, determining the value a company would be willing to pay to license its brand as if it did not own it (Brand Finance, 2016). This approach involves estimating the future revenue attributable to a brand and calculating a royalty rate that would be charged for the use of the brand.

³ Alka Superliga is the current highest football league in Denmark

As a backdrop to our investigation, in a first step the case of Brøndby IF is introduced (**Chapter 2**). This is followed by a presentation of the relevant literature (**Chapter 3**); serving as a theoretical foundation of our analysis, the literature review outlines central academic concepts from both brand- and stakeholder management in the context of a professional sports club setting. Based on that, **Chapter 4** presents our problem statement, research objective, as well as guiding research questions. Thereafter, the methodology section in **Chapter 5** briefly outlines the underlying research philosophy, strategy, and design. The following chapter explains the process of data collection and methods of analysis used in this thesis (**Chapter 6**). For the sake of clarity, certain analysis procedures are elaborated upon via their practical application in specific context of our actual findings. Due to the pragmatic nature of our research design, and guided by the succession of our research questions, the presentation of results in **Chapter 7** is accompanied by necessary levels of interpretation and discussion of our findings. Concluding remarks, summarize the key findings of this thesis in light of our research question (**Chapter 8**). The thesis concludes by briefly presenting relevant implications (both practical and theoretical), limitations, as well as suggestions for further research (**Chapter 9**).

Instant Replay: Where deemed helpful, concise summaries in the form of “Instant Replays” are provided at the end of critical subsections of this thesis.

2. Supra Societatem Nemo⁴: The case of Brøndby IF

“Fælleskab⁵. We will be an even bigger community and strengthen our position as Super League's largest family of followers. We believe in dialogue, inclusion, and diversity.” (Annual report, 2016).


| Brøndby IF at a glance | |
|------------------------|---|
| Full name | Brøndbyernes Idrætsforening |
| Nickname | Drengene Fra Vestegnen (The Boys from the Western outskirts) |
| Founded | 1964 |
| Ground | Brøndby Stadium |
| Capacity | 28,000 |
| Chairman | Jesper Eigen Møller |
| Manager | Alexander Zorniger |
| League | Alka Superliga |
| Titles | Danish Championship: 10 Danish Cup: 6 Royal League: 1 |
| Kit (16/17) |  |

Table 1: Brøndby facts and figures

Source: Brøndby.com

Founded in 1964, Danish Superliga's Brøndby IF was born as a merger between two rival clubs from Brøndby West and Brøndby East – two neighboring municipalities in the south of Copenhagen. At the time, “amateurism was still the core ideal in Danish club football, even though the need for change had been debated due to the poor results of the national team and because the best talents moved to foreign clubs without compensation being paid to the Danish club” (Nissen, 2017). With the introduction of professional football in Denmark in 1978 (Storm, 2011) came the creation of *Brøndbyernes IF Fodbold A/S*. Nine years

⁴ Club motto: “No one is above the club” (Brøndby.com Facts, 2009)

⁵ Danish for “community”

later, the company was listed at the *Copenhagen Stock Exchange* as the second publicly listed football club in the world (Brøndby.com Om Brøndby IF, 2017).

In 1981, BIF secured its first promotion to the highest Danish division. From then on, the team quickly rose to fame and succeeded in becoming one of the best clubs in Denmark. Winning their first national championship in 1985, the club was subsequently able to maintain its dominating position by winning several titles during the late 1980s and early 1990s: “[...] it has been a very strong brand in terms of a football club performing very very well and really moving upwards relatively quickly compared to many of our competitors in the Superliga” [Møller, 2017, 15⁶]. Between 1985 – 2008, Brøndby IF managed to win 10 Danish championships, 6 Danish cup titles and 1 *Royal League* title⁷ (Brøndby.com Om Brøndby IF, 2017).

Their national success story also made Brøndby IF famous on the international football stage: Being very close to qualifying for the 1991 UEFA Cup final, the club participated in both the UEFA Europa League⁸ (108 games) and UEFA Champions League (48 games): “When Brøndby was successful in the 90s and early 00s it was all about beating Bayern Munich, Roma, Karlsruhe and the like” (Zorninger, 2017, 11).

Since the beginning, Brøndby IF has prioritized the development of its youth and senior players as part of their success strategy (Møller, 2017). Being one of the Danish clubs most quickly adapting to the modern times of professional football, the club has a history of bringing up a number of famous Danish football players. Most notably, Brøndby IF club legends include Peter Schmeichel (World’s Best Goalkeeper 1992), Michael Laudrup, Brian Laudrup, and Daniel Agger (Brøndby.com Om Brøndby IF, 2017). In 2002, BIF appointed their former player Michael Laudrup as their head coach. His four-years employment marked the last successful era of Brøndby IF, in which the club played offensive and attractive football, giving the team both a positive reputation and title victories. In 2006, Laudrup decided to leave Brøndby because he could not reach an agreement with the management to renew his contract (Nissen, 2017).

For Brøndby IF, the 2006/2007 season marked the beginning of a long period of trouble and crises. Firstly, the last 10 years have been dominated by disappointing sporting results. Not only have BIF not won the Danish championship since 2005, but the club has also been close to relegation on several occasions throughout recent seasons. Secondly, the period has been characterized by unstable and turbulent club management, including multiple changes at board and ownership level. In that context, until recently, Per Bjerregaard had an autocratic role in Brøndby; something, the club has been heavily criticized for both internally (Blom, 2017), and in public (Nissen, 2017): “[...] we had five to ten years of conflict between Per

⁶ Interview transcripts are cited as follows: (*Name*, 2017, *line number*) (see Interview Transcripts attached)

⁷ Abolished in 2007, the Royal League was an annual Scandinavian football tournament held between the four best teams from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark respectively.

⁸ Previously called the UEFA cup

Bjerregaard, the former director and chairman of the board, and the fans” (Blom, 2017, 152). Lastly, Brøndby IF also experienced severe financial problems during recent years. Caused, for instance, by a failed attempt to buy a conference centre, losing their main sponsor, and by severe overspending on salary-heavy players (Nissen, 2015; Rasmussen, 2009); this almost led to bankruptcy in 2013.

Prompting extraordinary organizational change since the club’s rescue in 2013, today Brøndby IF is sailing towards calmer waters again. Owning 52% of the club’s shares, with Jan Bech Andersen the club has found a strong and influential main investor. Notably, with Sune Blom, for the first time in Danish history, in 2014 a fan representative was elected to the board of directors. Currently sitting comfortably in second place of the Danish league, with the signing of German head coach Alexander Zorninger in 2016, BIF’s sporting performance also has moved back closer to the limelight. Nonetheless, the last 10 years of off-pitch diversion have clearly left their mark, not least giving rise to Brøndby’s biggest arch-rival and city neighbor FC Copenhagen:

“[...] I think the dream is still alive, which also is shown by all these spectators they still have. They [BIF] see themselves as a sleeping giant and I see them as a sleeping giant that will maybe never be totally awake again because there is another giant, FC Copenhagen, that they can never catch up with because of the geography and business behind FC Copenhagen. I don’t think they can build that up in Brøndby (Sejersbøl, 2017, 11).

At our current snapshot, Brøndby’s official corporate vision reflects a philosophy of football as a social construct, bringing people together across cultural ties and geography, and creating values and cohesion for the community (Annual report, 2016). Additionally, their vision statement praises the club’s heritage and affirms their commitment to staying true to their values “as we’ve done since 1964, and will always do” (Annual report, 2016, p. 4). Making the club a particularly interesting research object, Brøndby IF’s organization can be described as currently being in a process of transition (Zorninger, 2017). Based on six focus areas, BIF’s new *Strategy 6.4* is a path to achieve a “stable and sustainable economic foundation based on patience, honesty, and a strong community” until the year 2024 (Annual report, 2016, p. 5). These focus areas are also clearly reflected in the company’s corporate vision and mission statements (see **Appendix 1**). Pertaining to this thesis’ focus on brand- and stakeholder management:

“Our most important value is the common community. We call it Fællesskabet, and that is really the combination of most of the stakeholders. It is the fans, it is the municipality, it is the staff who work for us, it is all of the volunteers who come from the amateur department, it is the relationship between the company and the amateur department. That is what we call “Fællesskabet” and that is for us the key value” (Møller, 2017, 73).

Last not but least, despite the club's turbulent heritage, with an impressive fanbase of 250,000 (Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Bech, 2017), Brøndby IF remains by far the most popular football club in Denmark. A fact both the club and Danish media are candidly aware of: "A lot of companies would give half an arm to have the coverage that we have. We are by far leading" (Møller, 2017, 185). This being said, in terms of media coverage, BIF is the most exposed brand in Denmark; leading over global brands such as *Carlsberg*, *Mærsk*, *Lego*, *Novo Nordisk* and their rival *FC Copenhagen* (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017).

Over the years, Brøndby IF has been the object of investigation for a number of both published studies (Nissen, 2017; Jørgensen, Moritzen, & Stadtmann, 2012; Storm, 2011) and student theses (Hagman, 2013; Faghihi, 2013; Agerklint, 2010; Ries Davidsen, 2009). Of special interest for us, a 2017 study by Nissen on identity construction and brand image concludes that Brøndby IF to some extent chooses to ignore external perceptions of the club, in turn leading to increased criticism and skepticism by external stakeholder groups such as the media (i.e. *BT*). Diagnosing BIF as a case of dysfunctional organizational narcissism, Nissen's (2017) study suggests that "football directors should prioritize to construct a well-balanced identity that includes both internal and external perceptions of the club in order to stay attractive to stakeholders and secure future collaboration and funding" (Nissen, 2017, p. 533).

3. Literature Review and theoretical background

The literature review of this paper is divided into three sections: First, the issue of identity-based brand management in a professional sports setting is presented. Apart from defining central theoretical concepts, this also includes a discussion of branding in light of the specific peculiarities of the football industry. Based on that, the inherent importance of stakeholder management in professional football is discussed. At its center, this includes the introduction of relevant stakeholders in and around professional football clubs – specifically focussing on their various interests and powers. Leading towards our problem statement, the issues discussed are aggregated in a model for professional football clubs.

3.1. Brand management

As a result of constant changes in market and environmental conditions, the subject of brand management has undergone many re-orientations in the course of time (Schilhaneck, 2008). In recent years, however, the stage of development has been characterized by a strong identity orientation in the literature (Burmam et al., 2012; Schilhaneck, 2008; Kapferer, 1992; Aaker, 1996; Esch, 2003). In that regard, the model of identity-based brand management developed originally by Meffert and Burmann (1996) presents one of the most complete conceptualizations (Schilhaneck, 2008) and thus will serve as a central theoretical and analytical (see **Chapter 6**) reference framework for this Master's thesis. After discussing the issue of brand management in context of professional football, relevant components of Meffert and Burmann's (1996) brand model are presented in more detail. The section on brand management concludes by presenting a holistic brand management model for the professional sports club setting based on Schilhaneck (2008)

3.1.1. Brand management in a professional football club setting

Summing up a vast amount of definitions, a brand can generally be understood to be a name, logo, slogan, sound, and/or a unique symbol that distinguishes a product, service or organization from that of competing organizations operating within the same or similar environment (Mullin et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013, Burmann et al., 2012; Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1991).

Translated to the context of sports management, a brand “means that a product or a service, such as a type of sport [e.g. football] or an event [e.g. football match] or a person [e.g. stakeholder], and institution [BIF] can be perceived as a brand” (Pedersen, 2004, p. 47). While O'Reilly & Séguin (2013) consider the brand to be the most intangible asset of a sporting organization, it is also closely connected to a number of tangible dimensions: brand as a product, brand as a person, brand as an organization, and brand as a symbol (Schilhaneck, 2008; Meffert & Burmann, 1996). Typically focused on the spectator sport industry (Mullin et

al., 2013), a sport brand has the power to “ignite customer emotion, loyalty, [and] passion for a team, organization, league and/or manufacturer, which is not typically found within other industries” (Byers, 2016, p. 381). For professional football clubs, it can further be observed that the strategic focus of management often is on short-term outcomes such as winning and success. That, however, is in stark contrast to the more long-term marketing and sponsorship strategies around building a brand. As a result, marketers and management often underestimate the power of a brand and its impact on stakeholders, where the focus is often on the “product” (Byers, 2016).

Furthermore, the branding of football clubs is inherently linked to economic peculiarities of the professional sports industry (Schilhaneck, 2008). Among others, these include the large number of influential and heterogeneous target groups (see **Section 3.2**), the unique service characteristics of the industry (e.g. intangibility, sport as an experience good), as well as peculiarities in the production structure of professional sports clubs (e.g. co-creation and team production) (Schilhaneck, 2008).

Firstly, regarding the heterogeneous stakeholder groups within a club’s environment, brand management typically faces the challenge of achieving far-reaching brand integration in all of them (Meffert & Bierwirth, 2005). That leads to the necessity of a consistent, comprehensive, and interlocking deployment of suitable marketing mix instruments (Burmam et al., 2012; Schilhaneck, 2008; Gladden et al., 2001; Welling, 2004).

Secondly, it is impossible to brand professional football clubs in the traditional sense because of their intangibility (Schilhaneck, 2008). Rather than selling a physical product or service, sport as an experience is stressing the importance of relaxation, fun, passion, competition, and empathy (Mehus, 2010). As a special kind of entertainment where the event of uncertainty is profound (Dyer, 2002; Goodger & Goodger, 1989), professional football is about “performances that provide the audience with the pleasurable experience of being able to achieve something better compared to daily life” (Mehus, 2010, p. 898). Consequently, alternative methods of branding that “facilitate labelling in the physical way need to be found” (Schilhaneck, 2008, 45). That means that all internal and external points of contact (brand touch points) have a more central branding significance (Bruhn, 2004; Fassnacht, 2004; Schleuser, 2002). According to Burmann et al., 2012, such brand touch points are vital communication vehicles for the transmission of information, and represent a central connection between internal brand identity and external brand image (Burmam et al., 2012). Besides classic brand communication through advertising, brand touch points also include aspects such as press releases, media coverage, as well as communication on websites and social media (Burmam et al., 2012). Also, the actual brand usage, as well as both direct and indirect contact with representatives of the brand, are of formative importance and influence the external brand image (Burmam et al., 2012). In the context of professional clubs, the following aspects may be considered in that regard: Employee dress codes, branding of reference objects (e.g. tickets, merchandise, printed material, vehicles), infrastructure design (e.g. stadium, offices, training ground, fan shop), as well as other branding possibilities such as flags, signage, integration of club colors and logos in both interior and exterior design (Schilhaneck, 2008).

Thirdly, service attributes offered by professional clubs are mainly addressed through usage and experience: They are experience goods (Mascarenhas, Kesavan, & Bernacchi, 2006; Beltagui, Candi, & Riedel, 2012). As a consequence, it is essential to establish a sustainable brand reputation (Schilhaneck, 2008). Paired with positive brand experiences for the consumer, this can be achieved by repeated signaling of the organization's identity (Bruhn, Henning-Thurau, & Hadwich, 2004; Fassnacht, 2004; Schleuser, 2002, Woratschek & Roth, 2004). In the context of professional football clubs, brand reputation, particularly in the area of management competence, is of significance: "In the field of sponsorship for example, established and signaled club management reputation can rectify insecurity on the part of the sponsoring companies about possible opportunistic club behavior after the contract has been signed" (Schilhaneck, 2008, p. 46).

Lastly, brand management challenges lie within the aspect of co-creation and team production (Schilhaneck, 2008). Firstly, sport as a particular kind of entertainment is characterized by a complementary relationship between athletes and spectators (Guttmann, 1986; Mehus, 2005). More specifically, spectators must be considered a part of the product they consume and are paying for (King, 2002, p. 141): Thus, fans are co-producers of the experience (Schilhaneck, 2008). While consistent and continuous quality is a central precondition of successful brand identities (Burmam et al., 2012), due to the underlying customer involvement, football clubs face the challenge that the quality of performance can only be controlled to a certain extent (Benkenstein & Spiegel, 2004, Bruhn, 2000, Bruhn 2004). In addition to that, professional team sport is characterized by an additional peculiarity which affects the process of performance: "At least two organizations must be involved in a sporting event (team production)" (Schilhaneck, 2008, p. 45). To solve the problem related to uncontrollable external components "clubs should try to standardize their performance spectrum peripheral to the sporting event, as in this way an alternative point of reference is created for a constant perception of quality" (Schilhaneck, 2008, p. 45). Among others, the standardization of the following aspects is recommended in the context of professional football clubs: tangible and intangible input factors (i.e. event marketing, catering, service performance), personnel input factors (i.e. employees with consistently good training and experience, regulations for customer contact, sufficient stadium staff), as well as selected performance processes and results such as care of sponsors and VIPs, complaint management, and time management (e.g. fixed waiting times for ticket purchase, entry, catering) (Schilhaneck, 2008). Furthermore, also the perceived quality of the infrastructure in and around the stadium (e.g. public transportation, design of VIP lounges, size of the screens, parking possibilities, child entertainment) as well as the size of the fan community, which determines the atmosphere in the stadium, are deemed to be important factors for brand management to consider (Schilhaneck, 2008).

Instant Replay: Qualitative features of sports clubs, such as the actual strength of the teams and their current sporting success, certainly influence the picture of the brand to a great extent. Beyond these components, a number of important peculiarities and subcomponents relevant to the professional sports club setting (i.e. heterogeneous target groups, intangibility, sport as an experience good, co-creation, and team productions, among others) represent additional important brand sources.

3.1.2. The concept of identity-based brand management

According to Burmann et al. (2012), the subject of brand management can be conceptualized as consisting of two components, between which the brand is negotiated (see **Exhibit 1**):

- **Brand identity** as the self-perception of the brand from an internal perspective (statement concept).
- **Brand image** as the external picture of the brand from the view of relevant target groups (acceptance concept).

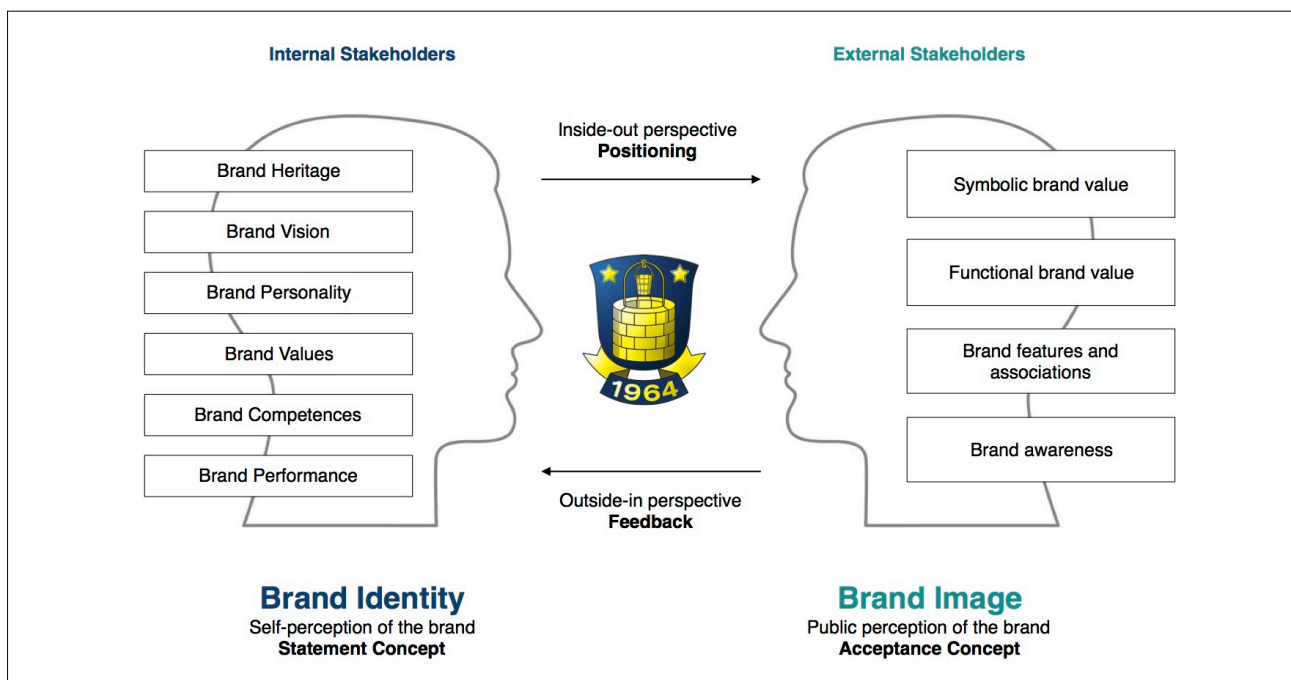


Exhibit 1: Model of identity-based brand management

Source: Own depiction, inspired by Burmann et al. (2012, p. 30)

The conceptualization above builds on the idea that brand identity is a relational construct that can only be understood in interaction with others (Eder, 2009). As pointed out in the introduction, especially football clubs are closely interrelated with their surroundings. This interdependency between the internal and external perspective implies that the club “is constantly confronted by its stakeholders, who explicitly express their opinions about the club and its performance” (Nissen, 2017, p. 535). It is the primary objective of identity-based brand management, to attain maximum fit and compliance between brand identity and brand image, subsequently resulting in brand strength (Burmam et al., 2003; Meffert & Burmann, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). In order to identify and diagnose reasons for both unsatisfactory brand strengths and incongruence between various stakeholders, a brand gap analysis provides a helpful instrument (see **Chapter 6**).

3.1.2.1. Brand identity in a professional football club setting

The term brand identity explains a brand from the perspective of internal stakeholders and thus can also be defined as a brand’s self-image: “Brand identity includes all the spatio-temporally identical features, that according to the internal stakeholders shape the character of the brand in a sustainable fashion” (Burmam et al., 2012, p. 30). This being said, the brand identity can be interpreted as a *statement concept*, constituted through the active interaction between internal and external stakeholders. One of the brand identity’s central tasks is to formulate a positive customer benefit in which the core competencies of the brand become apparent (Burmam et al., 2012). Importantly, constituent properties of brand identity within the concept of identity-based brand management include reciprocity (i.e. formed by the relationship between brand and stakeholders), consistency (i.e. avoidance of contradictions), continuity (i.e. retention of brand characteristics over time), and individuality (i.e. uniqueness) (Meffert & Burmann, 1996; Burmann et al., 2012).

In analogy to the human identity, also the concept of identity-based brand management assumes that every brand has their very own “face” and “soul”. Thus, brand identity consists of a number of identity components that ideally are consistent and unique for every brand over the course of time. The expression and combination of the individual identity components consequently must form an identity that is both coherent and without contradiction (Burmam et al., 2012). Based on social and psychological identity research, the construct of brand identity in the context of a professional football club can be operationalized based on the following six constituent identity components (see Burmann et al., 2012, pp. 42, for a comprehensive definition of the individual brand identity components as an internal management tool):

- The **brand heritage** (*where do we come from?*) forms the foundation, heritage, and historic roots of the club. Brand heritage can therefore be interpreted as a reference point for self-reflection of the club’s brand identity. Brand heritage is directed towards the past.

- The **brand vision** (*where are we heading?*) shapes the longterm direction, development, and motivation of the club. Brand vision therefore takes on a coordinating function and is directed towards the future.
- The **brand personality** (*how do we communicate?*) defines the verbal and non-verbal communication style of the club.
- The **brand values** (*what do we believe in?*) represent the club's basic beliefs and convictions. Brand values effect what the club and it's representatives (i.e. management and employees) believe in.
- The **brand competencies** (*what are we good at?*) make up the specific organizational capabilities and competitive advantage of the club.
- The **brand performance** (*what do we market?*) determines the way in which the club creates value for its stakeholders. Brand performance addresses the question of what type of "product" the club is selling.

With regard to brand identity, a professional football club can be seen as an organizational brand, in which the brand identity is closely linked to the stakeholders' knowledge of the team and everything around it (Brown & Dacin, 1997). As brand identity is connected to the club's enduring objectives, structure and administration (Scott & Lane, 2000), the brand identity of a football club should reflect to fans and other stakeholders the sum of everything the club has to offer (Urde, 2003). Applying the conceptualization of brand identity above, elements such as the country or city of origin, the logo, brand personality, symbols and colors, historical heritage, and club values are defining dimensions of a club's core identity. Aspects such as sporting performance and the team and players itself are part of the extended brand identity, helping the brand to express what it stands for (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The more meaning a club's brand identity carries, the easier supporters and stakeholders can personally identify with the club's identity (Russel-Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2005).

Instant Replay: Brand identity is a statement concept and reflects the brand from the perspective of the internal stakeholders. Constituent properties of brand identity include reciprocity, consistency, continuity, and individuality. Moreover, brand identity can be conceptualized as consisting of six dimensions: brand heritage, brand vision, brand personality, brand values, brand competencies, and brand performance.

3.1.2.2. Brand personality in a professional football club setting

Brand personality is expressed in the verbal and non-verbal communication style of a brand (Schade, 2011). The concept facilitates customer retention and loyalty (Marolf, 2006), emotionalizes the active relationship between a person and a brand (Fournier, 1998), as well as ensures a long-term differentiation and unique positioning in facing competition (Hieronimus, 2003). The idea of brand personalities is theoretically based in the so-called factor-analytical personality psychology (Burmann et al., 2012). Specifically, research assumes that so-called personality traits are the basic building blocks of human personality (Schade, 2011). It thereby attempts to identify fundamental dimensions of our personality with the help of statistical factor analysis (Marolf, 2006). This is based on the underlying assumption that human beings possess a broad spectrum of personality facets. These can be reduced into a generally valid hierarchical model (Burmann et al., Marolf, 2006). Since the early 90s a broad consensus has been reached amongst researchers, that the human personality can be explained based on a five-factor model (Strus, Cieciuch, & Rowinski, 2014; Hieronimus, 2003; Bartussek, 1996; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992). Commonly referred to as the *Big Five* of human personality, the five-dimensional structure includes the following factors: *Extraversion*, *Agreeableness*, *Conscientiousness*, *Emotional Stability*, and *Openness to Experience/Culture* (Marolf, 2006). The brand personality construct emphasizes the fact that brands are often enlivened, humanized, and personified by people (Fournier, 2005). This transfer to the world of brands is based on the theory of animism (Gilmore, 1919), indicating that humans tend to animate inanimate artifacts with human characteristics in order to simplify interaction with them (Burmann et al., 2012). Thus, also brands can have human characteristics and their own personality (Hieronimus, 2006, Wells et al., 1957; Huber, Hermann, & Weis, 2001; Fournier, 1998, Aaker, 1997). Football clubs like *Liverpool FC* or *Brøndby IF* are often referred to as working men's clubs, while teams like *FC Bayern* or *Chelsea FC* are often referred to as being more snobbish and elite. As seen in the examples above, brand personality, besides classic personality traits, can also include demographic characteristics (e.g. sex, age) as well as affiliation to certain social classes ("the possession of mink is hardly a matter of winter warmth alone") (Aaker, 1997, S. 348). Understanding a brand as a person lifts the communication between stakeholders and a brand to a level of personal identification (Marolf, 2006). This realization allows for an explanation, as to why consumers develop emotional relationships with certain brands, understanding and treating them like friends, advisors, and vivid partners in a relationship (Fournier, 2005; Hieronimus, 2003). Against this backdrop, brand personality can be understood as "the set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant for brands" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, p. 151). In similar fashion, Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p. 347). Based on the works of Malhotra (1981), Aaker (1997) presents a measuring scale for brand personality that is universally applicable to any type of product category (Hieronimus, 2003). Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (hereinafter BPS), similar to the five-factor solution of human personality, allows for a valid and reliable measuring of the brand personality construct (Hieronimus, 2003). The five dimensions of brand personality include the following factors and facets (see **Table 2**):

| Dimension of brand personality | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Sincerity | Excitement | Competence | Sophistication | Ruggedness |
| Down-to-earth | Daring | Reliable | Upper-class | Outdorsey |
| Honest | Spirited | Intelligent | Charming | Tough |
| Wholesome | Imaginative | Successful | | |
| Cheerful | Up-to-date | | | |

Table 2: Brand personality scale according to Aaker (1997)

Source: Own depiction, inspired by Aaker (1997)

So far, Aaker's BPS has been specifically applied to the following industries and product categories: Cars (Wells et al., 1957; Huber, Hermann, & Weis, 2001; Bauer, Mäder, & Huber, 2000), restaurants (Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin, 1999), sunglasses (Hayes, 1999), beer, (Wysong, 2000; Phau & Lau, 2001), clothing (Kim, 2000), PCs (Villegas, Earnhart & Burns, 2000), mobile phones (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001) and universities (Egerer, 2015). Of particular inspiration for this thesis, the concept has further been applied to college basketball teams (Ross, 2008) as well as professional sports teams (Schade, 2012; Carlson, Donovan, & Cumiskey, 2009; Alexa, 2009). Based on the work of Schade (2012), a brand personality scale for professional sports teams in the German cultural sphere is constituted by the following factors:

- The factor "**Happy Familiarity**" often refers to the group of supporters, picking up collective aspects such as happiness and community (Schade, 2012).
- The factor "**Self-deprecating Rebel**" characterizes clubs, that don't take themselves too seriously. A positioning based on that dimension particularly enables the decoupling from sporting performance and success (Schade, 2012).
- That is also the case for the factor "**Cultivated Tolerance**", highlighting the social responsibility of a club (Schade, 2012).
- In contrast to that, personality traits of the "**Honest Fighter**" are clearly related to the sporting aspect of a club. If a club positions itself based on that dimension, expectations of the fans must be met with an aggressive and fierce team that never gives up (Schade, 2012).
- The last factor "**Down-to-earth Modesty**" characterizes a club, that for example also in successful times does not raise high and unrealistic expectations in its supporters and only completes player transfers within its financial possibilities (Schade, 2012).

The specific factor-analytical process of constructing a personality scale will further be explained in the data analysis section of this paper (see **Chapters 6 and 7**).

3.1.2.3. Brand image in a professional football club setting

Mirroring a brand's identity, the brand image explains a brand from the perspective of the external stakeholders. It can thus also be defined as a brand's public image: "Brand image is a condensed and judgmental picture of the brand, firmly established in the psyche of relevant external stakeholders" (Burmman et al., 2012, p. 30). Brand image is a result of the individual subjective perception and decoding of signals emitted by the brand (Burmman, Blinda, & Nitschke, 2003). Referring to this external evaluation of the brand promise, the brand image can be interpreted as an *acceptance concept*. Contrary to brand identity, a brand's image is not actively constituted within the organization and therefore cannot be considered a managerial instrument (Burmman et al., 2012).

Similar to the concept of brand identity, also the brand image is multi-dimensional and can be divided into a number of sub-components (Burmman et al., 2003). Brand awareness is a necessary prerequisite for the creation of brand image, however it is not a defining component of the image itself. Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to a) remember the brand (i.e. brand recall), b) to recognize the brand based on visual or acoustic support (i.e. brand recognition), and c) to associate the brand with a specific product/service category (Burmman et al., 2003). Thus it is important to establish the brand with the consumers, so they are aware of the brand as well as its products and services (Byers, 2016; Aaker, 1991). Based on Vershofen (1940), Keller (1993), and Burmman et al. (2003), the brand image in the setting of a professional club can be further sub-divided into the following three factors:

- The **brand features and associations** represent the entirety of all club characteristics as perceived by the external stakeholders. Brand features include objective-rational, visual, as well as emotional characteristics related to the club brand.
- The **functional brand value** includes all benefit dimensions that result from the physical and functional features of the club brand (e.g. complexity reduction, information function, trust function etc.).
- The **symbolic brand value** occurs, if the brand provides a benefit that goes beyond the physical and functional features (e.g. prestige, group membership, self-realization etc.).

Instant Replay: Brand image is an acceptance concept and reflects the brand from the perspective of the external stakeholders. Moreover, brand image can be conceptualized as consisting of the awareness of the brand, brand features, brand associations, as well as the functional and symbolic value of the brand.

3.1.2.4. Brand equity and brand associations in a professional football club setting

According to Aaker (1991), brand equity refers to “a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by its product or service to a [club], and/or to that [club’s] customers” (p. 12). This being said, club brand equity increases the probability of brand choice, supporter and sponsor retention, profit margins, willingness to pay premium prices, customer search, marketing communication effectiveness, positive word of mouth, brand licensing opportunities, and brand extensions (Aaker, 1991; Ross, 2006). Apart from brand awareness, as explained in the previous section, elements of Aaker’s (1991) brand equity model include the aspects of brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets (Byers, 2016).

Firstly, and specifically important in the context of professional football clubs, brand loyalty refers to the situation when customers (i.e. club supporters) continue to purchase the brand, even in the face of competitors with superior features, price, and convenience. In such a case, substantial value exists in a brand (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013). Traditionally, brand loyalty can be established by meeting stakeholder expectations, introducing innovative products, designing brand loyalty programs, and making sure that both the marketing department and management support the brand loyalty initiatives (Byers, 2016). Secondly, the perceived quality of the product (or experience) refers to the “overall perception by the consumers with regard to a specific product in comparison to similar products within the same industry” (Byers, 2016, p. 387). Lastly, brand associations refer to the intangible set of associations that are created with the club brand. They can thus be understood by the consumers’ experience with the product and the symbolic benefits of that product (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013). As an integral part of the brand features, brand associations are also closely linked with brand image and the perception of the brand by its external stakeholders. According to Keller (1993), three types of brand associations can be distinguished: attributes (product-related and non-product-related), benefits (functional, experiential and symbolic) and attitudes⁹.

⁹ Applied to the context of professional football clubs, each of these association types can be measured in terms of strength (depending on the quantity and quality of information researched and processed by external stakeholders), favorability (depending on how much external stakeholders like the team), and uniqueness (in comparison to competing teams) (Keller, 1993; Bauer et al., 2005).

Based on these brand association types proposed by Keller (1993), and in order to better understand the associations connected with team sport brands, Gladden & Funk (2002) present the *Team Association Model* (TAM). The 16 dimensions of brand association according to the *TAM Model* are depicted in **Table 3**. Based on the work of Gladden and Funk (2002), further brand association models have been developed for the context of professional team sports (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005; Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006; Koo, 2009; Richelieu et al., 2011). Entailing important links between the club's brand and key stakeholders, as an inspiration for this Master's thesis a summary of the aforementioned models can be found in **Appendix 2**.

| Brand Associations | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Product-related associations | Non-product related associations | Benefits | Attitudes |
| Success | Logo design | Fan identification | Importance |
| Star players | Stadium / Arena | Peer group acceptance | Knowledge |
| Head coach | Product delivery | Escape | Affect |
| Management | Tradition | Nostalgia | |
| | | Pride and place | |

Table 3: Team Association Model (TAM)

Source: Own depiction, based on Gladden & Funk (1993)

Applying Aaker's (1991) brand equity model to team sport brand equity, three areas affect the elements discussed above (Byers, 2016; Gladden, 2014; O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013): The first area is team-related and refers to internal (i.e. identity-related) aspects such as the success of the team, the head coach, or players of the team (i.e. internal stakeholders). The second is organization-related, covering areas such as the club's reputation, scheduling, and product delivery. In short: the overall customer experience and entertainment package. The third area is external and market-related (image-related). It includes aspects such as media coverage, geographical location, competitive forces, and supporters (i.e. external stakeholders). In correlation with elements of Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, performance in these three areas can lead to an increase in local and national media exposure, merchandise sales, corporate support, atmosphere, or ticket sales, subsequently shaping stakeholders' perceptions of the brand (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2013).

Instant Replay: In the context of professional football, important brand associations are linked to key stakeholders in and around the club, as well as the social interactions with them. Among others, these include players, the head coach, management, supporters, and sponsors.

3.1.3. A brand management model for the professional football club setting

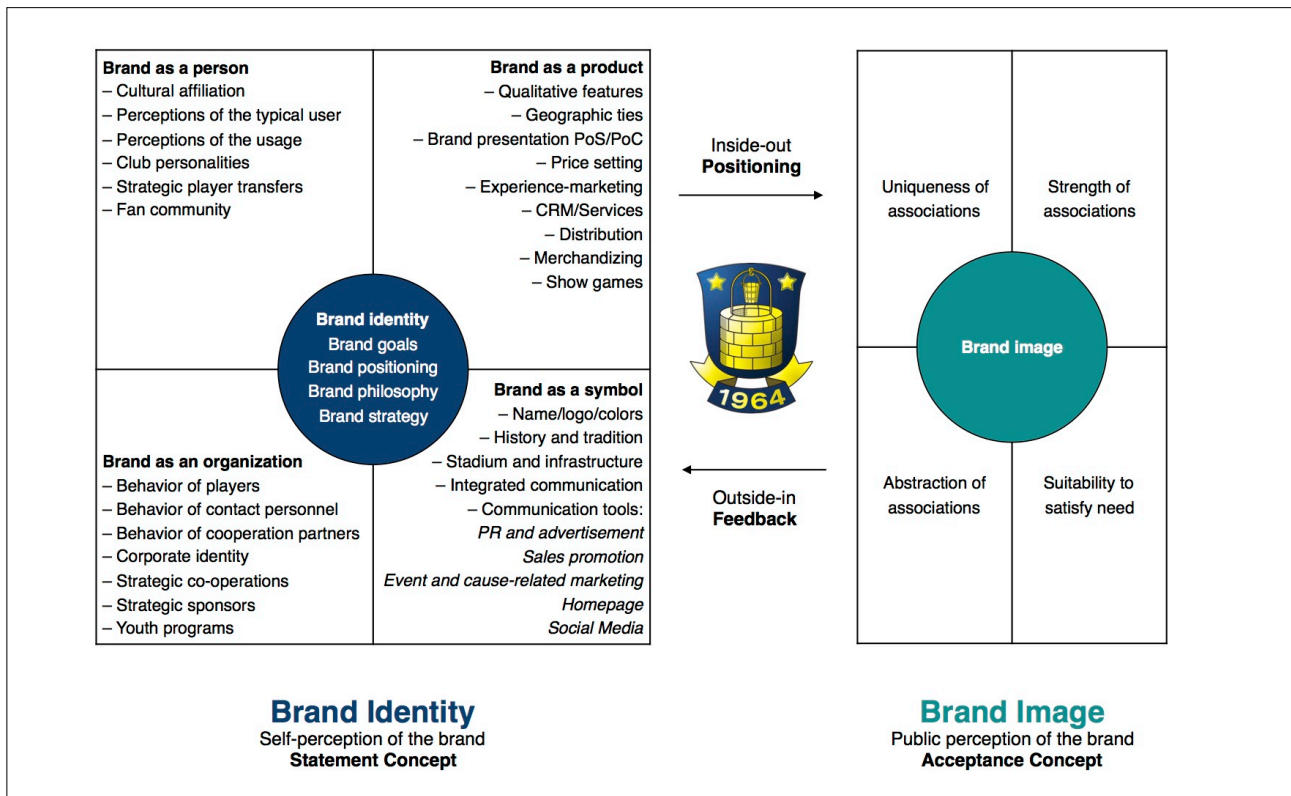


Exhibit 2: Brand management model for professional football clubs

Source: Own depiction, inspired by Schilhaneck (2008)

Combining the conceptualizations of brand identity, image, equity, and associations, Schilhaneck's (2008) brand management model for the professional football club setting serves as an aggregated framework of the issues discussed. Transitioning to the issue of stakeholder management, the model indicates that a club brand must not only be addressed in terms of its functional (brand as a product) and symbolic value (brand as a symbol), but also as an organization (brand as an organization) and the people behind it (brand as a person). Concluding this section of the literature review, a simplified version of Schilhaneck's (2008) brand management model is depicted in **Exhibit 2** (see **Appendix 3** for a procedural version of the model).

3.2. Stakeholder Management

By focusing on the individuals to whom the organization's actions affect, an organization's social performance may be analyzed by its interactions with its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2011). Besides being affected by the organization, these stakeholders can also affect the organization itself (Freeman, 1984; Mahon & Waddock, 1992). Hence, stakeholder theory can be presented as a powerful technique for sports managers to adapt to their constituent environments (Friedman, Parent, & Mason, 2004). If sports managers are to create "long-term competitive advantage and organizational wealth, they must also manage multiple stakeholder relationships as part of firm strategy" (Walters & Kitchin, 2009, p. 3).

Stakeholder theory maintains, that in addition to shareholders, an organization should recognize the interests of a wider range of constituents that have a stake in a corporation, and a right to inclusion in the governance process (Walters & Tacon, 2010). The following sections of the literature review feature the pertinent literature regarding definition of internal and external stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Olander, 2007), a typography of stakeholders (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), as well as the identification of stakeholders relevant to the professional football club setting.

3.2.1 Definition of stakeholders

Due primarily to the increasing professionalization and commercialization of the sporting industry (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010; Anagnostopoulos, 2011), particularly football, managers need to be as aware of their organizations' respective social, economic, and political environment, as in any other industry (Eesley & Lenox, 2006). In this respect, organizations need to be able to identify and prioritize their stakeholders in order to improve outcomes and efficiency of their decision-making processes (Miragaia, Ferreira, & Carreira, 2014). Several definitions of stakeholders exist within the realm of the academic literature. In the industrial sense, Freeman (1984) characterizes stakeholders as any individual or groups that are able to help or harm the organization. Alternative approaches define stakeholders as people or groups participating in the organization via explicit or implicit contracts, and with legitimate interests or rights in the organization's past, present, or future activities (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995).

Friedman et al., (2004) outline four characteristics which must be considered when identifying stakeholders and their relationship to the organization: 1) a direct or indirect connection between stakeholders and the organization, 2) measurable interests, 3) stakeholders must be perceived as a legitimate and integral part of the organization, and 4) stakeholders may undertake different functions. A study by Parent (2015) investigates key areas perceived to be most important within the context of major sporting events. The study finds performance, accountability, transparency, and participation respectively, as the most salient issues (Parent, 2015). Hence, being able to classify and prioritize stakeholder demands is paramount.

3.2.2 Typography of Stakeholders: Power, legitimacy, urgency, and salience

At any given time, decision-makers may have several issues that must be addressed in order to satisfy the demands of their organization's constituents (Friedman et al., 2004); i.e. expectations shape organizational purpose and strategies (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008). On the one hand, internal stakeholders can be classified as those within an organization being responsible for implementation and execution of organizational projects (Freeman, 1984). On the other hand, external stakeholders are those who affect implementation and execution from outside the official organizational structure (Olander, 2007). By evaluating stakeholders' levels of power, legitimacy, and urgency in relation to a given strategic issue (i.e. brand management), stakeholder analysis can be used to identify stakeholders, their claims, motivations, and relative importance (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Power

Using a typology of power described by Etzioni (1964), Mitchell et al. (1997) describe three types of power that stakeholders may possess, namely: coercive power, utilitarian power, and normative power. Hence, power can be defined as the ability for one party to bring about the outcomes that they so desire in the face of resistance (Mitchell et al., 1997). A party has power to the extent that it holds, or can gain access to, these three sources of power in order to exert its will. Mitchell et al. (1997) note that power as described by Etzioni (1964) is transitory in nature, meaning that without a steady state, power "can be acquired and lost" over time (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 866).

French and Raven's power typology (1959) goes beyond just defining power as the ability to exercise one's will (Etzioni, 1964; Mitchell et al., 1997). Rather, they suggest that leaders will draw from a mix of six¹⁰ sources of power:

- **Legitimate Power:** based on the belief that the individual has a right to make demands, and thus expects others to act accordingly.
- **Coercive power:** based on the individual's ability to punish others for noncompliance.
- **Reward power:** based on the individual's ability to mediate rewards to those under them.
- **Expert power:** based on the perception that the individual holds some special knowledge or expertise.
- **Referent power:** power derived from others' identification or respect of the individual.

¹⁰ A sixth power source was added by Raven (1965) to the original five bases of power

- **Informational power:** added as the sixth base of power to account for an individual's ability to control the information needed by others (Raven, 1965).

Individuals with authority can therefore draw from the power of their station (i.e. positional power) to access legitimate, coercive, reward, and (to some extent) also informational power. Expert power and referent power are then said to stem from the individual's specific character, knowledge, skills, and relational abilities (French & Raven, 1959; Raven 1965).

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as a social construct which evaluates the "actions of an entity as desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). This definition recognizes the "evaluative, cognitive, and socially constructed nature of legitimacy" (Mitchell et al., 1997, 866). Legitimacy is obtained within multiple individual, organizational, and societal levels (Wood, 1991). Suchman's (1995) definition therefore implies that legitimacy is something which may be negotiated differently, depending on which level of the social organization the negotiation takes place; and is a desirable social good (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Urgency

Power and legitimacy are constituent components of the stakeholder-organization relationship, however they do not fully capture the dynamics of the interactions. Thus, they only offer a static model of stakeholder theory. Mitchell et al. (1997) add urgency to the equation in order to move from a static to a dynamic model of stakeholder saliency, where urgency represents the willingness and opportunity for a stakeholder to act on its desires. Therefore, urgency is a stakeholder attribute which coerces action. Mitchell et al. (1997) define urgency "as the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate action" (p. 867). It is based on the following two attributes:

- **Time sensitivity:** The degree to which delayed attention by managers in dealing with stakeholders' interests is acceptable to the stakeholder, and
- **Criticality:** The importance of the claim, or relationship, to the stakeholder.

Salience

Stakeholder salience is characterized by the degree to which managers determine priority of stakeholder requests as a result of the cumulative effect of power, legitimacy, and urgency. Stakeholder requests should be prioritized according to their level of salience (Mitchell et al., 1997; Friedman et al., 2004):

- **Low priority:** Stakeholders possess only one typography attribute (i.e. power, legitimacy, urgency)
- **Moderate priority:** Stakeholders display two typography attributes
- **High priority:** Stakeholders attain all three attributes.

Instant Replay: Combining the attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency allows for identification of stakeholder salience. Based on their salience, (brand) management may prioritize certain stakeholders over others.

3.2.3 The stakeholder Power/Interest Matrix

Low and Cowton (2004) present two techniques for managing stakeholder relationships: First, meet and consult with stakeholder groups to actively involve them in decision-making. Two, integrate them into the governance structure of the organization. Given the discussions of stakeholder typography, it is helpful to have a tool which enables managers (or researchers) to clarify the classification of stakeholders with regards to the power and influence they hold over the organization. Mendelow's (1991) *Power/Interest Matrix* (see **Exhibit 3**) aids in classifying stakeholders "in relation to the power they hold and the extent to which they are likely to show interest in supporting or opposing a particular strategy" (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 156).

The depiction of managers' relationships to their stakeholders is largely dictated by the governance structures under which they operate, as well as the organization's ethics and stance on corporate responsibility (Johnson et al., 2008, pp. 133-153). Depending on that, a stakeholder group can occupy one of four positions in the matrix:

- **Low power, low interest – Minimal effort:** This quadrant represents the "minimal effort" quadrant. Stakeholders located in this box are of little focus to the organization as they have both low power and interest with regards to strategic issues.
- **Low power, high interest – Keep informed:** Despite having low power in influencing strategies, stakeholders in this quadrant should be kept informed due to their high level of interest — to stop them from joining forces with other stakeholder groups (potentially gaining power).
- **High power, low interest – Keep satisfied:** Stakeholder here have high power with regards to influencing strategic decision making, but with low interest in doing so. By keeping these

stakeholders satisfied the organization prevents them from potentially gaining more interest, shifting them into the “engage closely” quadrant.

- **High power, high interest – Engage closely:** These stakeholders have a high level of power with regards to implementation of strategic objectives. Additionally, a high interest means they are very effective at driving change or opposing strategies if they so wish. Key players require a much tighter relationship with the organization than stakeholders in any other quadrant.

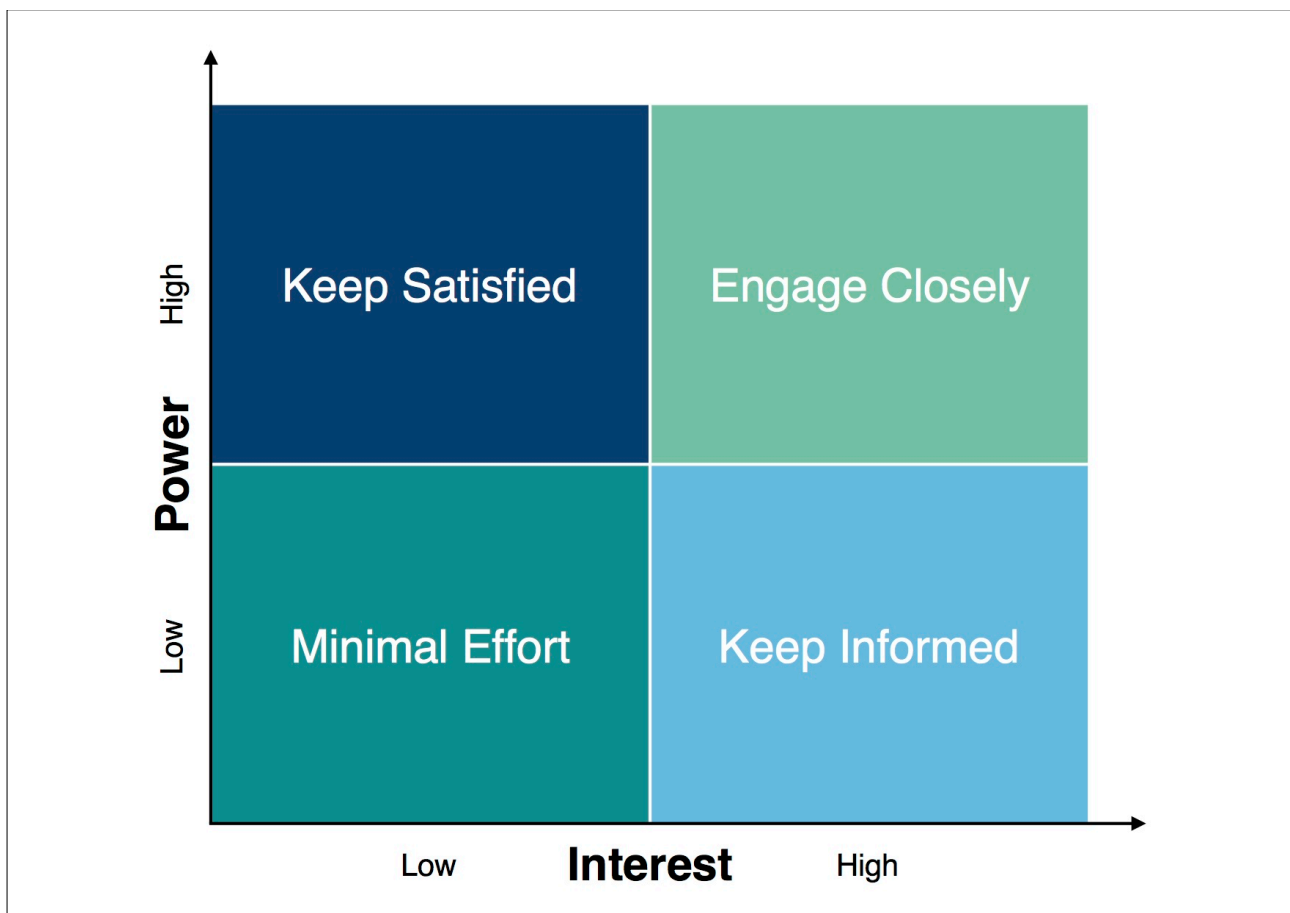


Exhibit 3: Stakeholder Power/Interest Matrix

Source: Own depiction, adapted from Mendelow (1991) and Low and Cowton (2004)

Instant Replay: The identification of stakeholder groups, based on their powers and interests, allows brand management to adjust and tailor their strategies so that they are appropriate to the salient group.

3.2.4 Identification of stakeholder groups in a professional football club setting

Apart from general definitions of what an organizational stakeholder is (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995), identification of stakeholders is unique to the context of the organizational situation. Due to the nature of this Master's thesis, the following identification of stakeholders is limited to the world of sports management – professional football in particular.

In a stakeholder analysis of professional football club governance in France, Senaux (2008) identifies seven relevant stakeholder groups: shareholders, players, leagues and federations, local authorities, support associations, supporters, and television. In a similar study investigating Portuguese football club *Centro Desportivo Fátima*, Miragaia et al., (2014) identify 10 stakeholder groups, including top management, operations management (players, staff, coaches), member association, sponsors, competitors, media, partners, regulatory bodies, local community, and suppliers. We attempt to consolidate these stakeholder groups below.

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, our investigation of brand- and stakeholder management takes place within the scope of the Scandinavian football arena, more specifically in Denmark. In that context, “the governance of sport [in Scandinavia] has been shaped by a considerable degree of autonomy and self-regulation. In the Scandinavian countries, sports have always had their roots in civil society” (Carlson, Norberg & Persson, 2011, p. 305). Ergo, the governance of football clubs and management of stakeholders in Scandinavia has taken place within the same sphere of societal values, norms, and policies (Esping-Andersen, 1989; Carlson et al., 2011): “Scandinavian sport has been able to uphold a normative autonomy regarding values, morals and sport policy, at least ideologically” (Carlson et al., 2011, p. 305). Thus, the identification of stakeholder groups will be presented in similarity to the structure presented by Junghagen (2016), who identifies stakeholders in the top Swedish league *Allsvenskan*. In addition to the stakeholders presented by Junghagen (2016), we add “Management, board, and staff” to the groups discussed, due to football clubs in Denmark being somewhat “highly commercialized” (Carlson, et al., 2011, p. 305) when compared to its Scandinavian counterparts. As per Miragaia et al., (2014), we include both top and operational management in the stakeholder group.

3.2.4.1 Supporters and members

According to Junghagen (2016), members (i.e. supporters with voting rights) and supporters can be classified together. For the purpose of this study, members can be assumed to be fans of the club as well (Junghagen, 2016). For the case of Brøndby IF specifically, the same is the case for main shareholder Jan Bech Andersen: “I think our supporters have taken Jan Bech Andersen as part of the family [...] It makes a big difference that Jan is a Brøndby fan as well – not some outsider” (Blom, 2017, 56, 64). Furthermore, for the purposes of this paper, shareholders are defined as individuals who legally own stock in the club.

Academic literature pertaining to professional team sports is varied, attempting to describe the enormous differences in sports supporters and fans. Smith (1988) defines sports fans as either “serious” or “normal”, where only serious sports fans are considered to truly believe that the results of a given sporting contest matter. Hunt, Bristol and Bashaw (1999) take the classification further and “propose an alternate classification scheme to capture critical motivational and behavioral distinctions” (Hunt et al., 1999, p. 442). They identify five different types of fans:

- **Temporary Fans** are fans for a specific, time-bound event. After a particular sporting event is over, the individual returns to normal behavior and becomes a non-fan.
- **Local Fans** are bounded by geographic constraints; if the local fan moves away from the location of their sports team, fandom will diminish.
- **Devoted Fans** have no limitations on fandom due to temporal or geographic restraints. They construct feelings of emotional “ownership”, and the particular sporting team/brand becomes a part of their self-identification.
- **Fanatical Fans** are like the devoted fan in that they’re not limited to time or place in order to support their team, however they engage in behavior that is outside the realm of what the devoted fan would participate in: “Self-attachment to the sporting object is very close to the self for a fanatical fan, yet remains firmly outside the core center” (Hunt et al., 1999, p.446). Such an example of fanatical fans might include so-called “alpha” groups who, outside of work or family life, might work to organize and participate in tifo¹¹ demonstrations at their team’s football matches.
- Whereas the actions of the fanatical fan are still deemed acceptable behavior by the fan’s significant others (family, friends, and other fans), **Dysfunctional Fans** use fandom as their primary source of self-identification (e.g. hooligans).

In relation to that, Tapp (2004) distinguishes between fanatics (i.e. fans with a strong sense of self-identification to the club), collectors (i.e. fanatics who collect club memorabilia as a reminder of their sense of self), repertoire fans (i.e. fans who watch other teams when their team isn’t playing), committed casuals (i.e. genuine fans of the club but non-football activities are of equal or greater importance) and carefree

¹¹ Tifo (from “tifosi”) is the Italian word for the phenomenon of supporting a sport team. The term is commonly used as a name for any choreography displayed by fans in the stands of an arena or stadium in connection with a sport event

casuals (i.e. being a supporter of the club is not part of their self-identification, however they are football lovers and see the club as a source of entertainment)¹².

With regard to the aspect of co-creation (see **Section 3.1.1.**), in this age of commercialization and a movement towards a “total experience” package, fans at a professional football match are both consumers of the entertainment but also “performers” (Mehus, 2010). Therefore, professional football clubs have no other option but to accommodate their fans in their product propositions, trying to make supporters function “in a way that is consistent with the proposed experience” (Van Uden, 2005, p.194). According to Senaux (2008), this gives supporters of football clubs clear legitimacy. Fans go to the games, purchase merchandise, and are faithful to the club (Senaux, 2008). Supporters are also attributed an element of power, in that long run absence of supporters from match days affect ticket revenues and severely impacts TV rights and sponsorship (Senaux, 2008).

3.2.4.2 Sponsors

Senaux (2008) describes “simple” sponsor relationships as limited in terms of relation with the club, tending to be fully outlined by a contract. However, “in some rare situations, they could have legitimate claim that the club’s policy or image is not in accordance with the image they want to give of themselves and threaten to withdraw their sponsorship” (Senaux, 2008, p. 14). However, legitimacy of sponsors with relation to football clubs is limited, as they usually don’t have, or want, the ability to influence further in strategic club management (Senaux, 2008).

Furthermore, sponsorship (e.g. in the form of shirt sponsorships, naming rights to the stadium, etc.) is important to football clubs as a source of revenue. Excessive use of sponsorships as a source of revenue generation can be harmful however, “as it has a negative effect on club image and [is] wasteful for the individual sponsors” (Junghagen, 2016, p. 4). In light of the increased commercialization of sports, “sponsorship has become a form of exchange between a sponsor and the entity it invests in, with both parties seeking to achieve their own strategic goals” (Henseler, Wilson, & Westberg, 2011, p. 8). Henseler et. al (2011) further investigate how sponsors perceive the impact of a sponsorship agreement on brand equity. Specifically, six facets of sponsorship packages are identified that contribute to brand equity: exposure levels of sponsored brand, amount of coverage, the competitive quality of the club, advertising opportunities, privileges, and exclusivity rights given to a sponsor (Henseler et al., 2011). However, it has been shown that sponsorship of one club potentially risks a harmful effect on brand equity amongst rival supporters (Bergkvist, 2012). Bergkvist’s (2012) study investigates how fans of a team can transfer their dislike for their

¹² To name a few, further spectator typologies include social, focused, and vested fans (Sutton et al., 1997), supporters, followers, fans, and flâneurs (Giulianotti, 2002), customers and fans (King, 1997), partisans and purists (Dixon, 2001), fans and tourists (Goksøyr, 1998).

rivals to the main sponsor of that particular team. Conversely, passion for a club can also translate into brand loyalty to its sponsor (O’Keeffe & Zawadska, 2010).

3.2.4.3. Media

Newspapers, radio, television, and film have all had a profound effect in the history and development of sport (Boyle & Haynes, 2009); turning the nature of modern sport “from an amateur-based playful activity into a serious multibillion dollar global business and established industry” (Byers, 2016, 69). As the demand for sports broadcasting increases, a significant escalation in the prices for broadcasting rights has followed (Gratton, Liu, & Ramchandani, 2012). Without a doubt, the advent of mass-media coverage of sporting events (especially professional football) has also contributed to the increased cost of sponsorship deals, as professional sports organizations gain increased media exposure (Byers, 2016; Maguire, 1991).

The media-sport production complex, as suggested by Maguire (1991), suggests that an interweaving of media and sport is the result of keen marketing interests. Participating in this production complex is the sporting organization, the media and its personnel (i.e. broadcasters and journalists), and marketing organizations. Interestingly, the sporting organization has largely fallen into a dependency type of relationship with the media, as they have little to no control over the nature and form in which their sport is broadcasted (Maguire, 1991). Returning to the connection between the media and sponsorships, the dependency on the media is “arguably connected to sport organizations increasingly relying on revenues derived from sponsorship and marketing (Maguire, 1991, p. 316). Thus, sport organizations “have to ensure that they gain sufficient exposure and are visible in the sponsorship and endorsement marketplace. Media coverage ensures this” (Maguire, 1991, p. 316).

Commercialization and the global coverage of professional football has largely been prompted by the media (Byers, 2016). However, the traditional media landscape is being challenged, as modern society moves away from analogue media, and is increasingly digitalized (Jenkins, 2006). Today’s internet-enabled culture has challenged the traditional notion of media’s control over content (Junghagen 2016), increasing spectator participation in the marketing and consumption of sport organizations. Internet-enabled supporters can enrich their consumption of professional football over the traditional “passive participation” method of enjoyment (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010). For instance, by viewing the match with “live” betting services on their mobile device, or by streaming football from anywhere, this “new media” format increases the spectators’ ability to maximize his/her entertainment factor (Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010). Additionally, virtual communities allow for co-created content and increased interaction between sports brands and their audience. In this regards social media has changed the role of traditional mass-media outlets (Junghagen, 2016), and allows football clubs an option to bypass the traditional media (Price, Farrington, & Hall, 2013).

3.2.4.4. Local community (municipality)

In the stakeholder group “local community”, we summarize local authorities, regulatory bodies, and local community (Senaux, 2008; Miragaia et al., 2014). No matter the industry, all organizations operate within some kind of environment which influences the organization and vice versa. As the discussion of this paper partly pertains to stakeholder theory, the issue of organizational purpose for football clubs, as described by Storm (2011), is mirrored by a discussion of social responsibility and profitability. For example, Walker and Kent (2009) have shown that an active engagement in CSR projects by a sporting club is viewed favorably by supporters, and thus affects the overall performance of clubs positively. The concept of *Corporate Citizenship* (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999) was coined as a way to assert the dual economic and social role of football clubs. Corporate citizenship can be understood as the specific activities undertaken by an organization, that are intended to meet social demands in a responsible manner. Walters and Chadwick (2009) locate their work within this idea and propose a model of governance, whereby the football club engages in the local community via a charitable organization – the “community trust”. The community trust is directly associated with the brand, but is independent structurally, financially, and strategically, and serves to engage in community initiatives. Walter and Chadwick (2009) specifically identify six strategic benefits that can be realized from this mode of organizational governance. These include the removal of commercial and community tensions, reputation management, brand building, local authority partnerships, commercial partnerships, and player identification. Junghagen (2016) identifies negative effects (on the club and local community) as an additional aspect with regards to the local community stakeholder group: Taking hooliganism as an example, such negative effects can be substantial and arise due to the rivalry between football clubs. It “is not necessarily a problem for the clubs alone, or associations alone, but this is a community problem, where all involved actors must assume a responsibility” (Junghagen, 2016, p. 5).

3.2.4.5 Management, board, and staff (administrative & athletic)

Management in an industrial context is typically centered around an organization’s top leadership and governance structure. Organizational governance structures can vary from a simple three-layer setup (i.e. management, shareholders, board of directors), to more complex structures including beneficiaries, senior executives, and executive directors, among others (Johnson et al., 2008). As per Miragaia et al. (2011), management can be further distinguished depending on their function into administrative and operative (e.g. athletic staff) management. Moreover, Parent (2015) offers an exploratory study attempting to identify what the most salient attributes are to stakeholders when it comes to the organization of sporting events. The investigation finds that performance, accountability, transparency, and participation respectively, are the most important aspects for management to consider with regards to stakeholder management (Parent, 2015).

In that context, performance refers to the strategic planning processes as perceived by stakeholders. Within performance criteria, efficiency, effectiveness, and economic aptitude are considered salient. Stakeholders notice effects due to strategic planning processes, both pre- and post-event (Parent, 2015). Accountability is “described in terms of outcomes, principles, issues, and targets” (Parent, 2015, p. 407). With regards to top management and operations management in football organizations, accountability can be taken as the management’s ability and propensity to take responsibility for funds spent, performance, and following through on promises to stakeholders (Parent, 2016). Moreover, transparency is closely linked with accountability and refers to “the ideas of openness, communication, clarity, available information, traceable decisions, and trust. Thus, transparency affects relationships” (Parent, 2016, p. 407). Lastly, participation is especially relevant to the football industry due to the nature of the co-created experience between sporting organizations and their stakeholders (including supporters and media). Participation creates an emotional connection between stakeholders and a specific sporting event (Parent, 2016). The aspect of participation is also perceived to be somewhat different amongst stakeholders, with sponsors particularly paying attention to the emotional aspect impacting individuals’ and communities’ connection to their brand (Parent, 2016). With regards to saliency, management can be considered to have a great deal of power concerning strategic objectives, as top and operations management are responsible for the implementation of sporting, financial, and political objectives (Senaux, 2008). The legitimacy and urgency of stakeholders within management (i.e. top management, administrative staff, athletic staff) clearly is high, as it is the players who perform on the pitch every game. Moreover, the strategic considerations connected to the experience of a football match are undertaken exclusively by organizational management (Senaux, 2008).

Athletic staff such as players and coaches, in the context of commercialized football, can be re-identified as part of the overall entertainment package (van Uden, 2005). As important stakeholders and an extension of the brand, football clubs increasingly recognize their players’ value as off-pitch brand ambassadors: “Besides their football skills and their relations with the public, players also have a direct commercial value that (football clubs) can capitalize on, for instance through image rights” (van Uden, 2005, p. 193).

Instant Replay: In the context of professional football, a number of important stakeholders can be identified. On the one hand, these include internal stakeholders such as the board of directors, management, administrative staff, athletic staff, and shareholders. On the other hand, important external stakeholders include sponsors, the media, as well as the local community. Due to the supporter’s important involvement in creating the sport experience (i.e. co-creation), they can be described as being both internal and external simultaneously.

4. Problem statement and research questions

As outlined, sport management research increasingly recognizes the importance and impact of stakeholders on the strategic management of sports organizations. Furthermore, professional football clubs and their internal and external surroundings are closely connected and interrelated. These increasing interdependencies imply that a football club is constantly challenged and held accountable by its stakeholders, who can be vociferous in expressing their opinions about the club, its role in society, and its performance. Moreover, those involved in corporate branding recognize that active interaction with stakeholders is crucial when managing a club's brand identity and image. With brand identity and image being subject to collective negotiation between internal and external stakeholders, this makes identity-based brand management a both important and challenging task in context of a professional football club. Yet, there is relatively little in the sports management literature that specifically indicates how the range of stakeholders can be actively engaged in developing the corporate brand of a club. Combining stakeholder theory with strategic findings from identity-based brand management, this Master's thesis sets out to investigate the role of stakeholders in the corporate branding of a professional football club:

Problem statement: *How can stakeholders be actively involved in the strategic brand management of a professional football club?*

This being said, it is the overall objective of this Master's thesis to gain an understanding of how and why stakeholders (explicitly and implicitly) interfere with and influence a football club's strategic brand management. Moreover, we are interested in how stakeholders can be actively integrated in the club's branding strategies. In order to approach the overall problem stated above, we specifically choose to investigate the case of Danish *Superliga's* football club Brøndby IF. In an attempt to approach the current intricacies of BIF's brand- and stakeholder management in a structured way, five specific research questions are formulated, that will act as a step-by-step framework in addressing the overall problem statement:

Question 1: *Who are the relevant stakeholder groups in regards to managing BIF's brand?*

Question 2: *What is BIF's brand identity, image, and personality from the perspective of relevant stakeholder groups?*

Question 3: *Where can tensions be identified between various stakeholder groups, and how do these tensions translate into potential consistency gaps?*

Question 4: *Why do these tensions and gaps occur?*

Question 5: *Based on Q1–Q4, how can these gaps be closed and tensions resolved through proactive stakeholder involvement?*

According to Saunders et al. (2009), the case study strategy has considerable ability to generate answers to “why?” “what?” and “how?” questions. Our research questions are therefore formulated in a way, that is gradually shifting the level of knowledge from an initially descriptive to a more explanatory and normative level. Furthermore, Q1 and Q2 are mainly related to the subject of brand identity and image (from Brand Management...). Thereafter, Q3 and Q4 include the various stakeholder relationships into a gap analysis (...to Stakeholder Management...). Lastly, Q5 attempts to combine both brand- and stakeholder management in a joint reflection (...to Brandholder Management).

This Master’s thesis is an empirical project, meaning that we as researchers consider us and our theoretical research interest the primary research subjects. Nonetheless, the overall research question was partly shaped by, and finally formulated in cooperation with the case organization Brøndby IF. Despite not directly solving a problem posed by the club (i.e consultancy report), we note that the issues and results discussed in this thesis deliberately are of major practical relevance and interest for Brøndby IF.

5. Methodological considerations

Based on Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill's (2016) so-called *Research Onion*, this chapter briefly outlines the underlying research paradigms of our study. **Section 3.1** is principally concerned with the first two of the onion's layers: Research philosophy and research approach (i.e. approach towards theory development). Thereafter, in **Section 3.2**, the research strategy, choices of methods, as well as the time horizon of our study are laid out. Data collection techniques and analysis procedures are dealt with in more detail in **Chapter 6**.

5.1. Formulating the research philosophy

According to Saunders et al.'s research onion (2016), besides philosophical aspects, formulating a research philosophy includes the aspects of theory development.

Research philosophy: Pragmatism

With a focus on exploring and “making a difference to organizational practices” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 143), the underlying research philosophy of this Master's thesis can be described as pragmatism. Throughout the research process, we thus strive to reconcile both objectivism and subjectivism, facts and values, accurate and rigorous knowledge, as well as a portfolio of different contextual experiences (Saunders et al., 2016) when analyzing various stakeholder groups and their inter-relationships. More specifically, theories, concepts, ideas, assumptions, and research findings are not approached in an abstract form, but rather “in terms of the roles they play as instruments of thought and action, and in terms of their practical consequences in specific contexts” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 143). Regarding ontology (how we view the nature of reality), epistemology (how we view what constitutes acceptable knowledge), and axiology (how we view the role of values in research), we made sure to stay within the social science paradigm of pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2009; Burrell & Morgan, 1982). Firstly, multiple views (i.e. internal, external, objective, subjective, and socially constructed) are considered when attempting to answer the research questions. Secondly, both observable phenomena and subjective meanings are considered to provide a more thorough knowledge of BIF's brand- and stakeholder management. Lastly, subjective values of our interviewees and respondents – represented in their verbatim expressions – play an important role in interpreting and discussing the results of our research (Saunders et al., 2009).

Research approach (theory development): Combining deduction and induction

Considering various approaches towards theory development, the study at hand uses deductive and inductive reasoning in combination (Saunders et al., 2016). On the one hand, data collection is used to evaluate a variety of assumptions that are based on a comprehensive literature review and existing theory (i.e. deduction). In order to structurally explain causal relationships between variables (i.e. stakeholders and the

brand), we therefore partly emphasize the collection of quantitative data as well as the operationalization of concepts to ensure clarity of definition (i.e. brand personality) (Saunders et al., 2009). On the other hand, data collection is also used to explore the case of BIF, identify themes and patterns, and eventually create a conceptual framework of stakeholder relationships, brand influence, as well as tensions and gaps (i.e. induction). In order to gain an understanding of the meanings that different stakeholders attach to the BIF brand, we therefore emphasize the collection of qualitative data to get a better understanding of the overall research context (Saunders et al., 2009).

5.2. Formulating the research design

According to Saunders et al., (2016), aspects of formulating the research design include the research strategy, choice of method, as well as the time horizon administered in the study.

Research strategy: Case study

This being said, the thesis at hand attempts the integration of both brand- and stakeholder management within the context of sports management – professional football clubs in particular – through the research strategy of a single case study (Saunders et al., 2009). This being said, the case of Brøndby IF was chosen to emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events, conditions, and their relationships (Soy, 1996). Thus, the case study research method is chosen as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (i.e. brand and stakeholder management within professional football clubs) within its real-life context (BIF); when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984). The case study strategy also is of particular interest, as we attempt to gain a rich understanding of the context of BIF's brand- and stakeholder management as well as the processes being enacted (Morris & Wood, 1991).

Choice of Method: Concurrent Triangulation (Mixed Methods)

Investigating the issue of BIF's brand- and stakeholder management, a variety of multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks and approaches are synthesized. Moreover, multiple methodological perspectives including both quantitative and qualitative approaches are considered throughout the research process. Specifically, a so-called "Concurrent Mixed Methods Research Design" is chosen, that involves the parallel use of quantitative and qualitative methods within a single phase of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2015). In empirical social research, such research design is referred to as triangulation, and involves the combination of various methodological perspectives on a given scientific problem (Saunders, 2015; Bleuß, 2011). The purpose of triangulation, among others, includes the provision of a richer and more comprehensive response to the research question (Saunders, 2015), better comprehension of a given field of research (Fielding & Fielding, 1986), an extended knowledge base (Flick, 2011), as well as an increase in

credibility, validity, and reliability of the results (Flick, 2011)¹³. Understanding triangulation as a powerful technique that facilitates validation of both theory and data through cross verification from two or more sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006), we chose a concurrent triangulation research design for the following reasons:

- As an attempt to map out, explain, and more fully comprehend the richness and complexity of stakeholder inter-relationships as well as brand influence by “studying them from more than one standpoint” (Cohen & Manion, 2000, p. 254).
- To give a “more detailed and balanced picture of the situation” (Altrichter et al., 2008, p. 147) when studying the various interests and powers of different stakeholder groups.
- As a “method of cross-checking data from multiple [stakeholder groups] to search for regularities in the research data” (O’Donoghue & Punch, 2003, p. 78) in order to produce more accurate results as well as increase certainty in data collection.

Following Denzin (1978), all four types of triangulation are considered in this thesis: Data triangulation (involving time, space and persons), investigator triangulation (involving multiple researchers), theory triangulation (using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon), as well as methodological triangulation (using more than one method to gather data).

Time-horizon: Cross-sectional

We note that this Master’s thesis is an explorative study of a particular phenomenon (i.e. brand- and stakeholder management at BIF) at a particular time (i.e. between the months of January and April 2017). This “snapshot” time horizon makes our thesis a cross-sectional study (Saunders et al., 2009). With the football industry being particularly vulnerable to rapid changes, constant development, and external influences, we will consider the limitations and challenges of a cross-sectional approach within such a context throughout this paper (see **Chapter 9**).

¹³ See **Chapter 9** for a more detailed evaluation of this thesis’ validity and reliability

6. Data collection techniques and analysis procedures

Technically being a part of the overall research methodology (Saunders et al., 2009), for the sake of clarity, the process of data collection as well as analysis procedures is discussed in this independent chapter. Both data collection and analysis procedures are divided in a qualitative and quantitative part.

6.1. Data collection

To gain an understanding of the intricacies of BIF's brand management and stakeholder relations, two primary data collection methods were administered:

- Firstly, nine semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups in and around the club¹⁴. The primary goal of the interviews was to a) define BIF's brand identity and image from the perspective of the various stakeholder groups, and b) uncover channels of brand influence as well as stakeholder interrelationships.
- Secondly, a short survey based on Schade's (2012) BPS for professional football clubs was designed in order to assess BIF's expressed and perceived brand personality.

Moreover, two supplementary field trips were undertaken in order to a) experience and observe the atmosphere in and around the club in more color, b) interview stakeholders in a more informal setting as well as c) distribute the aforementioned questionnaire. Specifically, we attended the club's annual general assembly as well the derby match between BIF and local rival FCK (0 : 1).

In accordance with the concurrent mixed methods research design, all data were collected in parallel within a single phase of data collection (Saunders et al., 2015) between the months of January – April 2017. Apart from that, an informal kick-off meeting took place between us and BIF's chairman of the board, Jesper Eigen Møller. The meeting served as an initial presentation of our research interest and resulted in an agreement to use BIF as a case for this Master's thesis. Given the club's interest in the topic, a second meeting is expected to take place upon completion of this thesis in order to discuss potential practical implications. **Table 4** summarizes both the sources and progression of our combined data collection process:

¹⁴ Relevant stakeholder groups were identified and categorized based on our literature research as well as an initial informal discussion with Brøndby IF's chairman of the board, Jesper Eigen Møller.

| Timeline | Data Collection Method | Who | Stakeholder Group Association |
|----------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| | Informal Kick-Off Interview | Jesper Eigen Møller (Chairman of the board, BIF) | Management |
| | In-Depth Interviews (N = 9) | Jesper Eigen Møller (Chairman of the board, BIF) | Management |
| | | Christian Schultz (Communications Manager, BIF) | Admin. Staff |
| | | Sune Blom (Brøndby Supporter Trust and member of the board, BIF) | Supporters |
| | | Mads Glenn Wehlast (Sports Journalist, Ekstra Bladet) | Media |
| | | Kim Jessing Pedersen (Sport Consultant, Brøndby Municipality) | Municipality |
| | | Thomas Sønnichsen (Sports Journalist, TV2) | Media |
| | | Alexander Zorninger (Head Coach, BIF) | Athl. Staff |
| | | Troels Bech (Sports Director, BIF) | Management |
| | | Morten Crone Sejersbøl (Sports Editor, BT) | Media |
| | Survey (N = 51) | Interview partners (see above) | – |
| | | Brøndby IF Shareholders (N = 13) | Shareholders |
| | | Kent Max Magelund (Mayor, Brøndby Municipality) | Municipality |
| | | Brøndby IF Supporters (N = 26) | Supporters |
| | | Nicklas Svendsen (Executive Assistant, BIF) | Management |
| | | Michel Wikkelsø Davidsen (Sports Reporter, BT) | Media |
| | Field Trips | Brøndby IF Annual General Assembly | – |
| | | Brøndby IF – FC Copenhagen | – |
| | Closing Interview (TBA) | Jesper Eigen Møller (Chairman of the board, BIF) | Management |

Table 4: Process and sources of data collection

Source: Own depiction

For pragmatic and analytical purposes, we conceptualize our interview partners and survey respondents as being representatives of one specific stakeholder group each (e.g. despite being a member of the board, as fan representative, Sune Blom is assigned to the “Supporter” stakeholder group). As chairman of the board, Jesper Eigen Møller is included in the “Management” stakeholder group (see **Section 9** for implications and limitations of this simplification).

6.1.1. Qualitative data collection

Nine semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders of BIF were conducted.

6.1.1.1. Interview design

Comprehended and assessed from the subjects' perspectives, the interviews we conducted with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups were theme-oriented (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), it is the interview's purpose to obtain descriptions of the "life world" with respect to "interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 30). Without aiming at quantification, the Kvale interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed by normal language. Since interviewee statements can often be ambiguous, we exhibited a "deliberate naiveté" and openness towards unexpected and new phenomena during the interview process (Kvale, 1996, p. 30). The structure of our interviews was based on a sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions. With the interview being constructed as an open dialogue, a semi-structured guide of questions was prepared (Kvale, 1996) (see **Appendix 4**). Whether the interview guide was followed strictly or not, we as interviewers aimed at facilitating an open conversation in which the interviewee felt secure (Kvale, 1996).

In light of our research interest, we chose Kvale's semi-structured interview technique for two basic reasons: Firstly, because it is theme-based and focused on qualitative descriptions of the life world from different interviewees' (i.e. stakeholder groups') point of view. Secondly, because the knowledge evolving through dialogue, as well as the interpretation of meaning, suits our overall focus on brand- and stakeholder management within the oftentimes subjective and emotional football industry. Prior to conducting the interviews, a question guide (see **Appendix 4**) universally applicable to all stakeholder groups was designed, containing questions regarding both the club's brand- and stakeholder management. The question guide contained both introducing and follow-up questions in case the dialogue went off topic (Kvale, 1996). Specifically, the interviews consisted of two distinct, yet interrelated parts:

Part one of the interview aimed at defining BIF's brand identity and image from the perspective of the respective interviewee. For that purpose, questions inspired by Burmann et al.'s (2012) six-dimensional brand identity framework were used: *Where does Brøndby IF come from?* (Brand Heritage); *Where is Brøndby IF heading in the future* (Brands Vision); *How does Brøndby IF communicate?* (Brand personality); *What does Brøndby IF believe in?* (Brand values); *What is Brøndby IF particularly good at?* (Brand competencies); *What does Brøndby IF sell and market?* (Brand Performance). For each of the questions above, clarifying explanations could be provided, if necessary.

Part two of the interview shifted focus to stakeholder relationships and covered the following aspects: How the various stakeholder groups within and around BIF influence the club's brand; what the interrelationships

between different stakeholder groups are; and how the various stakeholder groups are actively included/integrated in building brand identity and meaning (e.g. through organizational structures). In order to allow for a more lively discussion, this part of the interview was visually supported by the printout of a stylized stakeholder map (see **Appendix 5**), enabling the interviewees to indicate interactions and relationships more interactively. In a first step, interviewees were invited to locate themselves on the stakeholder map and elaborate on their decision. Thereafter, interviewees were asked to describe their own (aka their stakeholder group's) roles, interests, and powers (Mendelow, 1991) in relation to the BIF brand. Lastly, the final set of questions aimed at identifying interrelationships between various stakeholder groups. This part included questions such as *Which stakeholder groups, besides your own, do you most commonly interact with?*, *What is the nature of this interaction?*, and *In what ways is your stakeholder group connected to the others?*.

6.1.1.2. Sampling and interview process

Our sampling method can be described as non-probability sampling, containing both volunteer (snowball sampling) and haphazard (convenience) methods (Saunders et al., 2016). Convenient Snowball sampling was chosen due to the initial difficulty in identifying key representatives of BIF's stakeholders. Additionally, through our initial contact person Jesper Eigen Møller, snowball sampling gave us greater access to key internal stakeholders such as the head coach and sports director. In order to get the most holistic picture of stakeholder relations possible, our guiding principal in identifying and selecting interview partners was to cover representatives of as many stakeholder groups as possible. Based on both his assessment as to who was available, as well as our wishful requests, through the chairman's referral we managed to establish contact with the club's communication manager (Christian Schultz), fan representative on the board (Sune Blom), head coach (Christian Zorninger), and sports director (Troels Bech). Moreover, attending the club's general assembly allowed us to personally arrange interviews with reporters of three important Danish media outlets (Thomas Sønnichsen, *TV2*; Mads Glenn Wehlast, *Ekstra Bladet*; Morten Crone Sejersbøl, *BT*). Lastly, we were redirected to Kim Jessing Pedersen, special sports consultant at Brøndby municipality, after calling the municipality's public directory. In total, nine semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted.

No later than 24 hours before the actual interview, all interviewees were briefed on the specific interview modalities (i.e. research interest, interview process, timeline) via E-Mail or phone. Moreover, an outline of the interview guide (see **Appendix 4**) as well as stakeholder map (see **Appendix 5**) was provided to them. All but one interview was conducted in the fashion of face-to-face conversations (see **Interview Transcripts** for specific times and location). Due to time constraints, the interview with Mads Glenn Wehlast from *Ekstra Bladet* was conducted over the phone. Furthermore, seven out of the nine interviews were conducted in English. Nevertheless, all interviewees were invited to intermittently switch to Danish throughout the interview if deemed necessary (e.g. to be able to give a more detailed answer). Upon the interviewees request, both Mads Glenn Wehlast and Alexander Zorninger were interviewed in their native language

(Danish and German respectively). Due to the researchers' trilingual background, this did not pose a problem and allowed for both richer answers and a more comfortable atmosphere during the interview process. Before each interview, interviewees were asked for permission to be tape-recorded during the conversation (Kvale, 1996), to which all agreed. Both researchers were present at all interviews.

6.1.2. Quantitative data collection

As a more detailed sub-component of brand identity, BIF's brand personality was determined based on factor-analytical brand personality research (as outlined in **Section 3.1.2.2**). Data was collected via a short questionnaire in a survey of $N = 51$ stakeholders.

6.1.2.1. Brand personality survey design

In order to assess BIF's brand personality, the 26 personality traits constituting Schades's (2012) BPS for professional sports clubs formed the basis of our questionnaire (see **Appendix 6**). Such industry-specific BPSs must fulfill a number of criteria (Schade, 2012): 1) the scale must exclusively contain personality traits, 2) the scale must represent a statistically reliable and valid measuring instrument, 3) all personality traits included in the scale must fundamentally be appropriate to describe the respective brand personality and 4) the coverage of all differentiating personality traits must be ensured. Only if the above criteria are fulfilled, all relevant personality dimensions can be identified, allowing for differentiation from competitors (Burmann et al., 2012). Based on Schade (2012) and Aaker (1997), the construction of factor-analytical scales generally consists of five distinct steps (see Homburg & Giering, 1996, for a detailed description of the methodological procedures involved in conceptualizing and operationalizing complex constructs):

- **Step 1:** The qualitative identification of personality traits from relevant sources as a basis for the main quantitative study.
- **Step 2:** The revision and reduction of personality traits in a pretest.
- **Step 3:** The quantitative main study regarding the appropriateness and suitability of the personality traits to describe the studied object's brand personality.
- **Step 4:** The identification and interpretation of relevant personality dimensions using explorative factor analysis.
- **Step 5:** The review and verification of the scale, based on statistical quality criteria using confirmatory factor analysis.

Using the 26 already validated personality traits based on Schade (2012), the identification, revision, and reduction of suitable personality traits (steps 1 – 2) are not subject of this Master's thesis. Rather, all 26 personality traits can be assumed to a) be generally suitable to describe a person, b) be generally suitable to describe the brand personality of a professional football club, c) not include so-called hygienic traits¹⁵, and d) be clear and concise. Given the explorative nature of our study and research questions, statistical analysis is limited to explorative factor analysis at this point. Confirmatory factor analysis (step 5) to verify the scale was therefore not conducted. Since the survey was designed in English and conducted with primarily Danish native speakers, all 26 personality traits were translated from the German original (Schade, 2012) to both English and Danish by the researchers. While the final questionnaire was fully formulated in English, each question featured a Danish translation of each of the 26 personality traits in brackets (see **Appendix 6**). The final simple questionnaire design consisted of a short introductory instruction, followed by a randomized list of the 26 personality traits in the form of statements about BIF:

Please indicate, in how far the following personality traits are suitable to describe Brøndby IF. You are welcome to answer spontaneously and from the top of your head:

Brøndby IF is convivial (selskabelig, hyggelig) (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)

For each of the 26 personality traits, respondents were asked to assess BIF's brand personality on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree). Deemed irrelevant for the purpose of this study, the questionnaire did not ask for additional demographics. Both a paper and pencil version as well as an online questionnaire using *Google Sheets* was designed.

6.1.2.2. Sampling and data collection process

A convenience sampling approach (Saunders et al., 2012) was employed to distribute the questionnaire. All of our nine interview partners were asked to fill in a paper and pencil version of the questionnaire before starting with the qualitative interview. Additionally, 13 BIF shareholders were approached to fill in the questionnaire during the club's general assembly at *Brøndby Stadium*. Participants were approached based on their English literacy as well as interest in the project. Thirdly, 26 BIF supporters participated in an online version of the survey before the game and during the halftime of the BIF – FCK match on April 17, 2017, in the premises of *Brøndby Stadium*. A tablet computer as well as mobile phones were used to administer the survey. Eager to include supporters of different age groups and sexes, participants were approached randomly and based on their English literacy as well as perceived interest and availability.

¹⁵ The term "hygienic traits" refers to personality traits that are necessary to survive in the market, however do not allow for differentiation from competition (Schade, 2012).

Moreover, the mayor of Brøndby municipality, Kent Max Magelund, was kindly approached by our interview partner Kim Jessing Pedersen to participate in the survey. Nicklas Svendsen, executive assistant at BIF, was attendant during our interview with Troels Beck and thus also participated in the survey. Finally, *BT* reporter Michel Wikkelsø Davidesen completed the survey during BIF's general assembly, however was unavailable for an interview. In total, 51 respondents (all men¹⁶) took part in the survey.

6.2. Data analysis

Interested in discovering inter-stakeholder gaps and tensions, the *Evaluative Brand Gap Model* inspired by Meffert & Burmann (1996) served as a guiding conceptual framework of our data analysis. Before presenting specific analysis procedures, the model shall briefly be explained in more detail.

6.2.1. Evaluative gap model as a tool to measure brand success

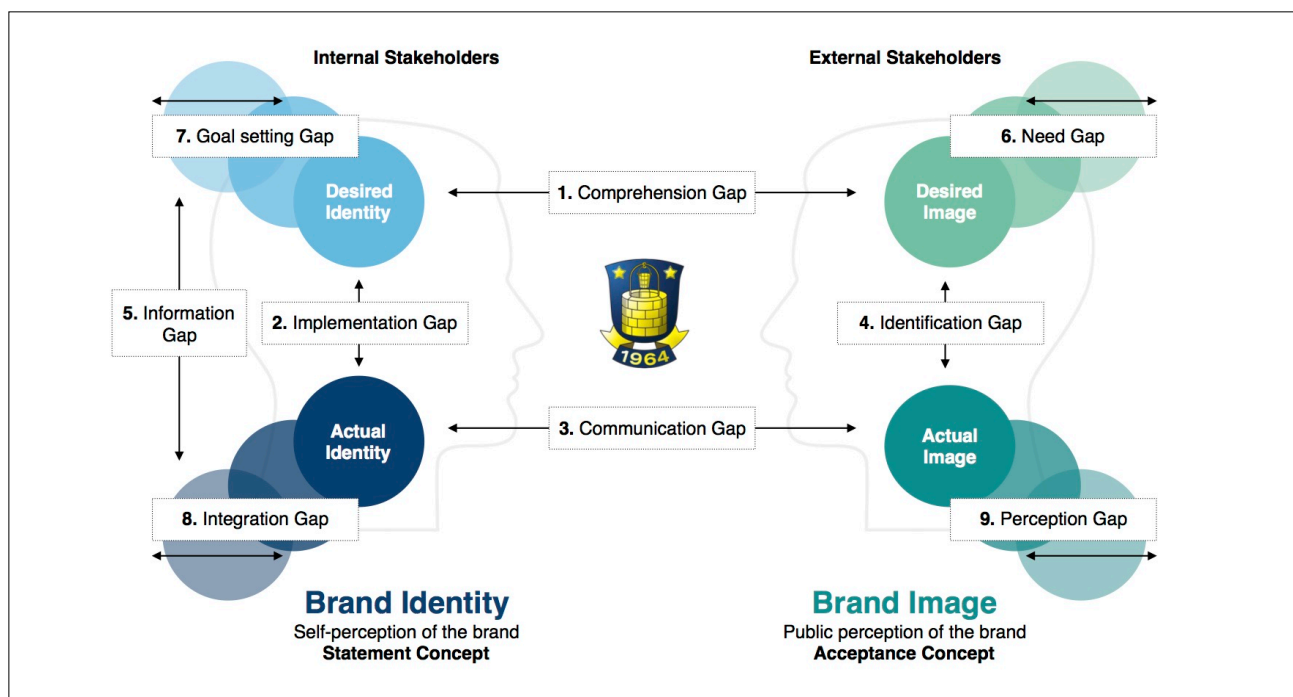


Exhibit 4: Evaluative gap model to measure brand success

Source: Own depiction, adapted from Burmann et al. (2003) and Burmann & Zeplin (2004)

¹⁶ Not on purpose, yet a largely fair representation of the environment we encountered (for limitations, see Chapter 9).

The *Evaluative Brand Gap Model* (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2004; Burmamann et al., 2003) to measure brand success is based on the primary objective of identity-based brand management: Attaining a maximum fit and compliance between brand identity and brand image, resulting in brand strength (Burmamann et al., 2003; Meffert & Burmamann, 1996). In order to identify and diagnose reasons for both unsatisfactory brand strength, and mismatch between internal and external stakeholders, a brand gap analysis provides a helpful instrument. Originally developed by Parasaruman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) to measure service quality, the tool was later introduced by Meffert and Burmamann (1996) in context of identity-based brand management. Importantly, the brand gap analysis divides both brand identity and brand image into an ideal (or desired) state and actual state. Based on that distinction, nine potential brand consistency gaps can be identified (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2004; Bierwirth, 2003) (see **Exhibit 4**).

In context of this thesis, the potential identification and analysis of either of the nine gaps above will be considered and discussed. As indicated in the gap model, in a multi-stakeholder setting, a gap analysis may not only concern the relation between internal and external stakeholder groups (e.g. brand management vs. supporters), but also between various internal (e.g. management vs. athletic staff), as well as external stakeholder groups (e.g. media vs. supporters).

6.2.2. Qualitative data analysis using thematic networks

The thematic networks approach by Attride-Stirling (2001) presents a step-by-step guide for conducting thematic analysis of qualitative material. Thematic networks, according to Attride-Stirling, can be described as “web-like illustrations (networks) that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text” (2001, p. 386). Thematic networks aim at exploring “the understanding of an issue or the significance of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387). In short, it is the purpose of the thematic networks approach to identify, structure, and depict salient themes in a text at different levels. In going back and forth between text and interpretation, importantly, the thematic networks approach shares the key features of any qualitative analysis focused on interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Drawing on a variety of established techniques in qualitative data analysis such as as the conceptual foundations of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauß, 1967) and argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1958), Attride-Stirling’s (2001) thematic networks suit our pragmatic approach to research (Saunders et al., 2016).

At the heart of the thematic networks analysis lies the systematic extraction of the following levels: 1) *Basic Themes* as the lowest-order premises evident in a text; 2) *Organizing Themes* as categories of *Basic Themes*, grouped together to summarize more abstract principles; and 3) *Global Themes* as superordinate themes encapsulating the principle metaphors in the text as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The results are then illustrated as web-like maps depicting all salient themes and their relationships at each of the three levels. In

this paper, thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was guided by the following six analysis steps as suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001): Coding the material, identifying themes, constructing the thematic networks, describing and exploring the thematic networks, summarizing the networks, and interpreting patterns (see **Section 7.2**).

Considered to be a “robust and highly sensitive tool for the systematization and presentation of qualitative analyses” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 385), we chose thematic networks as our analysis technique for one central reason: To explore our own as well as the interviewees’ understanding of the BIF brand and its connection to various stakeholder groups without pretending to “discover the beginning of arguments or the end of rationalizations” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388).

Specifically, in a first step of analysis, all nine interview tape recordings were transcribed in verbatim using *ExpressScribe Version 5.77* and *oTranscribe* transcription software. For any text passage that was difficult to identify (e.g. due to poor sound quality, language etc.), either a best guess or “unintelligible” was put in brackets in the final copy. In a second round, all nine transcripts were edited with regard to cleaning up punctuation, grammar, and speech-disfluencies (e.g. “um”, “uh”, “mh”). The editing put emphasis on not changing the original meaning, content, relevant personality pieces, and people’s speaking style if considered relevant. Since two of the interviews were conducted in Danish and German respectively, these were first transcribed in their original language and later translated to English. We note that this intermediate step might have lead to a minor loss of information. The final transcripts (See **Interview Transcripts 1 – 9**) formed our textual basis for the 6-step construction of thematic networks based on Attride-Stirling (2001). For the purpose of better understanding, the procedure of constructing and interpreting the networks will be explained in the specific context of our qualitative data (see **Chapter 7**).

6.2.3. Quantitative Analysis based on explorative factor analysis

Before conducting quantitative analysis, in a first step, the data set was examined and adjusted based on outliers in the sense of systemized response behavior, such as answering all questions with “5 – strongly agree” (e.g. due to above-average alcohol consumption or post-acceptance unwillingness to participate in the survey). This resulted in a final sample of $N = 51$.

Firstly, a main goal of the quantitative analysis was to predict dimensions of BIF’s brand personality, examine reliability and validity of the newly developed scale, as well as to eliminate non-appropriate items if necessary. Because this study is based on factor-analytical personality research, the survey data was analyzed using explorative factor analysis (main component analysis in particular) (Backhaus et al., 2008). Statistics software *IBM SPSS Version 24* was used and specific analysis procedures were largely based on the works of Schade (2012), Mäder (2005), Hieronimus (2003), and Aaker (1997).

Secondly, the goal of the quantitative analysis was to identify potential consistency gaps (Burmahn et al., 2012) between the respondents. To compare the assessments of relevant personality dimensions between the various stakeholder groups, in a second step the visualization of results in a so-called personality differential was chosen (Sattler & Völckner, 2007); a method of analysis inspired by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) semantic differential. Thereafter, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was chosen to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the mean personality assessments of two or more independent (and unrelated) groups (i.e. stakeholder groups).

When conducting the analyses above, specific statistical assumptions and quality standards must be considered. For better understanding, these assumptions as well as the detailed procedure of conducting the quantitative analyses will be explained in specific context of our own data in the following **Chapter 7**.

7. Presentation and discussion of results

The presentation of findings in this Master's thesis builds up step-by-step, based on the succession of our research questions Q1 – Q5 as formulated in **Chapter 4**. At the end of each step, an “Instant Replay” is presented, summarizing the central takeaways of the preceding section.

7.1. Relevant stakeholder groups in regards to managing BIF's brand

Question 1: *Who are the relevant stakeholder groups in regards to managing Brøndby IF's brand?*

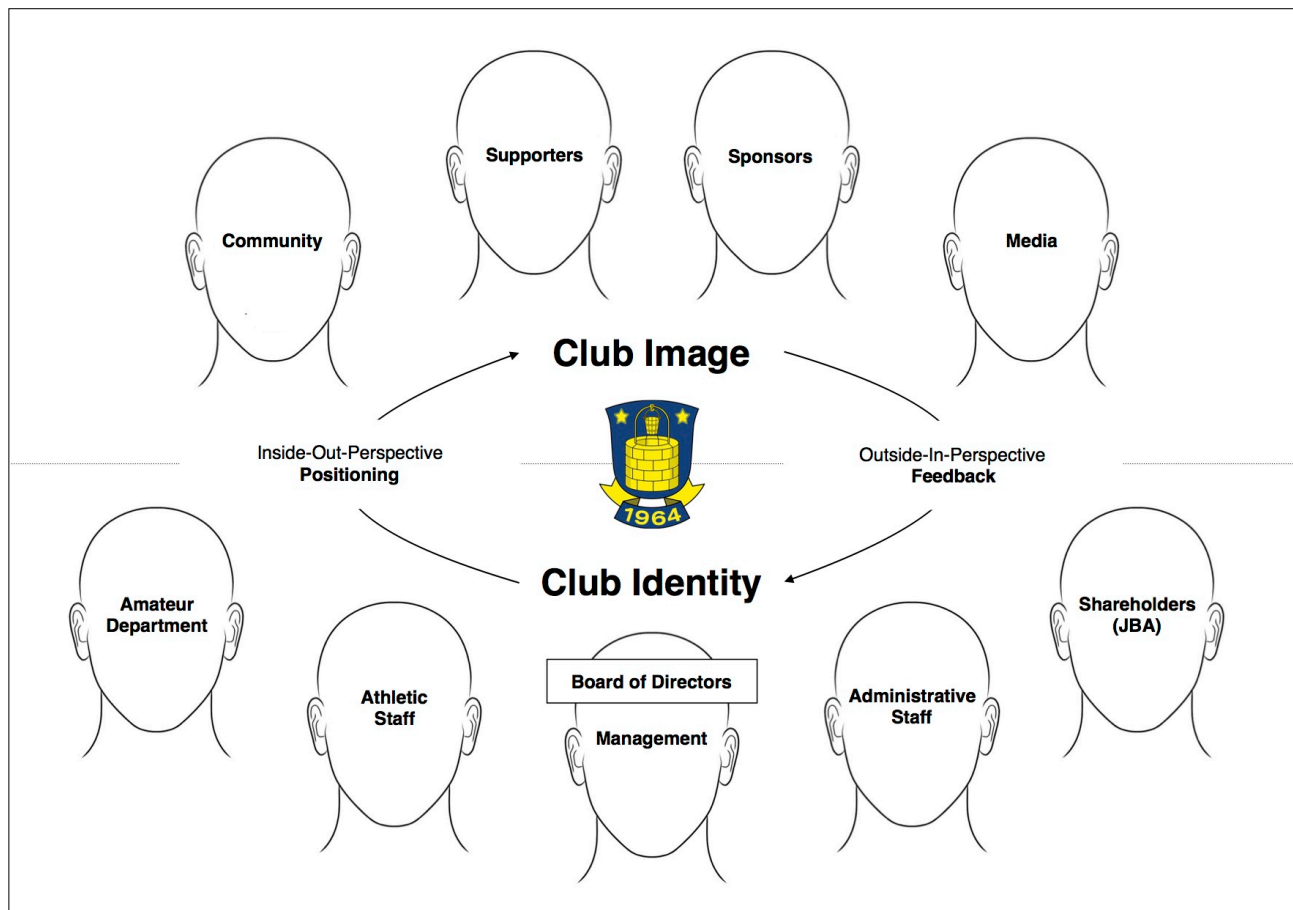


Exhibit 5: Map of relevant stakeholder groups in regards to managing Brøndby IF's brand

Source: Own depiction

Identification of relevant stakeholder groups with regards to the management of BIF's brand is done partly using insights from the academic literature (see **Section 3.2**). To supplement the literature, the preliminary interview with BIF chairman Jesper Eigen Møller was used to confirm our initial classification. Inspired by the concept of identity-based brand management's distinction between internal and external stakeholders, **Exhibit 5** maps the nine stakeholder groups that are deemed relevant in the context of BIF's brand management.

The stakeholder map depicted in **Exhibit 5** exclusively focuses on BIF's brand and stakeholder management and only contains the most important stakeholder groups. Therefore, a number of stakeholders are excluded, which ordinarily would be present if mapping the entirety of BIF's stakeholder environment. Governing bodies like FIFA, UEFA, and DBU certainly affect the strategic decision making of Brøndby IF, however, their direct effect on brand management can be considered negligible (Møller, 2017; Junghagen, 2016) and so they are excluded as stakeholder groups. We note, that the depiction of stakeholders in **Exhibit 5** is unique to Brøndby IF and doesn't necessarily reflect the stakeholder environment of other professional football clubs.

Management and board

Management represents the organization's main strategists (Johnson et al., 2008). In BIF's case, management can be assumed to be directly involved in brand management through their day-to-day business of designing the brand (Møller, 2017, Bech, 2017). Our representative within BIF's management is sport director Troels Bech. Moreover, the board of directors can be assumed to have an influence on BIF's brand in terms of driving, developing, and inspiring its strategic direction (Møller, 2017): "We have to be the ones who are challenging the management in terms of the day-to-day work" (Møller, 2017, 104). Moreover, building bridges between various stakeholder groups can be seen as an important role of the board (Møller, 2017). In our data set, chairman Jesper Eigen Møller represents this stakeholder group. In the following analysis, management and board – as "very senior management" (Møller, 2017, 96) – will be subsumed under a combined "Management" stakeholder group.

Athletic Staff

BIF's athletic staff, such as players and coaches, can be assumed to have an influence on the brand through both their on-pitch performance and public image (e.g. through interviews or social media): "We have by far the biggest influence because we are the ones who have to generate sporting success [...] When I say something, it is perceived as a statement from the club rather than just the person Alexander Zorniger" (Zorniger, 2017, 51). Our interview partner and representative from the athletic staff is head coach Alexander Zorniger.

Administrative Staff (Communications Department)

According to communications manager Christian Schultz, the communications department is the most important department in regards to BIF's brand management (Schultz, 2017). It handles operational responsibilities including communications and marketing and is the official touchpoint, or "middleman" (Schultz, 2017) between the organization and the outside world. Communications director Christian Schultz is our representative from this stakeholder group:

"I was working on Strategy 6.4 together with Jesper Møller, and the board of directors [...] That's our core storytelling [...] So everyone who works here understands, this is who we are. So, when we have to make a decision about something, if it doesn't reflect with our core story, then we cannot make the decision" (Schultz, 2017, 159).

Shareholders (aka Jan Bech Andersen)

BIF currently has approximately 25,000 shareholders (Annual report, 2016). The group was not initially considered a pertinent stakeholder group with regards to brand management. However, in the case of BIF, the role of shareholders is specifically relevant due to the strong role and influence of majority investor Jan Bech Andersen (Blom, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017; Møller, 2017). With 52% of the shares, "he can do whatever he likes [and] has 100% power and influence" (Blom, 2017, 38, 52). Since the 2017 general assembly, Jan Bech Andersen also has a seat at BIF's board of directors. Neither Jan Bech Andersen nor other representatives of the shareholder group were interviewed. Thus, their views are not directly represented in the qualitative analysis.

Amateur Department

BIF's amateur department is the original governing body and institution of historic significance in BIF. Being represented twice at board level (Møller, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017, Blom, 2017, Wehlast, 2017), the amateur department can be assumed to be involved in BIF's strategic brand management. No representatives of the amateur department were interviewed.

Municipality

As the local government, Brøndby municipality maintains a level of cooperation with BIF, largely due to its involvement in the club's conception. Despite their diminishing involvement in the club's day-to-day business (Pedersen, 2017), the municipality can also be assumed to have its stake and interest in the club's brand management (Møller, 2017; Pedersen, 2017): "When clubs are performing well, behaving well, and becoming positive influences on youth, it helps what the municipality would like to do. It reflects on the total appearance of a city, region, and even country when you have well-performing clubs" (Pedersen, 2017, 209).

Apart from that, the municipality's level of brand influence must be seen in relation to the club's level of professionalization and privatization (Pedersen, 2017). Our representative of the local community is the municipality's special sports consultant, Kim Jessing Pedersen.

Supporters

In our case, the supporters stakeholder group encompasses the entire spectrum of BIF fans as discussed by Smith (1988), Hunt et al., (1999), and Tapp (2004). Supporters can be assumed to have a very strong influence on the brand (Møller, 2017). No matter if through their support on and off the pitch, their actions can reflect both positively and negatively on the club brand (Møller, 2017). According to Blom (2017), "it's not normal that you have a stakeholder group, formally defined as being customers, that engage that much in the brand and the company and [...] demand so much influence; see themselves as a part of the company" (132). Representing this stakeholder group in the given analysis is fan representative¹⁷ and member of the board, Sune Blom.

Sponsors

Directly being invested in the brand financially, sponsors are particularly involved in a club's brand management: "[...] they spend part of their marketing budget being sponsors of Brøndby, so they want mileage from that investment" (Møller, 2017, 201). Aiming at shaping and positioning their own brand, sponsors identify with and are directly affected by the values and "content" the club offers (Schultz, 2017). No sponsors of BIF were interviewed. Thus, the views of this external stakeholder groups are only represented through third-party descriptions in this study.

Media

The media stakeholder group includes media agencies, both with and without broadcasting/news rights to the brand. By reporting around the club, what the media writes and broadcasts has an effect on the brand (Sønnichsen, 2017; Blom, 2017). Ideally, "it's the media's task to balance the stories and come as close to the reality as possible" (Wehlast, 2017, 47). As *BT*'s sports editor puts it: "Of course we have a huge influence [...] the media is the biggest platform [...] we are shaping the brand as well. And we're also making it more difficult for them to change their brand" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 73). In this analysis, the media's perspective is represented by journalists from Denmark's three most relevant media outlets in terms of sports news (Schultz, 2017): Mads Wehlast (*Ekstra Bladet*), Thomas Sønnichsen (*TV2*), and Morten Sejersbøl (*BT*).

¹⁷ Elected by Brøndby Supporter Trust (BST), a proxy for small BIF shareholders

Instant Replay: Officially confirmed by the club's leadership, a number of both internal and external stakeholders presumably play an important role in BIF's brand management. Internal to the club, these include stakeholders of strategic importance such as management, the board of directors, main shareholder Jan Bech Andersen, as well as the amateur department qua board representation. Influencing brand management from a more operational standpoint, the club's athletic and administrative staff have been identified. External to the club, supporters, the media, sponsors, and Brøndby's municipality represent stakeholder groups relevant to BIF's brand management.

7.2. BIF's brand identity, image, and personality from the perspective of relevant stakeholder groups

Question 2: *What is Brøndby IF's brand identity, image, and personality from the perspective of relevant stakeholder groups?*

The second question within our succession of research questions will be answered both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Firstly, qualitative thematic networks of BIF's brand identity and image are constructed and explored in **Section 7.2.1**. The herein findings are based on part one of our in-depth expert interviews (see **Appendix 4**). Secondly, in **Section 7.2.2**, statistical factor-analysis is conducted in order to identify relevant dimensions of BIF's brand personality.

7.2.1. Qualitative results: Thematic analysis of BIF's brand identity and image

Seeking to “unearth themes salient in a text at different levels, [the] following thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction” (Attride-Stirling, 2010, p. 387) of BIF's brand identity and image in a combined analysis. The results of the interviews are presented according to the six analysis steps in employing thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Step 1: Coding the material

The coding framework was devised with the aim “to systematically explore a set of theoretical constructs” (Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 391). Based on the theoretical interests guiding our research (i.e. research question Q2 and question guide), as well as initial salient issues that arose during the interviews, we identified six non-redundant and non-interchangeable codes (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Interested in exploring

BIF's brand identity and image from the perspective of relevant stakeholders, the coding framework was based on the six dimensions of brand identity as defined by Burmann et al. (2012): *Brand Heritage*, *Brand Vision*, *Brand Personality*, *Brand Values*, *Brand Competencies*, and *Brand Performance*.

Step 2: Identifying Basic Themes

Color-coding the edited versions of our interview transcripts, the coding framework above allowed for a dissection of the text into meaningful and more manageable segments (Attride-Sterling, 2001). This was done by re-reading the relevant text segments in context of the code under which they were classified, and collecting them in a table using *Microsoft Excel* (see **Appendix 7**). Salient issues discussed as well as common and significant themes for each of the six codes were extracted. Furthermore, themes were refined into *Basic Themes* in a way that they were a) specific enough to be non-repetitive and b) broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas across numerous text segments.

Step 3: Constructing the networks

Next, all *Basic Themes* identified were assembled and rearranged into similar, coherent groupings and visualized as freeform mind maps using *SimpleMind Version 1.15.2 build 5006*. Decisions about how to group them were made based on content, theoretical grounds, and our interpretations of data. In a first step, *Basic Themes* were adopted from the themes identified in step 2. They included both direct formulations from the interview transcripts as well as own formulations based on issues discussed under the respective codes. In a second step, the *Basic Themes* were examined and rearranged into more general *Organizing Themes* which summarized the underlying valence of the *Basic Themes* constituting them. Lastly, we identified the *Global Themes* by summarizing the main arguments, claims, and assumptions that the *Organizing Themes* were about. We note that in deducing the *Global Themes*, our underlying six-dimensional theoretical brand identity framework (Burmann et al., 2012) played an important role, guiding the overall salience and construction of the final networks. Specifically, a total of six *Global Themes* was identified in relation to BIF's brand identity and image. As suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001), the final findings were illustrated in non-hierarchical and web-like thematic network representations (see **Appendix 8** for visualization of the final six thematic networks including post-analysis *Global Themes*, *Organizing Themes*, and *Basic Themes*).

Step 4 – 6: Exploration of the networks, summary, and interpretation

Reaching a further level of abstraction, in the next steps of analysis the underlying meaning of the networks was explored, summarized, and interpreted. Furthermore, for each *Global Theme*, the content of the *Organizing Themes* was analyzed to identify potential tensions and gaps (see **Section 7.3**). This was done by also returning to the original interview transcripts and interpreting the text in light of both, the thematic networks that had been created previously, as well as stakeholder inter-relationships that were deduced from the texts. This being said, the selection of *Global Themes* to be explored changed throughout the analysis,

depending on which part of the research question was answered. In order to allow for richer interpretation of the coded material, thematic analysis was conducted together by both researchers to allow for multiple verbalizations of ideas and perspectives about the respondents under investigation. Once the *Global Themes* had been established, the next task was to interpret the original interviews with the aid of the thematic networks (Attride-Sterling, 2001). This allowed us to deduce the deeper meaning behind the original interviews. From here, it was possible to identify patterns, which in the following presentation of results are elaborated upon in the context of our research questions.

Summarizing our first qualitative analysis, the six *Global Themes* making up BIF's combined brand identity and image from the perspective of the club's internal and external stakeholders are presented in **Exhibit 6**. Due to the limited scope of this Master's thesis, in the following sections only a condensed summary of the six thematic networks is presented (see **Appendix 8** for a rigorous construction and exploration of the thematic networks, exemplified in the case of brand personality). Due to the strong explanatory power of our *Global* and *Organizing Themes*, this is deemed sufficient to obtain an understanding of the subsequent steps of analysis.

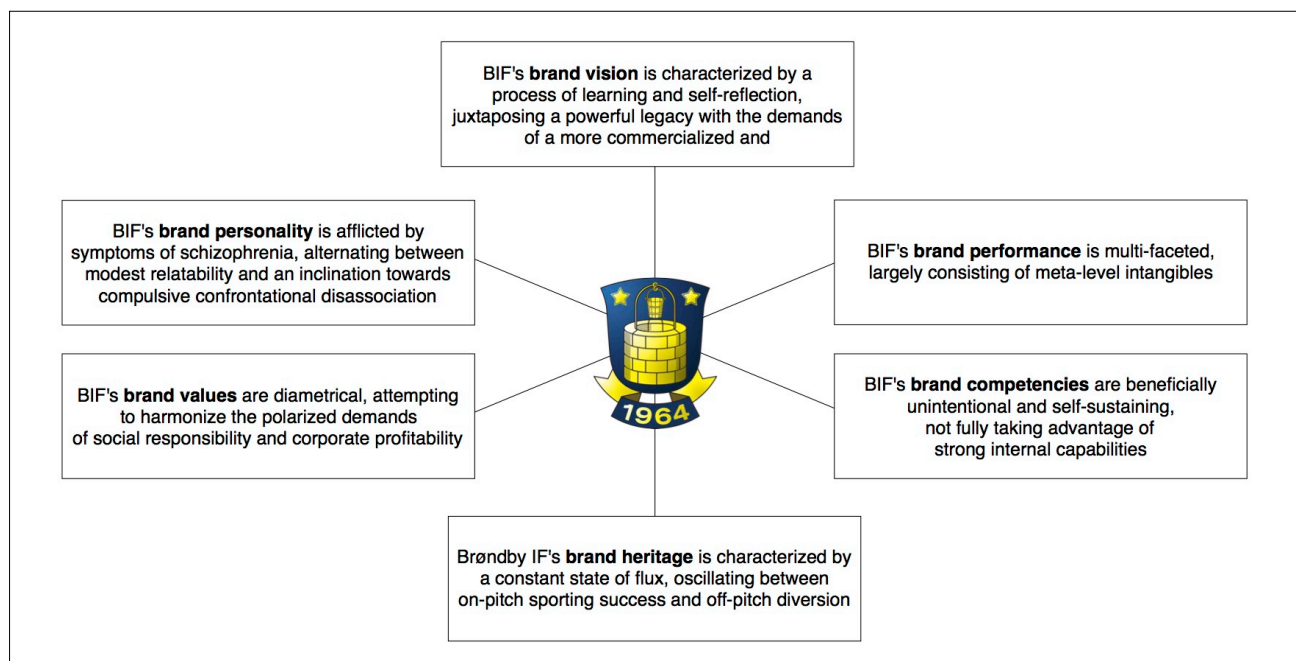


Exhibit 6: BIF's brand identity and image combined – Global Themes

Source: Own depiction

7.2.1.1. BIF's brand heritage as a state of constant flux

The *Global Theme* deduced from the coding framework based on perceptions of BIF's brand heritage is comprised of five *Organizing Themes* and is summarized in **Table 5**.

| Brøndby IF's brand heritage is characterized by a constant state of flux, oscillating between on-pitch sporting success and off-pitch diversion |
|--|
| Close relationship to institutions in the external environment as drivers of club development |
| Intentional and unintentional ambassadors of the brand |
| Periods of financial and organizational mismanagement |
| National and international success story in late 90s and early 2000s |
| Short but turbulent club evolution |

Table 5: BIF's Brand Heritage: Global and Organizing Themes

Source: Own depiction

All five *Organizing Themes*, and their respective *Basic Themes*, are grounded in the knowledge of the organization's past and what result it has had on the image of the brand over the course of its existence. The excerpt from the *Global Theme*, "characterized by a constant state of flux", reflects a substantiated recollection of BIF as a club which rose to prominence quickly and experienced some of the highest levels of sporting success in Danish football history, but have also experienced all kinds of "lows" since then (Møller, 2017; Blom, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Wehlast, 2017): "In the beginning, when they started up and merged the two small clubs, they were going into this huge success. A lot of good surroundings. Because of that they had all people from around Brøndby losing their heart to it. They are standing on such a great fundament as a club" (Sønnichsen, 2017, 4).

BIF "is a strong brand and quite glamorous as well, but of course that is more in the past" (Møller, 2017, 15). Moreover, the club's success has repeatedly been sidetracked and oftentimes pivoted the organization towards instability, sporting disaster, or corporate scandal – captured by the *Global Theme*'s addition of "off-pitch diversion". This is seen, in part, by the *Organizing Theme* "Periods of financial mismanagement": "Through the years, Brøndby IF had a lot of financial problems. There [have] been a lot about people leaving the board and others coming in" (Pedersen, 2017, 79). As fan-representative, Sune Blom adds: "Before we were saved in 2012, we had five, eight, ten years of conflict between Per Bjerregaard, the former director and chairman of the board, and the fans" (Blom, 2017, 152).

In some way, the valence of the *Global Theme* is encapsulated well by BIF's current head-coach Alexander Zorniger (2017), who says "I think that at the moment they are on the threshold on whether their past is in their way or helping them [...] Remembering where you are coming from is good, but you need to find

appropriate means to take the next steps and that they are not into the past but into the future” (7). This quote segues well into a discussion of BIF’s brand vision, for which its thematic network is described next.

7.2.1.2. BIF’s brand vision as a process of learning and self-reflection

The third *Global Theme* to be discussed is deduced from the coding framework based on perceptions of BIF’s brand vision and is comprised of nine *Organizing Themes* (see **Table 6**).

| BIF’s brand vision is characterized by a process of learning and self-reflection, juxtaposing a powerful legacy with the demands of a more commercialized and independent future |
|---|
| Modernize and position the brand towards future generations of Brøndby stakeholders (on/offline) |
| Critically reflect upon club heritage as potential driver of future ambitions |
| Improve and solidify sporting performance domestically to ensure qualification to European competitions |
| Improve output level of BIF’s youth academy and ‘in-source’ local talent development |
| Commercialize sustainably on a more diversified set of revenue streams with Jan Bech Andersen as main investor |
| Update and improve the experience and entertainment factor around the game |
| Reinforce a constructive communication and cooperation with the various supporter groups |
| Advance privatization efforts to increase organizational sovereignty |
| Develop philosophies for career counseling, player mentoring, and coaching |

Table 6: BIF’s Brand Vision: Global and Organizing Themes

Source: Own depiction

This *Global Theme* pertains to various thoughts, comments, strategies, and questions regarding the direction of BIF’s brand. The excerpt from the *Global Theme*, “learning and self-reflection”, characterizes the need for the organization to act deliberately and rationally based on its experiences (Blom, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Møller, 2017). In this age of professional football, the ability to commercialize and professionalize as an organization is a prerequisite of “big-football” success (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Wehlast, 2017). One can therefore argue that BIF’s strategy 6.4 is the organization’s attempt to reconcile the best parts of its past with the contemporary demands of today (Blom, 2017; Wehlast, 2017). This sentiment is echoed by *BT*’s sports editor, Morten Sejersbøl: “I think they would still love to build on that [history] but do it in a business kind of way” (2017, 27).

Considering BIF’s working men’s heritage (Møller, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Zorniger, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017), one could construe BIF’s efforts to increase their autonomy from the municipality (Pedersen, 2017) as contradicting their core values. We cannot know for sure, “but the other way around, if

they get more professional and improve and get better at earning money, then they should be stronger and maybe they can afford to help the community more” (Pedersen, 2017, 90). In any case, this *Global Theme* characterizes the brand vision as a balancing act between the tensions of organization and disorganization; history and future; self-reflection and self-expression:

“Whatever you did in the past, or whatever you try to produce in the long term is always overwhelmed by the present feeling and moment. And if you take that roller coaster ride from moment to moment, it's easy to lose track of it. Many of these stakeholders (supporters, sponsors, media) are very much aware of right now; of this moment. So that will influence on a very big scale the direction you want to go into” (Bech, 2017, 79).

7.2.1.3. BIF's brand personality as afflicted by symptoms of schizophrenia

The *Global Theme* deduced from the coding framework based on perceptions of BIF's brand personality is comprised of seven *Organizing Themes* (see **Table 7**).

| BIF's brand personality is afflicted by symptoms of schizophrenia, alternating between modest relatability and an inclination towards compulsive confrontational disassociation |
|--|
| High brand exposure as both asset and liability |
| Intuitive informality in internal communication as a potential obstacle towards transparency and accessibility |
| Unpredictability and dysfunction as uncontrollable elements of external brand communication |
| Eye-level communication as a way to convey genuine relatability and down-to-earth attitude |
| Understated self-confidence as a means to compensate for recent mediocrity |
| Non-associations as a central instrument to communicate otherness and differentiation |
| Playing style on pitch as a means to express brand personality |

Table 7: BIF's Brand Personality: Global and Organizing Themes

Source: Own depiction

The thematic network on BIF's brand personality as outlined above, represents an exploration of the participant's conceptualizations of BIF's personality in the context of a broader discussion on BIF's branding and stakeholder management. All the *Basic Themes* (see **Appendix 8**) relate to how the brand communicates – either through controlled and intentional mediums (i.e. playing style, inclusivity, “walk the talk”, etc.), or unintentionally via unpredictable and visceral reactions by others on behalf of the brand. The excerpt from the *Global Theme*, “symptoms of schizophrenia”, characterizes the duality of BIF's personality. On the one hand, the club is seen as level-headed or “very careful” (Wehlast, 2017, 3), while at the same time “the fans

[can] be a problem, because [BIF] can't control [them]" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 113). Thus, external stakeholders impart elements of “compulsive confrontational disassociation” to the brand’s narrative. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, a primary example of this is the rat incident (see **Introduction**): “But when you saw this "Rotte-gate" at FCK, it changed the whole [brand] picture” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 113). One abstracts from the *Basic Themes*, that this kind of radical disassociation stems from its rival club, objectively, performing better in recent years. Hence the *Basic Theme* “Haven’t won anything recently so [fans] have to compensate”. In general, BIF’s brand personality as characterized by its internal stakeholders tending to be more careful and strategic. At the same time, it is subject to the passionate and (sometimes conflicting) appropriations of the brand by its external stakeholders.

7.2.1.4. BIF's diametrical brand values

The fourth *Global Theme* deduced from the coding framework based on stakeholder perceptions of BIF’s brand values is comprised of five *Organizing Themes* and can be stated as follows:

| BIF's brand values are diametrical, attempting to harmonize the polarized demands of social responsibility and corporate profitability |
|---|
| Core values are inherently social-democratic and derived from working class milieu |
| Altruistic values as management-guiding principles |
| Commercial values as subject of increasing debate |
| Volunteerism as an enabler of community participation |
| Corporate citizenship (Fælleskab) as a core value to include all stakeholders in/around the club |

Table 8: Global and Organizing Themes for BIF’s Brand Values

Source: Own depiction

All the *Basic Themes* (see **Appendix 8**) in this thematic network relate to the basic values, beliefs, and convictions of the organization. When abstracted together, they hint at the tension referenced in the introduction of this paper by Storm (2011) as to what should be the primary objective of the professional football club (sporting success vs. profit maximization). The key detail of the *Global Theme* is to “harmonize”, reflecting the organization’s efforts to reconcile the differing needs and desires of its stakeholders with regards to this tension. Within the *Global Theme*, the primary *Organizing Themes* with which the issue of harmonization is relevant, can be verbalized as “Altruistic values as management-guiding principles” vs. “Commercial values as a subject of increasing debate”. “Altruistic values” is abstracted from *Basic Themes* which uplift the importance of the organization over that of the individual: “You don't see me a lot in the media and so on, because I think it is not my role” (Møller, 2017, 90). Moreover, the chairman notes that “Just because I am the chairman does not mean that I am much more important” (Møller, 2017,

90). At the same time, “Commercial values” is an *Organizing Theme* characterizing the shift from an altruistic corporate organizational culture/structure, to one reminiscent of “big-business” football (Møller, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017). This has raised some concerns among the brand’s external stakeholders: “Now we are owned by one businessman. Although he's a major BIF fan himself, there’s still only one person owns the club; and in time I think this will make a difference in our brand identity, our history” (Blom, 2017; 56).

Only time will tell how the organization manages to deal with this conflict, however insights into the management’s approach to reconciling these differences is exhibited by management: “Football is not a novel; for me it's an epoch. And I think that for me that leads to a really useful alternative to the idea of being a company” (Bech, 2017, 19). The *Organizing Theme* pertaining to “corporate citizenship” abstracts the company’s corporate structures and philosophies enabling feelings of inclusivity and loyalty in all of its stakeholders. The valence of the constituting *Basic Themes* suggests that this idea of “corporate citizenship” might be the organization’s approach to being socially responsible *and* fiscally profitable simultaneously. Kim Pedersen, sports consultant to Brøndby municipality, comments: “I think they are also very aware about it inside the club that they need to do something, not only for one part of the community, but everywhere in Brøndby” (2017, 63).

7.2.1.5. BIF's beneficially unintentional and self-sustaining brand competencies

The fifth *Global Theme* deduced from the coding framework based on stakeholder perceptions of BIF’s brand competencies is comprised of seven *Organizing Themes* and is summarized in **Table 9**.

| BIF's brand competencies are beneficially unintentional and self-sustaining, not fully taking advantage of strong internal capabilities |
|--|
| BIF is lucky to have their heritage as an incontestable competitive advantage |
| BIF can rely on unrivaled media exposure/attention as well as public interest |
| BIF exhibits the ability to unite differing social entities under a common cause |
| BIF if experienced in relating with the public (PR) and the Media in particular |
| BIF has a broad and passionate fan base representing both loyal support and a strong, but underutilized, commercial asset |
| BIF has ambitious facilities and infrastructure as a self-enforcing signal of prominence as a football club |
| BIF has tangible and intangible capabilities to attract and develop new, current, and former talent |

Table 9: BIF’s Brand Competencies: Global and Organizing Themes

Source: Own depiction

The abstraction of *Organizing Themes* into a *Global Theme* is relatively simple in this case: Upon inspection, the *Organizing Themes* subscribe to the idea that BIF's primary competitive advantage is one that has developed fortuitously, and hasn't necessarily been the result of focused action by the organization. Support for the brand doesn't even necessarily stem from sporting success, as is typical of most football clubs: "But also in bad times they support their team – we call them the best supporters in Denmark" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 113). The excerpt from the *Global Theme* "beneficially unintentional and self-sustaining" captures this idea of literally having stumbled into success. Barring complete disassociation with its fanbase, it can be argued that BIF's support can only increase as their sporting performance increases, "so it's the hang-around people who will come when they're going to win" (Sønnichsen, 2017, 30).

Regardless, BIF has the largest number of declared fans out of all Danish football teams, which unquestionably acts as a source of competitive advantage (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017). Given that BIF has a lot of "weight" (Blom, 2017, 98), there's the question of whether the organization has exploited this advantage to the fullest effect. In this sense, and due to the *Basic Themes* extracted from the text via the coding framework, this underutilization of internal capabilities is encapsulated in the *Global Theme*. As communications director, Christian Schultz (2017) puts it: "We got this huge fan base and we need to harvest them in some way" (103).

7.2.1.6. BIF's multi-faceted brand performance

The sixth and final *Global Theme* deduced from the coding framework based on stakeholder perceptions of BIF's brand performance is comprised of seven *Organizing Themes* and is summarized in **Table 10**.

| BIF's brand performance is multi-faceted, largely consisting of meta-level intangibles |
|---|
| BIF's product is entertainment |
| BIF's product is experience |
| BIF adds value through hospitality-related services |
| BIF creates value through brand associations and content |
| BIF's core business is sports competition |
| BIF creates value through community and a sense of belonging |
| BIF sells feelings and emotions |

Table 10: BIF's Brand Performance: Global and Organizing Themes

Source: Own depiction

The final *Global Theme* refers to the nature of the “product” of BIF and is based off the abstractions taken from the interviewees’ answers regarding what BIF “sells”. Examining the *Global Theme* as the summation of its constituent concepts allows us to extract its meaning from the excerpts, “performance is multi-faceted” and “consisting of meta-level intangibles”. The coding framework based on performance is meant to encapsulate all the different ways that the brand adds value to its stakeholders. “Multi-faceted” refers to the numerous perceptions of what the brand’s product is. The most basic and obvious interpretation of BIF’s product is represented by the *Organizing Theme*, “BIF’s core business is sports competition”. It is abstracted from *Basic Themes* pertaining to the realization that football is the core around which the entire organization operates (Zorninger, 2017). On an extended level, BIF is characterized as being in the entertainment and experience business: “We are very cognizant that yes, it is soccer. But it is only the basis of the business [...] we are in entertainment” (Møller, 2017). Alluding to the excerpt “meta-level intangibles”, on an even more abstract level, BIF is everything from experiences to feelings and emotions such as hope and belief (Blom, 2017; Bech, 2017), to a portal of brand associations and media content (Schultz, 2017; Wehlast, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Sejersbøl).

7.2.2. Quantitative results: A brand personality scale for Brøndby IF

To get a more detailed understanding of BIF’s brand personality, the survey data ($N = 51$) was analyzed using explorative factor analysis (principal component analysis, hereinafter PCA) (Backhaus et al., 2008). The analysis procedures described in the following section are largely based on the works of Schade (2012), Mäder (2005), Hieronimus (2003), and Aaker (1997). Statistics software *IBM SPSS Version 24* was used to conduct the analysis.

In a first step the data’s suitability for conducting an explorative factor analysis (factorability) was examined using the *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin* criterion (KMO) and anti-image covariance matrix (Schade, 2012). The KMO criterion indicates to what degree the output variables belong together. Generally, KMO values $> .05$ indicate that the data set is suitable for conducting explorative factor analysis (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The anti-image covariance matrix according to Guttman (1953) explains the share of variance that is independent from all other variables. For conducting a factor analysis, the anti image of variables should be as small as possible (Backhaus et al., 2008). A data set is not suitable for conducting a factor analysis, if 25% or more of the non-diagonal elements in the anti-image covariance matrix have values $> .09$ (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974).

- The first analysis of our data indicates that both of the criteria above are fulfilled: With .61, the KMO value is clearly $> .05$ (see **Appendix 9**).
- Moreover, only 16 out of 676 (2.4%) values in the anti-image covariance matrix have values $> .09$ (see **Appendix 10**).

Besides factorability, also assumptions regarding the quality of scales, normality, and sample size were considered. According to Field (2009), the variables should be measured at an interval level and ideally be normally distributed. Accordingly, the normality assumption was examined using *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* and *Shapiro-Wilk* test statistics¹⁸ (Field, 2009). Regarding sample size, “much has been written about the necessary sample size for factor analysis resulting in many rules-of-thumb” (Field, 2000, p. 433). Such rules range from 10 – 15 subjects per variable (Field, 2009) to having “at least 50 observations and at least 5 times as many observations as variables” (Habing, 2003, p. 3). Either way, a sample is adequate if the KMO value is $> .50$ and all elements on the diagonal of the correlation matrix are > 0.50 (Field, 2000).

- Regarding the quality scales, all our variables are measured at a 5-point Likert interval level (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree).
- Conducting both *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* and *Shapiro-Wilk* tests, all of our 26 variables deviated significantly from normal ($p < .05$ for all variables) (see **Appendix 11**). Also a transformation of the data set using the natural logarithm (*LN*) did not increase normality ($p < .05$ for all variables) (Field, 2009) (see **Appendix 11**). According to Field (2009), however, the normality assumption in PCA is only implicit and for “many purposes it is not necessary to assume any particular distribution for the variables x in a PCA” (Jolliffe, 2002, p. 394). Acknowledging this limitation, we therefore decided not to consider the non-Gaussianity of data to be a criterion of exclusion.
- Despite having a sample > 50 (Habing, 2003), due to our large number of variables (i.e. 26), our small sample of $N = 51$ does not fulfill the criterion of 5 times as many observations as variables (Habing, 2003). However, with a KMO of .61, as well as all the diagonal elements in the covariance and correlation matrix being greater than .50 (see **Appendices 10 and 12**), the sample can be considered adequate for conducting PCA.

In a next step, eigenvalues of the rotated factor solution were examined as a first indication regarding the number of factors representing the brand personality of BIF (Schade, 2012; Field, 2009; Rietveld & Van Hout, 1993). As a rule of thumb, only those factors with an eigenvalue > 1.00 were retained (Guttman-Kaiser rule) (Schade, 2012; Field, 2009). In addition, a scree-plot was examined to visually estimate the number of factors. As a rule of thumb, all factors before the breaking point, or “elbow”, were considered as an indication for the number of relevant factors (Elbow criterion) (Schade, 2012; Field, 2009). Lastly, the explained variance of factors with an eigenvalue > 1.00 was examined. While the literature suggests a minimum level of 50% explained variance (Homburg & Giering, 1998), as a more critical rule of thumb we only retained the factors which in accumulation accounted for about 70-80% of the variance (Field, 2009).

¹⁸ Note, that for Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics, non-significant values indicate normal distribution

- Eigenvalues up to the seventh component indicated values > 1.00 (Guttman-Kaiser criterion), initially pointing towards a 7-factor solution (see **Appendix 13**)
- Visual examination of the scree-plot did not confirm the 7-factor solution, with the greatest difference between eigenvalues and therefore a breaking point (elbow) being visible between the fifth and sixth variable (see **Appendix 14**). This indicated towards a potential reduction to a 5-factor solution.
- Accumulated, the seven components with an eigenvalue > 1.00 accounted for 73.13% of the variance (see **Appendix 13**), which is clearly above the minimum level as suggested by Homburg and Giering (1998).

To interpret factors, “variables ideally have high loadings on the most important factor, and small loadings on all other factors” (Field 2000, p. 438). To improve factor interpretation, orthogonal varimax factor rotation was used (Field, 2009). Orthogonal rotation resulted in a rotated component/factor matrix that presented the post-rotation loadings of the original variables on the extracted factors (see **Appendix 15**), and a transformation matrix that gave information about the angle of rotation (see **Appendix 16**). In order to ensure both convergent and discriminant validity (Homburg & Giering, 1998), factor loadings $< .40$ as well as items with similar cross loadings between multiple factors ($\pm .10$) were eliminated (i.e. items “socially responsible” and “humorous”). If an item cross-loaded significantly different on multiple factors ($\pm .10$), factor affiliation of that specific item was based on the highest factor loading (Schade, 2012; Field, 2009). Items affected by the criteria above were eliminated step-by-step, until clear textual interpretation of the factors was possible.

As can be seen in **Table 11**, the items “cosmopolitan” and “clever” were eliminated, as they were the only items creating component 6 and 7 respectively. This reduction to a five-factor solution, however, also was in line with the visual examination of the scree-plot (see **Appendix 14**), as discussed earlier. Despite a minimum of three to four items per factor is widely recommended in the literature (Harvey, Billings, & Nilan, 1985; Cook et al., 1981; Carmines & Zeller, 1979), factors with as little as two items were accepted, if the items were highly correlated (i.e., $r > .70$) and relatively uncorrelated with other variables (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). From the correlation matrix in **Appendix 12**, it can be seen that for the items “tolerant”/“honest” as well as “down-to-earth”/“rebellious”, that is clearly the case. Moreover, textual interpretation of the affected two components made sense, as will be further explained in more detail below.

| Items | Components | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Loyal | .837 | | | | | | |
| Tradition-conscious | .852 | | | | | | |
| Happy | .823 | | | | | | |
| Hardworking | .730 | | | | | | |
| Optimistic | .723 | | | | | | |
| Strong-minded | .713 | | | | | | |
| Convivial | .676 | | | | | | |
| Familial | .630 | | | .415 | | | |
| Diligent | .592 | | | | | -.445 | |
| Socially responsible | .502 | | .428 | | | | |
| Fierce | | .678 | | | | | |
| Cheeky | | .665 | .495 | | | | |
| Alternative | | .639 | | | | | |
| Self-deprecating | | .606 | | | | | |
| Humorous | .526 | .566 | | | | | |
| Civilized | | | .875 | | | | |
| Freedom loving | | | .636 | | | | |
| Glamorous | | .405 | .529 | | | | |
| Modest | | | .542 | | | | |
| Trend-setting | | | .505 | | | | .493 |
| Down-to-earth | | | | .785 | | | |
| Rebellious | .418 | | | -.682 | | | |
| Honest | .458 | | | | .667 | | |
| Tolerant | | | | | .601 | | |
| Cosmopolitan | | | | | | .889 | |
| Clever | | | | | | | .904 |

Table 11: Rotated component matrix with factor loadings – BIF's brand personality

Source: Own depiction, based on SPSS output (see **Appendix 15**)

In a final step, the reliability of each individual factor was tested in isolation using Cronbach's Alpha (Homburg & Giering, 1998; Churchill, 1979). Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency within a group of variables making up a factor (Churchill, 1979). With values between zero and one, high α -values indicate a high factor reliability. Typically, the literature suggests a minimum required value of .70 (Field, 2009). According to Schecker (2014), however, α -values $< .07$, that also by means of eliminating items can't be increased, should not be considered an absolute obstacle towards using a scale: "When a measure has other desirable properties, such as meaningful content coverage of some domain and reasonable unidimensionality, this low reliability [referring to $\alpha = 0,49$] may not be a major impediment to its use" (Schmitt, 1996, p. 352). To conduct reliability analysis, this required inverse transformation of the item "rebellious" to "not rebellious", as the item negatively loaded on component number 4 (see **Table 11**). The reliability statistics indicated the following α -values:

- A reliability statistic for component 1 (i.e. loyal, tradition-conscious, happy, hardworking, optimistic, strong-minded, convivial, familial, diligent) resulted in $\alpha = .912$, indicating a high internal consistency of the factor. Furthermore, the α -values could not be increased through elimination of particular items (see **Appendix 17**).
- A reliability statistic for component 2 (i.e. fierce, cheeky, alternative, self-deprecating) resulted in $\alpha = .730$, also indicating a high level of internal consistency of the factor. Again, no further items had to be eliminated (see **Appendix 17**).
- A reliability statistic for component 3 (i.e. civilized, freedom-loving, glamorous, modest, trendsetting) resulted in $\alpha = .760$. Furthermore, the output suggested the elimination of item "modest" in order to increase the factor's internal consistency to $\alpha = .792$. Given the already high α -value as well as contextual relevance of the item, we decided not to exclude it (see **Appendix 17**).
- A reliability statistic for component 4 (i.e. erratic, rebellious) resulted in $\alpha = .457$, indicating a relatively low level of internal consistency (see **Appendix 17**).
- A reliability statistic for component 5 (i.e. honest, tolerant) resulted in $\alpha = .599$, also below the minimum desired value of .70 (see **Appendix 17**). However, both components 4 and 5 were not excluded from further analysis due to their "meaningful content coverage" (Schmitt, 1996, p. 352).

After finishing all of the steps above, the resulting factors were interpreted contextually and labelled based on the salient themes expressed in the items they contained (see **Table 12**).

| Loyal Family | Fierce Alternativism | Civilized Narcicissm | Honorable Obedience | Honest Work |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Loyal | Fierce | Civilized | Down-to-earth | Honest |
| Tradition-conscious | Cheeky | Freedom-loving | Unrebellious | Tolerant |
| Happy | Alternative | Glamorous | | |
| Hardworking | Self-deprecating | Modest | | |
| Optimistic | | Trendsetting | | |
| Strong-minded | | | | |
| Convivial | | | | |
| Familial | | | | |
| Diligent | | | | |
| $\alpha = .912$ | $\alpha = .730$ | $\alpha = .760$ | $\alpha = .457$ | $\alpha = .599$ |

Table 12: A brand personality scale for Brøndby IF

Source: Own depiction

In the following section, the textual interpretation of BIF's five brand personality dimensions is explained in more detail. This is done in relation to both the original BPS for professional sports clubs developed by Schade (2012), as well as the qualitative exploration of BIF's brand personality in the preceding section of this study:

- Our first factor, **“Loyal Family”**, is closely related to the original personality dimension “Happy Familiarity” as suggested by Schade (2012). We interpret the factor to characterize a clan-like club, that puts great emphasis on collectivity, family, tradition, loyalty, and solidarity. With items such as “hardworking” and “diligent”, it's valence is closely related to values and characteristics of the working milieu (i.e. working men's club). While conscious of its heritage and tradition, our first personality dimension also characterizes a club that is optimistic, happy, and hopeful about the future.
- Second, the factor **“Fierce Alternativism”** describes a club that is proud to be different; in other words, anti-establishment. Picking up personality traits such as “fierce” and “alternative”, this could describe a supporter culture that puts great emphasis on differentiation and disassociation. Moreover, a potential inclination towards “aggressiveness” can be deduced from this dimension. However, with the items “cheeky” and “self-deprecating”, this factor also hints at a club that expresses the ability of not taking itself too seriously. This dimension is closely related to what Schade (2012) defines as the “Self-deprecating rebel”. A positioning based on that dimension particularly enables the decoupling from sporting performance and success (Schade, 2012).

- Third, the factor **“Civilized Narcissism”** describes a club that is self-confident and aware of its role, capabilities, and powers. Picking up grand personality traits such as “glamorous” and “trend-setting”, a high level of self-esteem is expressed by this dimension. Trying to avoid an inclination towards arrogance, however, this is paired with a good amount of carefulness and caution, as can be deduced from the items “modest” and “civilized”. For example, this restraint could be explained by a gap or mismatch between the club expectations (e.g. in relation to past successes) and actual performance.

Textually interpreting the last two factors posed a particular challenge due to the weak contextual foundation (i.e. two items only). While the factor characterization in verbal pairs allowed for a more nuanced description of the first three personality dimensions, meaningful abstraction of the final two factors was deemed impossible, without losing significant connotation of the originating items. To deal with this challenge, for textual interpretation the factor loading threshold of .40 (Homburg & Giering, 1998) was lowered to .30. This added the items “familial”, “fierce”, and “modest” to factor 4, as well as “familial”, “alternative”, “hardworking” and “(-) modest” to factor 5 (see **Appendix 15**). This aided in a more substantiated interpretation of the final two personality dimensions.

- Fourth, the factor **“Honorable Obedience”** describes a club that is the opposite of rebellious and is inclined to avoid conflict, if possible: A “good soldier”. The factor is partly congruent with Schade’s (2012) “Down-to-earth Modesty” dimension, characterizing a club that, for example, also in successful times does not raise high and unrealistic expectations in its stakeholders. Aiming to avoid disappointment resulting from overly ambitious expectations, this dimension highlights the notion of understatement. Based on the .40 factor loading threshold, the factor initially was labelled “Grounded Compliance”.
- Last, the factor **“Honest Work”** is picking up personality traits related to what can be called the values of a working men’s club: With the dominating attributes of honesty and tolerance, this dimension characterizes a club that pertains to notions of social responsibility, inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and openness. Moreover, the items “hardworking” and “familial” and “alternative” indicate towards a club that encourages “sweat” and human endeavor. Based on the .40 factor loading threshold, the factor initially was labelled “Honest Tolerance”.

To this point, nothing has been said about how BIF’s brand personality specifically scores along the individual dimensions identified. Concluding this section, this is done using the visualization in a so-called personality differential (Sattler & Völckner, 2007); a method of analysis inspired by Osgood et al.’s (1957) semantic differential. Due to the given method of data collection, the semantic space was not as originally defined by pairs of verbal opposites, but rather by the 5-point Likert scale used in the survey. Therefore, the scaling of our personality differential on the x-axis consists of the numbers 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree / 5 =

strongly agree), and on the y-axis of the five factors identified in our PCA. To retrieve the data points necessary to depict BIF's brand personality, five new variables were calculated as the mean of their constituting items (see **Appendix 18**): Loyal Family ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .65$), Fierce Alternitavism ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .74$), Civilized Narcissism ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .74$), Honorable Obedience ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .81$), Honest Work ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .78$). This being said, the data points in **Exhibit 7** represent the combined assessment of BIF's brand personality from all the stakeholders who participated in our survey ($N = 51$). Given the cluster of means within tight proximity of the value 4, for illustrative purposes, the x-axis in **Exhibit 7** only depicts the semantic space between the values 3 and 5 (see **Appendix 19** for the undistorted version).

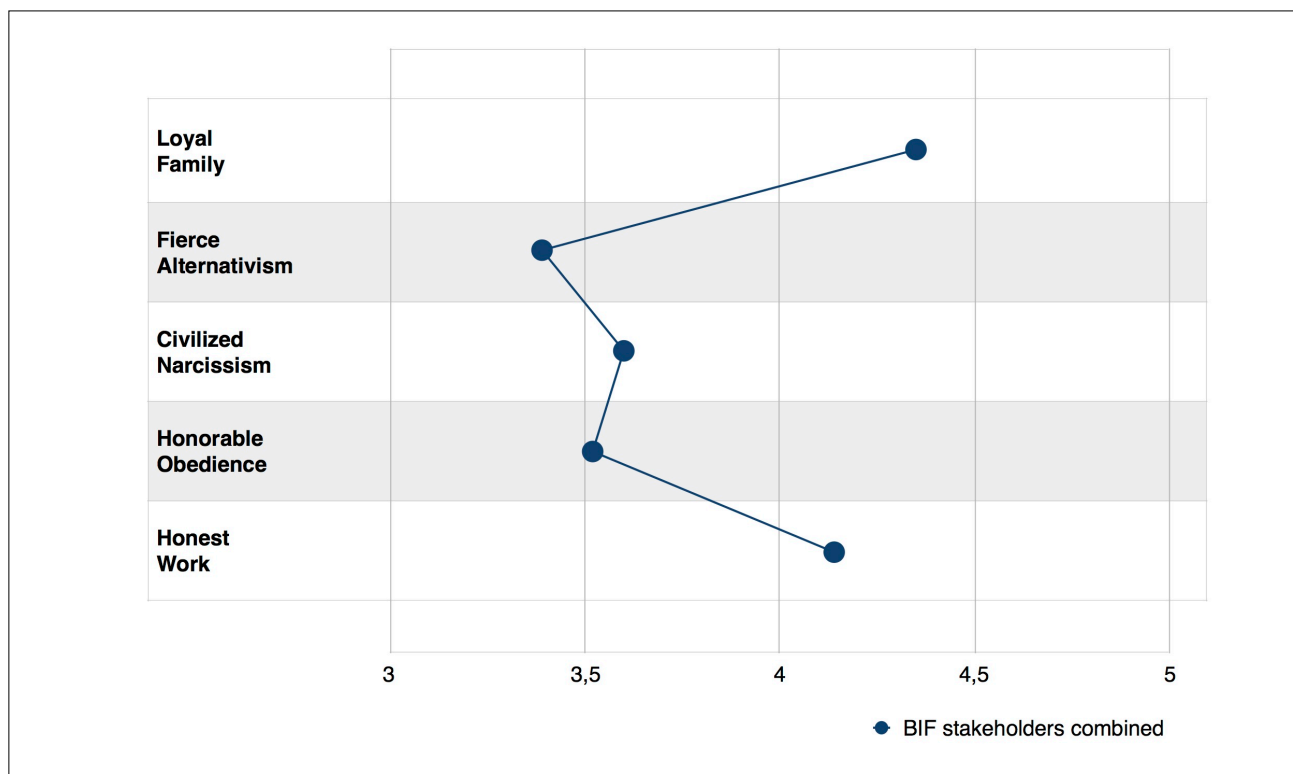


Exhibit 7: Personality differential for Brøndby IF (Stakeholders combined) (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)

Source: Own depiction

Upon first visual examination, BIF's brand personality is most dominantly described by the dimensions "Loyal Family" and "Honest Tolerance" (see **Exhibit 7**). Moreover, the five personality dimensions capture important characteristics of BIF's personality, as discovered in the preceding qualitative thematic networks analysis. For example, the personality dimension *Fierce Alternitavism* strongly correlates with our identification of BIF's personality partly being compulsively confrontational and dissociative. In other examples, the *Civilized Narcissism* dimensions corroborates with what our thematic network analysis identified as "understated self-confidence" (see **Section 7.2.1.3**). BIF's inclination towards "intuitive

informality” and “genuine reliability” can be said to be mirrored by the *Loyal Family* personality dimension. This textual connection serves as an initial internal validation between qualitative and quantitative findings. To this point, no explicit distinction has been made between different stakeholder groups. Neither did the analysis distinguish between brand identity (internal perspective) and brand image (external perspective). This distinction will be the main focus of the subsequent step of analysis.

Instant Replay: PCA resulted in the identification of five brand personality dimensions for BIF: Loyal Family, Fierce Alternativism, Civilized Narcissism, Honorable Obedience, Honest Work. It is a continuum along these five factors, BIF’s brand personality can be explained with.

7.3. Brand tensions and consistency gaps between stakeholder groups

Question 3: *Where can tensions be identified between various stakeholder groups and how do these tensions translate to potential consistency gaps?*

The third question within our succession of research questions will also be answered from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Firstly, strategic brand management tensions are deduced from the six thematic networks presented in the preceding chapter. Secondly, the assessment of various stakeholder groups is compared quantitatively using ANOVA. Both the qualitative and quantitative analysis aim at identifying potential consistency gaps (Burmann & Zeplin, 2004; Bierwirth, 2003) with regard to BIF’s brand.

7.3.1. Qualitative results: Identification of brand tensions and consistency gaps

Examining the underlying valence of the six *Global Themes* presented in the preceding chapter, a certain amount of ambivalence and contradiction can be deduced within each of BIF’s brand identity dimensions. The following example with regard to BIF’s brand heritage and vision illustrates this perfectly: Despite BIF’s heritage being a focal point of the club’s self-perception and image, critical concern is expressed as to what role the past should play in moving forward:

“I think that at the moment they are on the threshold on whether their past is in their way or helping them. You see the connections to tradition everywhere around here. Until just recently, the most current pictures were from 10 or 12 years ago. Of course it is not very helpful if the people in charge only see what happened 15 years ago, back when they were successful. I think, at the moment they are in a process of transforming that a bit.” (Zorninger, 2017, 7).

Based on important statements like the one above, BIF's brand vision has been characterized accordingly as being in a process of learning and self-reflection, juxtaposing a powerful legacy with the demands of a more commercialized and independent future. Coincidentally, BIF's brand identity is shaped by a number of such strategic tensions. This being said, and upon comparison of the various *Organizing Themes* in context of their constituting *Basic Themes*, **Table 13** depicts eight strategic brand management tensions for BIF.

| Brand dimension | Strategic brand management tensions | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Heritage | Past as hindrance | ↔ | Past as opportunity |
| Vision | Privatization | ↔ | Municipalization |
| | Off-pitch commercialization | ↔ | On-pitch sporting performance |
| Personality | Assimilation | ↔ | Differentiation |
| | Intuitive informality | ↔ | Structured control |
| Values | Social responsibility | ↔ | Corporate profitability |
| Performance | Tangibility | ↔ | Intangibility |
| Competencies | Exploitation | ↔ | Exploration |

Table 13: BIF's strategic brand management tensions

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.1. Past as hindrance vs. Past as opportunity

As suggested beforehand, both internal and external concern is expressed as to whether BIF's constant – sometimes compulsive – recollection of the past could actually be a burden in modernizing the club (Zorninger, 2017; Bech, 2017; Blom, 2017; Schultz, 2017). To a large degree, this is due to the supporters adherence to the status quo: “My role is to represent the supporters [...] at board level. Making sure that a lot of things [...] are still that way in 10 years” (Blom, 2017, 140). Moreover, BIF took up most of its fans more than 10 years ago, so there's still a lot of old population – “a fan group that just thinks Brøndby is still a good concept” (Sønnichsen, 2017, 7). According to the sports director, the flip-side to having such strong heritage is that expectations tend to be higher than realistic (Bech, 2017):

“It backfires [...] And that is an energy loss. If you cannot get rid of that box of expectations, you will have a much bigger gap. Even for all the stakeholders that want Brøndby to succeed, because they still have the expectations of the past in mind. They will fill this gap with frustration. And that will lower the performance level” (Bech, 2017, 7).

Against that, working with the club's tradition must be seen as an important branding instrument: "Remembering where you are coming from is good, but you need to find appropriate means to take the next steps and they are not in the past but in the future" (Zorninger, 2017, 7). Apart from strongly defining the brand that BIF wants to produce (e.g. *Strategy 6.4*) (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017, Wehlast, 2017), the club's heritage can be seen as a unique selling proposition, clearly differentiating the brand from its rival FCK as well as other competitors in the league: "It is a resource for this club that we have proven that we are successful. And eliminating that part of our brand would be a sad thing to do, because then we'd be more like Sønderjyske" (Bech, 2017, 11).

Dealing with the tension: One way of dealing with the tension between "past as a hindrance" vs. "past as an opportunity", according to Bech (2017), is trying to demonstrate to stakeholders what is in the perceived gap between the past and the future, and thereby reducing the fear of change and loss of identity:

"Planned progress. [...] to show them what we actually intend to do to get this progress. And that might lift the actual performance, maybe also reduce expectations, although that is not my point. But first of all there will be less resistance present in this gap. This gap will always be present because someone is always expecting the highest possible results. So I think that's what we try to do now" (Bech, 2017, 7).

Consistency Gaps: This being said, the tension above can also be described as a *Comprehension Gap* between the desired identity of the club's brand management on the one hand (the "new BIF"), as well as the ideal expectations of many supporters on the other (the "old BIF"). Furthermore, an *Implementation Gap* occurs if BIF is not able to actually reflect its ideal image of a new BIF in its day-to-day actions. That may be due to the fact that either the organizational culture does not fit the desired identity, or the necessary capabilities and resources are missing (Burmah & Zeplin, 2004): "We recognize that we have a very strong brand, and as I said it is a bit dusty, but you can dust it off if we come back to performing really well" (Møller, 2017, 47). With regard to aligning the brand's actual and desired identity, Zorninger (2017) adds: "Until just recently, the most current pictures were from 10 or 12 years ago. Of course it is not very helpful if the people in charge only see what happened 15 years ago, back when they were successful" (7). Lastly, if internal stakeholders do not share the same self-perception of the brand, an *Integration Gap* exists. While our analysis shows that management, staff (both athletic and administrative), and Jan Bech Andersen express a fairly stringent brand identity, the same can not be said for the large group of small shareholders and the amateur department – both of which represent the "old BIF". In that sense, parts of BIF's internal stakeholders act as a hindrance in moving the brand forward. Such discrepancy can either lead to an inconsistent brand image, or certain internal stakeholders not identifying with the "new BIF": Their behavior contradicts the brand identity, likely leading to a *Communication Gap* (Bierwirth, 2003) (see **Exhibit 8**).

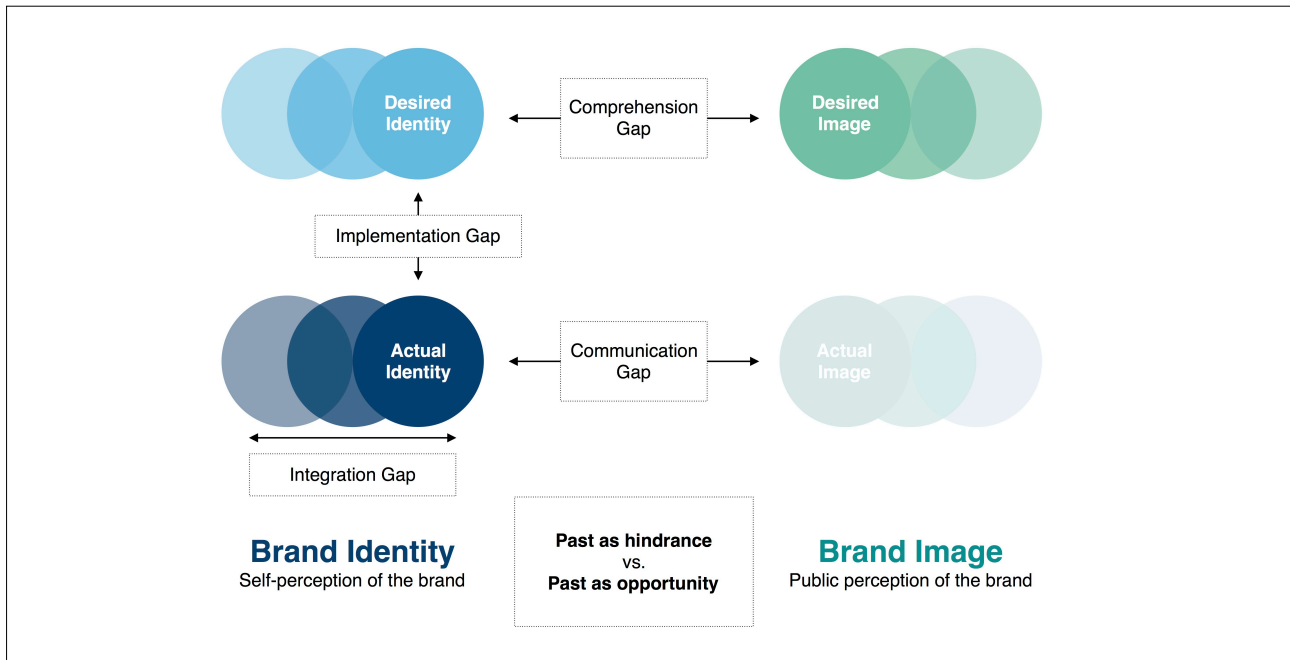


Exhibit 8: Consistency Gaps “Past as hindrance” vs. “Past as opportunity”

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.2. Privatization vs. Municipalization

The tension between privatization and municipalization pertains to the tug of war regarding who claims ownership of the brand: Investors, shareholders, and corporate interests on the one hand (football as a business), the supporters and public on the other (football as a public good). As a business and listed company, BIF is in need of finances, liquidity, and money (Schultz, 2017). Especially after years of financial crises (i.e. close bankruptcy) and with Jan Bech Andersen as a strong main investor (Blom, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017), a focus on financial stability is vital: “[...] they have to be more professional, that is what the new management is trying to build up now. To capitalize on the market. They can’t survive if they just want to be a family club [...] that’s what they try to signal to the world” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 19). This desire to gain financial independence (Pedersen, 2017) can be exemplified by the municipality’s diminishing role in the club’s strategic decision making: “[...] more and more things are getting privatized and [becoming] their own property and facilities. I think that one day they don’t need to ask Brøndby Kommune anymore about [...] It is too much of a company now [...] They finance themselves (Pedersen, 2017, 311, 177, 165).

Against that, BIF has strong historical connections with the amateur department and is highly dependent on both its supporters and volunteers, all of which vociferously claim ownership of BIF’s brand: “The guys who are standing on *Sydside*n, they believe they are the brand” (Sønnichsen, 2017, 50). As Sune Blom highlights, today there still is a strong and organized resistance from especially the supporters “to be in any way thinking commercial, being a part of a company” (Blom, 2017, 116). Highlighting the demand for

municipalization, the community, amateur department, and volunteers (e.g. youth coaches, stadium security etc.) around the club are “the key ingredients for Brøndby being Brøndby” (Blom, 2017, 35).

Dealing with the tension: A good example of how to navigate the tension of “privatization” vs. “municipalization” is BIF’s way of handling the ongoing subject of selling the name rights of Brøndby Stadium: “‘What if we sold the name?’ And the conclusion has been so far, that we’re not going to sell the name because we know that it would give a backlash” (Schultz, 2017, 127). In another instance, *Carlsberg*, owner of the stadium’s main stand *Sydsiden*, included the supporters in the debate of whether or not to change the name to *Carlsberg Stand*: “‘What do you want to call it?’ And the fans said ‘Sydsiden’. And *Carlsberg* got a lot of respect for that and were applauded by the fans for that. So all of a sudden, *Carlsberg* got 250,000 people who are saying ‘we think you are a cool brand for respecting us’” (Schultz, 2017, 135). These examples show, how communication between different stakeholder groups is paramount when dealing with strategic brand challenges.

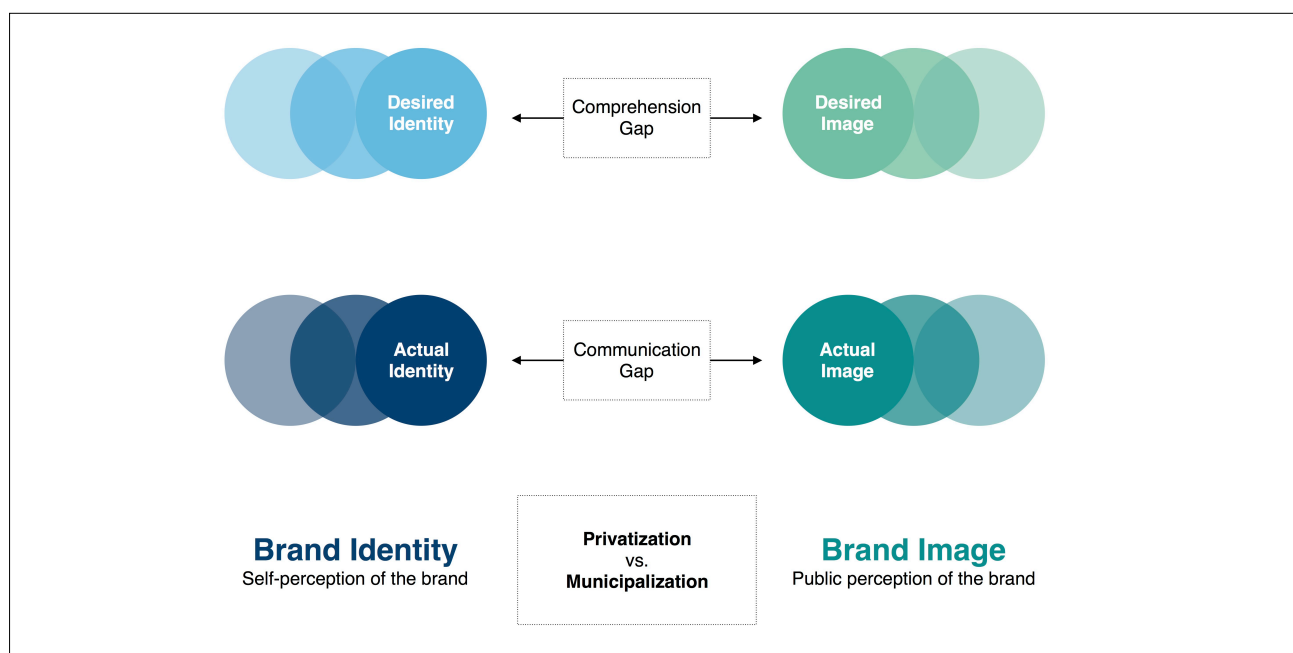


Exhibit 9: Consistency Gaps “Privatization” vs. “Municipalization”

Source: Own depiction

Consistency Gaps: Our analysis shows, that in recent years, the strategic brand tension between privatization and municipalization has led to a potential *Communication Gap* between BIF and Brøndby’s municipality. This *Communication Gap* occurs between the actual perception of the municipality (i.e. BIF is getting more and more isolated (Pedersen, 2017)) and the current self-perception (actual identity) of the club’s brand management (i.e. reaching out more socially to the community (Møller, 2017)) (Burmam et al.,

2012). Likewise, a *Comprehension Gap* exists between club management's incentive to attract further capital through privatization and supporter's ideal image of a club owned by themselves. Furthermore, the issue of *Carlsberg's* approach towards privatizing *Sydsiden* is a good example for how a potential *Need Gap* resulting from different preferences of external stakeholders (i.e. sponsors vs. supporters) has successfully been avoided. The decision to not privatize the name rights for *Brøndby Stadium* indicates, that club management sufficiently understands supporters' preferences and needs. While avoiding a *Comprehension Gap* on that end, the decision must be taken responsibility for, and explained in front of other external stakeholders such as sponsors and the media (see **Exhibit 9**).

7.3.1.3. Off-pitch commercialization vs. On-pitch sporting performance

This brand tension between off-pitch commercialization and on-pitch performance is related to both the strategic focus of the organization as well as the prioritization of financial means: “[...] of course you have to discuss how to prioritize your money. Should we do something good for our sponsors? For our supporters? To invest money in our stadium? To have a better customer experience, or should we invest in the professional team? What should we do?” (Blom, 2017, 14).

On the one hand, the club's sustainable commercialization is a key strategic goal – especially for the board of directors and management: “For me, it's the economy that needs to get back on track because a secure economy is the number one key to long term success, and a long term balance between ownership, brand identity, and values” (Blom, 2017, 152). This being said, a number of important income sources go beyond BIF's core product of selling football: Improving the customer experience and entertainment factor around the game (Blom, 2017; Møller, 2017, Sønnichsen, 2017), merchandise (Møller, 2017), food and beverage (Blom, 2017, Møller, 2017, Sønnichsen), and VIP hospitality (Møller, 2017, Schultz, 2017, Sønnichsen, 2017), to name a few. With Jan Bech Andersen and the appointment of a commercial director (Møller, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017), BIF clearly aims at improving their commercial channels: “[...] they simply haven't been good enough commercially for the past years [...] They are trying to make business again instead of only losing money (Sønnichsen, 2017, 75; Sejersbøl, 2017; 11).

On the other hand, after 10 years of sporting failure, also the on-pitch performance must improve again for BIF. Accordingly, sporting performance and style of play have been made a central strategic priority (Møller, 2017). This can also be seen from BIF's new *Strategy 6.4* (see **Chapter 2**). Naturally, it is especially the athletic staff that is fighting for sports performance-related investments: “Sporting success is the only thing that counts in a football club [...] Vision is all about sporting objectives and they are pretty clear I believe: That you want a long-term development that strengthens the core in order to be successful again. That is all I am interested in” (Zorninger, 2017, 11, 15).

Owing to this expectation, big investments have been made in improving the training facilities: “The training facilities where they can monitor all the players on the training ground, it's only for the really big clubs in Europe to buy this. It's not a cheap investment” (Sønnichsen, 2017, 34). Despite that, however, output of BIF’s youth academy *Brøndby Masterclass* has been unsatisfactory to date and must be improved (Møller, 2017). Moreover, it is important to understand that sporting success is directly linked to appealing to and recruiting the relevant younger generation. “If you want to win over this new generation of fans, you have to be successful again on the sports level” (Zorninger, 2017, 31). Or as Troels Bech (2017) puts it, “young kids tend to celebrate winners and champions” (107).

Dealing with the tension: One way of coping with this tension of “off-pitch-commercialization” vs. “on-pitch sporting success” is to see both aspects as complementing each other rather than substituting: “My key focus is the financial performance. But related to that is sports performance. The higher we are in the league table, the stronger financials we have more or less” (Møller, 2017, 112). In other words: while management is primarily interested in building a solid financial base and revenue for the company (Schultz, 2017), sporting performance attracts supporters, that creates content, that attracts sponsors, that attracts capital, that improves sporting performance... and so on!

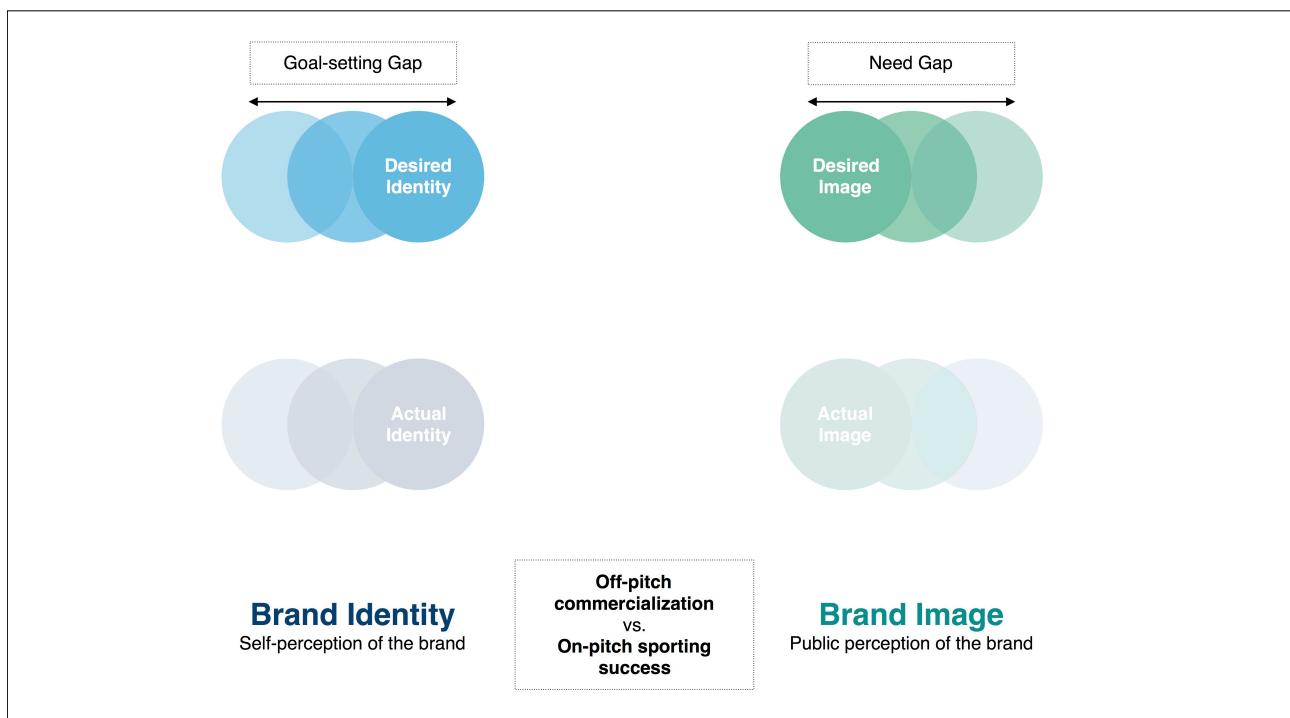


Exhibit 10: Consistency Gaps “Off-pitch commercialization” vs. “On-pitch sporting success”

Source: Own depiction

Consistency Gaps: Essentially, the tension between off-pitch commercialization and on-pitch sporting success gives reason to the emergence of a *Goal Setting Gap*. The gap exists, if the people responsible for the organization's brand management have differing ideas with regard to the aspired brand identity. In the given case, a *Goal Setting Gap* is likely to occur, because there is general disagreement with regards to the direction in which BIF as a football club vs. company is heading (e.g. amateur department vs. shareholders and management). Moreover, looking at the ideal image of sponsors and the media (i.e. stronger commercialization) as opposed to the ideal image of supporters (i.e. less commercialization and better sporting performance), also a *Need Gap* can be identified in context of the tension above. This *Need Gap* occurs, because the different external stakeholder groups (i.e. supporters, media, sponsors) have different preferences and desires, and BIF is not focused clearly enough on a target group with homogenous preferences (Bierwirth, 2003). Understanding on-pitch playing style as a central component of the overall brand identity and communication – high pressure football to express organizational unity (i.e. Strategy 6.4) – is a good example of how BIF avoids internal *Integration* and *Implementation Gaps*; thus strengthening a more consistent brand identity (see **Exhibit 10**).

7.3.1.4. Assimilation vs. Differentiation

The brand personality tension between assimilation and differentiation, in a nutshell, is encapsulated by the following quote: “We try to be something for everyone. FC Copenhagen, they are catering for a premium crowd. At least for the one's they want to be associated with. That's a different tactic for sure” (Schultz, 2017, 103). This being said, BIF's brand personality repeatedly catches itself in the following contradiction: “BIF is for everyone, but...”, “BIF is for everyone, except...”, “BIF is for everyone, excluding...”. Most probably, if not certainly, the aforementioned statements will end on anything related to FCK.

On the one hand, BIF's brand narrative highlights the importance of what they call “Fælleskab”, the common community. From its very beginning, BIF has been stressing the commitment to assimilation: The club that unified Brøndby as a municipality (Pedersen, 2017), the club that unites people from all possible social strata (Møller, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017), and even the club that “[...] united Denmark, united football in Denmark” (Schultz, 2017, 67):

“We are living in a society where people are getting more and more diverse, and people get divided into groups. The unity feeling in society today, not just in Denmark but around the world, is getting split up. People are more and more looking out for themselves. They don't care much about their neighbors or society [...] Here we have an opportunity as a club to unite. That we are the one thing that can unify 250,000 people” (Schultz, 2017, p. 67).

This community, however, inevitably also includes a strong disassociation: “We normally describe ourselves as the opposite of FC Copenhagen”(Blom, 2017, 67). Thus, while stressing the importance of community, sameness, and equality, a tension occurs from the obligation of being something else than their rivals and neighbors in Copenhagen (Blom, 2017).

Dealing with the tension: Having already discussed BIF’s brand personality in detail, the underlying tension between assimilation and differentiation shall not be further elaborated upon at this point. One clever way of coping with this tension, however, could be to positively feed off the energy created by the friction:

“Of course over time, if we can eliminate violence and make sure they are all just positive and so on, we would do it [...] I don’t like this hatred thing. I think that’s too aggressive. I would rather see them saying “we love the new firm”. Because that’s what they do. So why does it have to be expressed in negative terms all of the time? That is a bit irritating” (Møller, 2017, p. 157).

Specifically, this requires the ongoing communication between club and supporter groups, as well as establishing accountability for the fans and the impact their actions have on the club’s brand and financials (e.g. in the form of fines) (Møller, 2017; Zorninger, 2017, Sønnichsen, 2017). As pointed out, strong brands can have a high differentiation vis-a-vis competing offers, protecting brand from similar offers (Burmman et al., 2012; Aaker, 1991). Paradoxically, in the case of BIF, external differentiation has an internal assimilation effect. This creates a high level of identification of existing stakeholders (e.g. fans), however creates a high entry barrier for “newcomers” (e.g. new generation of fans and sponsors).

Consistency Gaps: From the tension between assimilation and differentiation, for many supporters a critical *Identification Gap* can be deduced. Specifically, this purely external gap materializes between ideal brand expectations of the supporters (i.e. BIF as the opposite of FCK), and the actual brand experience (i.e. BIF as becoming more like FCK). This can be traced back to a lack of congruency between self-perception of the fans and actual brand image (Burmman & Zeplin, 2004). With the “new BIF” being owned by one businessman, many supporters are having a hard time identifying with BIF’s brand and associated values any longer (Blom, 2017): “Although he [Jan Bech Andersen] is a major Brøndby IF fan himself, there’s still only one person that owns the club. In time, I think it will make a difference in our brand identity, our history” (Blom, 2017, 56). As BIF’s fan representative continues: “You should watch the fans of FCK. In each derby, the different fan groups always have some banner with a kind of message. And they are teasing us all the time for being owned by this one business man. Mostly because it represents everything we used to be against” (2017, 56).

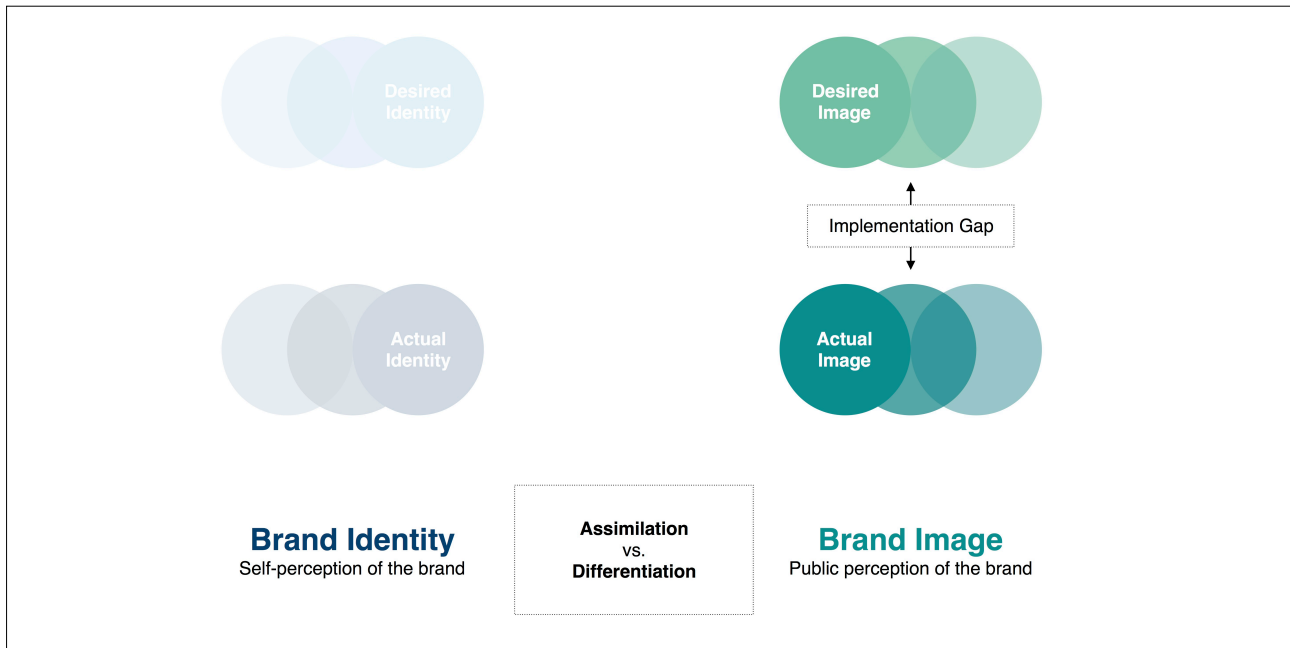


Exhibit 11: Consistency Gaps “Assimilation” vs. “Differentiation”

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.5. Intuitive informality vs. Structured control

“We’re a very transparent company; sometimes on purpose, sometimes not” (Schultz, 2017, 139).

The fifth tension, intuitive informality vs. structured control, mainly pertains to BIF’s handling of their communication. Internally, BIF demonstrates a very informal day-to-day collaboration and communication around things (Møller, 2017). Based on the idea of flat hierarchies and short communication channels (Schultz, 2017; Møller, 2017; Bech 2017), no formal guidelines exist with regards to the style of communication: “Day-to-day talks, telephone, meetings. Of course there are some more formal procedures, but it’s very informal because we are a very small club in terms of the administrative staff” (Schultz, 2017, 19). This being said, BIF’s communication strategy is largely guided by occasion, emergence, coincidence, and common sense, rather than formal and deliberate communication channels: “I think, internal communication is the difficult part. Because everybody has a strong strategy on the external communication, but internally it’s based on the interplay between all the different levels of the organization. And we always forget to inform the official channels” (Bech, 2017, 23). Likewise, no formal interview guidelines or codes of conduct exist with regards to the athletic staff’s (i.e. players and coach) communication with the media (Schultz, 2017; Møller, 2017; Zorninger, 2017): “We have had that before [...] I don’t believe in that. I believe that you use common sense. That comes with being a professional footballer. You have a responsibility, for your own career, as well as for the way you behave” (Schultz, 2017, 51).

On the one hand, BIF's emphasis on a laissez-faire style of communication is intended to reflect the organizations's relatability, approachability, as well as transparency. On the other hand, due to unrivaled public interest and the brand's high media exposure, the communication department is compelled to establish a more controlled and structured approach towards communication: "[...] they're trying more to close it down and take control [...] Even though they're not there, they are moving towards a more controlled world for themselves (Sønnichsen, 2017, 89, 105). In recent years and due to a number of unintended leaks of confidential information to the media (Schultz, 2017), this has led to an almost compulsive need to control the information leaving the club: "[...] it's almost like a press release when we write an E-Mail to FCK [...] I need to know what everyone is thinking, so when a journalist calls, I know the position that they've taken" (Schultz, 2017, 147; 179).

Dealing with the tension: One radical way to cope with this tension between intuitive informality and structured control could be to, instead of unsuccessfully trying to control communications, completely open the organization up to the public (i.e. create a more transparent club). Not surprisingly, this idea of total accessibility is especially entertained by members of the media:

[...] When you travel to America, because they are maybe ahead of Europe in their commercial way of thinking [...] you're seeing that it's boring here. They are saying the same things. I am never surprised. And if the interviewer is going a little bit for them, they are backing out [...] The only guy I really like to listen to after a match is Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Because he's telling whatever he likes! [...] They have always gone with this safe stuff. They're never taking any chances. And they are late. [...] In the old days, when football was not that commercialized, the press guys were sitting there next to a player in the dressing room. And that's fun. [...] in the US, ten minutes after the game is finished you are in the dressing room talking to the players. And that's fine! And the club is giving something back, not only to the press, but to the fans. Because the fans get that insight into the players [...] An inside view. [...] They should be more open. Who are you playing for? In a way you're playing for the fans. I hope so" (Sønnichsen, 2017, 40, 42, 48).

Referring to the sphere of organizational context in which the issues discussed above occur, the tension between intuitive informality and structured control is closely related to what de Wit and Meyer (2010) call the strategic paradox of control vs. chaos. The paradox states that for an organization there is both a demand for organizational control and organizational chaos. On the one hand, managers "cannot afford to let their organizations drift on the existing momentum" (de Wit & Meyer, 2010, p. 487). Therefore, they need the necessary power and control to realize their objectives, direct developments of the organization, and make the necessary changes in the organizational structure, processes, and culture (de Wit & Meyer, 2010). On the one hand, operational control in BIF's day-to-day communication would give Christian Schultz influence over activities within the current organizational system (e.g. control communications channels). Strategic

control, on the other hand, would give the club's management influence over changes to the organizational system itself (e.g. break existing communication structures) (de Wit & Meyer). The diminished ability of the affected stakeholders to actually exercise this power and control will be the subject of **Section 7.4** of this thesis.

Conversely, there is also a demand for organizational chaos. In the organizational context, "chaos refers to situations of disorder, where phenomena have not yet been organized, or where parts of an organizational system have become unfreezed" (de Wit & Meyer, 2010, p. 487). While generally not particularly appealing to many managers, periods of disorganization can be interpreted as prerequisites for strategic renewal (de Wit & Meyer, 2010). Finding BIF's brand in exactly such a transitional period of organizational renewal (Zorninger, 2017), opening the organization up to innovative possibilities might be inefficient in the short run and make people uncomfortable. Nevertheless, according to de Wit & Meyer, allowing for drastic experimentation such as suggested by *TV2* reporter Sønnichsen, could potentially be "necessary to provoke creativity and to invent new ways of seeing and doing things" (de Wit & Meyer, p. 487).

Consistency Gaps: Two central consistency gaps result from the tension between intuitive informality and structured control: First, a *Communication Gap* exists between BIF's communication department and the media. While the club perceives its style of communication as transparent, structured, open, and accessible (Schultz, 2017; Møller, 2017), the media's perception (actual image) differs significantly: "They are not always honest [...] We've caught them in some lies [...] that is challenging the relationship [...] It's not easy to change the feeling that Brøndby is a problematic club when we can't trust them" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 97). According to Burmann & Zeplin (2004), causes for a *Communication Gap* can either be the unstructured design of external communications, or inconsistent messages throughout the various communication channels. Problematically, both is the case for BIF:

"I don't think they are that strong. FC Copenhagen is better because they have a really strong communication line [...] They are really in control of their communication. In Brøndby you can still call different guys inside the organization. They are trying to stop that but they are not as successful as FC Copenhagen. I think that that is often a problem for them. They let out different signals" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 97).

Besides the media ignoring and circumventing the club's official communication channels, the same can be observed for Jan Bech Andersen and other members of top management (Wehlast, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017). Moreover, the *Communication Gap* between internal and external stakeholders also is a direct result of internal *Information Gaps*. *Information Gaps* occur, if brand management does not sufficiently understand the internal organizational conditions (Burmann & Zeplin, 2004). In the case of BIF, such instances can be traced back to a lack of clear internal communication channels (Bech, 2017) (see **Exhibit 12**).

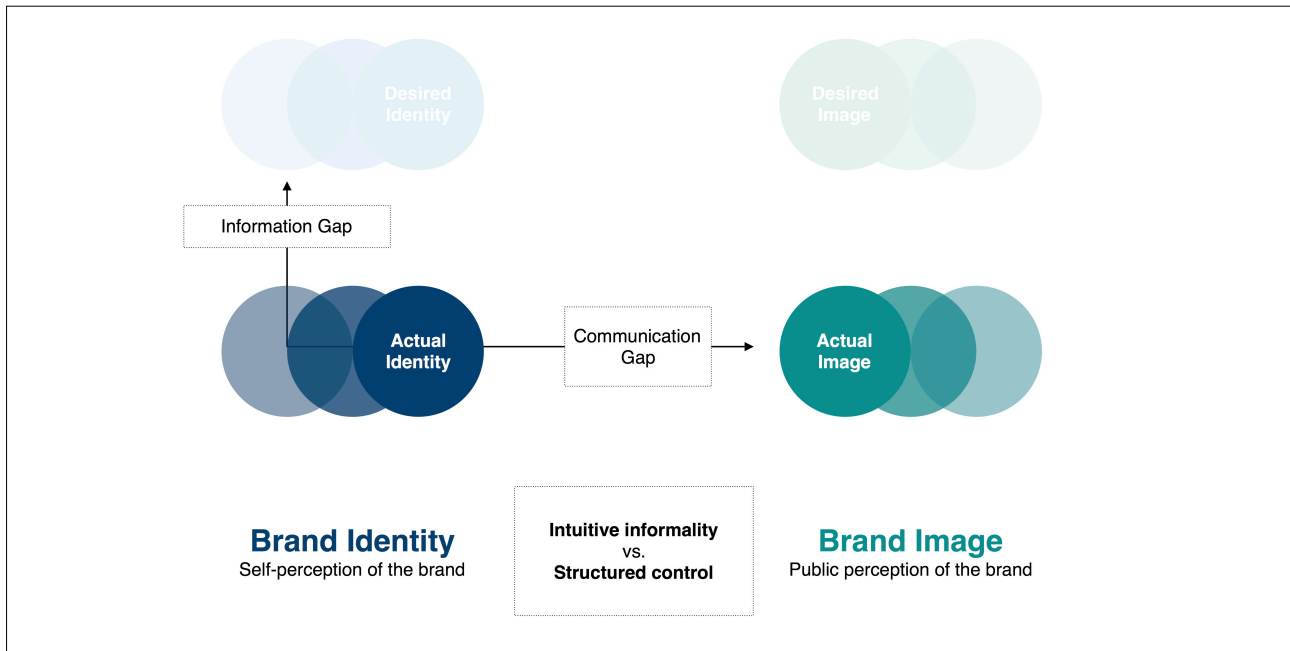


Exhibit 12: Consistency Gaps “Intuitive informality” vs. “Structured control”

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.6. Social responsibility vs. corporate profitability

The brand tension between social responsibility and corporate profitability is somewhat related to the privatization vs. municipalization paradox, however more strongly pertains to BIF’s values and organizational purpose. On the one hand, social responsibility is a central concern for BIF (Pedersen, 2017):

“Brøndby as a community is a place where there is a lot of citizens who have small incomes and so on. I don’t think it would work if you had a club that was not interested in the community. It wouldn’t work in Brøndby I think. I think they are just very aware of where they are located [...] They want to be known for their social responsibility, I think” (Pedersen, 2017, 51, 109) .

As stated above, the club’s inherent commitment towards social responsibility largely stems from its immediate social environment; a region characterized by a “large difference between rich and poor” (Pedersen, 2017, 109), and with a population that is often referred to as working class people (Møller, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017, Pedersen, 2017): “I think there is a combination with the municipality of Brøndby and the people who live there. It is a working men’s club more than it is for more affluent people” (Møller, 2017). Due to that, a close cooperation between the municipality of Brøndby and BIF has grown over the years (Pedersen, 2017): “I think it is important because there are some problems in their environment. I think it is important to tell that they have this social responsibility. And not just to tell it but also to take the responsibility” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 31).

On the other hand, however, also the club's obligations and responsibility towards corporate and shareholder interests have been increasing over the years, challenging and questioning the core values of the brand (Blom, 2017). Besides being in need of finances as an organization, the BIF brand is an important commercial target for sponsors, the media, and shareholders alike. Hoping to activate their products in front of a large audience (Blom, 2017), sponsors "put money in a club that is part of something bigger. They contribute to something that is bigger than just a name on a board [...] they're buying into something that 250,000 people believe in and respect" (Schultz, 2017, 123). Moreover, coverage of BIF represents a literal cash cow for the media: "One Brøndby story on *BT.dk* generates as many clicks as 13 stories on each of the other clubs combined [...] I understand that *BT* and *Ekstra Bladet*, if they can get a Brøndby story, then of course! They can increase their revenue and ads and so on" (Schultz, 2017, 187, 193). Lastly, the demand for corporate profitability is increased by the club's financial dependency on Jan Bech Andersen as the main investor: "So what could bring the club into a better investment so he [Jan Bech Andersen] maybe could sell it one day?" (Sønnichsen, 2017, 34).

Dealing with the tension: Juxtaposing the demands of social responsibility and corporate profitability, one strategy could be to communicate corporate profitability as a means to intensify, rather than move away from, the club's CSR initiatives:

"I think it [becoming more independent economically] will be good actually. [...] they also need to be aware of whether it is something they can earn money on or not. That is of course a big thing for them. But the other way around, if they get more professional and improve and get better at earning money, then they should be stronger and maybe they can afford to help the community more" (Pedersen, 2017, 90).

This pertains to the municipality's desire for BIF to take on a role of a *Corporate Citizen* (Maignan et al., 1999), asserting the dual economic and social role of the club. While BIF is committed to be the most important cultural institution for people by engagement with youth associations and local community (Møller, 2017; Annual report, 2016), apparently this identity expression of the club is not reflected in the municipality's brand perception.

Consistency Gaps: Looking at the tension between social responsibility and corporate profitability, for supporters an *Identification Gap* exists between their actual image (i.e. BIF becoming increasingly commercialized) and ideal image (i.e. BIF as a club that is owned by the community) of the club. As pointed out, the supporters represent the strongest opposition to be in any way commercial, part of a company, or subject to corporate interest (Blom, 2017). Secondly, a *Need Gap* occurs due to the differing interests and preferences of the various stakeholder groups: While the municipality and supporters highlight the importance of social responsibility, the media and sponsors express a stronger preference for corporate

profitability. With regard to the internal stakeholders, a similar debate is taking place between the amateur department and the other internal stakeholders, subsequently resulting in a *Goal-setting Gap*. Lastly, given the supporters' general skepticism towards any corporate association, this creates a constant need of explanation from BIF's management when it comes to corporate profitability and corporate interest. Thus, also a *Comprehension Gap* exists between ideal identity and ideal image (see **Exhibit 13**).

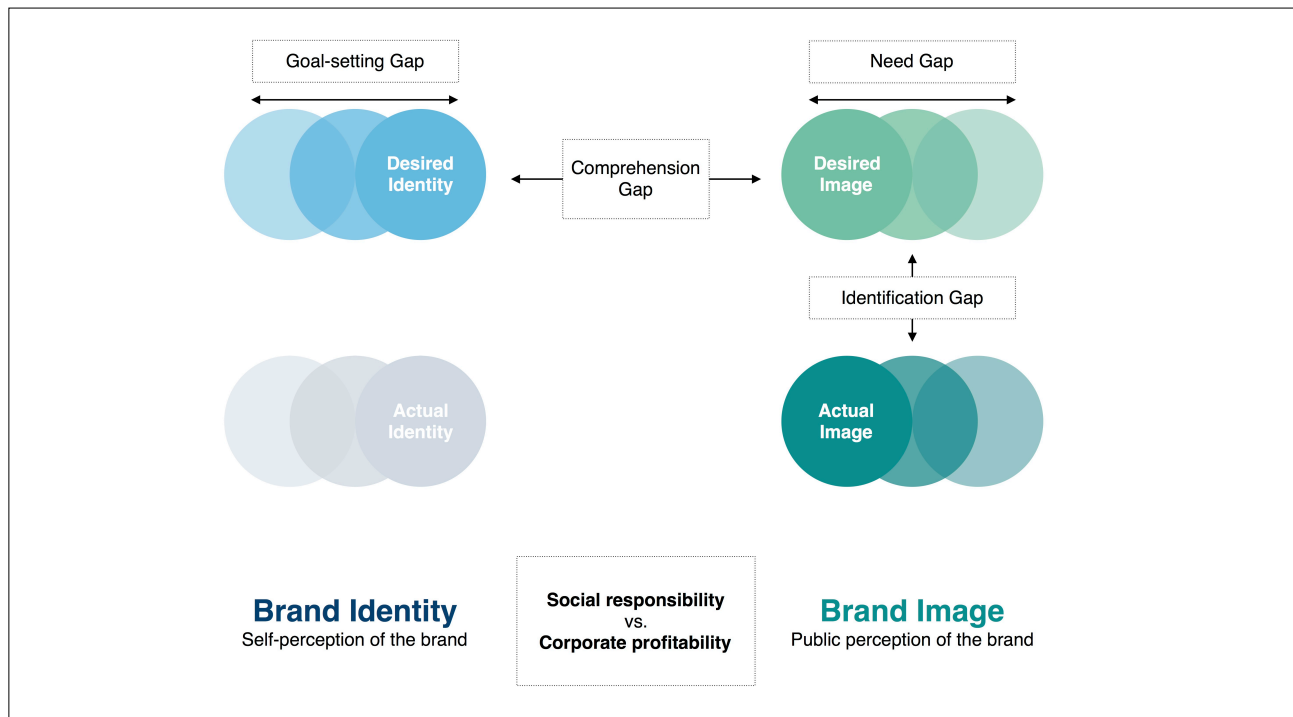


Exhibit 13: Consistency Gaps Social responsibility” vs. “Corporate profitability”

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.7. Tangibility (BIF as an experience product) vs. Intangibility (BIF as a feeling)

The brand tension between tangibility and intangibility is related to the question of industry context as well as the nature of BIF's “product”. The demand for BIF to be a tangible brand, on the one hand, relates to everything that is directly related to the experience before, during, and after the game (Møller, 2017). According to the athletic staff, BIF is in the business of sport and the product is the game, the sport, and sporting success (Zorninger, 2017). Expanding this core product, however still within the demand for tangibility, is the definition of BIF being in the experience (Schultz, 2017; Bech, 2017) and entertainment (Møller, 2017; Wehlast, 2017) business: “A lot of the value we get is from the TV money and I think that is the best proof that it is entertainment” (Møller, 2017, 80). In that regard, Bech (2017) and Blom (2017) make an important distinction between what is entertainment and what is an experience, claiming that BIF is much

more than “just” entertainment: “That’s the thing, it’s a big difference. Entertainment would very often leave you as a recipient of whatever is going on [...] A football game is only interesting if you contribute to it, participate. It’s not entertainment, it’s an experience. And for me, that is the difference between this and the cinema or circus or whatever” (Bech, 2017, 63). Being part of the experience economy and selling a highly emotional product, however, there’s also the strong demand for addressing a number of intangible aspects around the brand: Sense of belonging (Schultz, 2017), togetherness (Wehlast, 2017), hope (Blom, 2017; Bech, 2017, Sønnichsen, 2017), and belief (Blom, 2017; Bech, 2017). In short: Brøndby as a feeling, rather than a product. Compared to the tangible components of BIF’s brand, these aspects go way beyond the 90 minutes in and around *Brøndby Stadium*:

“[...] an individual incident, like a game, is only worth so much. We have a game every second week. So we cannot have a business of selling a two-hour event every second week. We should make it alive everyday, every minute. And that’s a feeling of being Brøndby, that is what we should allow our users to have“ (Bech, 2017, 59).

Dealing with the tension: To cope with this challenge of navigating between tangible and intangible world, the close and personalized communication between club and supporters plays an important role. A good example is Brøndby’s mobile app *Indefra*: On a daily basis, the app broadcasts and pushes events such as player routines, training sessions, and transfer updates from inside the club. Apart from that, it is also important for brand management to understand that tangible and intangible components of the BIF brand strongly complement each other: “[...] now as we get better, maybe we start selling belief instead [of hope]. Because every time you go to a football match, you hope you win. Now we have to get people to believe in it, because it’s not only hope any more, because normally we do win now” (Blom, 2017, 128). However, a strong positioning based on the aspect of intangibility may enable the decoupling from sporting performance and success (Schade, 2012). An aspect that is especially important “when things are not going so well” (Wehlast, 2017).

Consistency Gaps: With regard to the tension between tangibility and intangibility, an *Integration Gap* exists between different internal stakeholders as to what the core product and identity of BIF is (i.e. sport vs. experience, vs. entertainment vs. feelings). According to Bierwirth (2003), this can either lead to an inconsistent brand image, or that the internal stakeholders do not identify with the brand. As an *Integration Gap* is most likely to lead to a *Communication Gap*, this unclear brand proposition can also affect BIF’s image externally: If different external stakeholders do not share the same perception of the brand, a so-called *Perception Gap* is likely to occur, especially when different cultural environments influence the brand image (Bierwirth, 2003). Attracting audiences ranging from families who see visiting *Brøndby Stadium* as an once-off entertainment, to regular hardcore fans, to self-made business man and sponsors (Møller, 2017), for BIF, that is certainly the case (see **Exhibit 14**).

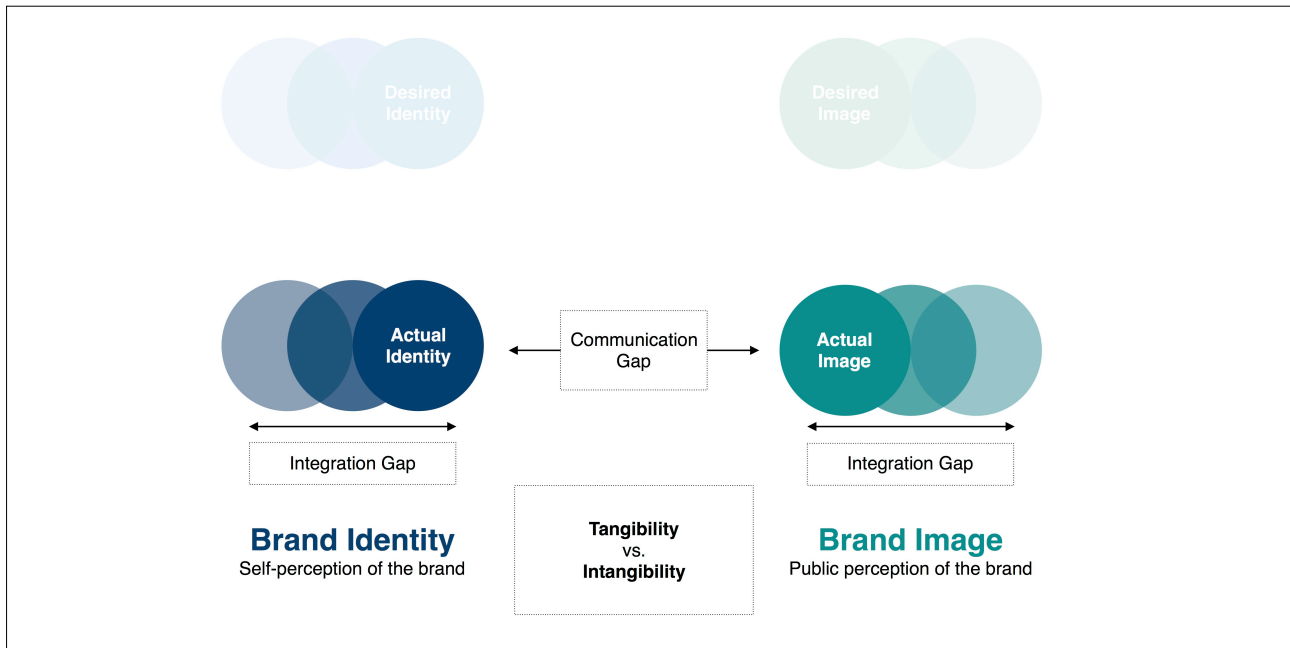


Exhibit 14: Consistency Gaps “Social responsibility” vs. “Corporate profitability”

Source: Own depiction

7.3.1.8. Exploitation vs. Exploration

Lastly, the tension of exploitation vs. exploration refers to the club’s organizational ambidexterity, defined as “the ability to simultaneously pursue both incremental and discontinuous innovation [...] from hosting multiple contradictory structures, processes, and cultures within the same firm (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996, p. 24). This being said, on the one hand BIF is lucky to possess a large potential for organizational exploitation, from an unrivaled fanbase of 250,000 in Denmark, to enormous media and sponsor interest: “We got this huge fan base and we need to harvest them in some way [...] it’s also important for the sponsors [...] they’re buying into something that 250,000 people believe in and respect” (Schultz, 2017, 103). In short, BIF is the biggest club based on spectators, fanbase, television viewers, and brand exposure, allowing brand management to penetrate on a much bigger scale than any other Danish club (Blom, 2017). Despite that, in recent years BIF has not been good enough at exploiting their enormous brand they have in Denmark (Blom, 2017): “[...] everyone wants to have something to do with them. But no one wants to pay to be a part of the Fælleskab as a sponsor. It’s surprising that there’s not more economic support for Brøndby” (Blom, 2017, 71). Unable to exploit this potential competitive advantage to the fullest extent, BIF is also required to explore and innovate alternative ways of commercialization:

“But we think there is many other things you could do also. Maybe reaching out more socially to the community. Many other things which you don’t do when you are really under pressure financially. But as

we see our financial situation improving, we are thinking about how to innovate [...] we are very ambitious because we think it is a business and any business should always think about 'how can we be different?'" (Møller, 2017, 59).

Dealing with the tension: Pertaining to the notion of BIF's chairman, "the basic problem confronting an organization is to engage in sufficient exploitation to ensure its current viability and, at the same time, devote enough energy to exploration to ensure its future viability" (March, 1991, p.105). With the operational brand management often being held busy by day-to-day tasks, the board of directors can be seen to play an important role in dealing with the tension between exploitation and exploration: "It is always easy for the board to ask for the next thing. And they should do. But as management you are very preoccupied with delivering on what was already agreed. Then the board must always set their sight a bit further out in the future" (Møller, 2017, 104). Moreover, for organizations operating in more turbulent environments such as the professional sport club setting, organizational ambidexterity requires the development of "more organic systems with a lack of formally defined tasks, more lateral coordination mechanisms, and less reliance on formalization and specialization" (Aldrich, 1999; Sine, Mitsuhashi & Kirsch, 2006; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2002).

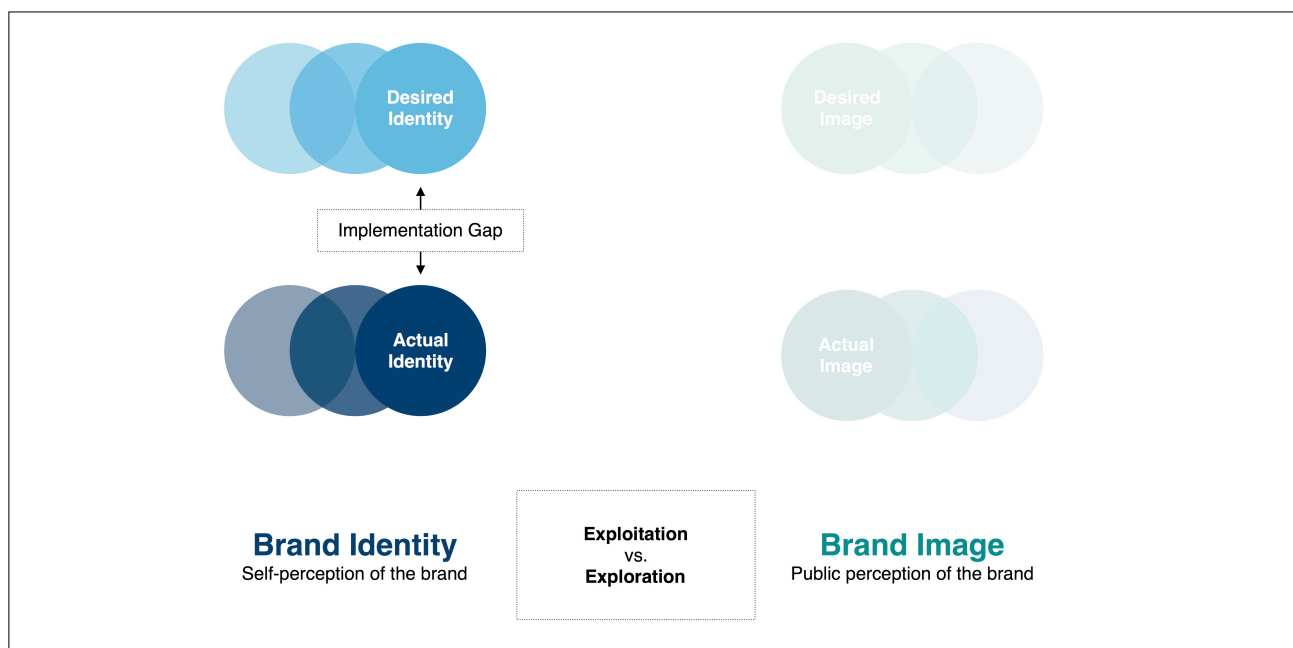


Exhibit 15: Consistency Gaps "Exploitation" vs. "Exploration"

Source: Own depiction

Consistency Gaps: This being said, from the tension between exploitation and exploration, the risk of an *Implementation Gap* within BIF arises. Specifically, the gap occurs between the actual identity enacted by the operational management (i.e. communications department), and the desired identity of the strategic management. In light of BIF's new *Strategy 6.4* (i.e. desired identity), the question must be asked whether or not the organization possesses the necessary capabilities and resources (Burmenn & Zeplin, 2004). For example, do the necessary resources exist for "having the best talent academy in Denmark" (Annual report, 2017)? (see **Appendix 15**)

Instant Replay: Trying to define and shape their brand identity and image, BIF is facing a number of strategic brand management tensions. In trying to embrace, navigate, and juxtapose the varying organizational demands (de Wit & Meyer, 2010), BIF presents a number of strategies on how to approach their brand challenges. However, unable to align and resolve the tensions, the preceding chapter identified a number of brand-related consistency gaps, resulting from stakeholder misalignment.

7.3.2. Quantitative results: Inter-stakeholder brand personality gaps

At this point, quantitative analysis was used to further explore inter-stakeholder gaps with specific regard to BIF's intended and perceived brand personality. Again, this was done by using visualization in a personality differential (Osgood et al., 1957; Sattler & Völckner, 2007). Additionally, ANOVA was conducted to uncover significant inter-stakeholder misalignments. In a first step, internal vs. external stakeholders' perception of BIF's brand personality were compared. Secondly, all stakeholder groups were examined individually. While both the analysis proceedings and conceptualization of the semantic space is similar to what has been explained in **Section 7.2.2**, specific assumptions regarding ANOVA will be explained in the following.

7.3.2.1. Brand personality gaps between internal and external stakeholders

In a first step, the assessment of BIF's brand personality from internal vs. external stakeholders was compared. For this purpose, our 51 respondents were assigned to either one of these groups using a dichotomous variable (1 = internal stakeholder, 2 = external stakeholders). On the one hand, the sub-sample "internal stakeholders" included respondents from the board of directors, management, administrative staff, athletic staff, and shareholders ($N = 18$). On the other hand, the sub-sample "external stakeholders" included respondents from supporters, the media, as well as the municipality (no sponsors participated in the survey) ($N = 33$). **Table 14** summarizes and compares the respective means and standard deviations for each dimension (see **Appendix 20**):

| | Loyal Family | | Fierce Alternativism | | Civilized Narcissism | | Honorable Obedience | | Honest Work | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Internal stakeholders | 4.37 | .38 | 3.21 | .62 | 3.41 | .75 | 3.61 | .78 | 4.39 | .63 |
| External stakeholders | 4.34 | .75 | 3.48 | .78 | 3.70 | .72 | 3.47 | .84 | 4.00 | .82 |

Table 14: Means and standard deviations BIF's brand personality – internal vs. external stakeholders

Source: Own depiction, based on SPSS output (see **Appendix 20**)

Comparing the means and standard deviations, it appears that there is no great difference between internal and external stakeholders with regards to their perception of BIF's brand personality. However, in four out of five cases, the standard deviation for the sub-sample "external stakeholders" is distinctively larger compared to the internal stakeholder group. This can be interpreted as an indication of a less consistent external perception of BIF's brand personality. Translated into our personality differential, internal vs. external stakeholders compare as follows:

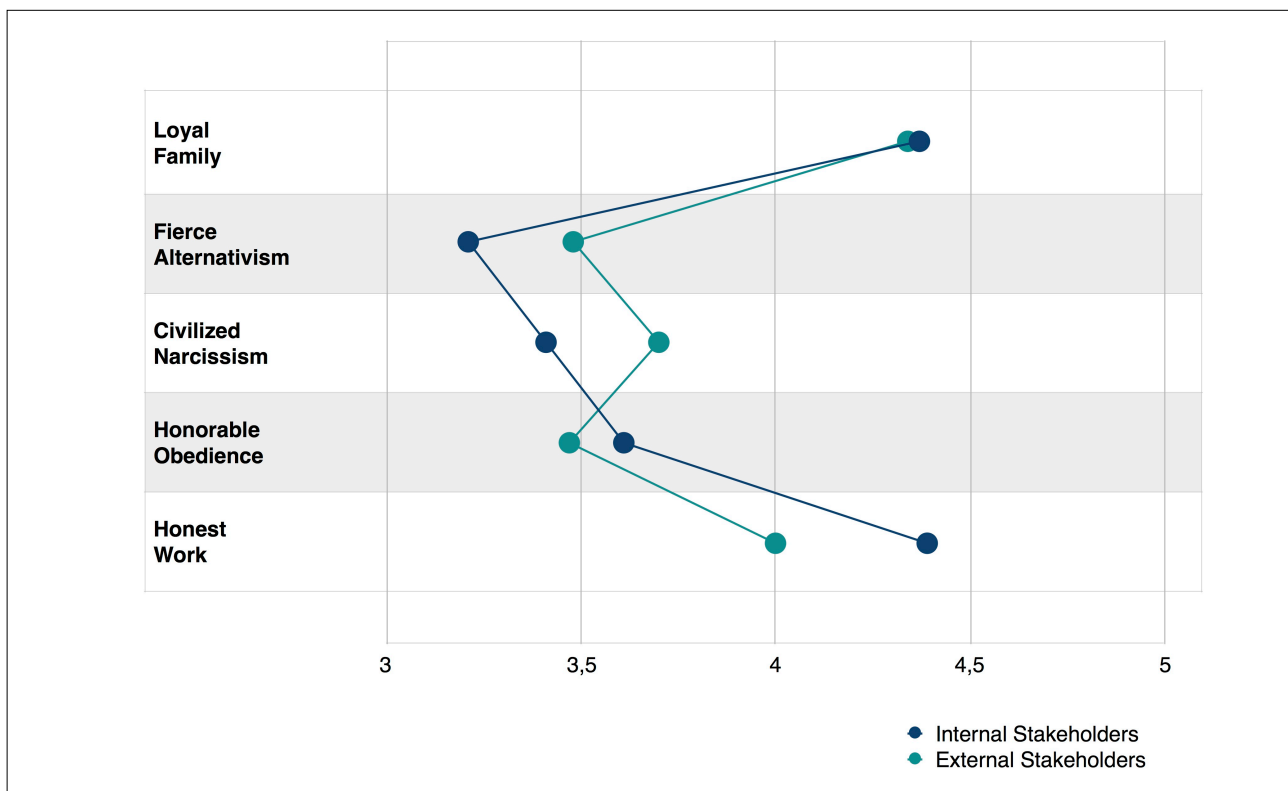


Exhibit 16: Personality differential for Brøndby IF (internal vs. external stakeholders) (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)

Source: Own depiction

As the personality differential in **Exhibit 16** suggests, the perception of BIF's brand personality seems relatively aligned between internal and external stakeholders. With a still relatively small difference of .39 on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree), the "biggest" gap can be identified for the dimension "Honest Work". To examine whether actual statistically significant gaps exist between internal and external stakeholders, in a second step an ANOVA was conducted using *SPSS*.

Before conducting an ANOVA, six general assumptions must be considered (Field, 2009). Firstly, the dependent variable should be measured at a continuous interval or ratio level. In the given case, this assumption is fulfilled through our five dimensions on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree). Secondly, the dependent variable must consist of at least two or more categorical and independent groups. In our case, we used the dummy variable created earlier (1 = internal stakeholder, 2 = external stakeholder) as our independent factor, thus fulfilling this assumption. Thirdly, and as laid out before, the independence of observations is given due to our method of data collection. That means that there is no relationship between the observations in each group or between the groups themselves. Fourthly, there should be no significant outliers. This assumption was tested by examining (detrended) Q-Q plots (see **Appendix 21**). Fifthly, the dependent variables in an ANOVA should be approximately normally distributed. Again, this was tested using *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* and *Shapiro-Wilk* tests. As can be seen from **Appendix 22**, normal distribution could only be verified for the factor "Civilized Narcissism" ($D(48) = .092, p = .200$; $W(48) = .975, p = .407$). Also logarithmization of the variables did not lead to normal distribution of the data (see **Appendix 22**). However, Field (2009) notes that, because of its robustness, ANOVA only requires approximately normal data, meaning that the assumption can be violated and still provide valid results. Based on visual examination of the variables' histograms (see **Appendix 23**), approximate Gaussianity can be assumed. Lastly, there needs to be homogeneity of variances. This can be done by applying the Levene's test, indicating homogeneity of variances when $p > .05$ (Fields, 2009). For our sample, p -values significantly $> .05$ were found for all five personality dimensions (see **Appendix 24**).

Having tested all relevant assumptions, subsequent ANOVA indicated a significant difference between internal and external stakeholders for the personality dimension "Honest Work" at the $p < .10$ level, $F(1, 29) = 3.05, p = .087$. For the other four dimensions, no significant inter-stakeholder differences were found (see **Appendix 25**). Since the dependent variable only featured two conditions (internal vs. external), no further post-hoc tests were necessary at this point (Field, 2009).

The result of the ANOVA is in line with what is depicted in our personality differential: Regarding the personality dimension "Honest Work", internal stakeholders experience BIF as being significantly more honest and tolerant than perceived by the external stakeholders. For all other personality dimensions, no significant personality gaps could be identified between internal and external stakeholders. This can be interpreted as BIF being perceived as less honest and tolerant (i.e. constituting items of the *Honest Work* dimension) by external stakeholders (such as the media), based for example on a more negative perception

over the misappropriations of dysfunctional fans' (e.g. the rat-incident, hooligans). To draw a more detailed conclusion as to which stakeholder groups are causing consistency gaps, the following section will take a closer look at the individual stakeholder groups and their perception of BIF's brand personality.

7.3.2.2. Brand personality gaps between individual stakeholders groups

In a second step, the assessment of BIF's brand personality from all seven individual stakeholder groups was compared. For this purpose, our 51 respondents were assigned to the following sub-samples: Management and board ($N = 3$), administrative staff ($N = 1$), athletic staff ($N = 1$), shareholders ($N = 13$), supporters ($N = 27$), media ($N = 4$), municipality ($N = 2$). No sponsors or representatives of the amateur department had participated in the survey. **Table 15** summarizes and compares the respective means and standard deviations of the seven stakeholder groups for each of the five BPS dimensions (see **Appendix 20**).

| | Loyal Family | | Fierce Alternativism | | Civilized Narcissism | | Honorable Obedience | | Honest Work | |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Management | 4.30 | .56 | 2.83 | .58 | 3.13 | .42 | 4.17 | .29 | 4.67 | .29 |
| Administrative Staff | 4.22 | – | 3.25 | – | 3.00 | – | 4.00 | – | 5.00 | – |
| Athletic Staff | 4.22 | – | 3.80 | – | 3.40 | – | 4.00 | – | 4.50 | – |
| Shareholders | 4.41 | .39 | 3.25 | .66 | 3.51 | .85 | 3.42 | .84 | 4.27 | .70 |
| Supporters | 4.40 | .81 | 3.74 | .52 | 3.88 | .63 | 3.54 | .87 | 4.19 | .64 |
| Media | 3.94 | .26 | 1.88 | .32 | 2.85 | .34 | 3.13 | .85 | 2.50 | .41 |
| Municipality | 4.50 | .24 | 3.25 | .35 | 2.90 | .99 | 3.25 | .35 | 4.50 | .00 |
| SD | .17 | .21 | .60 | .13 | .35 | .25 | .38 | .26 | .75 | .25 |

Table 15: Means and standard deviations BIF's brand personality – individual stakeholder groups

Source: Own depiction

Comparing the means and standard deviations for the first personality dimension “Loyal Family”, mean ratings between the various stakeholder groups appear very aligned. Administrative staff (i.e. communications manager Christian Schultz) and athletic staff (i.e. head coach Alexander Zorninger) are perfectly aligned with regard to their perception of BIF's familiarity. With regard to standard deviations, supporters show a much higher value than the other stakeholder groups for which numbers could be obtained. This could indicate towards disagreement between various supporter groups (e.g. old vs. young), as to what BIF's personality with regard to the “Loyal Family”-dimension is. Looking at the second dimensions, “Fierce Alternativism”, it can be seen that the media gives a distinctively lower rating in comparison to the other groups (e.g. they perceive BIF as being more similar to other clubs than what the

other stakeholder groups experience and perceive). For “Civilized Narcissism”, mean ratings are comparatively identical between the various stakeholder groups. With regard to the standard deviations, the media indicated the most consistent perception of how the club ranks on this dimension. Looking at the fourth dimension, again, administrative and athletic staff are aligned perfectly. With regard to the standard deviations, shareholders, supporters, and the media appear to be distinctively more divided than the municipality and management when it comes to the “Honorable Obedience” dimension. Lastly, what sticks out for the “Honest Work” dimension, is the distinctively lower rating from the media. In summary, the two dimensions “Fierce Alternativism” ($SD = .60$) and “Honest Work” ($SD = .75$) indicate the greatest gaps between the seven stakeholder groups. Visualized in a personality differential, the seven stakeholder groups compare as follows (see **Exhibit 17**):

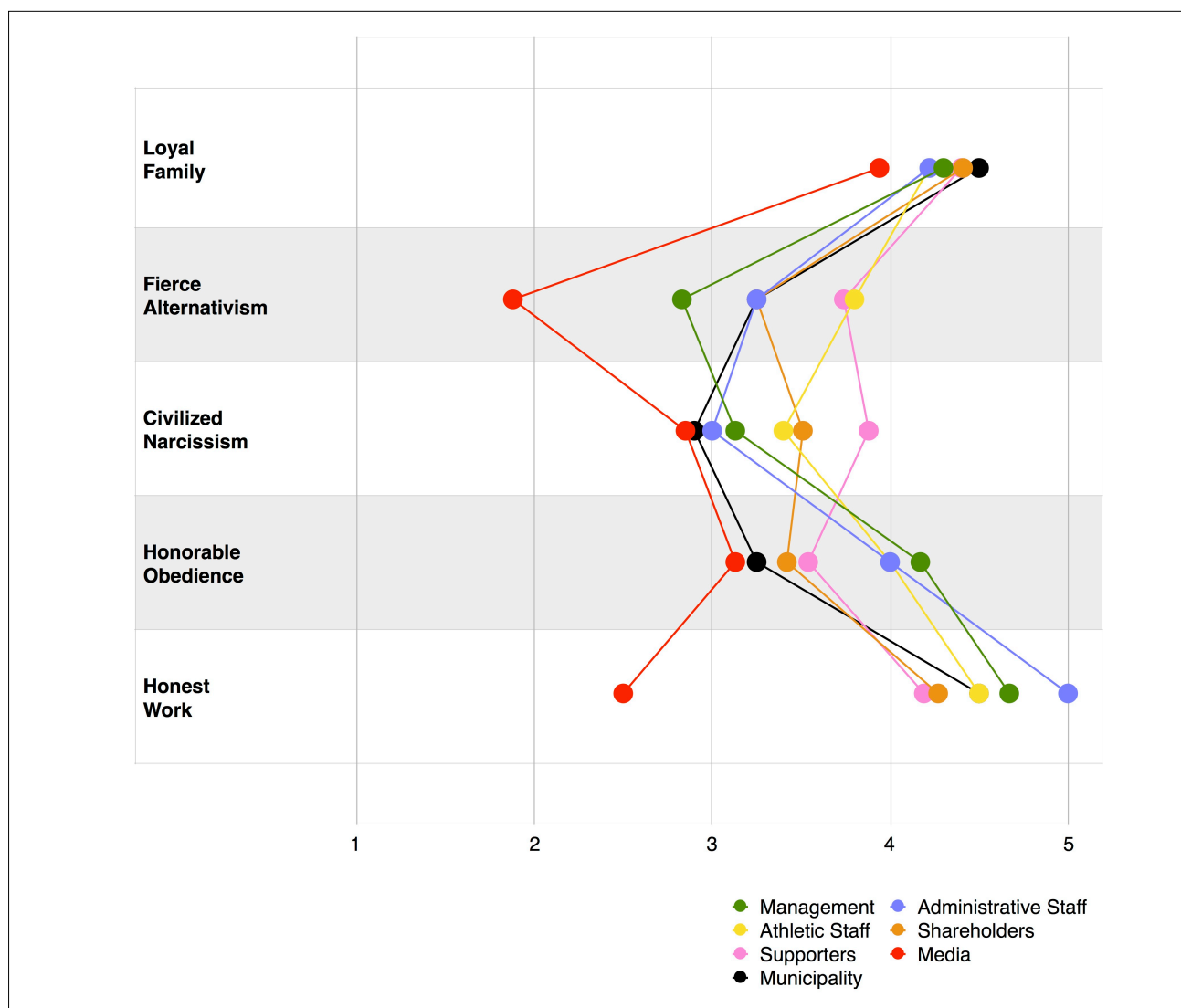


Exhibit 17: Personality differential for Brøndby IF (individual stakeholder groups) (1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)

Source: Own depiction

As already suggested by comparing the means and standard deviations, the personality differential in **Exhibit 17** shows that the perception of BIF's brand personality is relatively aligned between the seven stakeholder groups. For one exception: Looking at the dimensions "Fierce Alternativism" and "Honest Work", substantial gaps materialize between what the media perceives BIF's brand personality to be, and what the other stakeholder groups see. Specifically, unlike the other stakeholder groups, the media perceives BIF to be the opposite of fierce, cheeky, alternative, and self-deprecating. Moreover, the media perceives BIF to be relatively dishonest and intolerant. To examine whether the gaps above actually represent statistically significant differences between personality expression and perception, another ANOVA was conducted.

This time, the dependent variable consisted of seven conditions, each representing one of the seven stakeholder groups. Furthermore, relevant assumptions for conducting an ANOVA had already been tested. Subsequent ANOVA (see **Appendix 26**) indicated a significant difference between the stakeholder groups for three out of the five personality dimensions:

- A significant difference between the seven stakeholder groups for the personality dimension "**Fierce Alternativism**" at the $p < .01$ level, $F(6, 42) = 7.76, p = .000$.
- A significant difference between the seven stakeholder groups for the personality dimension "**Civilized Narcissism**" at the $p < .05$ level, $F(6, 44) = 2.33, p = .048$.
- A significant difference between the seven stakeholder groups for the personality dimension "**Honest Work**" at the $p < .01$ level, $F(6, 44) = 5.59, p = .000$.

Since the dependent variable above consisted of more than just two conditions, at this point a subsequent post-hoc test was necessary. Specifically, we selected the *Tukey HSD* post-hoc test, designed to compare the individual conditions to each other (Field, 2009). In order to conduct the *Tukey HSD*, the conditions "athletic staff" and "administrative staff" had to be ignored, due to the test requiring a minimum of $N = 2$ for each condition. For the three affected personality dimensions, post-hoc comparisons using the *Tukey HSD* test (see **Appendix 27**) allowed for the identification of the following brand personality gaps:

- For the "**Fierce Alternativism**" dimension, the *Tukey HSD* test indicated that the mean score for the media condition ($M = 1.88, SD = .32$) was significantly different than the shareholder condition ($M = 3.25, SD = .66$), $p = .001$; the supporter condition ($M = 3.74, SD = .52$), $p = .000$; and the municipality condition ($M = 3.25, SD = .35$), $p = .043$. Moreover, the mean score for the shareholder condition was significantly different than the supporter dimension, $p = .089$. Lastly, also the mean score for the supporter condition was significantly different than the management condition ($M = 2.83, SD = .58$), $p = .065$.

- For the “**Civilized Narcissism**” dimension, the *Tukey HSD* test indicated that the mean score for the media condition ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .34$) was significantly different than the supporter condition ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .63$), $p = .053$.
- For the “**Honest Work**” dimension, the *Tukey HSD* test indicated that the mean score for the media condition ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .41$) was significantly different than the management condition ($M = 4.67$, $SD = .29$), $p = .000$; the shareholder condition ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .70$), $p = .000$; the supporter condition ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .64$), $p = .000$; and the municipality condition ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .00$), $p = .005$.

Based on this quantitative insight, **Exhibit 18** visualizes all personality gaps that could be identified between the different stakeholder groups. As can be seen, no personality gaps were identified between the different internal stakeholder groups.

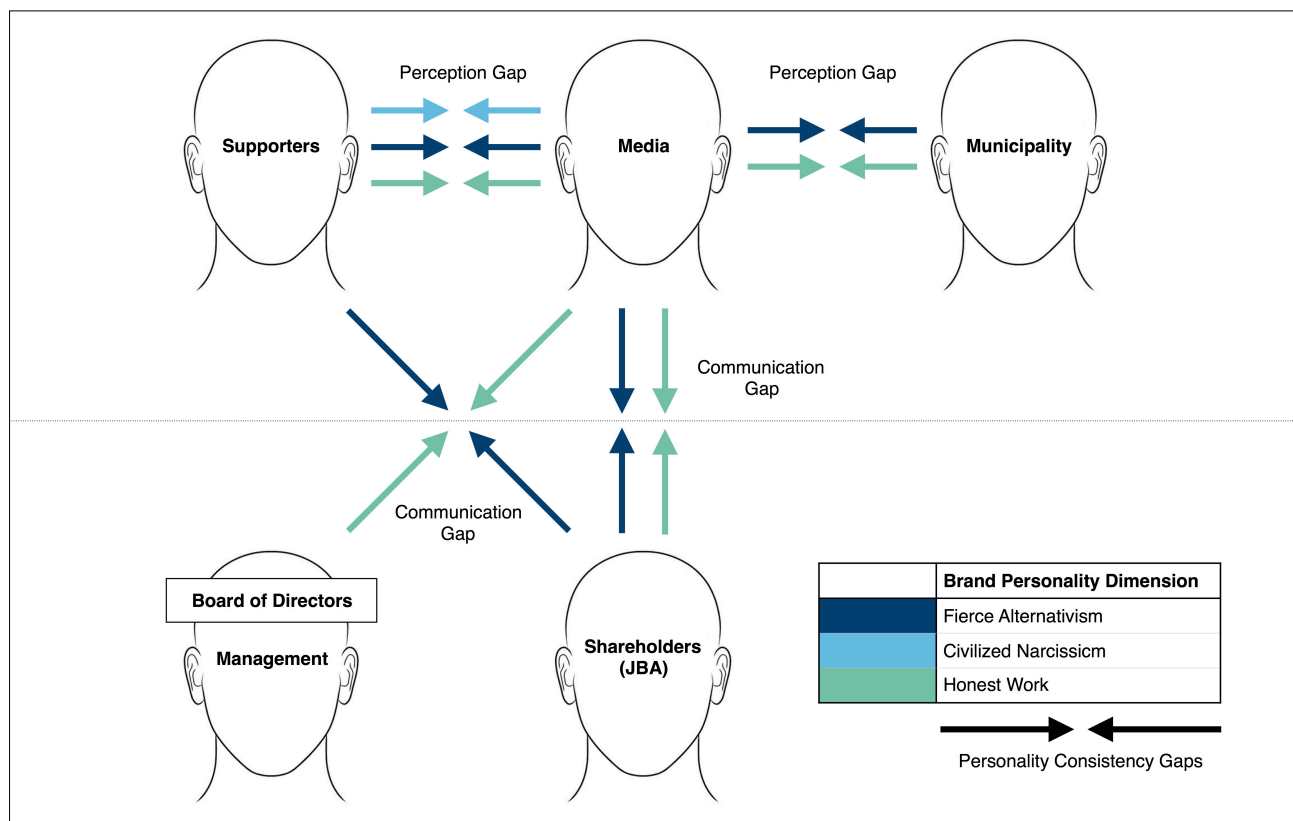


Exhibit 18: Brand personality gaps for BIF

Source: Own depiction

Consistency Gaps: Because our questionnaire asked for BIF’s actually perceived (rather than desired) brand personality, the personality gaps in **Exhibit 10** represent either *Communication Gaps* (between internal and external stakeholders) or *Perception Gaps* (between different external stakeholders (Burmam & Zeplin,

2004; Bierwirth, 2003). The *Communication Gaps* occur between the actual perception of BIF's external stakeholders (actual image) and the current self-perception of the internal stakeholders (actual identity) (Burmam et al., 2012). According to Burmann & Zeplin (2004), reasons for these consistency gaps must be found in either the unstructured design of BIF's external communications, or inconsistent messages throughout the various communication channels. Moreover, external *Perception Gaps* exist, because the external stakeholders of BIF do not share the same actual perception of some of the brand personality dimensions. Specifically, the media, supporters, and municipality perceive BIF's brand personality (i.e. verbal and non-verbal style of communication) as significantly different.

Instant Replay: While internal stakeholders are found to be very much aligned with respect to BIF's brand personality (internal consistency), most importantly a number of significant perception gaps between different external stakeholders were identified. Supporters, media, and the municipality do not share the same actual perception of certain dimensions of BIF's brand personality.

7.4. Power and interest asymmetries as sources of brand tensions and consistency gaps

Question 4: *Why do these tensions and gaps occur?*

The previous section has sought to outline where brand gaps can occur with regards to BIF, now we attempt to dig deeper into the causation of these gaps to better understand the root and nature of the branding tensions and challenges present. To address Q4, similar textual thematic analysis based on Attride-Stirling (2001) as in **Section 7.2** was conducted. A second coding framework was designed with the purpose of investigating stakeholders' abilities to influence brand management (i.e. their power) and their respective interest in doing so. Based on the theoretical interests guiding our research (i.e. research question Q4 and questions guide) as well as initial salient issues that arose during the interviews, at this stage we identified two additional non-redundant and non-interchangeable codes (Attride-Sterling, 2001): "power" and "interest". The interview transcripts were then re-read with this new framework in mind. Extracting salient text segments allowed for the generation of *Organizing Themes* pertaining to each of BIF's stakeholders, from which *Global Themes* were abstracted in the realms of stakeholder power and interest levels (see **Appendix 8**). The following section will briefly discuss the results of this analysis. We first explore and explain the thematic network addressing stakeholders' respective power bases, then with regards to their interests. In a third step, stakeholder powers and interests are discussed in tandem to identify why sources of tension within and around the organization's brand management causes brand gaps.

7.4.1. Asymmetries of power and dependency

The *Global Theme* pertaining to stakeholders' power is displayed in **Table 16**. In order to understand how respective stakeholders' power levels interact with each other, *Basic Themes* and salient text segments extracted from the interview transcripts have been organized in connection to the respective stakeholder groups. This allows for better understanding of the balance of powers within and around the organization, thereby contributing to a *Global Theme* describing the general picture.

| | BIF stakeholders' level of brand influence can be explained by asymmetries of power and dependency |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Management and Board | Contested brand influence, largely based on legitimate and expert power |
| Administrative Staff | Diminished brand influence due to low informational power |
| Athletic Staff | Higher level brand influence due to legitimate and expert power |
| Shareholders | Higher level brand influence based on legitimate and referent power (i.e. in the form of JBA) |
| Amateur Department | Limited brand influence base solely on legitimate power (i.e. board representation) |
| Supporters | High brand influence due to normative referent power and co-creation |
| Media | High brand influence due to normative co-coercive power and media independency |
| Sponsors | Limited direct brand influence based on reward power and club's financial dependency |
| Municipality | Low brand influence based on legitimate power and the club's infrastructural dependency |

Table 16: BIF stakeholders' powers and brand influence

Source: Own depiction

7.4.1.1. Management's contested brand influence

This *Organizing Theme* describes the fact that while BIF's upper management and board of directors have legitimate power in influencing the strategic direction of the brand, this authority is contested (primarily) by BIF's external stakeholders. Management's power is legitimate because of the authority granted by their position within the organization (Møller, 2017). Furthermore, expert power is demonstrated by the years of experience within football club management; i.e. Troels Bech having been "in the *Superliga* for 30 years" (Bech, 2017, 64). Top management's power in influencing the brand is not absolute in the case of BIF, as the board of directors is naturally subject to the whims of the shareholders: "I could also be expelled from the board if the shareholders agree that now we need a new composition of the board" (Møller, 2017, 116). Internally speaking, the board of directors and upper management have the power to set consequences for the

actions of its administrative and athletic staff (Bech, 2017). It cannot, however, easily reprimand its external stakeholders – “could you imagine us playing without spectators?” (Bech, 2017, 83). Troels Bech comments on this dynamic between the organization’s internal and external stakeholders with an analogy of the organization as a car traveling down a path determined by upper management:

“This [external stakeholders] is where it goes off road. [They] will define the speed, and sometimes what turns we need to take to prevail. They’re not against us. I think all of them want us to succeed. But they’re so difficult to manage. I think the best way of saying it, is trying to manage them being unmanageable” (Bech, 2017, 83).

7.4.1.2. Administrative Staff’s diminished brand influence

Officially speaking, the administrative staff should have some legitimate powers in pursuing its interests, however a closer look at the interrelationships with other stakeholders suggests that this might not entirely be the case. As was established in **Section 7.2.1.3**, BIF’s internal communication style is based around informality and intuition (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Bech, 2017). Specifically, BIF’s communications department acts as a gatekeeper and middleman (Schultz, 2017) between the organization and the outside world.

With this much responsibility in interacting with the brand’s prime storytelling channel, one would therefore assume that this stakeholder group has a lot of power in shaping the brand; this is supported by the claim that the communications department is the second-most important department after the sporting department (Schultz, 2017). Based on the salient themes presented in the interviews, however, we find the administrative staff to suffer from low informational power, due primarily to structural faults within the organization’s communication chain and the ability of the media to circumvent BIF’s official channels to speak with whomever they like (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017; Wehlast, 2017): “In Brøndby you can still call different guys inside the organization” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 35). This void is being exploited by the media: “I tell the journalists – go to the primary source instead of going to [the communications manager]” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 101).

7.4.1.3. Athletic Staff’s higher level brand influence

The power of the athletic staff in shaping the brand is considered high. It has been established that BIF’s core business is football (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017), so naturally the players and coaches possess a great degree of legitimacy in that regard:

“We have by far the biggest influence because we are the ones who have to generate sporting success [...] That is why in a football club it is exclusively what the sporting department delivers that is of interest. Everything around it [is] only mere side effects. It is impossible for the media, supporters, administrative staff, or management to do anything that could cover up for sporting failure. That’s impossible.” (Zorniger, 2017, 47).

BIF’s athletic staff have a great deal of expert power as well: “first of all [Zorniger] had a good start because he changed our performance so strongly. People said ‘wow, this guy can do something’” (Møller, 2017, 223). The power of the athletic staff to influence branding is only hampered by the ability of upper management to enforce consequences on the actions of the athletic staff should they choose to do so (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017; Zorniger, 2017).

7.4.1.4. Shareholders’ higher level brand influence in the form of Jan Bech Andersen

In the case of BIF, “shareholders” really only refers to one person – the majority shareholder Jan Bech Andersen. While BIF has around 25,000 individual shareholders (Blom, 2017), it is “Jan Bech Andersen [who] has the majority of the votes, so the general assembly will still be for show. He can do whatever he likes” (Blom, 2017, 52). Legitimate power comes from the fact that the shareholders’ literally and legally speaking own the organization, and thus have the power to enact change via termination of the board. In the case of BIF, however, that creates a critical conflict and concentration of power, with Jan Bech Andersen being both shareholder and member of the board simultaneously. Jan Bech Andersen’s referent power is displayed by his acceptance by the other stakeholders (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017; Blom, 2017): “I think our supporters have taken Jan Bech Andersen as part of the family” (Blom, 2017, 56).

7.4.1.5. The amateur department’s limited brand influence

In the case of BIF, its heritage is largely a story of its amateur department (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017): “Until 2013, the share majority was owned by a foundation – controlled by the amateur department. So back then, there was no difference between the company and the amateur department” (Blom, 2017, 52). Based on this, we are led to assume that the amateur department formerly played a pivotal role in the management of the organization and as a result, in managing the brand as well. In today’s picture of BIF, there is an official separation between the amateur and professional departments, however the amateur department is represented by two seats on BIF’s board (Blom, 2017). This gives them an additional degree of legitimate power in terms of influencing the strategic direction of the brand. Due to this separation between the professionals and the amateurs, however, and the commercial importance of the professional team in terms of the club’s business operation, the amateur department is only considered to have “limited brand influence”, and it can be speculated that this influence might become less as time goes

by: “Yes. Brøndby IF is both an amateur club and a professional club. They have very strong bonds still, these two, but they are also getting more and more apart” (Pedersen, 2017, 98).

7.4.1.6. Supporters' high brand influence

BIF's supporters have been shown to have great abilities to appropriate the club's brand, impacting the story telling narrative in a way that is not within the strategic desires of the organization's leadership (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017; Blom, 2017; Wehlast, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017). The supporters' referent power stems from their charisma as a group, their ability to create atmosphere (Bech, 2017; Bech, 2017), and the fact that they have been known to organize themselves for the benefit of the club as well (Blom, 2017):

“Later on we created BST, an organization to get fans and smaller shareholder to unite in paying money and buying shares. And during those years we became exposed due to the media. We got a lot of attention [...] But in organizing, we became the spokesperson for a reason [...] Everybody in the media, experts, they agreed with us. Every time something happened we had the right answers. The clever answers. We would take two or three steps back and tried to explain what happened. And the club had a lot of respect for us.” (Blom, 2017, 206).

Normative power comes from the supporters use of symbolism (i.e. banners and logos) in supporting their club via tifos and other fan displays; as well as the supporters figuratively personifying and symbolizing the club's “working men's values” (Pedersen, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017): The fans are a major part of the experience. The fans know that, the club knows that, the TV companies know that [...] So we can't live without them [...] and the supporters know that as well. So, they have a lot of leverage in being important stakeholders” (Blom, 2017, 120, 144). Because of these reasons, supporters are considered to have a high level of power in terms of brand influence.

7.4.1.7. Media's high brand influence

The media, as a stakeholder group, is independent of BIF, and as such is not bound by the same consequences, accountability, and responsibility as BIF's internal stakeholders. In fact, the media is so important to the professional football industry because of “TV money” (Møller, 2017, 80):

“[...] we have no business without the media. Sponsors would not be here, if it were not for the exposure. Supporters feel a part of something unique, because it's broadcasted, it's alive every day and every minute. So the media is the most important channel for our business plan. We could win championships without them, and without [sponsors and supporters], but we could not have a business. We couldn't make money... or lose money.” (95).

As literature suggests (Maguire, 1991), BIF has largely fallen into a dependency type of relationship with the media. Moreover, the media's power is coercive because of the fact that they perpetuate BIF's brand in the way that they see fit (Sejersbøl, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017). BIF cannot force the media to portray the brand in any particular way. Without "over-serving the media" (Møller, 2017, 177), it is in BIF's interest to keep the media happy so that they do not "chose to write negative stories and [...] over-focus on the negative" (Møller, 2017, 177).

7.4.1.8. Sponsors' limited direct brand influence

While sponsorships may be crucial to the survival and success of the professional football club, sponsors typically do not actively participate in influencing the direction of the organization's brand. In the case of BIF, brand associations and access to 250,000 self-proclaimed fans is what sponsors get for their money (Schultz, 2017). As there have been no indications from our interview subjects that sponsors actively seek to engage in BIF's strategic decision making and brand management, they are said to have an indirect influence – or "limited direct brand influence". For example, BIF's main sponsor *Arbejdernes Landsbank* can be assumed to reinforce BIF's already existing brand identity and image as a working men's club, rather than shaping it.

Sponsors' power over the organization in general is characterized as reward power, as they "reward" the organization with a sponsorship agreement that is lucrative. This arrangement can be withdrawn, if BIF doesn't perform well or is associated with scandal, providing negative brand associations to the sponsor (Aaker, 1991; Schilhanek, 2008): "You can see it in the period where Brøndby was doing poorly, where they lost sponsors and nearly went bankrupt" (Wehlast, 2017, 47). In this regard, BIF's organization is incentivized to promote a brand image which is attractive to potential sponsors, attracting greater "rewards".

7.4.1.9. The Municipality's low brand influence

Brøndby's municipality is only considered to have "low brand influence" because of their position externally to the club and their limited ability to shape the brand narrative of BIF. Being "not allowed to go to the media" (Pedersen, 2017, 281) as public servants, means that the municipality is severely limited in terms of coercive or informational power over the BIF brand, and thus must make due with only having legitimate power. Legitimacy in the case of Brøndby Municipality stems from the history of cooperation between the club and the community (Blom, 2017; Pedersen, 2017), and the club's infrastructural dependency is based on the club using the municipality's football pitches for training purposes (Møller, 2017; Pedersen, 2017). The nature of the municipalities relationship with BIF, and the waning official power they have over the club is encapsulated nicely below:

“I would say that our role is getting smaller and smaller so to say. Concerning my position and concerning Brøndby vs. the club, they are getting more and more isolated [...] But I am sure they will always keep us as a close partner, because there [are] other things that matter than just being able to have your own facilities and so on. There is also something called valueship in the local community and having support from the local community” (Pedersen, 2017, 165).

Instant Replay: The thematic network conceptualized around stakeholder power gives insights into the differing stakeholders’ bases of power. There is a strongly decentralized power distribution regarding the ability to influence the direction of the brand. As the internal stakeholders are subject to the powers and abilities of the external stakeholders, the external stakeholders would have nothing to exert influence over if it wasn’t for the internal stakeholders. Thus, BIF’s stakeholders’ level of brand influence can be characterized by strong asymmetries of power and dependency. **Consistency gaps are found to be a direct result of asymmetrical stakeholder powers.**

7.4.2. Varying interest in active brand management participation

In **Table 17**, the *Global Theme* relating to stakeholders’ interest is displayed with the encapsulated *Organizing Themes*. The following section will discuss the *Organizing Themes* with regards to their respective stakeholder groups.

7.4.2.1. Management’s high strategic interest in brand influence

This *Organizing Theme* describes the interests of management and the board of directors to have a high degree of strategic interest in influencing the brand narrative of BIF. One of the key strategic issues that management is concerned with is developing sustainable long term equity, requiring a solid financial base for the club (Schultz, 2017, 35): Management’s interests are classified as high, because they are the main “designers of the brand” (Bech, 2017) and so employ the majority of strategic decision making in formally shaping BIF’s brand internally.

7.4.2.2. Administrative staff’s high operational interest in brand influence

BIF’s administrative staff is characterized by an interest in brand influence that is limited to the operational activities of the organization. The admin staff, and especially the communications department, is therefore highly interested in shaping the brand based on the interests of the management’s strategy, and in aligning other key stakeholders with the organization. For example, the communication department shapes the brand

narrative via their marketing content to attract sponsors: “So they identify with the values they stand for, we create some content that matches that. Then they are willing to pay a premium price to be associated with our brand” (Schultz, 2017, 39). As opposed to the strategic interest of the management who “designs” the brand (Bech, 2017), the administrative staff is mainly concerned with implementing the strategies set in action by the management and so are considered to have a high operational interest.

| | Not all of BIF’s stakeholders have an interest in actively influencing or shaping the brand |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Management and Board | High strategic interest in brand influence, focused on sustainable long-term equity |
| Administrative Staff | High operational interest in brand influence, focused on controlling brand narrative |
| Athletic Staff | Non-managerial interest in brand influence, focused on sporting performance as a reflection of brand values |
| Shareholders | Strong interest in behind-the-scenes brand influence |
| Amateur Department | Higher level interest in brand influence, dependent on volunteerism through brand association |
| Supporters | Self-serving interest in brand influence, striving for self-actualization and brand ownership |
| Media | No interest in active brand influence, instead focused on harnessing brand reach and equity |
| Sponsors | Passive interest in brand influence, focussed on return on investment, positive brand associations, and content |
| Municipality | Little interest in brand influence, focussed on positive brand associations |

Table 17: BIF stakeholders’ interests in brand influence

Source: Own depiction

7.4.2.3. Athletic staff’s non-managerial interest in brand influence

For the athletic staff, it is all about football (Zorniger, 2017) and to a greater extent “the athletic staff is about creating and building a fan base” (Schultz, 2017, 39). The way in which the athletic staff is interested in controlling the brand narrative, however, is through demonstrating the club’s values of unity (Bech, 2017), and achieving sporting success (Zorniger, 2017). From the interviews, it is evident that the athletic staff are concerned with issues of infrastructure which impact the performance of the team: “When I come back home in the winter and can’t access the grass pitch, then that influences the area of sports [...] I then make [it] clear that we need more professional conditions and I do that vigorously enough so the people in charge will understand” (Zorniger, 2017, 75). With regards to BIF’s brand narrative, Zorniger (2017) also asserts that it

is exclusively the club's performance on-pitch which serves as the athletic department's contribution to the overall brand narrative.

7.4.2.4. Jan Bech Andersen's strong interest in behind-the-scenes brand influence

We take Jan Bech Andersen's perspective as the guiding principle of shareholders' interests. His interest in influencing the brand is characterized as "behind-the-scenes", due to the fact that he officially does not take the role as a primary strategic driver of the brand. However, there are conflicting reports of Jan Bech Andersen's managerial involvement: "If [Jan Bech Andersen] tells me, for example, that he is in charge of something, then you will hear from the rest of the organization that he is not interfering at all" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 43). In any case, since 2017 Jan Bech Andersen sits on the board of directors (Møller, 2017) so his involvement and interest in strategic brand management is unavoidable to a certain degree: "So of course [the board needs] to make sure that he is happy with what we are doing. And you can say that when he has the biggest investment, if he is happy with his investment, the other shareholders will also be happy with theirs" (Møller, 2017, 116).

7.4.2.5. The amateur department's higher level interest in brand influence

The amateur department, as discussed, is deeply entwined in Brøndby's football heritage, through their many years of leading the organization and by its representation on the board (Blom, 2017). Despite the amateur and professional branches of the club being largely autonomous entities in today's BIF (Pedersen, 2017), it can be said that their relationship resembles that of a symbiosis. For example, the high levels of volunteerism that the amateur department thrives on, is a direct result of the reputation and exposure of the BIF brand. At the same time, the community values of the amateur department are at the foundation of what the brand is built upon (see **Chapter 2**):

"[The amateur department] had a strategy conference in the fall where they had all of their key leaders there. Most of these people are not paid for what they do and they spend a lot of time there. It is quite impressive when you see how many people are really in the management of the amateur department. That is very important because we need their support and we are their flagship, but also, we try not to be arrogant and decouple from the base. Quite on the contrary." (Møller, 2017, 73).

Due to the representation on the board, the amateur department is said to have a higher level interest in influencing the brand, but only to the extent in ensuring that the brand associations of BIF promote the volunteerism that they need for themselves.

7.4.2.6. Supporters' self-serving interest in brand influence

While it is difficult to characterize the interests of a group of stakeholders as diverse as football fans (Hunt et al., 1999; Mehus, 2010; Tapp, 2004), BIF's fan groups have been identified as being generally self-serving in interest with regards to influencing the brand narrative of their beloved football club. The term "self-serving" is applied to describe a somewhat selfish behaviour which can be in direct opposition to the interests of the club's internal stakeholders. Initially, one would argue that self-organization and the co-creation of the stadium experience is evidence that the supports aim to promote the brand narrative of "Fælleskab" (Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017) and unity. However, there are clear indications of additional interests for certain parts of the fan community:

"For supporters, it is important to be recognized within the supporter community. There it's not only about loudly supporting your team [...] The fan community has their own ranking in Europe [...] Every idiot should understand that it doesn't do a club any good if you have to pay a fine of 10,000 Euros for certain things. Again, that is balancing between how the fans are being perceived in the fan community on the one hand and what the consequences are for the club on the other hand." (Zorniger, 2017, 131)

This quote by the head coach illustrates that besides a love for the game and their club, self-actualization interests of the supporters can precede the interests of the organization. This is in line with the important symbolic function of BIF's brand, representing the means for identity communication, self-realization, and group membership (Burmman et al., 2012; Schilhaneck, 2008). According to the interview transcripts, fans, in part, don't care if their actions impose difficulties for BIF's management and the club as a whole (Blom, 2017; Møller, 2017). Because of this appropriation of the brand to promote their fanatical fan culture, supporters are said to have self-serving interests and strive towards brand ownership: "it's a fact now that [Jan Bech Andersen] owns most of the club. I would like for him to own 45 [percent], and the fans the rest. This is still a long-term goal for me: Organizing more fans, collecting money, and to get more ownership" (2017, 64).

7.4.2.7. The Media's non-interest in brand influence

This *Organizing Theme* about the media is fairly straight-forward. As external stakeholders, the media has very little power in actively governing the brand. Rather, their interest lies in free-riding on BIF's extensive brand interest. BIF offers wide-ranging access to a cohesive consumer group in all of Denmark (Møller, 2017; Blom, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017): "We're interested in good stories, selling newspapers and getting clicks on the internet. Brøndby is one of our best cases" (Sejersbøl, 2017, 65). It has been discussed that the Media has great power in perpetuating or pushing a particular brand narrative (Sejersbøl, 2017), and this is largely due to the media-pull of the external stakeholders (Bech, 2017). Because

of this huge demand for BIF-related news, the media is constantly looking for stories: “as a journalist you definitely want to dig as deep as possible when it comes to Brøndby [...] because you know there's such a high level of interest” (Wehlast, 2017, 43).

7.4.2.8. Sponsors' passive interest in brand influence

Sponsors “want mileage from their investment [...] That means that the better [BIF is] performing sports-wise and the more positive coverage [BIF gets] in the media, the more value they get” (Møller, 2017, 201, 205). In this regard, BIF's sponsors have little interest in directly influencing the brand, but instead are only interested in leveraging the portrayal of BIF's image to promote their own brands, products, and services. Considering that many of BIF's sponsors are fans as well (Blom, 2017), this hasn't been much of an issue in recent years, but was more of a problem in the past when the club nearly went bankrupt due, in large part, to losing its corporate sponsors because of poor brand perception (Wehlast, 2017). Specifically, sponsors can be said to be interested in the “reach” that the BIF brand provides. For example, when *Carlsberg* decided to name their stands after BIF's fans, “Carlsberg got 250,000 people who are saying ‘we think you are a cool brand for respecting us’” (Schultz, 2017, 135).

7.4.2.9. The Municipality's little interest in brand influence

The municipality in Brøndby has very little interest in being able to influence BIF as a brand. As a public office, there are strict rules determining how much the municipality can promote the club (Pedersen, 2017). Having a prominent football club in the area reflects positively on the municipality however, as Kim Pedersen explains: “We get a lot of publicity for the whole community, just because we have this large football club” (Pedersen, 2017, 151).

Instant Replay: The interest in influencing BIF's brand depends on the relevance and potential benefit that the specific brand associations have for the stakeholders. Not all of BIF's stakeholders have an interest in actively influencing or shaping the BIF brand. Specifically, both internal (i.e. management and staff) and external stakeholders (i.e. supporters and sponsors) claim (partial) ownership of the brand. **Brand tensions are found to be a direct result of differing stakeholder interests.**

7.4.3. Mapping BIF stakeholders' powers and interests in a matrix of brand influence

Having explored BIF's stakeholder groups with respect to their level of power and interest, based on the findings of the preceding sections we can now present an adapted version of Mendelow's Power/Interest matrix (see **Exhibit 19**). In the context of this Master's thesis, the model has been adapted to represent a perceptual map of stakeholders' respective brand influences, where the placement and size of each stakeholder in the map gives an indication of their ability, desire, and respective influencing strength with regards to BIF's brand. Visualization of the supporters' relative strengths is in the form of an oblong circle, depicting the assumed spectrum of supporters from hardcore fans to casual supporters. As **Exhibit 19** indicates, BIF stakeholders have significantly different levels of interest, power, and influence with regard to brand management.

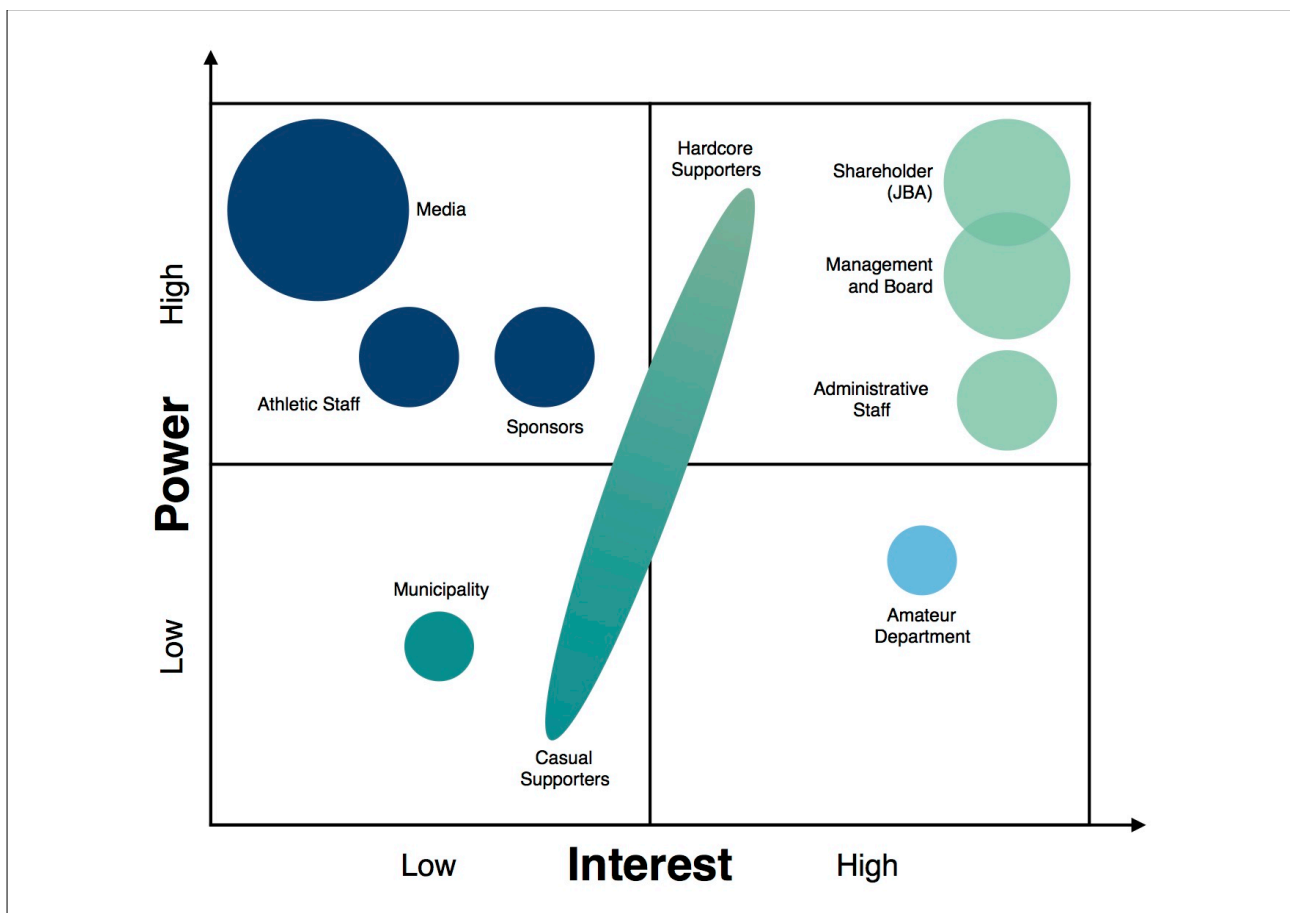


Exhibit 19: Stakeholder power/interest matrix for Brøndby IF

Source: Own depiction, inspired by Mendelow (1991)

The bottom quadrants, “low power/low interest” and “high power/low interest” respectively, represent the stakeholders who are, for the most part, uninterested in actively shaping BIF’s brand. The municipality is only interested insofar, as BIF’s powerful brand can be used as a positive brand association for the municipality itself (e.g. for attracting business investment) (Pedersen, 2017). The amateur department has largely become its own separate organization under the sphere of BIF’s brand influence (Pedersen, 2017). Casual supporters can likewise be said to have a low interest in the brand as they exhibit low levels of self-identification with the club, and are satisfied with the club simply existing as a form of entertainment (Tapp, 2004). Like the municipality, the amateur department does not exhibit a strong interest in influence BIF’s brand, but are considered to have “high power” due to their representation on the board (Blom, 2017).

Looking at BIF’s internal stakeholders, shareholders, management, the board, and the administrative staff are all located in the “engage closely” quadrant of the matrix, indicating their relatively high levels of power and interest in influencing the brand. Supporters, in the form of the “hardcore supporters” are also considered “high power, high interest” due to their abilities to mobilize on masse and the fact that they are considered a powerful reflection of the brand (Blom, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017). Within this group of “key players”, there are vastly different interests regarding financial stability, degrees of commercialization, and the core identity of the brand (Møller, 2017; Blom, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017). The supporters are increasingly “unmanageable” (Bech, 2017) due to their high level of brand influence. Partly, their power originates from the effect their actions and depictions of BIF have in the media, resulting in a brand narrative that is conflicting with the club’s official brand strategy. The result of BIF’s internal stakeholders’ differing interests is an *Integration Gap*. For example, the brand tension between “intuitive informality vs. structured control” is a result of the internal stakeholders’ inconsistent handling of brand communication (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Sønnichsen, 2017; Bech, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017).

Having “high power, low interest”, the media are depicted as having the largest relative strength in influencing the brand. Other stakeholders in this quadrant include the athletic staff and sponsors. While these three stakeholders are powerful, they are not necessarily characterized by a strong desire to actively affect change in the organization’s brand narrative. That being said, the media is interested in their ability to produce headlines (Sejersbøl, 2017), so are constantly reproducing and distributing their own perceptions of the BIF brand. *Information Gaps* between the media and BIF occur, when, for example, the communications department is bypassed (Schultz, 2017): “From their perspective, they should try to control us, but from our perspective let’s try to not let them control us” (Sejersbøl, 2017, 101). Stakeholders in this quadrant need to be “kept satisfied” (Low & Cowton, 2004) to keep them from collaborating with other stakeholders and gaining power. This is seen “especially when you have [the supporters, sponsors, and media] working at the same time, they’re so powerful. [They] will push your direction so much, because the media starts discussing it so much” (Bech, 2017, 79). When these external stakeholders coalesce, it becomes an issue of “managing the unmanageable” (Bech, 2017, 79) due to the lack of direct repercussions felt by the external stakeholders.

Instant Replay: On the one hand, brand tensions with regard to BIF's brand can largely be explained by the asymmetrical distribution of interests within BIF's stakeholder network. That leads to the brand identity and image being pulled in different directions simultaneously. On the other hand, consistency gaps form as a result of incongruent power dynamics between BIF's stakeholders, as no one stakeholder group has a sufficient power base to cause the other stakeholder groups to fall in line.

7.5. The TACTIC-model of "Brandholder" management

Q5: *How can these gaps be closed and aligned through pro-active stakeholder involvement?*

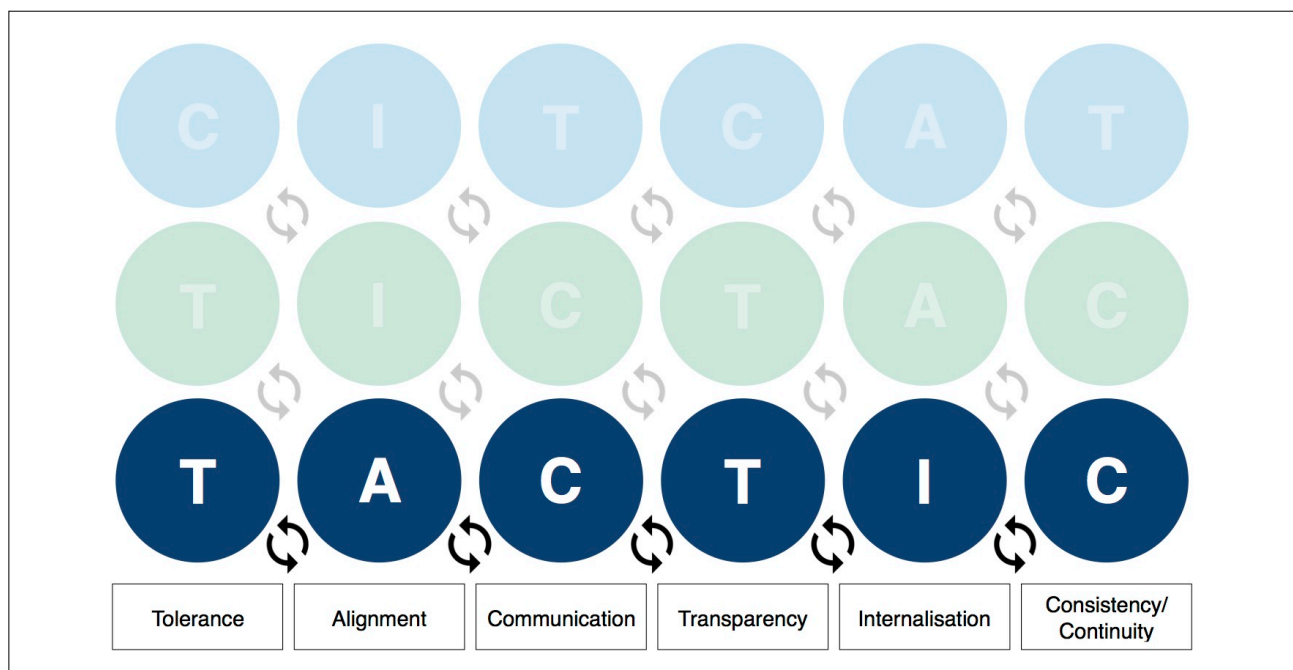


Exhibit 20: TACTIC model of pro-active brandholder management

Source: Own depiction

In the preceding sections of our analysis, it has been established that the club's brand management to large degrees is beyond BIF's direct control and outside the club's sphere of influence. With multiple internal and external stakeholders involved in shaping the club's brand identity and image, a number of strategic brand tensions arise from the plethora of stakeholder interests. Furthermore, significant consistency gaps exist between the various stakeholders when it comes to the perception of BIF's brand. These gaps have been found to be resulting from inter-stakeholder power asymmetries, as well as an imbalance of dependencies,

disadvantageous to BIF's internal brand management function. This being said, it can be argued that the stakeholders discussed in this Master's thesis are not mere stakeholders, but rather "Brandholders" – stakeholders with a stake in the brand rather than the organization as a whole. To various degrees and driven by differing motives brandholders claim ownership of the brand and demand brand management participation.

Having analyzed and discussed the complex intricacies characterizing the club's brand- and stakeholder environment, we identify six "red flags" for BIF to consider when actively involving stakeholders in the process of brand management: Tolerance, Alignment, Communication, Transparency, Internalization, as well as Consistency and Continuity. In short: TACTIC¹⁹ (see **Exhibit 20**). Aiming to juxtapose stakeholder tensions and close/prevent brand inconsistencies, the six dimensions of the TACTIC framework represent important strategy components for BIF to involve their stakeholders more actively in the process of brand management.

7.5.1. Tolerance: Actively acknowledge and embrace stakeholders' leverage

BIF's brand is subject to numerous brand management tensions, which have been shown to be the result of the organization's stakeholders' asymmetrical powers and interests. Tolerance therefore refers to accepting and acquiescing to the fact that BIF's brand narrative is aggregated by numerous influential stakeholders. Based on this, BIF's strategic management needs to be tolerant to, and embrace, that there are competing legitimate influences surrounding the brand before any further attempts can be made to close consistency gaps. This feature of the TACTIC model can therefore be seen as a prerequisite to the other features of the model, and characterizes the approach as a strategy defined by openness and inclusivity in the brand management function, rather than autocratic inside-out control. Our findings suggest that BIF is already somewhat tolerant to the influences of its stakeholders, as seen by their efforts to meet with and understand the interests of its different salient stakeholder groups (Møller, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Blom, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Zorniger, 2017; Bech, 2017).

7.5.2. Alignment: Align stakeholder interests, expressed identity and perceived image

In order to achieve brand strength in the sense of a coherent brand narrative, the various stakeholders' expression and perception of BIF's brand identity and image need to coalesce (Burmam et al., 2012). Based on this, another way to describe "Alignment" is to harmonize the legitimate interests of the internal and external stakeholders with the brand management function of BIF. In the realm of the competitive

¹⁹ Note, that the TACTIC framework does not imply a specific hierarchy or order. All six strategy components are mutually dependent and reinforce each other. Depending on the specific situation and organizational circumstances, TACTIC may transform to TICTAC, CITCAT etc.

professional football industry, sporting success is never guaranteed. Therefore, alignment with the club's supporters, sponsors, and media can go a long way in terms of soothing frustrations and slowing sensationalism, contributing to consistency gaps in the brand image. Internally, BIF's mission and vision statement (see **Appendix 1**) performs much of the alignment function in that regard, however alignment with external stakeholders has proven to be more difficult. As brand identity refers to the self-perception of the brand by its internal stakeholders, the expressed identity of all internal stakeholders – down to the playing style of BIFs players – needs to reflect the perceived image, and vice versa, to be in true alignment. One way BIF has been striving to align its internal and external stakeholders is by consistently reiterating the idea of “planned progress” to bring the short-term interests of their supporters in line with the longer-term interests of brand management. In the case of BIF, aligning the brand image and identity requires attention to the clubs' powerful external stakeholders. Aligning functions must be emplaced between everyone; even between multiple external stakeholders. For example, BIF has attempted to align the interests of its sponsors and supporters by organizing meetings between the two external stakeholder groups (Blom, 2017). An area in which BIF could improve with regards to aligning its external stakeholders is between the media and BIF's supporters. Currently, there is considerable apprehension between the two groups as the media benefits from reporting about BIFs dysfunctional fans and the related drama. BIF might therefore consider attempting to facilitate a more positive relationship between these two groups; showing the media that BIF supporters aren't all hooligans, and showing supporters that the media isn't necessarily out to get them: “My job is to report for the fans [...]. in a way I am their spokesperson (Sønnichsen, 2017, 64)”.

7.5.3. Communication: Continuously communicate with and inform stakeholders

A key determinant of BIF's consistency gaps is the stakeholders' differing perception of the brand. Pro-active communication strategies by BIF can seek to close these gaps by informing stakeholders of developments and considerations inside the organization, before powerful stakeholders pivot the brand narrative by their own speculation and actions. In this regard, BIF's current stance on communication is inadequate to perform this controlling function. In the case of BIF, internal stakeholders need to be more disciplined in respecting the official channel of communication, lest they risk unintentionally contradicting the official brand narrative. One particular area with which BIF's communication has fallen short is in their relationship to the Municipality. On the one hand, the Municipality is under the impression that BIF is seeking to privatize and reduce cooperation and coordination between the two organizations (Pedersen, 2017). On the other hand, BIF has expressed the desire to maintain or even increase this partnership with the local Municipality as BIF progresses with their *Strategy 6.4* (Møller, 2017; Bech, 2017). Pro-active communication strategies would therefore serve the purpose of mending this communication failure; but also, increase the level of professionalism with regards to communication and give BIF greater abilities in steering the overall media narrative.

7.5.4. Transparency: Understand accessibility as a competitive advantage

BIF's current transparency has not always come as a deliberate function of the organization but instead occurs because of unofficial leaks as well as inconsistent handling of both internal and external communications. The need for transparency in the organization is therefore even more relevant when discussed in the context of BIF's brand. Considering the club's turbulent past and years of negative PR, transparency initiatives aimed at increasing stakeholder access to the organization must serve to reinstate the image of BIF's management as competent and trustworthy. As BIF's values have been characterized as "working-class" and community-driven, transparency in the organization may also serve to quell the worries of the supporters with regards to having a rich businessman as the main shareholder. Besides the aspects of trustworthiness and legitimacy, transparency could also help BIF in terms of generating feelings of accessibility and engagement with BIF's external stakeholders. One area where this might generate positive brand associations is by being more accessible with regards to off-pitch football coverage and humanizing the brand. BIF, to some extent, already generates and distributes content that depicts "behind-the-scenes" access, however this could arguably be leveraged to greater effect. Giving the media access to players outside of the formal player-media relationship could serve to increase the authenticity of BIF's interactions with the media and other stakeholders. By doing so, positive PR is generated based on the genuine depiction of the club, and is more interesting to supporters and non-fans than the expected and "boring" communication style employed by nearly all professional sporting organizations.

7.5.5. Internalization: Formalize accountability and responsibility

Internalization refers to how BIF can incorporate its external stakeholders more in the organization. Currently, BIF's external stakeholders are powerful in their ability to influence the brand narrative of the club. In doing so, these stakeholders (primarily supporters and the media) operate with impunity, thus they can negatively impact brand management without BIF having any meaningful way of controlling them. Internalization resonates with BIF's core values of community; hence they should actively seek to increase the external stakeholders' feelings of accountability and responsibility by including them in a more official capacity. BIF, for instance, has been among the first Danish football clubs to place an elected representative of the supporters on its board of directors, however more could arguably be done in this regard. One great example of the internalization of BIF supporters comes not from BIF itself, but from one of its main sponsors. *Carlsberg* transferred responsibility in the decision of naming the section of the stadium which Carlsberg sponsored to the supporters, and have been greatly respected for that (Schultz, 2017). In the same light, BIF's management might seek to replicate this kind of strategy, involving supporters where possible in decisions regarding e.g. new sponsorship arrangements. Internalizing supporters as critical partners of the co-created football experience may increase supporters' feelings of ownership over the brand. This is not to say that current BIF supporters don't already feel like "they are the brand" (Sønnichsen, 2017); but internalizing these supporters might also make them feel accountable for the effects their actions have on the brand.

7.5.6. Consistency/Continuity: Avoid contradiction through reliability

Reliability is an inherently difficult concept to obtain in an industry “where anything can happen” (Møller, 2017). Fulfilling the promises made by an organization is therefore necessary to create trust in the brand. Consistency, as the basis of trust, arises from the fit of the brand’s promises with the brand’s behavior (Meffert & Burmann, 2012). Continuity describes the stability of BIFs essential brand characteristics over time; enabling both internal and external stakeholders to compare the brand promise with historic brand behavior (Meffert & Burmann, 2012). While the club has been governed, and defined, by its amateur department up until recently, there are definite sources of discontinuity in the current organizational leadership with regards to the brand’s historic essential characteristics. Increasingly, BIF has adopted practices which tend towards commercialization to increase their financial performance. This has led to a powerful single shareholder and elements of corporatization within the organization which contrasts with the working-class values attributed by BIF’s faithful supporters. Based on this, to create a cohesive and clear brand identity, BIF needs to ensure that all its actions are in line with their brand promise of “patience, honesty, and community” (Annual report, 2016). To a certain extent, BIF’s new Strategy 6.4 represents a promising basis for ensuring both a more consistent and continuous (i.e. long-term) brand behavior.

Instant Replay: Aiming to align and resolve stakeholder tensions consistency gaps, the six dimensions of the TACTIC framework represent important strategy components for BIF to involve their stakeholders more actively in the process of brand management: Tolerance, Alignment, Communication, Transparency, Internalization, as well as Consistency and Continuity.

8. Concluding remarks

With this Master's thesis, we set out to shed light on the important role that stakeholders have in the strategic brand management of a professional football club. Based on the combined insights from brand-, stakeholder-, and sports management, Danish *Superliga's* Brøndby IF was chosen as a case company that we deemed contextually relevant to answering our problem statement: *How can stakeholders more actively be involved in the strategic brand management of a professional football club?* Based on that scientific wondering, a succession of specific research questions was formulated, that allowed for a step-by-step approach to solving the problem.

In a first step, a number of relevant stakeholders in relation to BIF's brand management were identified. Representing the club's brand identity from the internal perspective, these included the board and management, athletic staff, administrative staff, the amateur department, and shareholders – main investor Jan Bech Andersen in particular. Shaping the club's image from an external perspective, supporters, the media, sponsors, as well as Brøndby's municipality were identified as pertinent interest groups.

Based on the assessment of the stakeholder groups above, in a second step BIF's brand identity and image was constructed along the dimensions of club heritage, vision, personality, values, competencies and performance. Revealing a plurality of inconsistencies and contradictions in each of these dimensions, this allowed for further dissection of BIF's branding challenges in the following analysis. Furthermore, factor-analysis identified five dimensions of brand personality, allowing us to examine the club's verbal and non-verbal brand narrative in more detail. The personality dimensions along which BIF defines itself were interpreted as *Loyal Family*, *Fierce Alternativism*, *Civilized Narcissism*, *Honorable Obedience*, and *Honest Work*. Analyzing BIF's brand identity and image in its entirety, at this point it became apparent that the club is facing a number of brand-related challenges: While the club's heritage presented itself as a state of turbulence and flux, BIF's brand vision was characterized by its uncertain handling of a partly burdensome club heritage. Alternating between modest understatement and compulsive confrontational disassociation, we found BIF's brand personality in a state of "schizophrenia". After years of both economic and sporting failure, BIF's brand values today were characterized as being torn between social responsibility and corporate profitability. Likewise, also BIF's brand performance and competencies were found unfocused and partly left to chance.

In a third step, these inconsistencies were translated into more abstract brand management challenges and consistency gaps. Specifically, not only did the analysis show that BIF's brand identity and brand image are not entirely aligned, but also purely internal and external inter-stakeholder gaps resulted. Step 4 of our analysis concluded that many of these brand management tensions and gaps result from the various

stakeholders' competing interests as well as asymmetries of power and dependency, oftentimes disadvantageous to BIF's internal management function.

Based on detailed discussion of our findings, exploration of brand management challenges, as well the identification of the club's coping strategies, the proposed "TACTIC Model of Pro-Active Brandholder Management" presents a conceptual approach towards answering our overall research question: Stakeholders can (and must!) be involved more actively in the club's brand management by: 1) Actively acknowledging and embracing their brand leverage and influence; 2) Aligning stakeholder interests, brand identity, and image; 3) Continuously communicating with, and informing stakeholders about current and expected developments; 4) Understanding transparency, accessibility, and public interest as a source of competitive advantage, rather than a threat; 5) Creating formalized stakeholder accountability and responsibility by internalizing them; and 6) Avoiding contradiction through reliable, consistent, and continuous appearance throughout all relevant channels. To address the question posed in the title of this Master's thesis, *Who owns the brand?*, especially in the context of professional football clubs, the answer seems to be both unsatisfactory and exciting at once: everyone and no one. As the analysis of BIF's brand- and stakeholder management has shown, this involves the recognition and acceptance of the fact that BIF's strategic leadership (aka brand management) is not the only – let alone most powerful – "designer" of the brand. Instead, the professional football club must function as the moderator of a brand, which is not only negotiated (Burmah et al., 2012; Hatch & Schultz, 2002), but co-created between the organization, the supporters, the media, and sponsors in particular. Back to the rats:

"[...] football is a fresh thing. Whatever you did in the past, or whatever you try to produce in the long term, is always overwhelmed by the present feeling and moment. And if you take that roller coaster ride from moment to moment, it's easy to lose track of it. Many of these stakeholders – supporters, sponsors, media – are very much aware of the right now; of this moment. So that will influence the direction the you want to go on a very big scale. And especially when you have those three [supporters, sponsors, media] working at the same time, they're so powerful. Managing the unmanageable. You try to give a direction. You want to pave the road ahead, to say "we know where to go, we even know what usually will determine success or failure" but then by the power of the moment, three rats thrown on the pitch" (Bech, 2017).

8.1. Practical implications for management

As discussed in conjunction with the proposed TACTIC-Model, the findings of our investigation and analysis offer significant implications to BIF's strategic leadership. Given the complex nature of BIF's stakeholder network, management should continuously seek to recognize its constituent stakeholders' interests, as well as understand where the base of power for each stakeholder lies. By thoroughly understanding how any given stakeholder impacts the brand narrative, management can implement appropriate strategies to either internalize the stakeholder's interests, or placate them to stop them from using their power to the detriment of the brand. BIF's brand management must understand the implications of the presented *Evaluative Brand Gap Model* to identify sources of inconsistency between various stakeholders. By dissecting the brand into its constituents parts, management can take on a more pro-active role in closing gaps and achieve congruency between the brand's expression (identity) and how it is received (image) (Burmann et al., 2012). Thus, a stronger brand can be created, helping the club to stay attractive to stakeholders in the future (e.g. for sponsors and a new generation of young supporters). This requires an increase in the quality of BIF's communication and better understanding their stakeholder's concerns. Specifically, communication with representatives of Brøndby municipality must increase, in order to avoid jeopardizing the historically grown close working relationship. As our analysis pointed out, the municipality's feeling of BIF becoming more and more isolated, is due to missing communication, rather than the club's strategic agenda. Furthermore, a specific stakeholder group that BIF needs to improve its relationship with, is the media. As an extremely powerful stakeholder group with the ability to critically influence or perpetuate a negative characterization of BIF's brand, the club needs to establish a more clear-cut, trustworthy, professional, and consistent communication infrastructure. Specifically, this must include the avoidance of mixed and incongruent signals from club-side, in turn preventing media speculation. In the future, it should not be possible for journalists to circumvent the official lines of communication (i.e. communications department), due to top management being easily available as sources of (mis)information. Moreover, ways of exploiting and capitalizing on the club's massive media exposure must be identified, in order to secure the club's financial stability in the future. With the supporters representing the most active and vocal Brandholders, BIF must continuously nourish the close ties between the organization and BIF's supporter network. In this case, it means remaining transparent and treating the supporters with the respect they feel they deserve; something which the current administration at BIF has objectively been somewhat successful at.

8.2. Theoretical implications

Besides practical implications, this Master's thesis underscores the critical theoretical connections between brand- and stakeholder management in the context of sports management – the brand management of a professional football club in particular. Storm (2011) poses the question, whether it is regional/geographical or management/leadership, that are the distinguishing explanatory factors of successful clubs in Denmark. In that regard, this study finds that both factors are important in the case of BIF. Moreover, we find stakeholder management to be a third objective function of professional sport clubs, besides sporting success and profit maximization.

Specifically, believe that our findings contribute to the field of brand-, stakeholder-, and sports management by: 1) Identifying stakeholder groups that are specifically relevant to a professional football club's brand management; 2) analyzing the interrelationships between both internal and external stakeholders with regard to brand management; 3) applying Burmann et al.'s (2012) six-dimensional model of brand identity to the field of professional football teams; 4) applying the *The Evaluative Brand Gap Model* (Burmann & Zeplin, 2004; Burmann et al., 2003) to identify consistency gaps in a multi-stakeholder setting; 5) identifying generalizable brand management tensions for the professional football club setting; 6) defining specific stakeholder powers and interests in relation to brand influence; 7) and mapping stakeholder powers and interests by applying Mendelow's (1991) power/interest matrix.

In the realm of factor-analytical personality research, we add to the theoretical field by 1) applying the BPS-concept in context of the Danish football landscape, and 2) laying the conceptual foundations for the development of a brand personality scale for professional football clubs in Denmark/Scandinavia.

Lastly, a conceptual model of pro-active stakeholder involvement for the brand management of professional football clubs is proposed. Adding to Nissen's (2017) study on BIF's identity construction through the media, this thesis adds to the understanding by taking into account the role of other important stakeholders in the process of identity-based brand management. Our thesis expands on the "wicked problems" faced by a professional football club (Junghagen, 2016), by identifying further brand- and stakeholder-related tensions.

9. Limitations and future research

Certainly, the case of BIF is inherently unique in the Danish football landscape. This made the club an interesting and lively case company, however, a primary limitation of this Master's thesis is due to its missing external validity and the emphasis placed on contextual implications. Typically, case studies can be criticized for their relatively small sample size and overall lack of generalizability of findings (Saunders et al., 2016). Instead of doubting relevance of the case, however, the implications and insights raised by our analysis can arguably be relevant to other football clubs characterized by similar challenges in similar environments – so-called traditional and working men's clubs in particular. This being said, a multiple case study design (Gustafsson, 2017) including multiple clubs could aid in increasing the generalizability of the findings suggested in this study.

We note that external validity of our findings is also hampered by our choice of research design and the study's time-horizon in particular. This being said, our study finds BIF in a comprehensive process of organizational transition and renewal (i.e. old Brøndby vs. new Brøndby) (Zorninger, 2017; Møller, 2017; Sejersbøl, 2017). In combination with the already dynamic and fast-changing football industry and unstable stakeholder environment, this calls for a more longitudinal (vs. cross-sectional) verifications of the findings presented in this thesis (Saunders et al., 2016). As Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) point out, in observing people or events over time, the researcher is able to exercise a measure of control over variables being studied.

With regards to the samples used for quantitative and qualitative data analysis, our approach is subject to a number of additional limitations. Primarily, not all of BIF's stakeholders are represented in our analysis due to the unavailability of representatives from the following stakeholder groups: sponsors, amateur department, and shareholders (i.e. Jan Bech Andersen). Additionally, most of our stakeholder groups are represented by not more than one interview partner (with the exception of the media). Consequently, our sample implies stakeholder homogeneity, that does not account for intra-stakeholder differences of the actual population. This limitation is especially important with regards to supporters, in which case academic literature typically classifies fans as a highly heterogeneous group, characterized by differing behaviors, powers, and interests. In relation to that limitation, also no distinction with regards to demographics and/or social background has been made. While BIF supporters have been the object of a number of studies (see Agerklint, 2010), their specific role in relation to BIF's brand management and perception certainly warrants further investigation. Despite this inherent subjectivity and sample-related bias of our study, due to the high "quality" of our interviewees, internal validity and causal conclusions of the findings are warranted. For further research, we suggest the specific investigation of the stakeholder groups missing in our sample (i.e. sponsors and the role of main investor Jan Bech Andersen in particular). Also, given the defining role of city rival FCK in BIF's

brand narrative, we note that the non-inclusion of FCK as a potentially important and indirect “Anti-Brandholder” poses both a further limitation and motivation for research.

With regard to the quantitative study, a number of additional limitations must be mentioned. First of all, the concept of brand personality, as well as the factor-analytical construction of BPSs in particular, has been subject to a large amount of both skepticism and critical doubt in multiple studies (see Burmann et al., 2012; Waller et al., 2005). For example, recent studies have repeatedly failed to confirm the concept’s general validity (Burmann et al., 2012). Specifically, the limited inter-cultural validity as well as product- and industry-specific validity of the brand personality concept has been subject to wide-ranging criticism (Schade, 2012; Alexa, 2009; Egerer, 2015). Furthermore, Waller et al. (2005) generally challenge the personality metaphor in relation to brands. Nevertheless, we emphasize that our BPS does not raise the claim of being a generally replicable scale; neither for football clubs in general, nor for the context of Danish or Scandinavian football. Rather, we used the BPS experimentally, attempting to uncover specific dimensions of BIF’s brand personality. For further research, development of a universally applicable BPS for the Danish football landscape is suggested. Based on the procedures presented in the thesis, this needs to include a larger scale sample as well as the investigation of multiple clubs. Furthermore, the appropriateness of Schade’s (2012) set of personality traits for the Danish/Scandinavian cultural context remains to be attested. Textual and statistical limitations with regards to the reliability of our factor-solution interpretation have been discussed.

Another limitation is the use of non-probability convenience sampling in relation to the survey data collected. More precisely, subjective judgement of the researchers was used to identify the population being studied. This poses a limitation to the study as we only reached out to football supporters who appeared willing to participate, creating the risk that the sample might not be scalable to describe the supporter population as a whole. Other than that, limitations with regard to our statistical analysis have been pointed out throughout the study (i.e. non-probability sampling, small sample size of $N = 51$, non normality of data, contestable internal consistency of factors). Despite having to stretch a number of statistical assumptions, we nonetheless decided not to disregard the quantitative insights in our analysis. Specifically, we believe that the more detailed exploration of BIF’s brand personality served as a value-adding support of our qualitative findings.

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