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The Rise of Social Expectations in Sports:

How the Notion of Fairness Can Affect Sports Sponsorships

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Abstract

Sports sponsorship is a worldwide acknowledged concept for brands to obtain customer-based brand equity. Thus, a marketing activity with highly lucrative potential, exposing the brand to a wide audience and making it subject to associations through platforms that generate high levels of engagement and positive feelings. As equality has become an important construct in social discussions, this has also affected the world of sports. This thesis firstly aims to explore how the valence of media coverage can affect what consumers perceive as fair in relation to how sponsorship funds are allocated between male and female athletes/teams. Secondly, this thesis addresses how the same valence of media coverage and consumers' perception of fairness of presented equality principles relates to a sponsor's obtained customer-based brand equity. Results illustrate how there is a basis for further research on the subject, although this thesis was not able to provide substantial evidence that valence of media coverage has an effect on consumers perceived fairness in regard to equality constructs for allocating sponsorship funds. However, exposure to a certain valence of media coverage can affect a sponsor's obtained customer-based brand equity. In line with existing theory on sports sponsorships coherence with social expectation, this thesis provides support to the notion that consumers' perceived fairness of allocation of sponsorship funds can affect a sponsor's customer-based brand equity.

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1.0 Introduction

Sports are, due to the amount of diversity of people engaged in both attendance and participation, unmatched by any other form of arts or causes (Plewa & Quester, 2011). However, a longstanding gap in media coverage, audience size, performance and pay has been detected between male and female athletes/teams. Sports has become a lucrative business, and the increased focus on the differences between male and female athletes/teams' salaries has simultaneously increased the social expectations on the business of sports. Thereby, sports are challenged on their standing on equality between male and female athletes/teams, similar to how companies face the same social expectations.

This thesis will examine how the pay gap affects the relationship between consumer and brand, when seen in the context of different metrics for allocating sponsorship funds.

As the Fourth Estate, media has a significant influence on both the system and on people (Sermaxhaj, 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2016). Research shows that less than 10% of all media coverage, both print and broadcast, is devoted to promoting female sports (Scheadler & Wagstaff, 2018). Which is arguably an important antecedent of why the sports scene, in all aspects, has been and still is, rather male dominant (Apostolou et al., 2014; Deaner et al., 2016; James & Ridinger, 2002; Lange, 2020c). Still, from the 1900s until today, there has been an evolution within sports (Messner, 1988). Especially over the last decade, where female sports have grown substantially bigger and gained more traction, both in attendance and participation (Raviprakash et al., 2020; The Nielsen Company, 2018). While 76% of sports watchers are male, both male and female audiences find male sports more exciting (Angelini, 2008; Lange, 2020c) . Making media outlets somewhat obliged to comply with this preference and grant male sports a majority share of promotion, in order to secure the audience's interest. A common reasoning to emphasize why the pay gap exists and why male athletes should be rewarded with higher salaries without it being outed as discriminating.

The difference in reported excitement level could be tied to how physical performances are generally not viewed as equal between male and female (Thibault et al., 2010). Typically, male sports provide more of a spectacle, and are perceived

to be more impressive, presenting a possible explanation for male sport's dominant popularity (Apostolou et al., 2014). Furthermore, men are often associated with mental and physical toughness, power, confidence, and competitiveness. While also possessing a larger aerobic capacity, greater muscular strength and being more risk willing compared to females. Thus, men are found to be the ideal athlete (Cheuvront et al., 2005; Deaner et al., 2016; Raney & Bryant, 2009; Schaal et al., 2011). Because there are fundamental biological differences between men and women whilst evolving at the same pace, this gap in performance may never close (Capranica et al., 2013). On the other hand, Emmonds et al. (2019), emphasize how the lack of research on elite female athletes may have caused an inability to maximize female performances within sports, which may further enhance the existing gap. This was exemplified when the female world champions in football lost to an under-15 boys' team, who were far superior in their game (Griffee, 2017). Another example is the numerous times that professional female athletes have been outperformed by non-elite males (boys under the age of 18) within athletics (Coleman & Shreve, n.d.). Furthermore, a male tennis player ranked 203rd beat the Williams sisters, both ranked within the top 20, back-to-back in a tennis match during the Australian Open in '98 (Kollare, 2021; Women's Tennis Association, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

At the same time, a Norwegian study reports differences in athletic-related offerings from an early age (e.g., video analysis of competition, paid trainer, etc.), implying that male athletes have an advantage on their way to the top athlete status (Lie, 2017b; Lie et al., 2020). This advantage manifested itself when college basketball player Sedona Prince showed the difference of facilities for the male and female athletes at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tournament, where male athletes had a significantly higher quality of available facilities (Bassuk, 2019; Brassil, 2021). Still, young female athletes are very unlikely to pursue the top athletic status and value higher education as more important than an athletic career (Flanagan et al., 2007). While the underlying factors for these results are unclear, it does indicate that female athletes' inferior level of motivation leads them to train less efficiently compared to male athletes. Implying that the work put down, within some sports is not equal (Lie et al., 2021). However, the line of reasoning that is based on athletic performance is often downplayed and outed as discriminatory against women when debating equal pay, thus, social expectations of gender equality have found their way to sports.

In recent years, discussions have flourished regarding differences in athletes' salaries. Male athletes tend to be granted a higher salary level compared to females, illustrated by the 2020 Forbes 100 highest-paid athletes list including only two women (Badenhausen, 2020). The evolution of salaries within sports shows an increasing trend, where athletes went from being a relatively low paid trade to a very lucrative profession. This increase is largely connected to the expansion of sports consumption, as well as the broadened broadcasting of sports events, with television as the main distribution channel (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000; Norton & Olds, 2001).

As media coverage mainly features male sports, marketeers wanting to sponsor female sports have met several barriers due to lack of media coverage and its way of addressing female sports, trends, social norms, and cultural aspects of its senior management (Shaw & Amis, 2001). In 2019, the UN Women (2020) reported that 7% of global sponsorship were allocated towards female athletes/teams. Recent reports show that lucrative sponsorship deals are awarded with five times as high frequency towards male athletes compared to their female counterparts, despite competing in the same sport and/or at the same level (Afami, 2021). Providing barriers to allocate sponsorship funds towards female athletes, arguing that female athletes are perceived to be less profitable compared to their counterparts. Paradoxically, the Fifa Women's World Cup Final was the most tweeted event in 2011 (The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2011). As female sports grew substantially through the 2010s, the historic athletic gender-balanced 2020 Olympics showcase the emerging commercial potential of female athletes/teams (The International Olympic Committee, 2021). Nonetheless, a list of the top 10 highest paid females illustrated that Alexandra Morgan (10th) and Sofia Kenin (9th) received $200.000 and $1.5 million more in endorsements compared to their male counterparts; Carson Wentz and Kirk Cousins, respectively (Cash, 2020).

Regardless of the flourishing discussion and focus on the social expectation towards the sports scene. Research has yet to address how the pay gap in sports might affect consumers' attitudes towards sponsors in relation to their perception of fairness. Fairness being defined as *"the quality of treating people equally"* (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Furthermore, research shows that consumers' perception affects both their decision journey and a sponsor's obtained customer-based brand equity (CBBE) (Aaker, 2009; Keller, 1993, 2001; Kotler et al., 2018; Sheppard et al., 1988). Thus, providing a reason to believe that consumers'

perception of fairness on sports sponsorship allocation can have several effects on CBBE. While the current body of information indicates that an equal allocation of sponsorship funds is more aligned with social expectations and political correctness, it is conflicting that the metrics to secure return on investments favors a larger allocation towards male athletes/teams. Which underlines the dilemma brand managers face when allocating sponsorship spending, as the decision could gain support, cause brand aversion, or have no effect on consumers at all.

Due to the lack of research, a combination between a descriptive and exploratory approach could provide insights into how fair sponsorship allocation is perceived and further how this perception of fairness affects obtained CBBE. By exposing respondents to content reflecting media coverage in favor of status quo or for equal pay, the exploratory study can also provide useful insights into how media discussion affects consumers' perception of fairness. Entering the post-pandemic era, brand managers need to secure return of the investment in sports sponsorship, as the landscape has been affected by the loss of viewership's within sports, loss of revenue and increased demand of sports social responsibility (Futterman et al., 2020; Lange, 2020b; Reimer, n.d.; Wragg & Quartey, 2020). As a tool for obtaining social justice, «cancel-culture» has over the past years showcased how a decision unaligned with the public could damage the brand (Bakhtiari, 2020). In support of this, research found in 2018 that 64% of consumers are willing to buy or boycott a brand based on the brand's political or social stands (Edelman, n.d.). Thus, the results could provide useful information on how brand managers can operate within sports sponsorship to avoid social cancellation whilst securing their return on investment. The following paper examines previous literature relevant to the context and points out gaps this research aims to narrow. Further, a survey is conducted to retrieve relevant data before suitable analysis and results are reported. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and the academic and managerial impact before acknowledging certain limitations associated with this thesis and encouraging future research on the topic.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Sports Sponsorship

Sponsorship has become an important marketing phenomenon in brands total marketing mix, especially within mainstream sports (Cornwell, 1995). From a corporate perspective, sponsorships are generally based on objectives to raise brand awareness and brand image, increase sales and market share, gain competitive advantage, reach a specific segment, or even enhance staff relations (Apostolopoulou & Papadimitriou, 2004). Where the most important KPI is considered to be media coverage (Abratt et al., 1987). The attention created by media is further drawn to winning athletes/teams due to the extended coverage, displaying how the brand itself is maximizing the long-term value of the brand with enhanced efficiency and effectiveness through sponsorship (Aaker, 1992; Wood, 2000). Elements that go beyond product quality has become an essential part of the total evaluation of a brand (O'Cass & Frost, 2002), thus sponsorships contribute to the very definition of brand equity as *"the added value with which a brand endows a product"* (Farquhar, 1989, p. 24). Several authors have since the '80s illustrated the elements on which brand equity is built and it has become a widely accepted concept that can generate hard-to-copy value to a brand (Chieng & Lee, 2011). Aaker (2009) illustrates how brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets are key elements of what makes brand equity. Keller (1993, 2001) moved to include the consumer's perspective, conceptualizing the CBBE, defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand. Thus, sports sponsorship is used to create favorable predispositions towards the brand (Cornwell & Humphreys, 2013; Stipp & Schiavone, 1996; Stuart et al., 1987).

By definition, sponsorship is a *"provision of assistance either financial or in kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objective*s*"* (Meenaghan, 1983, p. 9). The framework of Speed and Thompson (2000) propose that sponsors perceived to be sincere, in both its activity and commitment, evoke more favorable responses from consumers, which is supported by both previous and later research (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; d'Astous & Bitz, 1995; Olson, 2010). On the other hand, sponsors perceived to be ubiquitous and incoherent with the consumers' social expectations, run the risk of severely damaging its brand, possibly causing brand aversion, and generating fewer advantages compared to sponsors who are perceived

to be sincere and coherent with social expectations (Werther & Chandler, 2005). Regardless, sports sponsorship has the potential to both add value and change consumers' attitude toward the sponsoring brand, thus, generating sustainable competitive advantages (Filho, 2019; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Woodside & Summers, 2012). According to a study conducted amongst several Canadian Corporations, sports sponsorships were selected on the basis of maximizing return on investment, thus, exclusivity, generated awareness and positive image were valued above all other metrics. Additionally, no corporation reported sports sponsorships to be motivated by philanthropic objectives, providing support to the notion that today's metrics for rewarding sponsorship agreements is mostly coherent with a corporation's business objectives (Copeland et al., 1996). Therefore, running the risk of causing damage to the sponsoring brand if the metric used for allocation does not cohere with consumer social expectations on the subject in question.

Sports research has been and is, similar to the actual sports scene, male dominant. Where both researchers and the actual research seem prone to male superiority justifying a pay gap between genders. Although later research, presented by companies and/or researchers that sympathize with the cause of achieving equality of the outcome is illustrating a different view that highlights increased consumer interest in female sports. Institutions that openly support the cause of gender equality can be subject to criticism surrounding their biases in presenting equality measures (e.g., UN). To this day, the body of research does not address specific parts of social expectations regarding allocation of sponsorship funds, leading brand managers to potentially underestimate the impact of the underlying metrics for allocating sponsorship agreements between male and female athletes/teams.

2.2 The Commercialization of Sports

The commercialization of sports has not only made sponsoring athletes/teams a vital part of building CBBE but made the profession of «professional athlete» highly lucrative in the process. Thereby, sports, in general, became highly dependent on sponsorship generated income (Speed & Thompson, 2000). From a global perspective, the overall sponsorship revenue was in 2018 at $65.8 billion and is expected to increase even further (Guttmann, 2019). Looking back, the '96 Atlanta Olympics raised $426 million in sponsorship income, while the 2020 Tokyo

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Olympics generated over $3.192 billion (Grohmann, 2019; Lange, 2020a; Nikkei Asia, 2020; The International Olympic Committee, 2020). In relation, the Super Bowls' audience increased by 52.53% from 1990 to 2015, while an increase in sports viewership across sports of about 6 million is expected, passing 160 million viewership in the US by 2024 (Lange, 2020d; Richter, 2020). Underlining the scope of reach sports sponsorship has in terms of generating brand awareness and attention.

A century ago, the baseball player Babe Ruth had a salary of $80.000 a year, which at the time and compared to his peers, was groundbreaking (Anderson, 2000). Furthermore, the sports idols of the '50s and '60s could surprisingly serve you in a restaurant out of season, as a second income was vital for top athletes to make ends meet (Taylor, 2019). Then TV infiltrated the world of sports. Playing a crucial role in how, when, why, and where sports are consumed by the public, mass media has been the driver in the commercialization of sports (Pfister, 2010). In '97, the average salary for a basketball player in the National Basketball Association (NBA) was $2.1 million, $1.350 more than Babe Ruth's salary (when adjusted for inflation). Fast forward another 20 years, inflation set the average salary of '97 at $4.975 less than the actual average in 2019 at $8.320 (Gough, 2021). TV networks' willingness to pay for licenses to broadcast sports has been the main driver of the enormous increase in athletes' salaries. However, while male athletes in the NBA doubled their average salary between the '10 - '11 and the '19 - '20 seasons, their female counterparts experienced an average salary increase of only 15.32% (National Basketball Association, n.d.).

An extensive overview of the relationship between an athlete's salary and earnings from sponsorship agreements is at large absent. Nonetheless, based on the 2020 Forbes list of 100 highest-earning athletes, 30.26% of their total salary was on average generated from sponsorship agreements, regardless of gender (Appendix 1). Where the contribution of sponsorship agreements varied from 0.30% to 98% (Badenhausen, 2020; Gough, 2020a). In coherence with the increased sponsorship revenue in sports events, sponsorship accounts for a significant part of an athlete's salary today (Guttmann, 2019). As the list only includes two female athletes, this demonstrates the existing pay gap between male and female in sports. A Norwegian case-study further confirms the gap, illustrating an approximately $11.7 million difference in favor of male athletes, across sport branches (Lie, 2017a). The reasoning that male athletes generate more revenue,

thus, are awarded with higher valued sponsorship agreements is mainly presented by male stakeholders (Capranica et al., 2013; Fuhrmeister, 2019; Hagen, 2019; Salary.com, 2019). Who may stand to gain from male athletes/teams generating higher salaries than their female counterparts, who have been known to criticize this basis for salary (Townes, 2019).

The lucrativeness, as well as the inconsistency in sponsorships generated value, can be exemplified by the sponsorship agreement that Nike, a brand that in recent years have increased its focus on equal distribution of sponsorship agreements between male and female athletes, signed with a top female football player worth $1.162 million (Danziger, 2019; Næss, 2020; Nike Inc., n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The male equivalent signed a deal at the beginning of his career at $1.200 million back in 2003 (Gerencer, 2016), equal to almost $1.700 million today. Considering that, sponsorship spending has increased by 73.6% from 2007 to 2018 (Guttmann, 2019), the contract signed by the female athlete does not reflect the increase in sponsorship spending, nor inflation. However, looking at top tennis players, Naomi Osaka's sponsorship deal with Nike sets her on the same level as Rafael Nadal, illustrating a more equal distribution of sponsorship funds between genders (Badenhausen, n.d.; Bhargav, 2020). Even though sponsorship contributes to a significant part of an athlete's salary, research does not address how uneven allocation of sponsorship funds implicates CBBE.

2.2.1 Image Transfer

"Sport generates fanship that is more intense, more obtrusive, and more enduring than it is for other forms of entertaining social activities without direct participation in the spectated events" (Zillmann & Paulus, 1993, p. 604), allowing for spillover effects from the sports generated emotions and/or the image transfer from an athlete/team to the brand. The connection between athlete/team and the brand initiates the same customer response to both entities, thus, allowing one to benefit from the positive response generated by the other entity, moderated by the consumer's perception of fit. This transfer can potentially strengthen CBBE, making sports sponsorships highly lucrative (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; d'Astous & Bitz, 1995; Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Madrigal, 2001; Olson, 2010; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Werther & Chandler, 2005). Sponsoring athletes provides a gateway to transfer their stardom, physical attractiveness and likeability to the brand, whilst cutting through increasing clutter

and keeping the consumers' attention, similar to the benefits of celebrity endorsements (Garland & Charbonneau, 2006; Ohanian, 2013). Furthermore, as sponsorship agreements often compel or encourage the athletes to wear the sponsoring brand logos before, during and after the broadcasted events, the forced brand exposure enhances consumers probability of brand recollection and liking (T. Meenaghan, 2001). Research has also found that males tend to recall significantly more brands that sponsor sports compared to females. Although, this could be a reflection of sports sponsorships being dominated by brands that typically appeal to male consumers (Han et al., 2003; Kinney et al., 2008; McDaniel & Kinney, 1999; Stipp & Schiavone, 1996).

According to Thomson (2006), higher levels of satisfaction, trust and commitment can be achieved through attachment to a human brand (e.g., an athlete), making consumers feel appreciated and empowered. Looking at a recent example, Nike faced mixed reactions by sponsoring Colin Kaepernick, the National Football League (NFL) player who took a knee during the national anthem (Martinez, 2018). While the stock price decreased 3% upon the announcement, sales reported an increase of 31% in less than a week, despite people destroying Nike products on social media (Gregory, 2018). Underlining how consumers' attachment to the athlete could affect the brand's obtained CBBE, as coherence with social expectations enables consumers positive response (e.g., increased sales).

Existing research suggests that the distinction between male and female sports possibly could dilute the image transfer. Historically, studies prove that the portrayal of athletes in the media and TV coverage of sports has been rather male-dominant, mainly motivated by meeting the consumers' preferences and maximizing return on investment (Cooky et al., 2013; Duncan, 2006; King, 2007; Koivula, 1999). While the media tends to credit male accomplishments to male superiority, female abilities are downplayed and more often accredited to luck, emotion, or even strong male influence (Fink, 2015). In addition to the dominantly negative nature of how female sports are addressed, the lack in both frequency and quality may have negatively impacted consumers' perception towards it (Cooky et al., 2013; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Messner et al., 1993; Trolan, 2013). Thus, providing a basis for why sponsorship tends to favor male athletes/teams. Furthermore, theory on image transfer combined with the general valence of how female sports are addressed provides a foundation for possible negative associations of weakness, sexualization and unimpressive performances associations that could

spill over on the sponsoring brands. Undermining the initial goal of sports sponsorship of generating favorable associations, making it less desirable.

2.2.2 Fanship

Existing research shows that sports audiences tend to have a male majority, and that men, in general, are more interested in watching male sports (Apostolou et al., 2014; Wann, 1995). Aligned with the narrative that sports are a male domain, males play sports with approximately twice as high frequency as females (Deaner et al., 2016). A survey amongst US sports fans uncovered that twice as many females categorized themselves as "not a fan at all", while more than twice as many males fell into the "avid fan" category (Gough, 2020b). This difference in fanship provides a basis for the differing valence and frequency of media coverage between male and female athletes/teams and renders support towards an uneven allocation of sponsorship funds. Furthermore, male sports are arguably perceived as a more lucrative market than female sports when it comes to sponsorship agreements, thus, rendering additional support to an already existing gap in pay and attention in favor of male athletes.

2.3 Gender Equality in Sports

Equality has become a relevant topic in several aspects of society, including sports. More specifically, gender equality and equal pay. According to the UN, social norms hold a prominent role in the challenges in achieving gender equality (United Nations, n.d.). Meaning that social norms and cultural aspects (e.g., traditional gender roles) present a possible underlying reasoning for differences in consumers' perceptions of and interest in male athletes compared to females. People's perception of the world around them is built upon social norms and culture, their senses, past experiences, media, etc., in order to process information easier and to create a sense of the world (Kahneman, 2012; Keller, 2013). Hence, people's perceptions are not a direct replica of reality (Maund, 2003). As attitudes and perceptions are tied to people's identity and are relatively enduring constructs, they have proven difficult to change (Petty et al., 2003). In regards to allocation of sponsorship funds, today's underlying metrics are largely based on an Equality of Opportunity principle (e.g., audience size, media coverage and generated revenue), rendering inequality in outcome (Copeland et al., 1996). As stated earlier, male athletes/teams generate a large audience, positive attitudes, and

substantial media coverage, thus, presenting an ideal sponsoring object. Although, with the increased attention towards equality between genders within sports, this construct has in recent times been subject to criticism.

Equality of Outcome and Equality of Opportunity are two different principles of equality, both providing guidelines as to how equality should be measured (Fleurbaey, 1995; Phillips, 2004; Roemer, 2002). The constructs are rendering equality in different ways, promoting different views on generating true equality and are deemed most fair by consumers. Equality of Outcome is promoting the equalizing of results/adequate individual outcome (Phillips, 2004). However, this construct has been challenged (Fleurbaey, 1995; Nozick, 1973; Roemer & Trannoy, 2013). It has been argued that the assessment of justice and morality behind the distribution of resources, funds, welfare etc., is lacking when solely based upon final outcomes. This renders support to Equality of Opportunity's principle, which includes both an equalizing and a disequalizing aspect (Roemer & Trannoy, 2013). Equality of Opportunity seeks to equalize the choice sets of all the outcome levels within reach for each individual. The concept of Equality of Opportunity entails that each individual is provided with equal opportunities, the final outcome is then dependent on individual effort, which according to "opportunity supporters", renders ethically acceptable differences (Roemer, 2002). Although, equalizing opportunities have also been challenged for being inefficient, unfeasible and for being reliant on *"a shaky sociological and philosophical basis"* (Fleurbaey, 1995, p. 27). When examining consumers' perception in relation to sponsorship allocation, fairness is introduced to measure how consumers perceive the allocation of sponsorship funds based on the principles of Equality of Outcome and Opportunity. With media coverage aspects of the discussion on differences in athlete/team salaries, it is reasonable to believe that consumers' perception of fairness is to a certain degree affected by the valence and frequency of media coverage (Apostolou et al., 2014; Deaner et al., 2016; James & Ridinger, 2002; Lange, 2020c; Scheadler & Wagstaff, 2018).

Equality of Outcome	Equality of Opportunity
Equal individual outcome	Equal individual opportunity
Sponsorship agreements based on: • Equal work • Equal effort/training	Sponsorship agreements based on: • Generated revenue • Audience size • Media coverage

Table 1: Principles of Equality

Existing research on media coverages' effect mainly regards how the physical, psychological, and differences in media coverage are affecting consumers' attitudes and consumption habits of male vs. female sports. When looking at media coverage, this thesis will mainly focus on the valence of typical media coverage within sports, which includes the wording of how the pay gap is addressed. As female sports are generally described differently than male sports, and this is considered a source of differences in attitudes towards the two, this thesis will examine if the difference in addressing the pay gap has the same effect. Thus, this research aims to assess to which degree media has an impact on whether consumers evaluate Equality of Outcome or Opportunity as having the highest quality of equal treatment in relation to allocating sports sponsorship funds between male and female athletes. Based on this, the following research question and attached hypotheses are formulated:

RQ1: How does media coverage influence consumer perceptions of fairness of sports sponsorship allocation?

H1a: Exposure to Equality of Outcome positive information has an effect on how consumers perceive the fairness of this principle in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.

H1b: Exposure to Equality of Opportunity positive information has an effect on how consumers perceive the fairness of this principle in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.

H1c: The valence of media coverage has an effect on consumers' perception of fairness in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.

2.3.1 The Rise of Female Sports

Despite previous research showing male dominance in all aspects of sports, the past decade has showcased female athletes' ability to *"generate substantial TV audiences, deliver value to sponsors, and draw tens of thousands of fans"* (Messner, 1988; Raviprakash et al., 2020, p. 51). The frequency of media coverage towards female sports has increased substantially, although it is still marginal compared to their male counterparts (Schmidt, 2016; Sherwood et al., 2017). Nonetheless,

amongst US viewers, the Women's World Cup finals of 2019 reported a 22% larger audience than the 2018 male finals (Hess, 2019). In tennis, women have received slightly higher TV ratings compared to their male counterparts, despite 41% less media coverage (Raviprakash et al., 2020; Signal AI, 2019). Furthermore, research shows that 51% out of the 84% general sports fans who reported an interest in watching female sports were male. Indicating an increasing interest in female sports amongst sports' main demographic segment, males. Thus, arguably increasing the commercial potential of female athletes/teams for sports sponsorship (The Nielsen Company, 2018). Nonetheless, by examining arousal levels when watching male and female athletes, a self-report study indicated that both male and female spectators experienced higher arousal when watching male athletes (Angelini, 2008). However, the measurement of their physiological reaction did not cohere with these results, suggesting that their reported response could be influenced by attitudes derived from social norms and expectations. The increased interest in consuming female sports, might generate a change in frequency and valence surrounding female sports. Thus, providing a greater basis for sponsoring female sports in the future.

Incoherence with social expectations can damage the brand, therefore providing an important basis for addressing the insufficient research on how consumers perceive the fairness of the relationship between gender in sports and allocated sponsorship funds, and more importantly how this perception affects the sponsoring brand (Werther & Chandler, 2005). The increased focus on equality between genders arguably supports the use of the Equality of Outcome principle to allocate sponsorship funds. As CBBE is generated through positive associations, liking and support, using consumer approved metrics for allocating sponsorship funds may be of interest to maximize the brands return of investment. Literature within sponsorship research does not state how equal or unequal sponsorship allocation is perceived by the consumer, and the effect this has on a brand. Therefore, this thesis will examine how a brand's sponsorship allocation influences CBBE through consumers' perceptions of fairness, focusing on consumer perceptions of Equality of Outcome vs. Opportunity. Thus, the following research question and attached hypotheses are formulated:

RQ2: How do media coverage and how consumers perceive the fairness of sponsorship allocation between male and female athletes/teams influence sponsors' customer-based brand equity?

H2a: The valence of media coverage has an effect on sponsors obtained CBBE who use the Equality of Outcome principle for allocation of sponsorship funds.

H2b: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Outcome principle has an effect on the sponsors CBBE when using Equality of Outcome as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.

H2c: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Opportunity principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Outcome as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.

H2d: The valence of media coverage has an effect on sponsors obtained CBBE who use the Equality of Opportunity principle for allocation of sponsorship funds.

H2e: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Outcome principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.

H2f: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Opportunity principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study

The research design was of descriptive and experimental nature, where the aim was to examine possible relationships between media coverage, consumers' perception of fairness regarding sponsorship allocation and CBBE (Malhotra, 2019). The data was collected by conducting an experiment in coherence with a questionnaire

(Appendix 2) in order to explore the relationship between media coverage and the average consumers' perception of fairness of sports sponsorship allocation and to further look at this in the context of a sponsoring brands obtained CBBE (Gerber & Green, 2012; Malhotra, 2019). In order to answer the formulated research questions, an experiment with a between-subject design was conducted. Treatments were distributed at the very beginning of the questionnaire, in the form of a piece of information that represented different valences of media coverage. *Treatment 1* presented information that positively reflected the Equality of Opportunity principle through promoting business metrics as to why the gender gap exists (Angelini, 2008; Apostolou et al., 2014; Deaner et al., 2016; Flanagan et al., 2007; Fuhrmeister, 2019; Hagen, 2019; James & Ridinger, 2002; Lange, 2020c; Salary.com, 2019; Thibault et al., 2010);

> *In many sports, male athletes earn substantially more money than female athletes. Generally, a majority of these earnings comes from sponsorship agreements. Male athletes generally draw a bigger audience, and offer greater business potential for the sponsoring brand, which is why sponsors generally pay more to male athletes.*

while *Treatment 2* presented information that positively portrayed the Equality of Outcome principle through the emphasis on the unfairness of gaps in pay between male and female athletes (Hess, 2019; Lie, 2017a, 2017b; Lie et al., 2020; Messner, 1988; Raviprakash et al., 2020; Signal AI, 2019; The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2011; The Nielsen Company, 2018; UN Women, 2020);

> *In many sports, male athletes earn substantially more money than female athletes, despite female athletes reporting to train just as hard. Female athletes have expressed that this gap in pay is unfair and that they should be rewarded just the same as their male counterparts, based on the "same work" principle.*

To avoid possible biases, both treatments were only presented as a simple text, without further visual illustration nor as a statement from athletes/teams, trainers, stakeholders and so forth. Assuming that the population, to a certain degree, had previous knowledge on the subject due to the increasing media coverage over the past years, the one-time exposure could also work as a reminder of either the

Equality of Outcome or Opportunity positive media coverage. A control group was not exposed to any treatment, enabling the assessment of the possible relationship between the different valence of media coverage and, compared to the scenario where no media coverage was supplied. Participants were randomly assigned to a treatment- or control group, which prohibits selection bias (Gerber & Green, 2012; Malhotra, 2019).

The questionnaire aimed to examine consumers' perceptions towards the fairness of sponsorship allocation when based on the two different principles of equality. As previously stated, brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are generally agreed upon by researchers to be key elements of CBBE (Aaker, 2009; Keller, 2001). To address sponsorship allocation and media coverage's effect on CBBE, the main focus was brand associations and loyalty through identifying how sponsorship allocation decisions affect consumers liking/disliking and willingness to support a brand. Perception of fairness was used as the main element of the first section of the questionnaire. Due to the lack of research on the subject, the measurement of fairness is developed on the basis of the principles of Equality of Outcome vs. Opportunity (Appendix 2).

The scale used to measure the perception of fairness was inspired by a Semantic Differential Scale, where endpoints were associated with bipolar labels of semantic meaning: «discriminating against women» vs. «discriminating against men» (Q1-Q8) (Malhotra, 2019). Thereby, the midpoint of the scale represented that the consumer perceived it as «fair», thus neither discriminatory towards women nor men. A seven-point-Likert-scale was used to evaluate how consumers perceive Equality of Outcome vs. Opportunity as a basis for sponsorship allocation through reliable metrics (Q9-Q11) (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Consumers' propensity to like or dislike and support or discontinue support towards brands based on different metrics of sponsorship allocation were measured using the semantic scale with these labels respectively (Q12-Q14). While the approach demanded somewhat higher cognitive efforts from the respondents, the scale helps reduce the effect of consumers' conscience when addressing a sensitive subject (Friborg et al., 2006). To secure the coherency and facilitate the respondent's cognitive processing while answering the questionnaire, variables set to measure fairness and CBBE were grouped together (Krosnick & Presser, 2018). Furthermore, questions were counterbalanced, and interchanged between the nature of statements in order to promote true answers (Adams & Cox, 2008). Moreover, the serial order of

questioning and keeping the questionnaire relatively short aimed to capture and keep the respondent's attention through the entire questionnaire. This was further achieved by firstly introducing the questions related to perceived fairness and CBBE, as these questions presented the need for a high level of cognitive effort. The questions were randomized and presented individually in order to avoid the occurrence of trends on the basis of order and prohibit respondents from changing answers after they are given. Respondents were also given fixed-alternative questions in order to strengthen the reliability of the data, as the data is structured and won't fluctuate with each respondent (Malhotra, 2019).

To examine attitudes amongst consumers is challenging, due to the complexity surrounding a person's attitudes and their willingness and ability to communicate it (Donoghue, 2000; Steinman, 2009). This thesis' theme may be perceived as a sensitive topic and evoke feelings of discomfort due to social expectations of political correctness regarding equality, thus, the structured survey can prohibit construct validity, which can obstruct the respondent's ability to answer honestly. Therefore, the projective technique «third person questioning» was used to bypass such challenges and to remove the respondent's notion of personal accountability (Donoghue, 2000; Malhotra, 2019; Steinman, 2009). Completing the questionnaire with questions that require the least cognitive effort, the respondent's demographics and also their preferences regarding sports were mapped out, providing insight into demographic differences across preferences and attitudes (Krosnick & Presser, 2018).

Aligned with an exploratory research design, the *Fairness Index* will be developed to look for patterns or structure based on the observations and will be determined using a confirmatory factor analysis in the later stages (Janssens et al., 2008). Followed by an ANOVA analysis, the conclusive stages for the first part of the study will determine if the treatments have an effect on consumers' perception of fairness. To examine whether the *Fairness Index* has an effect on CBBE, the following part of the questionnaire measures consumers' level of liking/disliking and willingness to support a brand in relation to its allocation of sponsorship funds according to either the Equality of Outcome or Opportunity principle. To investigate a possible pattern or structure between the developed variables measuring brand equity, an exploratory factor analysis is conducted before a regression analysis will determine how and if the perception of fairness could affect brand liking and to a certain degree of loyalty.

3.1.1 Pre-test

A pre-test was conducted through qualitative interviews, where the questionnaire was distributed to a small, but diversified sample upon final distribution. Thus, using the nonprobability sampling technique, «convenience sample» (Etikan, 2016). Allowing us to detect and eliminate potential problems related to the questionnaire (Malhotra, 2019). Small changes were made to the wording in order to ensure unambiguity of the questions, enhancing the validity of the questionnaire.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The finished survey was distributed using a convenience sampling technique, through Facebook and LinkedIn, whilst aiming for a snowball effect to obtain a certain number of respondents (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). To counteract the selection bias of a convenience sample, the survey was further distributed in three forums, two based on sports interest and one general to obtain a higher percentage of respondents at random (Taherdoost, 2016). Additionally, the survey was distributed in three different Facebook-groups outside of the authors network in order to gain a more representative sample (Malhotra, 2019). Due to private policy regulations, the data does not include information that determines which distribution channel the respondents represent. In turn, this constraint inhibits the assessment of how the respondents' demographics might differ depending on the distribution channel. While a convenience sample is not recommended for descriptive studies, the main focus of this study lies on an exploratory design, which does not advise against a convenience sample, due to the goal being to generate insights (Malhotra, 2019).

3.2.1 Data Cleansing and Final Sample

The survey was online from March 12th and was withdrawn April 26th, 2021. Generating a complete sample of 137 respondents after data cleansing, which mainly consisted of removing partial answers and outliers (row 376-137) (Malhotra, 2019). 62.8% of the final sample consists of female respondents, while 35.8% is male (the remaining 1.5% would rather not say).

Majority of the sample falls into the *age* group 20-24 or 25-34, with 86.1% of the sample reporting to be under 34. An overall view of respondents' *countries of origin* showcase that the sample consists of respondents from 14 different countries around the world, although the majority is located in western countries.

60.6% report that they to some degree identify as a *fan of sports*, while 19% report to disagree with this statement. Whether or not respondents are *supporters* of a specific sports team/club is rather equally distributed as 48.9% reports their support, while a rather small portion of 19.7% reports that they are an *active member* of a sports team. Interestingly, despite a female dominated sample but in line with previous research within consumer preferences between male and female sports, 64.2% state that their *favorite athlete* is male. Furthermore, the preferred *channel for sports* consumption remains TV (62.8%), followed by streaming/Internet (33.6%). Lastly, the vast majority of the sample spends less than 5 hours per week *consuming sports* (93.4%), while the majority of this group consume between zero and three hours of sports per week. Thus, the sample does feature a majority of marginal sports consumers.

The sample is further allocated into Treatment 1, Treatment 2, and a Control Group with 42 (30.7%), 51 (37.2%) and 44 (32.1%) respondents respectively. Where respondents in Treatment 1 are distributed quite equally between male and female, female respondents count for the majority of respondents in Treatment 2 (66.6%) and Control Group (68%).

Treatment 1	Treatment 2	Treatment 3
42 (30.7%)	51 (37.2%)	44 (32.1%)
Positive towards Equality of Opportunity	Positive towards Equality of Outcome	No information

Table 2: Treatment Groups

4.0 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Factor Analysis

To create indexes for consumers' perceptions of fairness in regards to allocation of sponsorship funds between genders, and to create an index for the CBBE construct, two factor analyzes were conducted. The aim was to decrease the size of the dataset and create factors that were suitable for further analysis. The Principal Components method was used for extraction, and the Varimax rotated solution was used in order to enhance interpretability of the results (Malhotra, 2019).

When conducting the factor analysis to create the *Fairness Indexes*, the a priori determination method was used in order to determine the number of factors, thus, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As two different equality constructs were represented in the collected data, the factor analysis was set to

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produce two factors. The factor analysis illustrates the correlation between questions that are worded positively towards the principle of Equality of Outcome and questions that are positive towards the Equality of Opportunity principle also correlate with each other. Thus, creating an *Equality of Outcome Index* and an *Equality of Opportunity Index* (Table 3). The KMO and Bartlett's test show that the factor analysis is suitable for this data (Sig.: .001 <.05) and this solution presents an explained variance 47% (Appendix 3). All variables are included as is, except the variable regarding whether it is unfair to pay male athletes more than female athletes (Q10). This variable is coded into an opposite scale to cohere with the other variables.

	Item	Cronbach's Alpha
	Equality of Opportunity Index	.705
Q3	Paying male athletes *more* than female athletes because men are stronger and faster: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q4	Paying male athletes *more* than female athletes because men attract larger audiences, media coverage and revenue: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q7	Sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes because of larger audiences, media coverage and revenue: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q8	Sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes because of better athleticism: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q9	Most people find it as good business sense for sponsors to pay male athletes *more* than female athletes: Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree.	
	Equality of Outcome Index	.633
Q1	Paying male and female athletes *equally* when men are stronger and faster: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q2	Paying male and female athletes *equally* when men attract larger audiences, media coverage and revenue: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q5	Sponsors who pay *the same* to male and female athletes regardless of audience size, media coverage and revenue: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q6	Sponsors who pay *the same* to male and female athletes regardless of athletic ability: Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men.	
Q10	Most people find it unfair that sponsors pay male athletes *more* than female athletes (Reversed scale): Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree. Strongly Agree.<-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Disagree	

Table 3: Factor Analysis Equality Indexes

In the factor analysis that was set to create indexes of CBBE perceptions amongst consumers, the determination of factors was based on the Eigenvalues. Thus, an exploratory factor analysis, which resulted in a two-factor solution. Here, correlations based on which equality principle the wording is positive towards was

identified. This creates two factors that represent consumer perceptions of CBBE towards a brand when the questions are worded positively towards the Equality of Outcome and the Opportunity principle (Table 4). The KMO and Bartlett's test show that the data is suitable for factor analysis (Sig.: .001 <.05), and this solution presents an explained variance of 71% (Appendix 4).

	Item	Cronbach's Alpha
	CBBE Index (Outcome Metrics)	.413
Q11	Fans are less likely to support sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes: Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree.	
Q12	Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending equally between male and female athletes/teams by: More strongly *disliking* the <-1 ------ 7-> More strongly *liking* the company/brand. company/brand	
	CBBE Index (Opportunity Metrics)	.734
Q13	Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending to male and female sports according to the relative size of audiences and media coverage by: More strongly *disliking* the <-1 ------ 7-> More strongly *liking* the company/brand. company/brand.	
Q14	Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending to male and female sports according to the relative size of audiences and media coverage by: *Discontinuing their support* for the <-1 ------ 7-> More *strongly supporting* the company/brand. company/brand.	

Table 4: Factor Analysis Brand Equity Indexes

4.1.1 Reliability Check

When conducting a factor analysis, further tests should be run in order to address whether the variables are measuring the same underlying constructs. The reliability of the factors was checked using Cronbach's Alpha, measuring the internal consistency of each factor (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The factors *Equality of Outcome Index*, *Equality of Opportunity Index* and *CBBE Index (Opportunity Metrics)* are all above the threshold of .600. However, the *CBBE Index (Outcome Metrics)*, consisting of consumers' propensity to like and support a brand when distributing its sponsorship funds equally, is according to the reliability check not suitable to combine for further analysis. This is due to the Cronbach's Alpha not meeting the required threshold with a value of .413. Thus, this factor will not be used further, and analysis will be conducted using each variable, *Liking* and *Support*.

4.2 The Influence of Valence of Media Coverage

To determine the effects of the treatments on consumers' perception of fairness regarding allocation of sponsorship funds, an ANOVA analysis was conducted using the *Equality of Outcome* and the *Equality of Opportunity Indexes*. Treatment 1 reflected the Equality of Opportunity principle, and Treatment 2 portrayed the Equality of Outcome principle. In order to obtain information about how the effect of one manipulation might differ from the effect of another, a Tukey multiple comparisons test was conducted (Lee & Lee, 2018). As the Tukey test is less conservative compared to other post-hoc tests, an adequate sample size was needed to prevent illogical results and heterogeneous subsets (Lee & Lee, 2018). The Levene test of homogeneity of variances confirms the appropriateness of an ANOVA and the multiple comparison for further analysis of the current sample (Malhotra, 2019). The ANOVA and Tukey multiple comparisons model is constructed with the aim of testing hypothesis 1a, 2b and 2c.

ANOVA

Measure description	Group 1 mean	Group 2 mean	Control group mean	F(p)	Sig.
Equality of Outcome Index	4.0762	3.9843	4.1955	.812	.446
Equality of Opportunity Index	3.1667	2.9333	3.0832	.952	.389

Multiple Comparison (Tukey HSD)

			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Equality of Outcome	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	.09188	.16788	.848
		Control Group	-.11926	.17381	.772
	Treatment 2	Treatment 1	-.09188	.16788	.848
		Control Group	-.21114	.16577	.413
	Control Group	Treatment 1	.11926	.17381	.772
		Treatment 2	.21114	.16577	.413
Equality of Opportunity	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	.23333	.20414	.489
		Control Group	-.01061	.21135	.999
	Treatment 2	Treatment 1	-.23333	.20415	.489
		Control Group	-.24394	.16577	.449
	Control Group	Treatment 1	.01061	.17381	.999
		Treatment 2	.24394	.16577	.449

Table 5: ANOVA and Multiple Comparisons Analysis
Treatment 1 = Opportunity positive info. / Treatment 2 = Outcome positive info. / Control Group = No info.

4.2.1 Hypothesis Testing: Valence of Media Coverage and Fairness Perceptions

Hypothesis H1a aimed to examine if positively presenting information in favor of Equality of Outcome in relation to sponsorship fund allocation will have an effect on how fair consumers perceive this principle of equality. The Tukey multiple comparison test illustrates no significant differences in the group means of how the Equality of Outcome principle is perceived when exposed to Outcome positive information (Treatment 2), compared to Opportunity positive information (Treatment 1) (Sig.=.848) or no information at all (Sig.=.413) (Table 5). The results are therefore, providing no support to hypothesis H1a.

Hypothesis H1b questioned if positively presenting information in favor of Equality of Opportunity in relation to sponsorship fund allocation had an effect on how fair consumers perceive this principle of equality. The Tukey multiple comparison shows no significant difference in the means of how the principle of Equality of Opportunity is perceived by the consumer when exposed to Opportunity positive information, compared to when exposed to Outcome positive (Sig.=.489) or no information (Sig.=.999) (Table 5). The results are therefore providing no support to hypothesis H1b.

Hypothesis H1c questioned if the valence of media coverage in general had an effect on how consumers perceive fairness constructs in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds. The ANOVA models find no significant differences among the means for the *Equality of Outcome Index* (Sig.=.446), nor for the *Equality of Opportunity Index* (Sig.=.389) (Table 5). These results imply that the treatments have not had an effect on how the respondents perceive the different fairness principles when related to sponsorship allocation. Meaning that being presented with a piece of information that favors either Equality of Outcome or Opportunity or not presented with any information, has no proven effect on the consumers' perceptions of the fairness of the different principles of equality. The results are therefore providing no support to hypothesis H1c.

H1a: Exposure to Equality of Outcome positive information has an effect on how consumers perceive the fairness of this principle in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.	Not supported
H1b: Exposure to Equality of Opportunity positive information has an effect on how consumers perceive the fairness of this principle in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.	Not supported
H1c: The valence of media coverage has an effect on consumers' perception of fairness in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds.	Not supported

Table 6: Overview of Results 1

4.3 The Effect of Consumers' Perception of Fairness

In order to identify the effect of both valence of media coverage and consumers' perceptions of fairness on sponsors obtained CBBE, a linear regression analysis was conducted with the *CBBE Index (Opportunity Metrics)* as the dependent variable. Furthermore, being unable to create an index of consumers' predisposition towards *Liking* and *Support* towards a brand when its allocation of sponsorship funds is based on the principle of Equality of Outcome, this regression analysis was performed at a variable level. Thus, consumers' propensity to generate *Liking* and/or *Support* towards brands that depend on the Equality of Outcome principle, were used as dependent variables in a separate regression model. The indexes of consumers' attitudes towards Equality of Outcome and Opportunity were included as independent variables. Treatments were included into the model as dummy variables, using the Control Group as a reference.

4.3.1 Hypothesis Testing: Sponsorship Allocation based on Outcome

The *Support* and *Liking* measures are representing obtained CBBE when using an Equality of Outcome reasoning for allocation of sponsorship funds. The regression model for *Liking* (Table 7) is significant at a .05 level (Sig.=.001), while providing an explanation of 21.2% of the variance in liking. The model for *Support* (Table 8), is significant only if extending to a .10 level (Sig.=.075) and explains 7.5% of the variance in support. This model is constructed with the aim of testing hypothesis 2a, 2b and 2c.

ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	60.973	4	15.243	8.858	<.001	.212
Residual	227.144	132	1.721			
Total	288.117	136				

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	8.205	.593		13.086	<.001
Equality of Opportunity Index	-.355	.135	-.239	-.2.639	.009
Equality of Outcome Index	-.451	.164	-.249	-2.755	.007
Treatment 1	-.549	.275	-.159	-1.936	.055
Treatment 2	-.050	.272	-.017	-.184	.854

Dependent Variable: Liking (Q12)

Table 7: Linear Regression Model; Liking (Outcome Metrics)

ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	24.955	4	6.239	2.661	.035	.075
Residual	309.483	132	2.345			
Total	334.438	136				

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	5.476	.732		7.482	<.001
Equality of Opportunity Index	-.097	.157	-.060	-.615	.540
Equality of Outcome Index	-.446	.191	-.229	-2.335	.021
Treatment 1	-.112	.331	-.033	-.337	.737
Treatment 2	-.374	.317	-.116	-1.178	.241

Dependent Variable: Support (Q11)

Table 8: Linear Regression Model; Support (Outcome Metrics)

Hypothesis 2a aimed to assess if the valence of how principles of equality were presented had an effect on CBBE for sponsors who used the principle of Equality of Outcome for allocation of sponsorship funds. In order for this hypothesis to gain full support, both treatments should have an effect on both *Liking* and *Support* towards brands that use the principle of Equality of Outcome. However, this was not the case. Both treatments are found insignificant in predicting support. Although when predicting *Liking*, Equality of Opportunity positive information (Treatment 1) is found to be significant at a .10 significance level (Sig.=.055) (Table 7 and 8). Furthermore, exposure to this information is yielding a -.549 decrease in the propensity to like the brand that uses Equality of Outcome based metrics for deciding sponsorship allocation. Therefore, hypothesis 2a is partially supported.

Hypothesis 2b examined whether consumers' perception of fairness of sponsorship allocation based on the Equality of Outcome principle had an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Outcome based metrics for allocation of sponsorship funds. To gain full support, the *Equality of Outcome Index* needs to be significant in predicting both *Liking* and *Support*. Both are found significant at a .05 level (Table 7 and 8), thus, consumers who think that Equality of Outcome is discriminating against men is less likely to like (Sig.=.007) and support (Sig.=.021) a brand that allocates sponsorship funds according to the Outcome principle, compared to those who think it is fair. They yield a decrease of -.451 and -.446 respectively. Thus, hypothesis 2b is supported.

Hypothesis 2c examined if consumers' perception of fairness of sponsorship allocation based on the Equality of Opportunity principle had an effect on the

sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Outcome as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds. The hypothesis receives full support if the *Equality of Opportunity Index* is found to be significant in both regression models. However, this index is found to be significant only in predicting *Liking* towards a brand (Sig.=.009), therefore rendering partial support to hypothesis 2c (Table 7 and 8). A unit increase in the *Equality of Opportunity Index* will render a -.355 decrease in obtained CBBE, thus, consumers who think that the Equality of Opportunity principle is discriminant against women, have a higher propensity to like a brand that allocates sponsorship funds on the basis of the Outcome principle, than those who think that the Opportunity principle is fair.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing: Sponsorship Allocation based on Opportunity

The *CBBE Index (Opportunity Metrics)* represents obtained CBBE when using an Equality of Opportunity reasoning for allocation of sponsorship funds. The model explains 10.6% of the variance in *CBBE Index (Opportunity Metrics)*, while being significant at a .05 level (Table 9). This model is constructed with the aim of testing hypothesis 2d, 2e and 2f.

ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square
Regression	18.018	4	4.504	3.909	.005	.106
Residual	152.121	132	1.152			
Total	170.139	136				

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.563	.513		5.234	<.001
Equality of Opportunity Index	.115	.110	.101	1.045	.298
Equality of Outcome Index	.358	.134	.258	2.671	.009
Treatment 1	-.126	.232	-.052	-.543	.588
Treatment 2	-.024	.223	-.010	-.109	.914

Dependent Variable: CBBE (Opportunity Metrics)

Table 9: Linear Regression Model; CBBE (Opportunity Metrics)

Hypothesis 2d aimed to examine if the valence of media coverage had an effect on obtained CBBE for sponsors who use the Equality of Opportunity principle for allocation of sponsorship funds. In order for this hypothesis to gain full support, one or both treatments need to have a significant effect on CBBE. However, neither Treatment 1 (Sig.=.588), nor Treatment 2 (Sig.=.914) is found to be significant at a .05 level and renders no support to hypothesis 2d (Table 9).

Hypothesis 2e regarded if consumers' perception of fairness of sponsorship allocation based on the Equality of Outcome principle had an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when a brand is using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds. The *Equality of Outcome Index* is found to be a significant predictor of CBBE (Sig.=.009) at a .05 level (Table 9). A one unit increase in the *Equality of Outcome Index* yields an increase of .358 in obtained CBBE when basing its sponsorship fund allocation on the Equality of Opportunity principle. Entailing that the more respondents think that equal distribution of sponsorship funds despite athletic ability, audience size, media coverage and generated revenue is male discriminant, the more CBBE the sponsor gains from following the Equality of Opportunity principle. These results provide support to hypothesis 2e.

Hypothesis 2f regards if consumers' perception of fairness of sponsorship allocation based on the Equality of Opportunity principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained brand equity when using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds. The *Equality of Opportunity Index* (Sig.=.298) is not a significant variable in predicting CBBE (Table 9). Thus, there is no evidence suggesting that consumers' perception of the Equality of Opportunity principle is affecting the sponsors who are using the same principle as the basis for allocating its sponsorship funds. Therefore, hypothesis H2f is not supported.

H2a: The valence of media coverage has an effect on sponsors obtained CBBE who use the Equality of Outcome principle for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Partial support
H2b: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Outcome principle has an effect on the sponsors CBBE when using Equality of Outcome as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Supported
H2c: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Opportunity principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Outcome as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Partial support
H2d: The valence of media coverage has an effect on sponsors obtained CBBE who use the Equality of Opportunity principle for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Not supported
H2e: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Outcome principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Supported
H2f: Consumers' perception of fairness of the Equality of Opportunity principle has an effect on the sponsors obtained CBBE when using Equality of Opportunity as basis for allocation of sponsorship funds.	Not supported

Table 10: Overview of Results 2

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine consumers' perception of fairness in relation to allocating sponsorship funds between male and female athletes/teams, and how this perception is both influenced by the valence of media coverage and how it affects sponsors obtained CBBE based on the principle of Equality of Outcome vs. Opportunity.

In order to gain insight into the impact of the valence of media coverage on consumer perceptions towards differences in allocation of sponsorship funds, respondents were exposed to two different treatments that were representative of the valence of actual media coverage through an online survey. Treatment 1 (Opportunity positive) represented the reasoning for why male athletes do and should continue to retrieve higher salaries, thus, sponsorship agreements (Angelini, 2008; Apostolou et al., 2014; Deaner et al., 2016; Flanagan et al., 2007; Fuhrmeister, 2019; Hagen, 2019; James & Ridinger, 2002; Lange, 2020c; Salary.com, 2019; Thibault et al., 2010), while Treatment 2 (Outcome positive) represented the reasoning for why female athletes should receive equal salaries as their male counterparts (Hess, 2019; Lie, 2017a, 2017b; Lie et al., 2020; Messner, 1988; Raviprakash et al., 2020; Signal AI, 2019; The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport, 2011; The Nielsen Company, 2018; UN Women, 2020). Neither hypothesis 1a, 1b or 1c were supported, illustrating that the valence of media coverage did not have a significant effect on how the respondents answered the questions regarding perception of fairness. Indicating that people are less inclined to be persuaded to change their attitudes or be affected from a one-time exposure than initially assumed. Thus, this research found no support to the assumption that the valence of media coverage is able to affect consumer perception of fairness regarding the different equality principles when evaluated in relation to the allocation of sports sponsorship between genders.

In the second part of the study, we aimed to explore how the valence of media coverage and consumers' perceptions of fairness of sponsorship allocation metrics had an effect on a sponsors obtained CBBE in relation to the metrics that they used for allocating sponsorship funds. Insights on this topic could be of importance as research emphasizes the coherence between sponsorship and social expectations (Werther & Chandler, 2005). Thus, the valence of media coverage on sponsors obtained CBBE was analyzed, represented by a measurement of *Liking* and *Support*. Furthermore, the effect of consumers' perception of fairness on CBBE

was analyzed using the *Equality of Outcome Index* and *Equality of Opportunity Index*. As we find partial support for hypothesis 2a, the valence of media coverage can have an effect on a sponsors obtained CBBE, depending on the metrics that the sponsor applies when allocating sponsorship funds. Thus, if presented with information that is positive towards the Equality of Opportunity principle (Treatment 1), this would negatively affect the consumer's propensity to like brands that allocate sponsorship funds on the basis of the Outcome principle between male and female athletes. However, evidence does not suggest that the information has an effect on support towards the brand. As hypothesis 2d is not supported, the valence of media coverage is not proven to be a significant predictor of a brands obtained CBBE when the brand relies on Opportunity based metrics for allocation of sponsorship funds.

Furthermore, our results show that consumers' perceptions of the fairness of Equality of Outcome vs. Opportunity, does in some cases have an effect on their propensity to generate CBBE towards the sponsor. We find support for hypothesis 2b and 2e, both regarding the effect of the respondent's attitude towards the Equality of Outcome principle. Indicating that a consumer's perception of the Equality of Outcome principle is of superior importance when predicting sponsors obtained CBBE, compared to their perception of the Equality of Opportunity principle. Furthermore, H2c received partial support, thus the *Equality of Opportunity Index* proves to be a significant predictor of *Liking* towards a brand that rely on Outcome based metrics for allocating its sponsorship funds. Although, it is not found to be sufficient in predicting consumers propensity to *Support* the sponsoring brand. These results illustrate that consumers' who think the Equality of Outcome principle is fair, would be less inclined to grant CBBE towards a sponsor who allocates its sponsorship funds according to the Equality of Opportunity principle, compared to consumers who think that the Outcome principle is male discriminant. Furthermore, it will render a greater negative effect on CBBE for a brand that allocates sponsorship funds on the basis of the Outcome principle if consumers think that this is male discriminant, than when thought to be fair. These results coincide with the already existing theory saying that greater liking and support are generated towards sponsors that consumers relate to and that act according to social expectations (Madrigal, 2001). Lastly, hypothesis 2f is not supported, indicating that consumer perceptions of the Opportunity principle are

not significant in predicting CBBE when metrics for sponsorship allocation is based on the same principle.

In conclusion, there are many reasons for a brand to allocate sponsorship funds according to Equality of Opportunity based metrics, which would continue to favor a male majority and dominance among sponsorship agreements and the pay that they generate for the athlete. Although, our findings suggest that if a consumer has strong perceptions regarding the fairness of equal distribution according to the Equality of Outcome based metrics, this will render consequences for the CBBE obtained by the sponsor and, in turn, its return on investment. Arguably providing a basis for further research into the subject, which along with certain limitations of the current study will be discussed further.

5.1 Academic and Managerial Implications

Based on the aforementioned findings and discussion, academic and managerial implications for sponsorship decisions are presented.

This research provides insights into consumer perceptions in an underexplored area. The increased attention towards equality in sports is providing a basis for exploring consumers' perceptions of how to fairly allocate funds towards sponsoring athletes and teams and can prove important in order to obtain updated and efficient metrics for sponsorship allocation. Furthermore, this thesis contributes academically with a basis for a *Fairness Index*, which can be a useful measurement in further research settings. As sponsorship has become a marketing phenomenon and are generating more favor when the sponsoring brand is perceived to act in coherence with social expectations, this speaks to the importance of keeping consumer perceptions in focus when allocating sponsorship funds (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; d'Astous & Bitz, 1995; Madrigal, 2001; Olson, 2010; Speed & Thompson, 2000). Thereby, enhancing the importance of brand managers' awareness of and keeping up with social expectations within the area of equality to secure the brands return on investment. This research mainly provides evidence that the consumers' perception of fairness is something to be mindful of when making decisions regarding sponsorships. In order to provide concrete metrics to base this decision on, further research on the subject is needed.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis embodies certain limitations that should be acknowledged. As the scope of the thesis is directed at providing research within an area with little existing research, it presents the possibility to replicate and extend the metrics and research in order to further examine this topic.

Media is thought to have a significant impact on consumer attitudes and was when replicated anticipated to show results that cohere with this notion (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Although this was not the case in this study. A rising question is whether the treatments were strong enough, especially in regards to the probability that consumers were familiar with the pay gap that exists within sports. Consumers will, presumably, be at least familiar with the discussion of a pay gap between genders in general, if not specifically to the world of sports. Thus, presenting the possibility that because attitudes are such enduring constructs, the treatments may not have been strong and clear enough to alter or significantly affect an already standing attitude in the consumer's mind (Petty et al., 2003). Thus, future research may further investigate if similar treatments can have an effect on how consumers perceive equality principles, if made more extensive or presented in a more realistic setting or format. The Covid situation and the affiliated restrictions created barriers when it comes to the nature of the conducted experiment. Therefore, future research could address the media exposure towards consumers in a physical setting. Furthermore, the frequency of exposure is also mentioned as an important factor to why media has such an effect and presents the possibility to look at valence in coherence with frequency of media exposure of a certain nature. Future research can also put a larger emphasis on the visual presentation of treatments to mimic actual media content.

Acknowledging that the current sample differs from stats showcasing that 76% of sports watchers are male, which to a certain degree can make the results less applicable for brand managers (Lange, 2020c). As our sample consists of a large portion of consumers who do not identify with this, it may have impacted the results and impaired the generalizability of this study. Thus, obtaining a proportional sample of genuine sports fans would be of interest for further research into the topic. Furthermore, as our sample is largely based on respondents from western countries and examines sports in general, a more extensive look into differences across regions and sports would be of interest, especially in regards to segmentation and identifying distinctions in consumer perceptions that should be

accounted for as the equality focus would arguably be of differing importance across regions and sports branches.

 This research examines consumer attitudes and their propensity to grant CBBE towards sponsoring brands when made aware of its basis for allocating sponsorship funds. However, in a real-life situation, this may not be information that the consumer is familiar with or interested in, even when having a clear opinion on the matter of equality. Thus, future research could examine to which degree the consumer is aware of and concerns themselves with the uneven distribution of sponsorship funds in real life. As the measurement of fairness and CBBE are constructed for the purpose of this study, the *Fairness-* and *CBBE Indexes* could be a subject of criticism. The questions designed to measure consumers' perception of fairness in relation to allocation of sponsorship funds, were based upon literature's emphasized metrics for allocation, both in favor of Equality of Outcome and Opportunity. Which can render challenges in relation to this not being tested beforehand. The factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha shows that the measurement for *Liking,* and *Support* based on the Outcome principle are not measuring the same underlying constructs, thus, were not eligible for creating an index (Table 4). Future research should continue to develop the *Fairness-* and *CBBE Indexes* in order to secure the construct validity. As this research also mainly addressed *Liking* and *Support* as a measure for CBBE, a more extensive measure can be of use for further research on the topic.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Sponsorship Percentage of the 100 Highest Paid Athletes

Athlete	Total Salary	Salary	Sponsorship	%
Roger Federer	$106 300 000	$6 300 000	$100 000 000	94,07 %
Christian Ronaldo	$105 000 000	$60 000 000	$45 000 000	42,86 %
Lionel Messi	$104 000 000	$72 000 000	$32 000 000	30,77 %
Neymar	$95 500 000	$70 500 000	$25 000 000	26,18 %
LeBron James	$88 200 000	$28 200 000	$60 000 000	68,03 %
Stephen Curry	$74 400 000	$30 400 000	$44 000 000	59,14 %
Kevin Durant	$63 900 000	$28 900 000	$35 000 000	54,77 %
Tiger Woods	$62 300 000	$2 300 000	$60 000 000	96,31 %
Kirk Cousins	$60 500 000	$58 000 000	$2 500 000	4,13 %
Carson Wentz	$59 100 000	$55 100 000	$4 000 000	6,77 %
Tyson Fury	$57 000 000	$50 000 000	$7 000 000	12,28 %
Russell Westbrook	$56 000 000	$29 000 000	$27 000 000	48,21 %
Lewis Hamilton	$54 000 000	$42 000 000	$12 000 000	22,22 %
Rory McIlroy	$52 000 000	$22 000 000	$30 000 000	57,69 %
Jared Goff	$49 000 000	$47 000 000	$2 000 000	4,08 %
Conor McGregor	$48 000 000	$32 000 000	$16 000 000	33,33 %
James Harden	$47 800 000	$28 800 000	$19 000 000	39,75 %

G. Antetokounmpo	$47 600 000	$19 600 000	$28 000 000	58,82 %
Anthony Joshua	$47 000 000	$36 000 000	$11 000 000	23,40 %
Deontay Wilder	$46 500 000	$46 000 000	$500 000	1,08 %
Tom Brady	$45 000 000	$33 000 000	$12 000 000	26,67 %
Drew Brees	$44 800 000	$29 800 000	$15 000 000	33,48 %
Novak Djokovic	$44 600 000	$12 600 000	$32 000 000	71,75 %
Kyrie Irving	$41 900 000	$23 900 000	$18 000 000	42,96 %
Phil Mickelson	$40 800 000	$800 000	$40 000 000	98,04 %
Julio Jones	$40 500 000	$37 500 000	$3 000 000	7,41 %
Rafael Nadal	$40 000 000	$14 000 000	$26 000 000	65,00 %
Klay Thompson	$38 800 000	$24 800 000	$14 000 000	36,08 %
Naomi Osaka	$37 400 000	$3 400 000	$34 000 000	90,91 %
Canelo Alvarez	$37 000 000	$35 000 000	$2 000 000	5,41 %
Damian Lillard	$37 000 000	$22 500 000	$14 500 000	39,19 %
Sebastian Vettel	$36 300 000	$36 000 000	$300 000	0,83 %
Serena Williams	$36 000 000	$4 000 000	$32 000 000	88,89 %
Mohamed Salah	$35 100 000	$23 100 000	$12 000 000	34,19 %
Chris Paul	$35 000 000	$29 000 000	$6 000 000	17,14 %
Kylian Mbappe	$33 800 000	$20 800 000	$13 000 000	38,46 %
Grady Jarrett	$33 100 000	$33 000 000	$100 000	0,30 %

Paul George	$32 800 000	$24 800 000	$8 000 000	24,39 %
Michael Thomas	$32 400 000	$31 600 000	$800 000	2,47 %
Kei Nishikori	$32 100 000	$1 100 000	$31 000 000	96,57 %
Blake Griffin	$31 900 000	$25 900 000	$6 000 000	18,81 %
John Wall	$31 200 000	$28 700 000	$2 500 000	8,01 %
Kawhi Leonard	$30 500 000	$25 000 000	$5 500 000	18,03 %
Anthony Davis	$30 400 000	$20 400 000	$10 000 000	32,89 %
Aaron Rodgers	$30 100 000	$21 100 000	$9 000 000	29,90 %
Andres Iniesta	$29 600 000	$26 600 000	$3 000 000	10,14 %
Matt Ryan	$29 500 000	$24 000 000	$5 500 000	18,64 %
Daniel Ricciardo	$29 000 000	$27 000 000	$2 000 000	6,90 %
Mesut Ozil	$28 700 000	$23 200 000	$5 500 000	19,16 %
Kyle Lowry	$28 500 000	$27 000 000	$1 500 000	5,26 %
Paul Pogba	$28 500 000	$23 000 000	$5 500 000	19,30 %
Jimmy Butler	$27 600 000	$24 600 000	$3 000 000	10,87 %
Gordon Hayward	$27 600 000	$24 600 000	$3 000 000	10,87 %
Jordan Speith	$27 600 000	$1 600 000	$26 000 000	94,20 %
Kemba Walker	$27 600 000	$24 600 000	$3 000 000	10,87 %
Oscar	$27 500 000	$25 800 000	$1 700 000	6,18 %
Clayton Kershaw	$27 300 000	$26 500 000	$800 000	2,93 %

Zion Williamson	$27 300 000	$7 300 000	$20 000 000	73,26 %
Arik Armestead	$26 800 000	$26 500 000	$300 000	1,12 %
Joel Embiid	$26 700 000	$20 700 000	$6 000 000	22,47 %
Antoine Greizmann	$26 700 000	$21 200 000	$5 500 000	20,60 %
Devin Booker	$26 600 000	$20 600 000	$6 000 000	22,56 %
Christian McCaffrey	$26 500 000	$23 500 000	$3 000 000	11,32 %
D'Angelo Russell	$26 500 000	$20 500 000	$6 000 000	22,64 %
Darius Slay	$26 100 000	$25 800 000	$300 000	1,15 %
Virat Kohli	$26 000 000	$2 000 000	$24 000 000	92,31 %
David De Gea	$25 700 000	$22 700 000	$3 000 000	11,67 %
Kevin Love	$25 700 000	$21 700 000	$4 000 000	15,56 %
Alexis Sánchez	$25 600 000	$24 600 000	$1 000 000	3,91 %
Ryan Tannehill	$25 500 000	$25 200 000	$300 000	1,18 %
Mike Conley, Jr.	$25 400 000	$24 400 000	$1 000 000	3,94 %
Tobias Harris	$25 400 000	$24 600 000	$800 000	3,15 %
Gareth Bale	$25 200 000	$19 700 000	$5 500 000	21,83 %
Bobby Wagner	$25 000 000	$24 500 000	$500 000	2,00 %
Amari Cooper	$24 900 000	$23 900 000	$1 000 000	4,02 %
DeMar DeRozan	$24 800 000	$20 800 000	$4 000 000	16,13 %
Robert Quinn	$24 700 000	$24 500 000	$200 000	0,81 %

Kristaps Porzingis	$24 500 000	$20 500 000	$4 000 000	16,33 %
Al Horford	$24 400 000	$21 100 000	$3 300 000	13,52 %
Trae Waynes	$24 300 000	$24 100 000	$200 000	0,82 %
Dante Fowler, Jr.	$24 200 000	$24 000 000	$200 000	0,83 %
Khris Middleton	$24 100 000	$23 100 000	$1 000 000	4,15 %
Marcus Mariota	$23 900 000	$20 900 000	$3 000 000	12,55 %
CJ McCollum	$23 800 000	$20 800 000	$3 000 000	12,61 %
Nick Bosa	$23 700 000	$22 900 000	$800 000	3,38 %
Shaq Thompson	$23 700 000	$23 500 000	$200 000	0,84 %
Karl-A. Towns	$23 500 000	$20 500 000	$3 000 000	12,77 %
Philip Rivers	$23 400 000	$23 000 000	$400 000	1,71 %
Ezekiel Elliott	$23 300 000	$21 300 000	$2 000 000	8,58 %
Paul Millsap	$23 300 000	$22 800 000	$500 000	2,15 %
Ben Roethlisberger	$23 000 000	$22 000 000	$1 000 000	4,35 %
Andrus Peat	$22 700 000	$22 600 000	$100 000	0,44 %
Andre Drummond	$22 600 000	$21 600 000	$1 000 000	4,42 %
D.J. Reader	$22 400 000	$22 300 000	$100 000	0,45 %
Quinnen Williams	$22 400 000	$22 200 000	$200 000	0,89 %
Bradley Beal	$22 300 000	$20 300 000	$2 000 000	8,97 %
Cam Newton	$22 200 000	$16 700 000	$5 500 000	24,77 %

Calais Campbell	$22 100 000	$22 000 000	$100 000	0,45 %
Derek Carr	$22 000 000	$20 000 000	$2 000 000	9,09 %
Sergio Ramos	$21 800 000	$18 800 000	$3 000 000	13,76 %
Total	$3 622 300 000	$2 526 100 000	$1 096 200 000	30,26 %

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

- **Story I (Treatment 1 - Equality of Opportunity)**
  In many sports, male athletes earn substantially more money than female athletes. Generally, a majority of these earnings comes from sponsorship agreements. Male athletes generally draw a bigger audience, and offer greater business potential for the sponsoring brand, which is why sponsors generally pay more to male athletes.

- **Story II (Treatment 2 - Equality of Outcome)**
  In many sports, male athletes earn substantially more money than female athletes, despite female athletes reporting to train just as hard. Female athletes have expressed that this gap in pay is unfair and that they should be rewarded just the same as their male counterparts, based on the "same work" principle.

- **No story provided (Control group)**

Answer the following questions in line with how you believe the average person will answer. Be mindful to read each question carefully.

Q1.   Paying male and female athletes *equally* when men are stronger and faster:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q2.   Paying male and female athletes *equally* when men attract larger audiences, media coverage and revenue:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q3.   Paying male athletes *more* than female athletes because men are stronger and faster:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q4.   Paying male athletes *more* than female athletes because men attract larger audiences, media coverage and revenue:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q5.   Sponsors who pay *the same* to male and female athletes regardless of audience size, media coverage and revenue:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q6.   Sponsors who pay *the same* to male and female athletes regardless of athletic ability:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q7.   Sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes because of larger audiences, media coverage and revenue:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q8.   Sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes because of better athleticism:
Discriminates against women <- 1 2 3 is fair 5 6 7 -> Discriminates against men

Q9.   Most people find it as good business sense for sponsors to pay male athletes *more* than female athletes:
Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree

Q10.   Most people find it unfair that sponsors pay male athletes *more* than female athletes:
Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree

Q11.   Fans are less likely to support sponsors who pay male athletes *more* than female athletes:
Strongly Disagree <-1 ------ 7-> Strongly Agree

Q12.   Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending equally between male and female athletes/teams by:
More strongly *disliking* the company/brand <-1 ------ 7-> More strongly *liking* the company/brand

Q13.   Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending to male and female sports according to the relative size of audiences and media coverage by:
More strongly *disliking* the company/brand <-1 ------ 7-> More strongly *liking* the company/brand

Q14.   Most people are likely to react to companies/brands that allocate their sponsorship spending to male and female sports according to the relative size of audiences and media coverage by:
Discontinuing their support for the company/brand <-1 ------ 7-> More *strongly supporting* the company/brand

Demographic questions
Answer the following questions from your point of view.
Q15.   Age
- 16-19 years old
- 20-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older

Q16. Gender
- Male
- Female
- Other
- Rather not say

Q17. Country of origin
(Write in)

Q18. Do you consider yourself a fan of sports?
Strongly Disagree <-1 --- Average --- 7-> Strongly Agree

Q19. Are you a supporter of any sports team/clubs?
Yes/No

Q20. Are you an active member of any sports team (regardless of level)?
Yes/No

Q21. Who is your favorite athlete? (Mention only one)
(Open question)

Q22. Where do you mainly watch sports?
- TV
- In person
- Streaming/Internet
- Radio

Q23. How much time do you on average spend per week watching sports in any form?
- Less than 1 hour
- 1-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-7 hours
- 7-10 hours
- 10 hours or more

Appendix 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO		.776
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	337.929
	Df	45
	Sig.	<.001

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Q1	1	.282
Q2	1	.567
Q3	1	.456
Q4	1	.698
Q5	1	.473
Q6	1	.510
Q7	1	.646
Q8	1	.525
Q9	1	.171
Q10	1	.413

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.564	35.644	35.644	3.564	35.644	35.644	2.650	26.505	26.505
2	1.177	11.773	47.418	1.177	11.773	47.418	2.091	20.913	47.418
3	1.022	10.217	57.634						
4	.918	9.176	66.811						
5	.788	7.876	74.687						
6	.697	6.971	81.658						
7	.645	6.448	88.106						
8	.529	5.290	93.396						
9	.397	3.970	97.366						
10	.263	2.634	100.000						

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
Q1	.077	.526
Q2	.313	.685
Q3	.667	.103
Q4	.817	.175
Q5	.292	.636
Q6	-.009	.714
Q7	.772	.222
Q8	.715	.118
Q9	.337	.241
Q10	.379	.519

Appendix 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO		.568
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	72.432
	Df	6
	Sig.	<.001

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Q11	1	.588
Q12	1	.692
Q13	1	.787
Q14	1	.783

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.786	44.640	44.640	1.786	44.640	44.640	1.587	39.682	39.682
2	1.065	26.619	71.259	1.065	26.619	71.259	1.263	31.577	71.259
3	.711	18.265	89.525						
4	.419	10.473	100.000						

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
Q11	-.194	.742
Q12	.001	.832
Q13	.881	-.104
Q14	.879	-.099