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# I INTRODUCTION

## Prologue

From the beginning, women's football has been in a position of disadvantage, as it followed the participation of men in officially sanctioned football by several decades. This disadvantage, where women have been given a less equitable chance compared to men, is visible in most aspects of contemporary football.<sup>1</sup> For example, the late entrance of women's participation in official football can be seen in certain trends and in the ways women's football is organised. As women's football in Scandinavia gained official recognition in the early to mid-1970s, it was affected by some of the same equality issues found in society at large.<sup>2</sup> The women's teams often emerged in association with men's football

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- 1 Eva Olofsson (1989), *Har kvinnorna en sportslig chans? Den svenska idrottsrörelsen och kvinnorna under 1900-talet* [Do women have a sporting chance? Organized sport and women in Sweden in the 20th century]; Jonny Hjelm (2004), *Amasoner på planen. Svensk damfotboll 1965-1980* [Amazons on the pitch: Swedish women's football 1965-1980]; Robert Hoffmann, Lee C. Ging, Victor Matheson & Bala Ramasamy (2006), *International women's football and gender inequality*; Gertrud Pfister (2010), *Women in sports – Gender relations and future perspectives*; Jayne Caudwell (2011), *Gender, feminism and football studies*.
  - 2 Bente O. Skogvang (2006), *Tøppfotball – et felt i forandring* [Elite football – A field in transition]; Lennart Weber (2014), *Kvinder der vinder, respekt, fodboldshistorie 1887-2013* [Women that wins, respect, football history 1887-2013].

clubs; that is, they became a sub-section of an already existing club. Moreover, the induction of women's football met resistance, as advocates of men's football stressed that the participation of women would affect allocated resources.<sup>3</sup> This ultimately came to position the women's side as subordinate to the men's side.<sup>4</sup> One might think that this can be consigned to the early stages of women's football; however, it is still a reality in contemporary football. As a result, it has been a struggle for women's football to gain recognition.<sup>5</sup> The reluctance of established football practitioners to give adequate recognition to women's football has forced it to organise differently, find alternative sources of funding, and justify its presence in relation to men's football. It has always been perceived that the most successful pathway for women's football teams in Scandinavia is to play for a club with a weak men's football side or else exist as a women's club without any association with a men's club.<sup>6</sup>

Women's football has also experienced less visibility and recognition in the general media than men's football. Due to this positioning, women's football has had to adopt new ways to organise and justify their operations. The organisation of men's football is seen as more homogenous through the use of similar types of consecutive strategies for attaining viability, awareness and recognition over a long period of time. In contrast, the organisation of women's football highlights a heterogeneity in strategic organisational sustainability and recognition by adopting any strategy that serves the purpose of viability. Thus, women's football has been forced into being more flexible by adopting more non-traditional organisational and viability strategies than men's football. This can be viewed as men's football fundamentally endorsing their presence through their football activity (playing football). However, from the beginning, women's football has been in a position of justifying its football existence to a greater extent by having to address the added aspect of why someone should endorse their operations (*women* playing football). For example, in 1995, the Swedish club Malmö FF (women's side) was offered a lucrative sponsorship deal if they agreed to play in the sponsor's visionary kit (outfit). The kit consisted of a short, tight top which would leave the player's midsection exposed, a puffy shredded skirt and jingle bells attached to their ankles which were in-

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3 Jonny Hjelm & Eva Olofsson (2003), *A breakthrough: Women's football in Sweden*; Hjelm (2004).

4 Olofsson (1989); Anette Börjesson, Former Elite Football Player, Chief Editor, Damfotboll.com, personal communication, September 8, 2015.

5 Anette Börjesson, Former Elite Football Player, Chief Editor, Damfotboll.com, personal communication, September 8, 2015.

6 Hjelm (2004); Anette Börjesson, Former elite footballer, Chief Editor, Damfotboll.com, personal communication, September 8, 2015. Other examples: FC Rosengård, Umeå IK, Öxabäcks IF, IF Trion, Jitex, Fortuna Hjørring, HEI, Trondheims-Ørn, and Røa IL, Linköpings FC. However, a contemporary trend is highlighted, where clubs with both men's and women's teams have won titles. Danish Brøndby IF and Norwegian LSK Kvinner (Lillestrøm) are two such examples.

tended to “make a symphony whilst playing the game.”<sup>7</sup> The offer was refuted and met with harsh critique. It would be hard to imagine such stipulations being proposed to a men’s football club, yet it is conspicuously present in women’s football. Another example of a nontraditional organisational strategy can be found with the Swedish women’s football club, Jitex, which was formed in the early 1970s. The name, *Jitex*, was derived from a local textile company that sponsored the team with jerseys, and in return, were given the honour of the club taking the company’s name.<sup>8</sup> This is an example of team name sponsoring which is far more common in women’s football compared to men’s football in Scandinavia.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Danish football club, BK Femina, was founded by *Femina* magazine in 1959. Through a series of articles, the magazine attracted attention to the issue of women’s limited access to certain sports such as football, in particular. Given that Denmark’s official football governing body, the Dansk Boldspil Union (DBU), was unwilling to incorporate women at the time, *Femina* magazine decided to arrange women’s football tournaments instead and later also formed the women’s football club, BK Femina.<sup>10</sup> The resistance from the DBU inspired women in Denmark to organise football matches on their own terms. The Swedish club, LdB FC Malmö, which was founded in 2007, serves as another organisational example, as the club adopted the name of their main corporate sponsor, LdB, into their club name.<sup>11</sup> LdB FC Malmö’s organisational strategy was to incorporate what are seen as female values into women’s football. The club strongly communicated that players should not only be seen as good football players but also as *female* football players.<sup>12</sup> In women’s football, biological traits have been emphasized to communicate aspects of the game that are *in contrast* to those of a football sphere tainted by male archetypes. The Australian women’s national football team also emphasized the gender difference, but in a different way – by posing nude for a calendar. The denuded intention of the team was interpreted as them reflecting that *we represent a women’s*

7 *Sydsvenskan* (2007-04-12), “Malmö’s gamla damlag” [“Malmö’s former women’s team”].

8 Jitex (2016), “Om Jitex Mölndal BK” [“About Jitex Mölndal BK”]; Anette Börjesson, Former Elite Football Player, Chief Editor, Damfotboll.com, personal communication, September 8, 2015.

9 The name of Swedish club Kopparbergs/Göteborgs FC contains both the name of its main sponsor as well as its home city. BK Femina in Denmark was named after their benefactor, the women’s magazine, *Femina*, which initially payed for all club expenses. The former club, LdB FC Malmö (Sweden) also adopted their main sponsor’s corporate name (LdB) upon signing a lucrative sponsor deal. *Göteborgsposten* (2006), “Bronsman vill föra Göteborg till toppen” [“Bronsman wants to take Göteborg to the top”]; Mattias Melkersson (2013), *Brand Management as a vantage point for revising developmental opportunities and challenges within contemporary women’s soccer in Sweden: The case of LdB FC Malmö*; Weber (2014).

10 Weber (2014).

11 LdB stands for ‘Lait de Beauté’ which is French and roughly translates into English as ‘beauty milk’. The company behind LdB is a skincare retailer. LdB FC (2012).

12 Märten Hedlund, LdB FC Marketing, personal communication, December 10, 2012.

*sport with low profile, so we need to get all the attention we can get.*<sup>13</sup> These examples highlight that women's football is a setting where various viability strategies and organisational incentives have been implemented. Women's football's various strategies for attracting attention and visibility is seen as evidence of a heterogeneous setting. This heterogeneity is dependent upon and affected by several aspects, such as lack of recognition, gender inequality, the sexualization of women and emphasized femininity, to name a few. The significance of physical appearance is also clearly more common for women athletes than for their male counterparts.<sup>14</sup> A greater homogeneity in men's football compared to the heterogeneity in women's football can be seen as evidence of a maintained distinction (separation) between men's and women's football. This distinction can be regarded as based on the reluctance of traditional football to recognize women's participation. The heterogeneity of the viability strategies and organisational structure of women's football can be viewed as a survival tactic and not always based on deliberate choice; more often than not, it is a means of survival.

As contemporary women's football has gained increased professionalism, so has the demand for bigger turnovers and larger investments. Financial incentives are considered to play a hegemonic role in contemporary football, as a strong club financial position is believed to ensure sporting success.<sup>15</sup> Monetary incentives for success in football increasingly affect the outcomes for football participation.<sup>16</sup> The increased professionalisation of men's football has also had an effect on the professionalisation process in women's football.<sup>17</sup> Football clubs work hard to increase their revenues not only so they can be competitive with other clubs but also to avoid insolvency threats. Furthermore, clubs are shifting away from local rivalry and toward national and global competitiveness, while at the same time, positioning themselves in the relationship between the global and the local.<sup>18</sup> It has increasingly become significant for football clubs to be not only proficient in playing football but also competitive regarding financial and organisational proficiency. The match results are only one side of a club's ability to gain success; another side is to have adequate finances. Thus, to be a viable organisation and achieve footballing accomplishments, a club must distinguish itself and attract adequate investors and sponsors. The traditional

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13 *Aftonbladet* (1999-11-30), "Damlaget visar allt i årets kalender" ["The women's team shows it all in this year's calendar"].

14 Hargreaves (1994), *Sporting Females. Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*.

15 Stephen Morrow (2003), *The people's game? Football, finance and society*.

16 Stephen Dobson & John Goddard (2001), *The Economics of football*; Stefan Szymanski (2010), *Football economics and policy*.

17 Jean Williams (2003), *A game for rough girls? A history of women's football in Britain*.

18 Richard Giulianotti & Roland Robertson (2004), *The globalization of football: A study in the globalization of the 'serious life'*.

way of attracting attention and stakeholders in sports was to win matches and manifest geographical connectedness; however, in contemporary football, it is important for a club to be able to differentiate between its footballing accomplishments and its financial viability.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, financial and organisational viability among football clubs have also gained increased significance for governing football bodies.<sup>20</sup> Through several incentives, UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) has introduced a guiding framework which includes the need to support and develop women's football in Europe.<sup>21</sup> In recent years, the discussion of developmental aspects within women's football has changed from notions of developing the game on the field to an extended focus on visibility, management and organisation.<sup>22</sup> UEFA incentives are linked to an increased growth in the numbers of players, the inauguration of domestic leagues and greater financial significance for clubs throughout Europe.<sup>23</sup> A greater focus on awareness and visibility is seen as a significant tool for achieving increased viability. Within the Scandinavian countries, much focus has been placed on professionalisation, such as with organisational proficiency and refined visibility. This aim to make women's football clubs more professional has resulted in the implementation of specific national *club licenses* for women.<sup>24</sup> The implementation of club licenses can be seen as evidence that women's football had shifted from being marginalised towards having a well-established and credible-driven agenda. In recent years, the licensing of women's football clubs has increased throughout Europe. The intention of club licensing systems has a different focus depending on the country: Some licensing systems put heavy demands on financial viability, while others do not. Roughly 70 percent of 54 UEFA-affiliated nations have a club licensing system for women's football. By 2015, budgeted funds for women's football had increased and grown by roughly 30 percent, making the average budget approximately 1.5 million Euros per national football federation.<sup>25</sup>

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19 SvFF/EFD (2012), *Nationell Klubblicens Damer [National club license for women]*; UEFA (2012), *UEFA's women's football development programme*; DBU (2014a), *DBUs Klubblicenssystem – Manual for Elitedivisionen 2014-2015 [DBU's Club licensing system – Manual for the Elitedivisionen 2014-2015]*; NFF (2014b), *Lisenskræterier for Toppserien [Licensing criteria for Toppserien]*.

20 FIFA (2012a), *All about FIFA. Develop the game, touch the world, build a better future*; SvFF (2014d), *UEFAs klubblicens [UEFA club license]*.

21 UEFA (2010), *UEFA club licensing and financial fair play regulations*; UEFA (2012); UEFA (2015c), *UEFA*.

22 SvFF/EFD (2012); UEFA (2012).

23 Jean Williams (2003), *The fastest growing sport? Women's football in England*; UEFA (2015a), *Women's football across the National Associations 2014/2015*.

24 SvFF/EFD (2012); DBU (2014a); NFF (2014b). These licenses are directed specifically towards women's football as strengthening incentives. The licenses were fully implemented by 2012 (Sweden), 2014 (Norway), and 2014 (Denmark).

25 Allocated budgeted funds are not evenly dispersed throughout Europe, and vast differences exist between nations. For example, more than half of the total amount of

In Europe (2015), roughly 1.2 million women and girls play football that is organised and sanctioned by a national football federation. In 1985, there were approximately 200,000 registered players, which means an increase of roughly 500 percent in the past 30 years.<sup>26</sup> The Scandinavian countries are considered the forerunners, with the most registered players, along with England, France and Germany, and national football federations across Europe have increasingly opened up their official organisations to include women's participation. In 2015, 50 national football federations had a national football league for women (out of 54 national federations within UEFA), and 49 of the national federations within UEFA have an established approach for strengthening women's football. Most allocated funds are directed towards areas of competition and development as well as promotion and communication.<sup>27</sup> Against the backdrop of the rapid growth of women's football in Europe, it is seen as significant to conduct further research on development conditions for football clubs. Contemporary women's football is part of a transitional phase, where organisation and visibility have an increased impact on fulfilling development demands and achieving financial viability. Again, the Scandinavian countries are the forerunners not only in both the organisation of clubs and federations but also in regard to football performance and societal gender equality agendas, which makes this specific setting even more interesting to study.<sup>28</sup>

## Rationale

The rapid growth in women's football is reason enough to explore contemporary women's football; however, as growth is a continuous process, extended research must investigate the conditions that affect this specific setting. The growth in contemporary women's football increasingly affects clubs as they work towards development-driven incentives for achieving both football accomplishments and organisational proficiency. Also, a recent development in football is the stipulation of increased financial revenues, which brings in aspects associated with commercialism. Women's football has historically implemented various operational strategies and organisational forms. This organisational heterogeneity is affected by contextual aspects which, in relation to

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allocated budgeted funds derives from England, France, Germany, Norway and Sweden. These nations have an average allocated budgeted funds of between 4–15 million Euros (€) each per year, thus vastly increasing the average. UEFA (2015).

<sup>26</sup> UEFA (2015).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Brus & Else Trangbæk (2003), *Asserting the right to play – Women's football in Denmark*; Kari Fasting (2003), *Small country – Big results: Women's football in Norway*; Hjelm & Olofsson (2003).

increased development in football, demand a greater focus on communicating a professional agenda. Governing football bodies identify that increased professionalism and awareness are significant aspects for improved organisational proficiency and development in women's football. The current organisational heterogeneity found in women's football is perceived to exist not only because of existing structures of established football but also extended contextual aspects. These aspects entail both the traditional structure of football as a male bastion as well as the weak recognition of women's football in general.

The Scandinavian setting is of particular interest to investigate, as Sweden, Denmark and Norway have adopted and implemented well-defined licensing systems for increased proficiency in organisational development. Historically, these countries have held prominent positions in the contemporary development of women's football.<sup>29</sup> In Denmark, early leagues by the mid 1900s were organised which, in turn, encouraged the foundation of leagues in Sweden and Norway. The Norwegian national team became a power factor in the 1990s by dominating the international scene and with the increased mobility of women football players as a consequence. The Swedish domestic league (*Damallsvenskan*) established itself during the mid-2000s as one of the top leagues in the world and able to attract the best players.<sup>30</sup> Scandinavia is considered an established venue to investigate due to its position in the larger women's football setting. Developmental aspects such as increased professionalism, commercialism and globalization have also affected women's football during this growth, and this can be considered an area where more research is needed.<sup>31</sup> Increased professionalism in Scandinavian football has resulted in more people working in football-related employment. This not only refers to paid football players but also other extended forms of employment, such as administrative personnel, coaches, managers, etc.<sup>32</sup> Aspects of commercialism highlight the increased

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29 Brus & Trangbæk (2003); Fasting (2003); Skogvang (2006); SvFF (2014a), *Tidigare år & statistik [Previous years & statistics]*; Weber (2014).

30 Fasting (2003); Skogvang (2006); Timothy F. Graine (2012), *Beyond bend it like Beckham – the global phenomenon of women's soccer*; Jørgen B. Kjær & Sine Agergaard (2013), *Understanding women's professional soccer: the case of Denmark and Sweden*.

31 The study was co-financed through the NORDCORP project, *Scandinavian women's football goes global*. NORDCORP (NORDic COLlaborative Research Project) and is an operative measure for promoting and supporting new and innovative Nordic research in the academic fields of humanities and social sciences (NOS-HS, 2011), *Nordisk samarbeidsnemnd for humanistisk og samfunnsvitenskapelig forskning [Nordic cooperative committee for research in humanities and social sciences]*. The specific project (*Scandinavian women's football goes global*) will research the areas of professionalisation, commercialisation and globalization in women's football. Aarhus University (2014), *Scandinavian women's football goes global*. See, for instance, Kjær & Agergaard (2013), *Understanding women's professional soccer: The case of Denmark and Sweden*; Mari Haugaa Engh (2014), *Producing and maintaining mobility: A migrant-centred analysis of transnational women's sports labour migration*.

32 Tomas Peterson (1993), *Den svengelska modellen. Svensk fotboll i omvandling under efterkrigstiden. [The Swenglish Model. Swedish Football in Transition during the Post War Period]*; Kalevi

significance of monetary transactions for federations, clubs, individuals and the football industry at large. Increases in annual turnovers also put demands on having proficient organisations.<sup>33</sup> Contemporary women's football in Scandinavia also must consider fluctuating positions in both local and global contexts.<sup>34</sup> The Scandinavian countries have similar societal and cultural structures which have shaped the organisation of both professional and grassroots sports.<sup>35</sup> As the Scandinavian sports movement is based on beliefs of voluntarism and idealism, it can be inferred that increased professionalism and commercialism also challenges traditional perceptions of how to organise and structure professional sports in a Scandinavian setting.<sup>36</sup> Just as the dichotomies of professionalism versus voluntarism and commercialism versus idealism exist in Scandinavia, so too is women's participation in football seen as secondary to men's, both in terms of exposure and financial resources.<sup>37</sup> Spectator rates and financial turnovers differ vastly between men's and women's football, and this also must be taken into consideration when addressing aspects of contemporary football in Scandinavia.<sup>38</sup>

When exploring the Scandinavian football scene, it should be pointed out that Sweden is a contemporary forerunner among the Scandinavian countries by having larger financial turnovers, higher spectator rates, and a greater number of both professional and grassroots football players.<sup>39</sup> This ultimately has consequences for the proportion and disposition of this study; thus, Sweden is given more attention and space than Norway and Denmark due to its more extensive progression and general accessibility.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the study will focus on one Norwegian club, one Danish club, and two Swedish clubs. These clubs have been successful in football by winning national titles and participating in international club tournaments. However, all four clubs distinguish themselves differently by having various forms of organisational structure. The clubs are also fairly new, which highlights a lack of club consistency which is traditionally seen in men's professional football.<sup>41</sup> Women's football is thus more

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Heinilä (1998), *Professionalization of sport: From fun to occupation*.

33 SvFF/efd (2012); DBU (2014a); NFF (2014b).

34 Sine Agergaard, Torbjörn Andersson, Bo Carlsson & Bente O. Skogvang (2013), *Scandinavian women's football in a global world: Migration, management and mixed identity*.

35 Hallgeir Gammelsæter (2009), *The organization of professional football in Scandinavia*.

36 Torbjörn Andersson & Bo Carlsson (2011), *A diagnosis of the commercial immaturity of Swedish club football*; Agergaard et al. (2013).

37 Pfister (2010); Caudwell (2011).

38 Spectator rates for men's top tier football (average per game), Sweden: 9127 (2016); Norway: 6 972 (2016); Denmark: 7216 (2015). Spectator rates for women's top tier football (average per game), Sweden: 815 (2016); Norway: 190 (2016); Denmark: 147 (2016).

39 UEFA (2016d), *Women's football across the National Associations 2015/16*.

40 See Appendix A: Historical Outlines.

41 The choice of clubs will be further elaborated and developed in the methodological section of this dissertation, under the section "Selecting Suitable Informants".

organisationally heterogenic than the seemingly homogeneous men's football scene. Organisational heterogeneity is affected by contextual conditions which ultimately have an impact on identity characteristics formulated and communicated by the clubs in focus of this study. However, the heterogeneous organisation of women's football is not an empirical finding for this study per se, but rather a thesis, which will be illustrated/confirmed.

The adopted point of departure serves to address the core of a football organisation – its *identity*. The concept and term, 'identity', is a complex phenomenon with multiple definitions depending on the academic field.<sup>42</sup> Identity in relation to football has also been much studied,<sup>43</sup> with symbols, club emblems, colour schemes, playing styles, local connection/pride and similar others all meant to reflect certain aspects of a football club's identity.<sup>44</sup> Thus, identity is a significant aspect to consider when addressing football clubs and how they are organised. For the purpose of investigating the conditions surrounding women's identities in contemporary club football, this study adopts the concept of *brand identity* from brand management research. As women's football development incentives aims to reposition and bring further awareness to women's football, it is also significant to address contextual conditions which affect the organisation of football clubs. So how does a brand work to make its identity visible? To generate awareness, a brand considers various aspects such as symbols, names, slogans, value declarations, associations, advertisements, etc. These aspects can be summarized under the related concepts of *communication* and *promotion*. The communication of a brand's identity should also highlight the distinguishing traits of the brand (organisation). Outlining the fundamental structure of branding is, simply put, to have an identity: What characteristics and traits does the brand have? What does the brand represent? And who is the targeted consumer? After formulating an identity, the identity must be communicated in order to attract consumers. The communication can, as previously

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42 Identity is who we are, but also who we are not. Identity is viewed as simultaneously being both the distinction and the separation of self. Identity is also formed through social relationships which is part of a continuous development process. Identity is formulated via social interactions, distinctions, experiences, preconditions, individuals and events in society. See, for example, Erving Goffman (1959), *The presentation of self in everyday life*; George H. Mead (1967), *Mind, self, and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*; John P. Hewitt (2003), *Self and society: A symbolic interactionist social psychology*. Barry Brummet & Andrew W. Ishak (2013), *Sports and identity: New agendas in communication*.

43 See, for example, Anthony King (2000), *Football fandom and post-national identity in the new Europe*; Fabien Ohl (2005), *Staging identity through consumption*; Chris Stone (2007), *The role of football in everyday life*; Christos Kassimeris (2014), *The semiotics of European football*; Ilias Michailidis, Ifigenia Vambakidou, Argyris Kyridis & Anastasia Christodoulou (2016), *The logotypes of football clubs as expressions of collective identities: A socio-semiotic approach*. Torbjörn Andersson (2016), *Spela fotboll bondjävlar! Del 2 [Play football peasant bastards! Part 2]*.

44 Michailidis et al. (2016).

mentioned, consist of symbols, colour schemes, declarations of values, etc. However, the communication of a brand is also affected by various contextual conditions such as competitors, financial circumstances, societal norms, organisational possibilities, or geography, to name a few. The communicated identity along with contextual conditions determines how the brand is perceived. A key strategy in brand management is to have a congruent correlation between the communicated brand identity and the perceived image of the brand. The extent of this correlation determines a brand's *positioning*, which ultimately highlights competitive advantages. In Figure 1.1, the Brand Chain Model visualizes the structure of brand identity, communication and positioning.



Figure 1.1 *Brand Chain Model*<sup>45</sup>

Thus, brand identity is the essence of what defines that specific brand, as in, the distinguishing characteristics and traits unique for that brand.<sup>46</sup> Communication concerns the various ways which brands convey their identity for gaining awareness and engagement for their brand.<sup>47</sup> Positioning concerns the brand's relationship and competitiveness compared to rivals competing for similar market shares.<sup>48</sup> Having an accurate and well-defined brand identity, along with value propositions, are necessary to differentiate a brand and give it an adequate and desirable positioning.<sup>49</sup> This overall theoretical approach will be further elaborated in the chapter, "Theoretical vantage point".<sup>50</sup>

## Aim

The intention of this study is to illustrate and investigate contextual and organisational conditions, characterized by heterogeneity, for a contemporary football development in Scandinavian women's football. This is conducted by addressing football clubs and their formulated and communicated brand identities and intended positioning. Addressing the formulation and commu-

45 The model is based on fundamental brand management concepts. David A. Aaker (2010), *Building strong brands*, p.68–78; Jean-Noël Kapferer (2013), *The new strategic brand management – Advanced insights & strategic thinking*, p.149–154.

46 Aaker (2010), p.68; Kapferer (2013), p.150.

47 Kapferer (2013), p.2, 158.

48 Ibid., p.152–153.

49 Aaker (2010), p.68–78.

50 See page 43.

nication of football club's identities does not only aspire to describe the club's development strategies, but it also serves to investigate the significance of specific conditions for the position of women's football in contemporary football. The study's intention can be further broken down into the following three questions:

- How and why do football clubs such as Stabæk Football, Fortuna Hjørring, Linköpings FC and LdB FC Malmö formulate and communicate their brand identity in the way they do?
- How do contextual conditions affect contemporary football clubs, such as Stabæk Football, Fortuna Hjørring, Linköpings FC and LdB FC Malmö, and their formulated and communicated brand identity?
- Which development conditions can be found for Stabæk Football, Fortuna Hjørring, Linköpings FC and LdB FC Malmö in regards to development incentives and the changing landscape of women's football?

It needs to be highlighted that the intention of this study is not to develop branding strategies for football clubs but rather investigate and describe the specific setting and conditions that clubs must work in. The brand management approach should be seen as a theoretical tool for investigating and analysing the addressed setting. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to an extended understanding of Scandinavian women's football by describing and analysing specific clubs' conditions regarding distinguishing characteristics for meeting developmental demands. Furthermore, the present research does not set out to generalize a whole football setting or make comparisons between the investigated countries, but rather it intends to highlight certain examples of a heterogeneous Scandinavian football setting.

## Framework

When conducting research, there will always be aspects that affect the formulation and extent of that specific research. It is therefore significant to highlight certain aspects that have had consequences for this study. Sport Sciences at the University of Malmö is an academic field formulated and equipped with multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary characteristics for investigating sport as a societal phenomenon. The academic field of Sport Sciences is influenced by many other academic disciplines such as sociology, pedagogic, history and philosophy, with an orientation towards humanities and social sciences.<sup>51</sup> As

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<sup>51</sup> Susanna Hedenborg (2016), *Vad är idrottsvetenskap? [What is sport science?]*; Bo Carlsson & Susanna Hedenborg (2014), *The position and relevance of sport studies: An introduction*.

this study has derived initial theoretical inspiration from brand management concepts, it could be rewarding to combine such an approach with additional theoretical guidance. This would seamlessly fit an overall theoretical impetus by the multi- and interdisciplinary academic field of Sport Sciences. Also, due to the heterogeneous organisational nature in women's football, the investigation of such setting would benefit from being addressed through multiple approaches. Solely adopting a brand management theoretical approach would, in my opinion, only assist in understanding incentives from an inside communicated side. For further understanding contextual (outside) conditions, it is also relevant to apply an additional theoretical approach. The study therefore applies a *general* theoretical approach which is inspired by brand management concepts. Additionally, each specific investigated setting will apply a supplementary theoretical guidance which is called the *specific* theoretical approach. For broadly investigating case-specific settings relevant for this study, a complementary theoretical approach will be addressed. This theoretical outline will be further elaborated in the chapter, "Theoretical Vantage Point." Having multiple theoretical approaches for the investigated setting also fits the multidisciplinary academic field of Sport Sciences, of which this study is a part. While embracing multi- and interdisciplinary aspects of Sport Sciences, this study does not make any claims of being solely a dissertation of business disciplines nor a dissertation of sociology. Instead, this study should be understood as a fruitful product of the academic field of Sport Sciences inspired by brand management and sociology. This positions the study as a multi- and interdisciplinary influenced dissertation which intends to build much-needed bridges between a business approach and a sociological approach. This bridge-building will contribute to new significant inputs and theoretical considerations for the overall Sport Sciences discipline and its multi- and interdisciplinary orientation.

## Disposition

The upcoming chapter is a literature review and addresses relevant research which formulates the academic background of this study. The review of this literature ultimately serves to identify gaps in knowledge and to position this study's intentions. The following chapter outlines the theoretical vantage point for analysing the empirical findings of the study. The chapter delineates a multiple theoretical approach where a general theoretical approach which is complemented with a specific theoretical approach for each investigated empirical case setting. Chapter four outlines the methodological approach for conducting the research. A methodological approach using case studies outlines the research design of this study. Case study research allows the researcher to investigate a

broad entry in the understanding of a specific setting by reviewing its conditions and participants. The chapter also outlines adopted methods for obtaining adequate empirical data which ultimately formulates the four cases. The fifth chapter, "Women's football in Scandinavia," intends to give a contextual framework of women's contemporary football. This is carried out by depicting a historical timeline of the emergence of women's football in Scandinavia. Thereafter, a view on development incentives that affect contemporary women's football in Scandinavia will be addressed.

Chapter six, "Gender as part of a football identity," investigates the Norwegian club, Stabæk Football. Stabæk Football emphasizes organisational inclusion and equality between men and women. This organisational impetus is relevant to investigate, as history has shown that there are organisational challenges for men and women being part of the same club. Chapter seven, "Generating organisational viability through networking," examines the Danish football club, Fortuna Hjørring. Fortuna Hjørring is an interesting organisation to investigate, as the club has a close organisational collaboration with the successful international youth tournament, Dana Cup. Chapter eight is called "The impact of locality," and it investigates the Swedish club, Linköpings FC. Linköpings FC has an exciting organisational collaboration with a local professional ice hockey club. The ninth chapter, "If you are not seen, you do not exist," investigates the Swedish club, LdB FC Malmö. LdB FC went through much organisational change while adopting a corporate name as their club name. This organisational change meant implementing extended corporate strategies for strengthening the club's operations. Chapter ten concludes with a discussion and the final considerations of the empirical data and analysis. As the investigated settings have formulated individual cases, this chapter also serves to tie together important findings for the development of contemporary women's football in Scandinavia. The chapter also looks at some implications for the future which will serve as a vantage point for further research. The last section of the study contains the Appendix, where relevant additional material and information have been collected and summarized.