EXPLORING THE LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHRIVALS: THE RIVALRY AMBIVALENCE MODEL

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Synopsis:
We develop and empirically test the Rivalry Ambivalence Model (RAM), which simultaneously captures positive and negative effects of rivalry on identity-related variables such as perceived distinctiveness, cohesion and public collective self-esteem. Data from a large-scale survey provide strong support for the RAM and show that the ambivalent effects of rivalry are mediated through identification with the favourite team, disidentification with the archrival and perceived reciprocity of rivalry.

Abstract:
INTRODUCTION
Defined as a "fluctuating adversarial relationship existing between two teams, players, or groups of fans" (Havard, Gray, Gould, Sharp & Schaffer, 2013, p. 51), sports rivalries have been described as a double-edged sword with negative and positive consequences. The team sports and intergroup relations literature focuses on the dark sides of rivalry, such as bias, negative explicit and implicit attitudes, schadenfreude, verbal aggression, consumer rage, prejudice and violence. However, initial evidence suggests that the existence of an archrival is desired by team sports consumers, who seem to enjoy certain aspects of the overt hostility and mutual derogation. Harboring a fundamental need for rivalry, they use the archrival to build a positive self-concept. This research develops and empirically tests the Rivalry Ambivalence Model (RAM), which simultaneously captures positive and negative consequences of rivalry on several identity-related variables and therefore provides a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon of rivalry in team sports.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
Our research draws on social identity theory, the concept of organizational disidentification and the literature on identity threats. Based on Tyler and

Cobbs (2015), we conceptualize rivalry as a threat to the fans´ identity. The perceived intensity of the rivalry between two teams serves as the independent variable in the RAM. Although barely appreciated in the literature, an identity threat can exert not only negative but also positive effects on a person's self-concept (Petriglieri, 2011). The RAM embraces this idea and accounts for the ambivalent effects of rivalry on fans' perceived distinctiveness, cohesion and public collective self-esteem (PCSE), which are reflections of a positive self-concept. We hypothesize a positive relationship between the intensity of rivalry and the outcome variables distinctiveness and cohesion. We further hypothesize that rivalry intensity is positively related to PCSE in relation to neutral outgroups, while it is negatively related to PCSE in relation to supporters of the archrival. The RAM also addresses the theoretical mechanisms behind the aforementioned paths. We propose that the three variables identification with the favorite team, disidentification with the archrival and perceived reciprocity of rivalry mediate the effects of rivalry intensity on fans' self-concept.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS
The RAM was tested based on data from a large-scale survey at home games of eight German Bundesliga clubs (n = 748). Tested via structural equation modeling in Mplus, the RAM displayed a good overall fit to the data. The results support our hypotheses that rivalry intensity positively influences the perceived distinctiveness, cohesion and PCSE related to neutral reference groups, while it negatively influences the PCSE in relation to the arch-rival's supporters. As expected, identification, disidentification and perceived reciprocity of rivalry mediate the relationship between rivalry intensity and the fans' self-concept. The RAM explains a substantial proportion of the variation in the scores for distinctiveness (R^2 = .32), cohesion (.27), neutral collective self-esteem (.18) and archrival collective self-esteem (.14).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS
The results indicate that sports rivalry is more than schadenfreude, hate and aggression. We extend past research by showing that rivalry is first and foremost a threat to the own identity, however, one with previously disregarded positive effects on the fans´ self-concept. Rivalry can help clubs to strengthen the ties with their community. Independent of fluctuating team performance, the disdain for the archrival will always be salient. Hence rivalry could be a crucial non-product related attribute that enables sports marketers to build brand identity and make their brands more unique. Also, the RAM shows that rivalry has maximum impact when it is reciprocal. Refusing to acknowledge the neighbours as rivals can mitigate the positive effects of rivalry for the fans on the wrong end of the dyad. Our findings can help shift the (research) attention back to the bright side of rivalry, which tends to be overshadowed by violence accompanying certain derbies. Furthermore, for the promotion of rivalries, grasping the identity-related consequences can potentially help drawing the thin line between entertainment and aggression.

References:
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