Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

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Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

Abstract

Purpose: Contextual changes in communications, social activism, and perceptions of commercialization have changed the dynamics in sponsorship. This paper investigated the patterns in sponsorship and social justice within the context of a major sports event.

Design/methodology/approach: The European Football Championship serves as an impactful platform for sponsors due to its global reach. The sponsorship activations of the twelve official sponsors were investigated by analysing sponsorship expressions on the LED boarding during every match of the tournament. Furthermore, additional data on sponsorship characteristics and brand positioning was collected for every sponsor to define relevant factors to understand the differences in sponsorship communications.

Findings: During UEFA EURO 2020, five official sponsors changed their sponsorship activations. Adjustments were made in sponsorship expressions to position the brand on diversity and inclusion. The analyses of over 90,000 press photos and 51 official match videos clarified the dynamics of brand positioning, sponsorship characteristics in perspective of globalization patterns, and different sponsorship approaches in different geographical, social, and political contexts.

Practical implications: Decision makers in the global sports industry are challenged in their brand management and sponsorship approaches for the social good. This study supports to understand the sponsorship approaches and factors affecting these different strategies.

Originality/value: Despite the growing attention to social justice issues in sports, there is a need to understand inclusive marketing strategies in sponsorship relationships. Using data triangulation, the findings enabled to clarify differences in sponsor approaches to social justice and illustrate the complex dynamics of brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in the sponsorship ecosystem.
Keywords: marketing, football, social justice, sponsorship, rainbow boarding, globalization.

Introduction

The first female official at a men’s European Football Championship, Stéphanie Frappart, announced the final substitutions of Czech Republic in the knockout match of UEFA EURO 2020 against The Netherlands. In the background of the French referee is the rainbow-colored sponsor boarding of official automotive sponsor Volkswagen, next to sponsors expressions of Heineken, Qatar Airways, Gazprom and Tik Tok. In the stands several fans are waving rainbow flags and some representatives of professional football (soccer) associations are wearing a rainbow-coloured pin on their suits at Budapest’s Puskás Aréna. It is a revealing illustration of the dynamics on social justice in sports marketing during this major sports event. During this event, there was an opportunity for sponsors with their different brand strategies to position themselves on diversity and inclusion in their sponsorship activations.

The most recent literature review on sponsorship-linked marketing concluded that contextual changes in communications, social activism, and perceptions of commercialization have brought sponsoring to a turning point (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). In the complex ecosystem of sponsorship relationships, sponsors co-create value with the potential to affect social development issues by their corporate community involvement with sponsees, including individual athletes, clubs, national teams, competitions, and events (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). Within the context of international football, changing commercial partnerships and cultural battles were recognized as remarkable tendencies in the development of the global football ecosystem (Beek et al., 2018). Despite the growing attention to social justice issues in sports, there is lack of understanding about
inclusive marketing strategies on this topic in sponsorship relationships (Melton & MacCharles, 2021).

Within the context of interrelated challenging dynamics on geography, politics, and economics in sports (Chadwick, 2022), sponsors obtained a global spread of their sponsorship expressions for corporate branding purposes and promoting their products or services (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). The UEFA European Football Championships is an impactful podium for sponsors due to its global reach. UEFA EURO 2020 reached 5.23 billion people as a cumulative live match audience reordered among 229 territories and 137 broadcasters (UEFA, 2021g). In line with the globalization patterns in football, this pan-European national team tournament had a growing global audience, in particular in North America and Asia, with an important global reach in China (+46%, 352 million cumulative audience), USA (+32%, 87 million), and India (+229%, 107 million) compared to the former edition of the tournament in 2016 (UEFA, 2021g). In perspective to the changing media landscape and engagement of football fans (Filo et al., 2015), it is interesting that more Chinese fans accessed matches through streaming services than through traditional TV (UEFA, 2021g). Moreover, it was the most digitally engaged EURO in history, with 7.5 billion interactions and views on social media, with one social media post that generated 59 million video views on the official sponsor platform TikTok (UEFA, 2021g). As virtual advertisement of LED boarding on the pitch enabled sponsors to adjust their sponsorship expressions, new possibilities for global visibility of sponsorship activations emerged alongside challenges in sponsor approaches, cultural differences, and legislative conditions.

In the sponsoring process, the interdependent and interconnected nature of sponsorship due to exclusivity agreements and geographic boundaries is an under-researched aspect of these relations (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Recent literature reviews
identified the need for bridging the gap between research and practice on corporate community involvement initiatives for the social good in professional sports (Carlini et al., 2021). With the need for both sport management scholars and practitioners to understand inclusive marketing strategies in sports (Melton & MacCharles, 2021), this study examined sponsorship activations for diversity and inclusion using a multimethod analysis of sponsorship expressions during the UEFA EURO 2020. This paper investigated three aspects of sport marketing and social justice with remarkable external occurrences in this geopolitical economy context of the sponsorship ecosystem (Chadwick, 2022), including (a) the role of sponsorship characteristics on brand positioning, (b) the role of sponsorship on social justice, and (c) sponsorship activations on diversity and inclusion. The research question that guided the inquiry was as follows: To what extent do multinational companies adapt their sponsorship communications to express their corporate values on a social justice topic? This will be examined through the sponsorship expressions of official sponsors during a major sports event.

Theoretical framework

Sponsorship and brand positioning

Sponsorship has emerged as meaningful component of brand strategy (Jin, 2017) and is defined as a form of corporate community involvement with philanthropic, transactional, and integrative approaches (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). The related paradigm shift from a transactional ‘hierarchy’ approach of sponsorship buyer to the integrative ‘whyerarchy’ as partnership investor, articulated the changing dynamics in the process of value co-creation in sponsorship (Ukman, 2012). The goals of this value co-creation have been categorized in cognitive, affective, or behavioural objectives (Cornwell et al., 2005). Previous studies indicated that these objectives vary depending on the relevant ecosystem and the size of the sponsoring entity (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Small firms were
suggested to historically being more community oriented (Mack, 1999), while larger firms being more branding focused (Söderman & Dolles, 2010). Globalization processes related to geographical, commercial, digital, and social developments fundamentally changed the game (Beek et al., 2018). Consequently, these globalization patterns in international football challenged decision makers to adopt a strategy of a global outlook while maintaining fidelity to their local roots (Sondaal, 2013).

Previous research on sponsorship and brand positioning not only revealed the impact of a major sports event towards the sponsoring brand, but also the impact of negative sponsor behaviour (Parker & Fink, 2010) and the impact of the image-transfer of a sponsor on the image of the sponsored entity (Henseler et al., 2009). However, research on managerial aspects focused primarily on expanding the benefits of event-sponsorship relationships, as opposed to addressing the reputational risk management of an event during the different phases of a sponsorship relationship (O'Reilly, 2008). In this process of image-transfer and reputation management, an important aspect in the sponsorship strategy is to communicate the symbolic brand associations as part of a process to change the personality of a brand (Aaker, 1997). Subsequently, perceived sincerity and perceived ubiquity of the sponsor were identified as two key factors in generating valuable outcomes (Speed & Thompson, 2000).

Given the extensive commercialization and expansion of sponsorship as a marketing platform, the question was raised whether relationship authenticity is a better predictor of positive sponsorship outcomes for the sponsor and sponsee compared to the previously used relationship congruence in sponsorship (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). This brand authenticity emerges when a brand is being perceived as faithful and true to itself (Morhart et al., 2015). Authentic sponsorship engagement is based on brand and relationship authenticity which influences both basic outcomes (i.e., cognition, affect,
behavior) and deeper engagement outcomes (i.e., loyalty, attachment, passion, love) (Cornwell, 2019). The characteristics of the individual actors in a sponsorship relationship contribute to the potential for brand authenticity and relationship authenticity, depending on continuity (i.e., timelessness, history), credibility (i.e., deliver on promises), integrity (i.e., communicated values), and symbolism (i.e., cues important to identity construction) (Cornwell, 2019). Since authenticity is subjective, similar to perceived sponsor-event fit, it encompasses the potential to develop perceptions of authenticity through sponsorships. In understanding this process of sponsorship and brand positioning in relation to social justice, the brand characteristics of the sponsor are fundamental.

**Sponsorship and social justice**

The ecosystem of sport has always been a platform to draw attention to issues of social injustice (Edgar, 2021). Conversely, the dark side of sports institutions entails the toleration and even encouragement of injustice and immorality (Edgar, 2021). The business of football should therefore not be considered independently of the major challenges facing the world, in which sports may have a facilitating role (Beek et al., 2018). The terms sport-for-development (SFD) and sport-for-development and peace (SDP) were used in discussions of sport as a vehicle for social change (Cunningham & Chelladurai, 2015). Sport is recognized as an important enabler of sustainable development with contributions made to individuals and communities related to health, education, and social inclusion objectives (Lemke, 2016). Although sport is directly linked to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, the perceived importance and related processes differ significantly in geographical, social, and political contexts (Giulianotti et al., 2018). Fundamental to this
process of sport for sustainable development is the shared commitment to lasting
development by powerful partners and stakeholder networks (Lemke, 2016).
Nevertheless, there is a need to critically reflect on the expansion of sport-for-change
policy and practice given the ambiguities of such development through sport (Black,
2010).

The complex system of sponsoring is affected by external and unpredictable
events like scandal and controversies (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Several cases in the
context of international football have been illustrative for these dynamics. In the case of
the 2015 leadership crisis and scandal in FIFA with the organization’s president Sepp
Blatter (Ibrahim, 2017), four of the top corporate sponsors (i.e., Anheuser-Busch InBev,
Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, and Visa) issued public statements to resign and reform the
world football governing body (Fortunato, 2017). Moreover, in the case of the 2022 FIFA
World Cup in Qatar, three prominent sponsors (i.e., Adidas, Coca-Cola, and Visa) stated
concerns in public expressions on labour rights and human rights abuses (Harris, 2015).
Although these sponsors also demanded the organization to investigate its controversial
decision to award the event to Qatar (Joseph, 2014), these companies maintained loyal
FIFA partners to the 2022 World Cup together with Wanda Group, Hyundai/Kia, and
Qatar Airways (FIFA, 2022).

In addition to external factors like scandal and controversies, the phenomenon of
social activism and engagement in social issues through sports challenged sponsorship
processes to adopt an engagement ecosystem perspective (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). In
perspective of the media agenda setting theory (Zeng et al., 2011), the changing media
landscape enabled actors in the sponsorship ecosystem to influence the public opinion by
new ways of communication and engagement (Filo et al., 2015). Several professional
athletes used their platform to speak out on social issues and for sustainable development
during the last decade. Athlete activism in international football encompassed the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Prominent recent cases by professional football athletes arose with engagement to gender inequality by USA’s Megan Rapinoe (Turtiainen, 2021), sustainable social change against racism by England’s Raheem Sterling (Cable, 2021), environmental issues by Norway’s Morton Thorsby (Edgar, 2021), and health and social inequalities by England’s Marcus Rashford in his efforts to provide underprivileged school children with free school meals during the midst of the covid-19 pandemic (Magrath, 2022). Athlete activism has affected other actors in the ecosystem since multiple actors participate in the co-creation of value and the offering of value propositions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Consequently, these tendencies affect the sponsorship dynamics as, for example, the positives attitudes of actors towards the protesting athlete create a strong positive relationship toward the endorsed sponsoring brand (Park et al., 2020).

The new wave of athlete activism is illustrative for the suggested turning point to a new sponsorship era (Lewis, 2020). Since the engagement to social issues is not limited to athletes and their sponsors, other actors in the sponsorship ecosystem also showed similar dynamics, including teams, event organizers, and governing bodies (Sanderson et al., 2016). For example, the English Premier League and the club teams by their awareness and symbolic expression of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement (Evans et al., 2020). Sponsors were challenged to support, reject, or dissociate themselves from these initiatives on social activism and engagement in social issues. What is the impact of these dynamics of social engagement and sensitivity to social injustices on the commercial playing field of international football?
Sponsorship activation on diversity and inclusion

Although there is a growing attention to diversity and inclusion in sports, previous examinations on the role of corporate strategy were mainly related to managing diversity in sport organizations (Burton, 2015; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999), top management beliefs in the benefits of diversity (Fink et al., 2001), and leadership roles within sport organizations (Gaston et al., 2020). Diversity and inclusion from the perspective of sport marketing is limited and mainly related to the brand strategy to target groups within the ecosystem of sports that were recognized as underrepresented or with the potential of marketing initiatives to engage with these sport consumers (e.g., LGBTQ+ fans) (Melton & MacCharles, 2021). Consequently, there is a need for both sport management scholars and practitioners to understand how to create and successfully implement inclusive marketing strategies (Melton & MacCharles, 2021).

Building on the globalization processes in international football (Beek et al., 2018), sponsorship activation and sponsor’s brand positioning on social justice should be considered in the perspective of soft power strategies of countries (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015). In line with the fundamental shifts in the socio-economic paradigm and significant changes in the dominant model of the transnational corporation (Little et al., 2017), soft power sponsorships have emerged during the last decades. State-owned airlines, energy companies, and sovereign-wealth fund brands entered the sponsorship playing field and are pursuing political and industrial strategies in sport (Chadwick et al., 2020). Consequently, brand positioning and sponsor’s approaches to social justice should be related to the representation of industries and country-origins to understand this form of marketing communication in the light of sponsorship as an increasingly political activity and the geopolitical economy of sport (Chadwick, 2022).
The role of sponsors in social justice is mainly limited to commercial organizations supporting athletes engaged in activism, like Nike and Colin Kaepernick (Kim et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some cases in football also illustrated the partnership approach of the sponsor and sponsee. For example, the ‘No More Red’ initiative by English football club Arsenal FC and sponsor Adidas was created to make a positive difference in the community with regard to the high number of knife crime offences among young people in London (Arsenal, 2022). Paradoxical to such corporate community involvement initiatives for social change, sponsors may be undermining or demeaning the cause it declares to support by exploiting injustice for commercial purposes (Chadwick & Zipp, 2018).

The roles of sports organizations on diversity and inclusion were related to the various ways in which people differ, including race, sex and gender, age, mental and physical ability, appearance, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and social class (Cunningham & Chelladurai, 2015). Four diversity strategies were defined for organizations in the sport context to follow, including non-compliance, compliance, reactive, and proactive approaches (Fink & Pastore, 1999). The use of a proactive diversity strategy is suggested to serve as the ideal approach, with a potential positive impact on group functioning, employee attitudes, and perceptions of organizational performances (Fink et al., 2003). Such organizations were characterised by (a) their broad and encompassing view of diversity, (b) the way they value diversity, and (c) how they integrate diversity and inclusion principles throughout the entire organizational system (Cunningham, 2011).

With sponsorship activations seen as part of the corporate’s brand strategy, the authentic engagement on diversity and inclusion should be enacted in partnering, leveraging, and activation (Cornwell, 2019). This include all activities which are often
on-site, online, or interactive, such as in-stadium sponsor expressions or advertisements through social media. Technological innovations, for example virtual advertisements and the widespread use of LED signage, have created the opportunity for real-time adjustments of sponsor message exposure during broadcasted matches. Individual responses to advertising vary in a sports broadcast setting according to the type of advertising (Bennett et al., 2006). This advertising effectiveness of virtual advertising in a sports broadcast setting tends to be, to a large degree, driven by the frequency of exposure (Sander & Altobelli, 2011). Moreover, the interplay with in-game events like the position of the ball on the field, the team with ball possession, and the score of the game affects the viewers’ attention to sponsor signage (Boronczyk et al., 2021). Sponsors could adjust their virtual messages in real time to react to different game situations and target audience segments based on their characteristics to increase viewers’ attention and, consequently, the effectiveness of the messages in sports broadcasts (Boronczyk et al., 2021). This challenged brands to consider the ethical implications, similar to gambling and alcohol sponsorships targeted at potentially vulnerable or underage viewers (Boronczyk et al., 2021). Therefore, these new possibilities represent an important condition to consider sponsorship activations on diversity and inclusion due to differences in sponsor approaches, cultural differences, and legislative conditions.

Since engagement in social issues is part of the sponsorship ecosystem, sponsors and sponsees are criticized for investments that were considered negative by part of society. In line with the identified shortage of research on marketing management of the sponsorship process, research is explicit requested to better understand these new roles on engagement in social issues by means of sponsorship (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). This paper contributes to this by examining the interplay of sponsorship activations on social justice within the context of the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship.
Methodology

A single case study design was used to investigate to what extent multinational companies adapt their sponsorships communications to express their corporate values on inclusion and diversity during UEFA EURO 2020 (Yin, 2003).

The context of UEFA EURO 2020

The European Championship in football is the primary association football tournament organized by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and has been held every four years since 1960. Scheduled to be in the even-numbered year between FIFA World Cup tournaments, the individual events have been branded as ‘UEFA EURO [year]’ since 1996 (UEFA, 2021e). Nevertheless, the edition UEFA EURO 2020 kept its original name, even though the tournament was postponed due to the covid-19 pandemic and was organized from 11 June to 11 July 2021 (UEFA, 2021c). UEFA EURO 2020 was held across the continent for the first time in the competition’s 60-year history (UEFA, 2021c), with eleven host cities and corresponding host countries (see Table I). Due to covid-19 restrictions, Spain’s Seville replaced original host city Bilbao and the matches in Dublin (Ireland) were moved to Saint Petersburg and London (UEFA, 2021a). After the qualifications among all 55 UEFA member nations, as no host country qualified automatically, the final tournament featured 24 national teams playing altogether 51 matches (see Table II) (UEFA, 2021b).

In perspective of the dynamics on diversity and inclusion, the timings of UEFA EURO 2020 are relevant. Every year in June, the world’s LGBTQ communities come together and celebrate the freedom to be themselves with several festivities in cities around the world (Hecimovic, 2021). This so-called ‘Pride Month’ started eleven days
before the opening match of UEFA EURO 2020 and ended on June 30, a few days before
the start of the quarterfinals.

**INSERT HERE TABLE I**

**HOST CITIES AND HOST COUNTRIES**

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**NATIONAL TEAMS AND SPORTIVE PERFORMANCES**

*Data collection*

A dataset with three elements was constructed for the purpose of this study, including (a) sponsor characteristics, (b) sponsorship and social justice values, and (c) sponsorship activations during UEFA EURO 2020. The characteristics of the sponsors included relevant aspects of their core business and origins that were collected from company websites. The geographic origins of the sponsors were collected by the address of the sponsor’s head office at the time of the actual sponsorship agreement. For the sponsorship and social justice dataset, the corporate strategy on diversity and inclusion of the official sponsors were collected from company websites and related corporate documents (e.g., reports, press releases) to identify company values. Sponsorship activations were investigated by visual data collection using a multimethod frame and data triangulation for the convergence of multiple sources evidence (Yin, 2003). First, the summary videos of the individual matches were analysed on the UEFA EURO 2020 platform (UEFA, 2021f). These videos showed the highlights of all 51 matches of the tournament in a few minutes per video (average length 04:49 minutes, minimum 01:46, maximum 06:26). In this data collection process, it was important to collect data of the complete sponsorship
expression for every sponsor in every match. Due to the LED boarding, these visual activations on the in-stadium boarding on the field included mostly multiple alternating expressions of the same sponsor (e.g., sponsor logo and a call to action for a sponsor’s product or service). When sponsorship expressions were missing, additional data were collected in other videos of these matches on YouTube that were found searching on ‘UEFA EURO 2020 [national team A] [national team B] [date of the match]’. Thirdly, the sponsorship expressions were verified by analysing press photos of the matches. The globally dominant image collection of GettyImages was used to collect these data as applied in previous scientific investigations using a multimethod frame for evidence in virtual representations (Hayes & O’Neill, 2021). These images were collected by searching on ‘UEFA EURO 2020 [national team A] [national team B] [date of the match]’, resulting in 90,025 total images of the 51 matches (minimum 502 and maximum of 8697 photos per match).

Data analysis

The sponsorship characteristics were matched with the Industry Classification Benchmark (ICB hereafter) to classify the industries of the sponsors. The ICB is a widely adopted and globally utilized standard for the categorization and comparison of companies by industry and sector, with a comprehensive taxonomy and four-tier structure (11 industries, 20 supersectors, 45 sectors, and 173 subsectors) (FTSE Russell, 2019). This ICB classification method has been applied in previous sponsorship studies to cluster sponsoring companies by industry and its defined sectors (Beek & Derom, 2022; Unlucan, 2015).

The sponsorship expressions were categorized as corporate communication or marketing communication. Corporate communication involves an explicit corporate
orientation to a wide range of stakeholders, while marketing communication has a product or service-orientation and is mainly focused to consumers (Illia & Balmer, 2012). Furthermore, to recognize the patterns of sponsorship activations on social justice during the event, the expressions of sponsors were categorized as logo, slogan, tagline (i.e., textual call to action), or product placement image (Rifon et al., 2004). These multiple alternating expressions of the same sponsor on the in-stadium boarding on the field were all collected. Finally, these were coded for all matches as ‘original sponsorship activation’ (i.e., expressions seen during the first matches of the tournament) or ‘adjusted sponsorship activation on social justice’ (i.e., expressions first seen during other matches in the tournament).

Findings

The analyses on the patterns on sponsorship and social justice during UEFA EURO 2020 were divided into (a) the role of sponsorship characteristics on brand positioning, (b) the role of sponsorship on social justice, and (c) sponsorship activations on diversity and inclusion.

Sponsorship and brand positioning

UEFA has restricted the number of official sponsors for the event to twelve, with each sponsor exclusive to its respective industry. Six sponsors were involved as an UEFA National Team Football Official Sponsor (Alipay, Booking.com, FedEx, Gazprom, Hisense, and Volkswagen) and six other commercial partners were an UEFA EURO 2020 Official Sponsor (Coca Cola, Heineken, Qatar Airways, JustEat TakeAway.com, TikTok, and Vivo). On the first-tier industry level, five sponsors represented ‘consumer discretionary’, two sponsors ‘consumer staples’, and two sponsors ‘industrial’ industry in addition to one sponsor in each of the industries of ‘energy’, ‘technology’, and
‘telecommunications’. On the subsector level in the ICB structure, there was indeed
exclusivity for all twelve sponsors.

During this European Football Championship, only four of the twelve sponsors
(33%) had their headquarters in Europe. The country where most of the sponsors came
from was China (4), followed by The Netherlands (3), the USA (2), Germany (1), Qatar
(1), and Russia (1).

The corporate policy on diversity and inclusion indicated differences on the focus
and interpretation of social justice by the sponsors. Their approaches differed mainly in
terms of (a) the extent to which the brand positioning was defined, (b) the explicit
engagement on diversity and inclusion, and (c) how they valued this in their policies on
the corporate websites and related reports. For example, official sponsor Vivo described
its culture in a few sentences on the corporate website as a ‘harmonious, respectful work
environment’ without explicit engagement on diversity and inclusion on the website or
reports (Vivo, 2022), while Volkswagen elaborated more explicit on its brand positioning
and explicit engagement on diversity and inclusion with press releases, stories on multiple
cases, and the approaches on this aspect within diverse sports sponsorships (e.g., sponsor
of Germany’s VfL Wolfsburg and UEFA Men’s and Women’s) (Volkswagen, 2021a). Table III provides an overview of these sponsor characteristics and their brand positioning
on diversity and inclusion.

INSERT HERE TABLE III

SPONSOR CHARACTERISTICS AND BRAND POSITIONING
Sponsorship and social justice

Coca-Cola continued its 32-year association with UEFA by becoming the official non-alcoholic beverage sponsor for UEFA EURO 2020 (UEFA, 2019). Nevertheless, there were no sponsor expressions on the in-stadium LED boarding since the company activated its brands by product placements during, for example, press conference (e.g., Coca Cola) and during matches with bottles of sports drink (e.g., Powerade). When examining the sponsorship activations, it was evident that all other official sponsors used their logo on the LED boarding. In the case of three sponsors (i.e., FedEx, Gazprom, and TikTok), the original sponsorship activation was recognized as corporate communication by only indicating the logo of the company. The sponsorship expressions of the other eight sponsors had a product or service orientation to consumers and were therefore classified as marketing communication. Of these eight sponsors, three companies used more than one sub-brand (i.e., AliPay, Heineken, Just Eat TakeAway.com) and three sponsors used an image of a product (i.e., Heineken’s beer bottle, Qatar Airways’ airplane, Volkswagen’s car). Furthermore, four sponsors made textual reference to one of their products (i.e., Booking.com, Hisense, Vivo, Volkswagen) and four sponsors used a textual slogan in their sponsorship activations (i.e., AliPay, Heineken, Qatar Airways, Volkswagen). Two of those slogans referred to the sponsors’ intentions for their sustainable development goals on environmental issues (i.e., Qatar Airways’ ‘Fly Greener’ and Volkswagen’s ‘VW way to zero’).

From a geographic perspective, Just Eat TakeAway.com adjusted its expressions per match to the markets of the two national teams competing. The sub-brand ‘Thuisbezorgd.nl’ was seen during matches of The Netherlands both in Amsterdam and other cities, while sub-brand ‘Lieferando’ was used during matches of Germany and Austria. During matches of two national teams in another country, the sponsorship
expression was adjusted to the playing teams. During the round of 16 matches between Wales and Denmark in Amsterdam and between Belgium and Italy in Munich, the logo of ‘Just Eat’ was on the boarding instead of ‘Thuisbezorgd.nl’ or ‘Lieferando’ for the home markets in The Netherlands and Germany. Another geographical adjustment for the broadcasted countries was the sponsorship activations of two Chinese sponsors. Both AliPay and Hisense alternately used their logo and textual expressions in both English and Chinese languages during the matches.

The adjusted sponsorship activations on social justice were seen in the expressions of five sponsors, including Booking.com, Heineken, Just Eat TakeAway.com, TikTok, and Volkswagen. All five sponsors included rainbow colours in the adjusted sponsorship activation as background of their logo or slogan. Booking.com not only used the colours of the rainbow, but also included other colours (e.g., black, and brown). Two sponsors used an additional slogan in their adjusted activation (i.e., TikTok’s ‘where all fans play’, and Volkswagen’s ‘#WeDriveDiversity’), while the original slogan of Heineken (‘Cheers to all fans’) achieved an additional meaning with the rainbow colours behind the text.

These sponsorship expressions were part of the animated slideshows on the in-stadium boarding on the field. Some sponsors permanently showed their adjusted sponsorship activations on social justice, while others used this as part of the multiple alternating expressions in addition to their original sponsorship activation. First, the coloured background of Booking.com and Volkswagen were permanently seen on all LED boarding communications of these sponsors in their ‘adjusted sponsorship activation on social justice’. Second, the slogans on diversity of Heineken, TikTok and Volkswagen were seen as part of the animated LED boarding communication in addition to their additional original communications (e.g., logo, product image). Thirdly, Just Eat TakeAway.com used both their original sponsorship activation (i.e., corporate colour
orange as background of logo) and the adjusted background (i.e., rainbow colours as background of logo). Table IV provides an overview of the original and adjusted sponsorship activations for all official sponsors during UEFA EURO 2020.

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SPONSORSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Sponsorship activation on diversity and inclusion

The developments of sponsorship activation during the tournament indicated three phases. In the first phase, no sponsor referred to social justice issues in their sponsorship expressions during the broadcasted matches at the start of the tournament. With the start of the knock-out phase of the tournament fifteen days later, five sponsors changed their sponsorship activations and explicitly communicated for diversity and inclusion on the in-stadium sponsor boarding. The third phase started with the quarterfinals, as four of these sponsors returned to their original sponsorship expressions and only Volkswagen continued to activate with their social justice expressions until the final of the tournament. Moreover, a Volkswagen-branded remote-control car delivered the match ball to the centre-circle of the playing field before every match. At the start of UEFA EURO 2020, this tiny football car was greyscale with the logos of the event and the car manufacturer (Volkswagen, 2021b). Parallel to their sponsorship expressions on the LED boarding, Volkswagen changed its appearance by a rainbow-branded version since the knock-out phase of the tournament up to the final at Wembley Stadium in London (Blow, 2021).

INSERT HERE TABLE V

SPONSORSHIP ACTIVATIONS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
To understand the dynamics in these three phases, a timeline is conducted to highlight remarkable occurrences on social justice during the event that might have affected the sponsorship activations of the official sponsors (see Table V). Four moments were remarkable from a sponsor perspective. First, although there were substantial rumours on diversity and inclusion before and during the last group match of Germany against Hungary, the adjusted sponsorship expressions did not start during this last group match played in Munich. Second, all five sponsors remained their sponsorship expressions on the boarding during the knock-out match between The Netherlands and Czech Republic played in Budapest’s Puskás Aréna in the capital of Hungary. Thirdly, UEFA stated that apart from Volkswagen all other sponsors had decided not to use rainbow expressions in the quarterfinals as Pride Month had ended (BBC, 2021). The fourth remarkable moment is that all sponsors excluded their social justice expressions during the quarterfinals in Saint Petersburg and Baku. According to statements of Volkswagen in the international media, UEFA had banned advertising using the rainbow colours at the quarterfinal matches in Russia and Azerbaijan due to local legislation (BBC, 2021).

Discussion
The research question that guided the inquiry was as follows: To what extent do multinational companies adapt their sponsorship communications to express their corporate values on a social justice topic? This was examined through the sponsorship expressions of official sponsors during UEFA EURO 2020. The investigations on sponsorship expressions generated valuable patterns and implications for future research and practice concerning the sponsor characteristics, sponsorship and social justice values, and sponsorship activation of official sponsors during this major sports event.
Research implications

With the need for both sport management scholars and practitioners to understand inclusive marketing strategies in sports (Melton & MacCharles, 2021), this study contributed to bridge the gap between research and practice by identifying patterns on corporate community involvement initiatives for the social good in professional sports (Carlini et al., 2021). The interplay of sponsorship activations on social justice during UEFA EURO 2020 contributed to the identified shortage of research on how contextual changes in communications, social activism, and perceptions of commercialization have brought sponsoring to a turning point (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020).

Furthermore, the identified patterns on sponsorship and brand positioning contributed to the under-researched aspect of sponsorship relations on industrial representations, geographic boundaries, and the globalization processes in the sponsorship ecosystem (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). Consequently, brand positioning and sponsor’s approaches to social justice were related to the representation of industries and sponsor-origins to understand sport marketing communication in the light of the geopolitical economy of sport (Chadwick, 2022). Despite the exclusivity on a subsector level, on the industry level three of the five sponsors (i.e., Booking.com, Just Eat TakeAway.com, Volkswagen) that have their core business in ‘consumer discretionary’ adjusted their sponsorship expressions to highlight their corporate values for social justice. In addition to the relative high percentage of the companies within this industry adjusting their sponsorship activation (60%), these three companies also represented the majority of the sponsors that adjusted their sponsorship expressions during UEFA EURO 2020 (three out of five sponsors, 60%) in addition to sponsors of the industry ‘consumer staples’ (i.e., Heineken) and ‘technology’ (i.e., TikTok).
Although this study contributed to the understanding of factors influencing the application of inclusive marketing strategies in sport sponsorship (Melton & MacCharles, 2021), additional research is needed to further understand the drivers of successfully implemented inclusive marketing strategies by sponsors and its impact on perceived-brand authenticity among the target audiences (Morhart et al., 2015). The changing process of value co-creation raises questions considering the interplay of political, economic, and socio-cultural dynamics and the role of the sport ecosystem in optimizing value for the stakeholders involved. Future research on this process is challenged to embrace the geopolitical economy of sport as a new perspective in contrast to the existing utilitarian or neoclassical perspectives (Chadwick, 2022). As this study was limited to the case of the UEFA EURO 2020, future comprehensive investigations on multiple sponsorship cases is needed, although be interpreted with some caution as place and time matters in cross-cultural dynamics (Beek & Go, 2017). Future research is also required to validate these patterns in other contexts and in perspective of the level of alignment of sponsorship activations with corporate brand strategy, various sponsorship expressions (e.g., social media activations), and other marketing expressions of the sponsoring brand on social justice. Longitudinal approaches can investigate the impact of continuity in sponsorship expressions for social justice. Although longer partnerships are associated with positive outcomes for partners (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020), distinction should be made to the length of the contract indicating commitment and financial support. Therefore, especially the patterns in long-term sponsorship developing authenticity from continuity and integrity are valuable to further understand (Cornwell, 2019).

Practical implications
In line with globalization patterns in football, this pan-European national team tournament with a growing global audience is illustrative for the changing sponsorship ecosystem. The findings of this study support the different sponsorship approaches in different geographical, social, and political context (Giulianotti et al., 2018). Most official sponsors of this European Football Championship had their headquarters outside of Europe. Furthermore, two sponsors adjusted their sponsorship expression to the Asian market by using Chinese logos and texts on the in-stadium sponsor boarding. The five sponsors that adjusted their sponsorship activations on social justice were mainly located in Europe (i.e., Booking.com, Heineken, Just Eat TakeAway.com, Volkswagen) and only TikTok’s headquarter was located outside of Europe. Previous studies stated that the globalization patterns in international football challenged decision makers to adopt a strategy of a global outlook while maintaining fidelity to its local roots (Sondaal, 2013).

Given the low percentage of the official sponsors from Europe (33%) among UEFA EURO 2020 sponsors, the high involvement of European sponsors among the five sponsors that adjusted their sponsorship activations (80%) is remarkable. This pattern is not only supporting the different approaches by region, but it is also supportive for the suggested challenges of adapting sponsorship strategies within the complex ecosystem.

Another implication for practice is about the dynamics on brand authenticity and the level of congruence of corporate strategy on social justice with sponsorship approaches by sponsee and sponsors. The complex dynamics in cross-sector partnerships and related asymmetric power dynamics as defined by Seitanidi and Ryan (2007) became also illustrative in the interplay of UEFA, its sponsors, and its host cities on social justice. Moreover, athlete activism by professional athletes and their engagement in social issues became visible during UEFA EURO 2020 (e.g., captains of national teams with rainbow armbands) in addition to team protests for social justice (e.g., teams taking a knee before
the start of the game) (Pitchers & Liboreiro, 2021). Furthermore, international fans visiting local communities in host cities responded different to the social justice issue on diversity and inclusion, due to social-cultural principles and legislative boundaries (e.g., ban of rainbow flags in fan zones) (Mellor, 2021). These dynamics were challenging for both the UEFA as the event organizer and for the sponsors being able to use their sponsorship relationship to express their corporate strategy and brand values.

The case of UEFA EURO 2020 illustrated how the phenomenon of social activism and engagement in social issues challenged decision makers in sponsorship relationships to adopt an engagement ecosystem perspective (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020). The paradigm shift to a integrative ‘whyerarchy’ partnership approach articulated the changing dynamics in the process of value co-creation in sponsorship (Ukman, 2012). This process encompasses the potential to develop perceptions of brand authenticity through sponsorship. Building on the suggestion for relationship authenticity being a better predictor of positive sponsorship outcomes (Cornwell & Kwon, 2020), this study investigated to what extent sponsors activated in line with their corporate values for being perceived as faithful and true to their organization (Morhart et al., 2015). Concerning the social engagement and sensitivity to social injustices on the commercial playing field, the use of a proactive diversity strategy is suggested to serve as the ideal approach (Fink et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the investigation on the adaptation of sponsorship communications during UEFA EURO 2020 illustrated the different approaches of official sponsors to express their corporate values on a social justice topic during a major sports event. Consequently, it showed that the international business of sports should not be considered independently of the major challenges facing the world and decision makers were challenged to adapt a valuable role with explicit engagement on social justice aspects, including diversity and inclusion. Since multiple actors participate in the co-
creation of value in this complex sponsorship ecosystem, it is important for decision makers to understand the dynamics in sponsor approaches, ethical issues, cultural differences, and legislative conditions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Contradictory, stand-alone sponsorship expressions as commitment to a more diverse and inclusive society might also be seen as ‘sports washing’ for the social good (Fenton, 2010). Sports washing refers to a means by which an actor (e.g., company, country) diverts the public’s attention from less favourable perceptions through an investment program in sports (Chadwick, 2022). In perspective of this study, these sports washing behaviors are relevant to consider for decision makers in their efforts to impact the brand authenticity in relation to the level of alignment of sponsorship activations with the corporate mission and other corporate community involvement initiatives.

Moreover, the context of the international football industry is illustrative for these dynamics in the complex sponsorship ecosystem and the alignment of sponsorship and brand positioning on social justice. UEFA has committed to join the UN Race to Zero campaign to reduce greenhouse gases emission by 2030 (UEFA, 2022a). A few months earlier and being a year before the UEFA EURO 2020, UEFA extended its co-called ‘fruitful partnership’ with Russian state oil company Gazprom for both club tournaments (e.g., UEFA Champions League) and national team competitions (UEFA, 2021d). Subsequently, UEFA terminated this sponsorship relationship a few months after the UEFA EURO 2020 tournament in perspective of the Russian war in Ukraine (UEFA, 2022b). Likewise, a year before the event UEFA quietly and secretly ended the UEFA EURO 2020 tournament partnership with politically controversial company and Azerbaijan’s state-run oil company SOCAR (Kreuzer, 2021). Moreover, the environmental records of its sponsors like German automotive manufacturer Volkswagen were often less than exemplary (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2018). In perspective of brand
authenticity and sponsorship authenticity, these tendencies illustrate that rights holders such as UEFA face the challenge to significantly improve its contributions to the SDGs within increasing community pressures and realize its purposed impact for the social good.

While the trophy for best goal of the tournament UEFA EURO 2020 was sponsored by Gazprom (Andrew, 2021), other sponsors showed the value of authentic sponsorship expressions on social justice in a complex geopolitical economic playing field. These patterns of value co-creation in sports for social change might be the future assists to score the best common goals in the infinite game of sports and with the purpose of continuing the play.

**Conclusion**

This study on sponsorship and social justice contributed to the need to understand inclusive marketing strategies in sponsorship. The findings clarified the dynamics of brand positioning through sponsorship in perspective of globalization patterns and dissimilar sponsorship approaches in different geographical, social, and political contexts. The analyses of sponsorship expressions during UEFA EURO 2020 indicated substantial differences between sponsors of different industries and geographic origins. External conditions seemed to affect the dynamics on sponsorship approaches to adjust sponsorship activations and include sponsorship expressions for diversity and inclusion. The findings support the complexity of the sponsorship ecosystem and the challenges in perspective of the geopolitical economy of sport. This study enriched the sponsorship literature with patterns on sponsorship approaches for sustainable development and social justice in specific. The insights of the investigated European Football Championship serve as a valuable case to support decision makers in the global sports industry in their brand management and sponsorship approaches for the social good.
References


Cornwell, T. B. (2019). Less “sponsorship as advertising” and more sponsorship-linked marketing as authentic engagement. *Journal of advertising, 48*(1), 49-60.


UEFA. (2022a, January 27). *UEFA commits to ambitious climate targets and joins Race to Zero Campaign*. Retrieved March 02 from


Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Championship

Table I. Host cities and host countries UEFA EURO 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host city</th>
<th>Host country</th>
<th>Stadium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final and semi-finals, two round of 16 games, three group games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Wembley Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six group games, one quarter-final</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Petersburg</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Saint Petersburg Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three group games, one quarter-final</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baku</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Baku Olympic Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Football Arena Munich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Olimpico in Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three group games, one round of 16 game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Johan Cruijff ArenA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>National Arena Bucharest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Puskás Aréna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Parken Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Hampden Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>La Cartuja Stadium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

Table II. National teams and sportive performances UEFA EURO 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-finals</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterfinals</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round of 16</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group stage</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

Table III. Sponsor characteristics and brand positioning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official sponsor</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Subsector</th>
<th>HQ city</th>
<th>HQ country</th>
<th>Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booking.com</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Travel and Tourism</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>‘LGBTQ+’, ‘gender balanced’, ‘women’, ‘inclusive to all backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca Cola</td>
<td>Consumer Staples</td>
<td>Soft Drinks</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>‘Mirror markets (race and ethnicity representation)’, ‘equity for all’, ‘inclusivity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FedEx</td>
<td>Industrials</td>
<td>Transportation Services</td>
<td>Memphis</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>‘Minorities’, ‘women’, ‘LGBTQ+’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazprom</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Integrated Oil and Gas</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>‘Gender and cultural diversity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heineken</td>
<td>Consumer Staples</td>
<td>Brewers</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>‘Regional nationals in leadership teams’, ‘gender equality’, ‘LGBT+’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Eat</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Consumer Services</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>‘Women’, ‘LGBTQ+’, ‘BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People Of Colour)’, ‘BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)’, ‘Neurodiversity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TakeAway.com</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>Doha</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>‘Gender and diversity balance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Airways</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>Doha</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Consumer Digital Services</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>‘Black creative community’, ‘women and gender minorities’, ‘LGBTQ+’, ‘marginalised groups’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>Wolfsburg</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>‘Age, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation’, ‘LGBTIQ+’, ‘internationality’, ‘female talents and leaders’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

Table IV. Sponsorship and social justice UEFA EURO 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official sponsor</th>
<th>Original sponsorship activation</th>
<th>Type of communication</th>
<th>Language used</th>
<th>Adjusted sponsorship activation on social justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alipay</td>
<td>International and Chinese logo of (a) AliPay, (b) AntChain, and (c) WorldFirst subbrands with the slogan ‘International Business Payments Made Easy’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Chinese, English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking.com</td>
<td>Logo with text ‘Hotels, Villas, Apartments’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Coloured background of rainbow-coloured blocks with additional colours (i.e., pink, white, light-blue, brown, and black)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FedEx</td>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazprom</td>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heineken</td>
<td>Logo Heineken, Heineken 0.0, image of Heineken beer bottle, slogan ‘Cheers to all fans’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Rainbow colours behind slogan ‘Cheers to all fans’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisense</td>
<td>Logo and text ‘100” LASER TV’ and ‘ULED TV U7’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Chinese, English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Eat TakeAway.com</td>
<td>Logo Just Eat, TakeAway.com, and national sub-brands like Thuisbezorgd or Lieferando</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Rainbow colours as background of logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Airways</td>
<td>Logo, image of QA airplane, slogan ‘Going places together’, ‘You can rely on us’, ‘See you in Qatar 2022’, and ‘Fly Greener’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Logo with text ‘where all fans play’ in rainbow colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivo</td>
<td>Logo and text ‘Vivo X60’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>Logo, image of VW ID.3 car, slogan ‘VW way to zero’, text ‘The all-electric ID.3’, and ‘search Volkswagen ID.’</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Rainbow colours as background, additional slogan ‘#WeDriveDiversity’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sponsorship and social justice: Brand positioning on diversity and inclusion in sport marketing during the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship

Table V. Sponsorship activation on diversity and inclusion in UEFA EURO 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tournament stage</th>
<th>Group stage</th>
<th>Knock Out Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group Match 1</td>
<td>Group Match 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match number</td>
<td>1-12</td>
<td>13-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host city¹</td>
<td>All cities</td>
<td>All cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AliPay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking.com</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FedEx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazprom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Eat TakeAway.com</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heineken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Airways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany’s captain Manuel Neuer wearing a rainbow armband in their first match</th>
<th>UEFA bans rainbow lighting of Munich stadium</th>
<th>Georginio Wijnaldum, captain of the Dutch national team, wears a rainbow armband during their last-16 match in Budapest</th>
<th>End of Pride Month</th>
<th>The European Parliament voted for legal action over Hungary’s new law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungary’s parliament passed a law banning LGBT content in schools or kids’ television</td>
<td>Hungarian PM Orbán protested to not attend the final group match between Germany and Hungary</td>
<td>England’s captain Harry Kane wears a rainbow armband during the Round of 16 match between England and Germany</td>
<td>Both teams and referee taking a knee before the final between England and Italy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timeline of remarkable occurrence on diversity and inclusion during UEFA EURO 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First match</th>
<th>Start of Round of 16</th>
<th>Start of Quarterfinals</th>
<th>Start of Semi-finals</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>15.06</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>27.06</td>
<td>30.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Host cities: A = Amsterdam, B = Baku, C = Copenhagen, D = Budapest, G = Glasgow, H = Bucharest, L = London, M = Munich, P = Saint Petersburg, R = Rome, S = Seville.