

Christian Weißkopf

The internationalization of professional football clubs. Potential markets and the brand personality of Borussia Dortmund

Master's Thesis

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Master Thesis

The internationalization of professional football clubs

– An examination of potential markets and an empirical study on the
brand personality of Borussia Dortmund –

Abstract

The ongoing professionalization and commercialization of football, as the logical consequence of the constantly increasing financing need of today's football clubs, constitutes a topic of high interest within the current media landscape and society. This phenomenon is especially valid for the leading clubs of the 'big five' European football leagues. Considering that further growth opportunities in their respective domestic, mainly saturated markets are limited, most of these clubs strengthened their efforts of expanding their business activities into new foreign markets in recent years. In this context, it seems that the assessment and selection of potential foreign markets are mainly based on the potential fanbase which causes a situation in which the internationalization path of leading European football clubs appears to be relatively similar and mapped out to a large degree. Due to this fact and the non-perceptibility of a systematical assessment and selection procedure, this thesis examined the attractiveness of current and prospective markets by means of deductive analysis. The results confirmed the general assumption of the high importance of socio-economic conditions as a significant determining factor for assessing the attractiveness of prospective new foreign markets. Based on these findings, the thesis provides a ranking of the top non-UEFA member markets which could demonstrate deviations between the actual target markets of European football clubs and the results of the ranking. Furthermore, as the internationalization of a professional football club implies also the extension of a club's brand management and marketing activities, the thesis contains an empirical study on the perception of the brand 'Borussia Dortmund' within international markets. In accordance with global marketing literature which states that cultural differences have the potential to notably affect consumer perception of foreign brands, the study was able to confirm this assumption. The results based on the brand identity and personality of 'Borussia Dortmund' provided clear indications that deviations on the perception can be linked to and explained by cultural differences. Consequently, these findings could serve as the basis for possible adaptations on the brand identity for being able to exploit commercial potentials in new foreign markets in a more effective and efficient way.

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