

**F1's We Race As One:**  
a man's world through the female consumer

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**ABSTRACT**

*Formula One has for the majority of its existence always been a man's world, where the sport was made by, ruled by, and executed by men. In recent years, the desire for more female representation in the sport has become more prominent, with the ban of the grid girls being one of the most impactful decisions. It came to an all-time high through the initiative We Race As One in 2020. As F1 has previously stated not wanting to be involved in and affiliated with sociopolitical issues, it indicated the start of a new era in the sport. The topic of branding and Formula One is academically underdeveloped and has largely not been researched greatly. Previous academic research regarding Formula One has not considered looking at the view of the minority of the fans and considered their lack of representation in the sport and the effect of this cause. This thesis, for the first time, sheds a light on how female consumers view the recent developments in Formula One. The main research question focuses on this problem by stating "What is the female consumer's view of Formula One's initiative "We Race As One"?". This is answered by the two sub-questions "To what extent is F1 brand activism perceived as effective?" and the second sub-question is "How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?". To research this, 10 female consumers from different countries were interviewed through semi-structured interviews, which were all transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The coding and analysis were done with reflexive thematic analysis and a deductive approach. The collected data showed the hesitancy of the female consumer in regard to We Race As One. Most participants doubt the sincerity of the initiative and view it as done under pressure. Nonetheless, the female consumer sees We Race As One as progressive, as it allows a platform for women and minorities in the sport. While the want and desire for more females in the sport is greatly present, the hesitancy to see it come to reality remains and is instilled in the consumer. In terms of brand co-construction, the female consumer indicates not minding the masculine traits the sport offers and resists hegemonic masculinity at this point. Negativity experienced by the female consumer is mainly found online by other male consumers by diminishing the role of the female in the sport and community. The subjectivity and normativity built by the female consumer results in the construction of their own reality and discourse, allowing for agency and freedom in the masculine environment of Formula One.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Brand co-construction, branding, hypermasculinity, subjectivity, Formula One*

## **Preface**

*“First, you have to finish” Michael Schumacher (2001)*

As said by one of the greatest drivers to exist in Formula One after winning the Monaco Grand Prix, in order to be successful, you first have to finish. This thesis was a team effort in the biggest sense of the word as I am eternally grateful for the full support and honest, open conversations with my supervisor Marco, without whom I could not have finished the thesis the way I did. Your never wavering encouragement always made me feel secure and capable and has helped me tremendously through the transition of graduating and writing a thesis while also starting my first job.

Secondly, I want to extend my gratitude to my participants. Without your enthusiasm and willingness to be vulnerable and share your opinions and views, this research would not have reached the potential it has. Particularly, a special thank you to Alessandra who has played a crucial role in helping me to find participants. Thank you for your dedication and time, your efforts did not go unnoticed, and I am forever indebted to you. Your passion for the topic and immense support in the selection process of participants has been the greatest help.

Lastly, to my parents, friends, housemates, and new colleagues: thank you for your patience, optimism, and always lending an ear to ramble and sort out my thoughts. The reassurance you gave me throughout the last months, has kept me going at a pace I never thought I was capable of. To finish this thesis was a feat and challenge on its own, but with my life changing faster than I thought, you have kept me upright and made sure I came out of the other end. I can never express my gratitude for how much that meant to me, thank you.

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## **1. Introduction**

At the beginning of 2018, Formula One announced the ban of grid girls from the 2018 season onwards (F1, 2018). The organization made clear that amid the #MeToo movement and to increase the role of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the purely decorative role of grid girls was found anachronistic and counterproductive (Walker, 2018). The role of an F1 grid girl was primarily carrying out promotional tasks on the grid and served as visible figures to cheer on the racing drivers (Tippett, 2019).

The ban of the grid girls was met with criticism from host cities and several drivers (Walker, 2018). Furthermore, former grid girls argued due to feminism has gone too far and are now losing their jobs because of it (Tippett, 2019). The question arises how the relationship between femininity and masculinity is seen by female consumers as females often have not had a prominent role in the sport.

### **F1's We Race As One initiative**

Formula One launched its “We Race As One” initiative in June 2020 which aims to tackle the global biggest issues facing the sport and global communities, mainly focusing on COVID-19 and the condemnation of racism and inequality (F1, 2020a). Therefore, my research question is “What is the female consumer’s view of Formula One’s initiative “We Race As One”?”. This is answered by two sub-questions: “To what extent is F1 brand activism perceived as effective?” and the second sub-question is “How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?”.

For F1’s “We Race As One”, it hits two aspects as the initiative addresses a controversial sociopolitical issue, within the sport and society. Also, the initiative takes a progressive stance in a moderate to very conservative sport to make a definite stride forwards. The other two aspects of authentic brand activism leave more room for improvement as F1 by nature is not a purpose- and values-driven brand, including its fans (Miller, 2016). Moreover, F1 contributes through its messaging with its initiative, however in practice the significant changes seem to be reached in stickering on the car, including a rainbow and #EndRacism in the 2020 season, and a minute of silence, with drivers opting to take the knee, for a gesture against racism (Smith, 2021).

To further the cause of the initiative, F1 announced that for its 2021 season that “We Race As One” will now have three key pillars; sustainability, diversity and inclusion, and community (F1, 2021). As F1’s initiative does not include all four aspects it needs for

authentic brand activism, it leaves to wonder how authentic it is then seen through the perspective of its fans. Following the reasoning of Vredenburg et al. (2020), it is stated that addressing questions of authenticity is the key to how brand activism may be perceived and received in the marketplace.

Through the concepts of brand activism and hypermasculinity, the brand co-construction within the brand F1 and its initiative can be further explored. As F1 is branding itself as more inclusive and looking to diversify within the sport, following recent events and scandals, it can be researched how this is perceived. Especially the female fans are interesting as F1 has always been a masculine sport but is now wanting to be more considerate and understanding towards the female consumer. It is therefore left to question how these females look at F1's new branding. By taking brand co-construction, subjectivity, and normativity, F1's brand activism and hypermasculinity can be questioned, whether it is authentic or an issue among the female consumers.

### **Forgotten Female Consumers**

The question remains what other female F1 fans think of the sport's changes and whether it has an impact on the female fans. Certain actions and decisions made by Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) might be counterproductive to the initiative, such as racing in non-democratic countries (Næss, 2017) and keeping a new driver in the sport who recently has inappropriately touched a woman in an Instagram video he posted himself (Sky Sports, 2021). It begs the question of whether female fans find the 'We Race As One' initiative respectable and believable with follow-through. Furthermore, seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, and the only black driver on the grid, has been quick to point out the slowness of diversity in the sport (Smith, 2020). According to Hamilton, there is a lack of leadership in the diversity issue in the sport as well as unity. The hope is that the initiative can not only take away the concerns of the people within the sport as well as those of the fans.

The co-construction of F1 might completely overlook the hypermasculinity or it can be viewed as an empowered feminine position to be an F1 fan as a woman. Concerning F1, Tippett (2019) stresses the importance of subjectivity in the ideology of postfeminism to examining gendered behaviors. Due to the #MeToo movement, it has become clear that a wider climate of male entitlement has been allowed to prevail for some time. The passive role of F1 grid girls has contributed to that image (Tippet, 2019). Martin et al. (2006) follows this notion by saying hypermasculinity is the background against which all performances are staged, where some freedom of men is accrued to constraints of women.

It begs the question of whether female F1 fans find it challenging or empowering to be part of the male-dominant culture. Taking into consideration how F1 has banned the grid girls and has been trying to diversify and battle inequality through the “We Race As One” initiative, the organization has acknowledged these sociopolitical issues are prominent within the sport. Through subjectivity and brand co-construction, hypermasculinity and brand activism in F1 and its community can be further explored.

A female F1 fan can be conceptualized and analyzed in terms of the multiple subject positions that people take and are given to as a female F1 fan. This is in turn produced through discourse, where the analytical focus lies on what kind of subject positions the dominant discourses of being an F1 fan produce for the female F1 fan. It shifts the focus to the complex processes of knowledge and discursive power that produce the subject positions associated with being a female F1 fan (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

The majority of the academic literature covering the topic of F1 in relation to brands focuses on sponsorship effectiveness (Quester, 1997), the niche portfolio strategy in marketing (Jensen et al., 2014), and tourist experience (Chiu & Leng, 2019). The latter also incorporated an analysis between male and female tourists by stating that male tourists were more likely to mention “F1” and “fan” while female tourists were connected to themes relating to the atmosphere (Chiu & Leng, 2019). While it does display a difference between the male and female perception of a Grand Prix event, it fails to go in-depth about the motivation of the tourists and their perception of F1 as a brand. Furthermore, there is at this point no existing literature discussing F1 and branding.

Through researching Formula One’s initiative, the study takes an in-depth look at the perception of the female audience of a predominated male landscape in search of diversity and equality. There have been no academic studies thus far researching the initiative and female fan perception of F1. This study fills the gap in academic literature that currently exists.

## **Outline of the Thesis**

The thesis thus explores the roam of the female consumer in the world of Formula One. In chapter two, the theoretical literature and conceptual framework are discussed where the gap in academic literature is further discussed, as well as the main concepts brand co-construction, subjectivity and normativity, and hypermasculinity are further developed.

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative approach was chosen through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 female Formula One consumers from all over the



world. Chapter three dives further into the methodology of the thesis with a comprehensive overview and discussion of the study design and justification of the method. Furthermore, the process of sampling and data collection is described and how the research questions are made operational. Also, the analysis framework and process are discussed and lastly, this chapter offers the validity and reliability of the research.

Chapter four deals with the results of the research, where the interviews are discussed. The chapter is split into three main themes in which the results are presented to create a concrete overview of the female consumer's view on Formula One and the We Race As One initiative.

The last chapter, chapter five, discusses the results presented in chapter four. Here, the main research question and the two sub-questions are answered. The chapter also deals with the societal and practical implications of the research as well as the limitations of the thesis. Lastly, the chapter presents options for future research about this topic as this research is new and has the potential to further explore Formula One and the initiative, and female consumers as well.

## **2. Theoretical Literature and Conceptual Framework**

### **Chapter overview**

This chapter presents the theoretical literature and conceptual framework of consumer research in relation to brand co-construction, hypermasculinity, subjectivity, and normativity. The theoretical literature is grounded in consumer research through a cultural approach as well as the gap in literature within this research domain. The conceptual framework explores three areas within consumer research: brand co-construction, subjectivity and normativity, and lastly hypermasculinity.

### **Theoretical Literature**

#### ***Consumer Research***

The domain of consumer research has been affected by the turn of the cultural turn in the social sciences (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In particular the field of brand management and advertising, academic research focused more on meanings, symbolism, and postmodern forms of affinity. Cultural knowledge and creativity led to prompting consumers to form deeper relationships with products, such as iconic brands (Holt, 2003; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Specifically, brand management has shifted from more traditional strategic thinking in terms of benefits and features of a brand or product to an approach grounded on understanding the effect a product or service has on the consumer's life (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The emphasis is put on how brands perform, not only what they stand for. Moreover, it is especially important for lifestyle products, for example, food, clothing, and automobiles (Holt, 2003).

The status of cultural icons has been highlighted by Holt (2003), who argues that because of their role in society, brands as cultural icons are able to maintain a firm hold in the marketplace. The reason these brands can be stable and secure over many years is because they forge a deep connection with the culture. Iconic brands might also provide distinctive benefits, trustworthy service, or innovative technology; however, these are not the main reason they compete for culture share (Holt, 2003). Through powerful cultural narratives and myths with culturally shared meanings, norms, and values, iconic brands add value to their consumers.

In consumer research, the most important prudent goal is to gain a better understanding of the cultural contingency and complexity of marketplace phenomena. This

marketplace phenomena are established on shared cultural meanings and social relations (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Through analytics of cultural practice (ACP), the perspective focuses on culture and cultural practices. The cultural approach commonly looks at the research problem of how social reality and social order are produced, maintained, contested, negotiated, and transformed in the market (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The focus is on how marketers, as well as consumers, play a role in producing the cultural world while also looking at institutional forms and practices through which this takes place (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Moreover, analytics of cultural practice aims to describe the ways in which individual experience and social reality are represented and rendered intelligible in text, talk, and signifying practice. Through this practice, a particular point of view to the study of marketplace realities as discursively produced and practiced in society is given. This marketplace behavior is analyzed within the context of people's everyday life and cultural practices instead of trying to explain it under the lens of some unifying theory (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

The analytics of cultural practice draws from two basic interpretive analytics for studying the cultural complexity of marketplace phenomena. Firstly, there is ethnomethodologically informed analysis of everyday discursive practices through which social reality is constructed and social order achieved within an existing institutional and cultural structure (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Secondly, there is the analysis of culturally standardized or institutionalized discourses, which is based on more poststructuralist and Foucauldian ideas and considerations (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The orientations do not differ greatly, however, the focus on consumers and brands in everyday life and practice form a different perspective.

In this thesis, the analysis of culturally standardized or institutionalized discourses will be used where the focus lies in which these cultural discourses and networks of power and knowledge entail as well as how they constitute the conditions of possibility for subjectivity and agency among the members of the culture (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The emphasis is also on the fact that cultural discourses provide people with discursive resources and also guide and constrain meaning-making and social action.

### ***Gap in Literature***

Further exploring and following this approach of research allows for new perspectives in new domains of the marketplace that has been left untouched so far. This thesis builds

further on Tippett (2019), who noted subjectivity needs greater focus to further explore the position of women in today's society. Through subjectivity, it can be explored how co-construction is constructed for females in not only modern society but also within a masculine environment as this has not been done before. Connecting subjectivity to brand co-construction and hypermasculinity allows for an in-depth exploration of how this is formed and how culture then informs the subjective self (Tippett, 2019).

Additionally, the role of women in a masculine environment has been researched through subcultures, including the car culture (Martin et al., 2006; Lumsden, 2010; Tippett, 2019). However, none of the existing theories of gender and consumption completely encapsulate the engagement of women in hypermasculine activities. While this research focuses on consumer research, the masculine environment of the case study plays a crucial role in subjectivity and agency as noted by Tippett (2019).

The co-construction of F1 might completely overlook the hypermasculinity or it can be viewed as an empowered feminine position to be a F1 fan as a woman. In relation to F1, Tippett (2019) stresses the importance of subjectivity in the ideology of postfeminism to examining gendered behaviors. Due to the #MeToo movement, it has become clear that a wider climate of male entitlement has been allowed to prevail for some time. The passive role of F1 grid girls has contributed to that image (Tippet, 2019).

Martin et al. (2006) follow this notion by saying hypermasculinity is the background against which all performances are staged, where some freedom of men is accrued to constraints of women. It begs the question of whether female F1 fans find it challenging or empowering to be part of the male-dominant culture. Taking into consideration how F1 has banned the grid girls and has been trying to diversify and battle inequality through the "We Race As One" initiative, the organization has acknowledged these sociopolitical issues are prominent within the sport. Through subjectivity and brand co-construction, hypermasculinity and brand activism in F1 and its community can be further explored.

The gap in the literature in consumer research in terms of subjectivity and agency of females in a hypermasculine environment through cultural discourses and the networks of power and knowledge will be filled through this research. Moreover, how and whether females construct the cultural discourses is explored where guiding and constraining meaning-making and social action will be discussed.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### ***Brand co-construction***

For the section on brand co-construction, first, the definition of brands and brand co-construction is given. This is then further explored in the context of brand activism and what the influence and impact of brand activism can have on consumers and their interpretation of brand activism. Lastly, the role of the consumer is explored and how co-construction takes place in times of mass media and online communities.

The definition of Moisander and Valtonen (2006) will be used where brands and products are defined as cultural artifacts and resources and carriers of meanings, produced, and consumed in and through processes and practices of representation. A brand does not merely serve as a symbolic tool for co-constructing identity as the focus can be put on the personal structures of meaning that are theorized to motivate consumers' use of certain products and brands (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Gambetti et al. (2014) define co-construction, also named co-creation, as the encounter and the cross-fertilization of subjective and psychological meaning-making processes between two or more actors. The relationship between brand and consumers is then made up of shared values, rituals, and symbols that are constantly co-constructed, nurtured, and negotiated by both the brand and the consumer (Gambetti et al., 2014). Within this perspective, consumers, employees, and organizations are seen to construct and perform identities and self-concepts, trying out new roles and creating their identity within, and in collaboration with, brand culture (Schroeder, 2009).

Brand management is concerned with communicating messages, which are received with the corresponding brand owner's intention. What it fails to see is what happens when consumers interpret the message in another way (Schroeder, 2009). The meanings that consumers attach to a message are not necessarily the result of projected brand identity, rather a process of negotiation between the marketing domain, cultural surroundings, and the social environment (Schroeder, 2009). It correlates to the concept of brand activism, particularly brand political activism. Brand activism does not have an overall consensus, as there is universally no correct answer or response to the involved sociopolitical issues. Furthermore, Moorman (2020) emphasizes that divisiveness due to taking a sociopolitical stance is worrisome for companies as it is likely to upset stakeholders.

This correlates with Miller (2016) who has pointed out, in relation to greenwashing and environmental activism in F1, it is difficult for the sport to diversify in any way. F1 is a private and corporate venture with significant autonomy, which results in the impossibility of

activism being mandated properly. Moreover, removing sponsors or changing attitudes has no proven success among motorsport fans, at least in terms of greenwashing (Miller, 2016).

This is then followed by how a brand's stand on a controversial social or political issue reflects the consumer's moral foundations, or how the level of self-brand similarity corresponds between consumer and brand (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Consumer-brand identification theory presupposes that higher self-brand similarity results in stronger self-brand identification, therefore in turn have more favorable attitudes towards the brand and higher levels of brand advocacy (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

It is noteworthy to mention how brand activism in this cultural paradigm is perceived as authentic. According to Vredenburg et al. (2020), authenticity is encompassing mutually reinforcing and supportive brand purpose, values, messaging, and corporate practice. Authenticity lies in three characteristics, namely the core purpose and values as a reflection of employees, caretaking of stakeholders, and brand promise and how those are understood in the marketplace (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Secondly, the type of messaging and content that is distributed through brand vehicles, traditional media, and social media channels. And thirdly, how corporate practices and key stakeholders catalog, interpret and demonstrate the practices in the marketplace (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

The role of consumers shifted from passive to active in constructing the co-construction of brand meaning, for example through social media (Schembri & Latimer, 2016), where the discursive and socially constructed aspects of consumption are the focus (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In this framework, consumers are re-working the meaning that they consume and, therefore, consumption can then be seen as a form of production. The production of symbols and meanings by consumers that are incorporated into the system of representation in which people act and make sense of their everyday life (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Consumers, in many circumstances, can also be considered co-creators, using their skills and knowledge to produce or create the objects of their own consumption, either as prosumers or working consumers (Pongsakornrunsilp & Schroeder, 2011).

Co-creating value by consumers does not have to be by merely participating in the market or brand but can also be done by outdoing brands or marketers through defiant or oppositional consumption practices. Moreover, specific possessions or brands enable consumers to construct a particular sense of identity as well as tell stories about their consumer experience of the brand or product (Schembri & Latimer, 2016). This means that consumers attach their own meanings to brand messages and consumption of products. Brand meaning can thus be transformed by consumers, compared to the original intention of the

marketers, as consumers have an active role in a brand meaning's development (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Within a brand community, participants negotiate and share meanings, resulting in co-creating brand value.

As stated by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) brands can now transcend geography due to modern marketing, such as mass media, and consumer culture. Mass media has illustrated how virtually all characteristics of a geographic community can be simulated or replicated (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Through mass media, brands have been able to create a brand community online, where brand meaning can be co-constructed between brand managers and consumers, as the latter is no longer at the end of the value chain but assume central importance in the process (Pongsakornrungrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011). The dominance of marketers is then fading as consumers find spaces that allow for consumers to rework and reconsider their identities rather than the market dictating them (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Postmodern consumers pursue a lifestyle where the production of self and culture through consumption is predominant. In response to this theory, Holt (2002) states that "consumer culture is an irresistible form of cultural authority that generates a limited set of identities accessed through commodities" (p. 72). Therefore, the intended effect of a brand or organization can differ from the consumer's perspective. As revealed by Schembri and Latimer (2016), co-construction can be focused too much on company and consumer as two separate entities, where the actual mixture of meaning-making processes is overlooked. Especially considering how online social networks allow consumers to exchange information, share opinions and ideas, and can continuously redefine what brands mean in their lives (Schembri & Latimer, 2016), it is a point for brands to fully connect with their consumers.

The active role as a consumer means that the marketer's control is vanishing through micro-independent practices that off-balance market-determined subjectivity and accelerate fragmentation (Holt, 2002). Consumers construct their identities, make sense of their world, express themselves, and take stance on socio-political issues using symbolism that is embedded in brands and consumption practices (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

In many subcultures, resistance is strongly based on iconic brands. These brands can solve tensions that people feel between society's ideology and their own lives, which gives these brands political authority. This is especially the case for the people who live a life that contradict the values of the dominant culture, such as female F1 fans. An iconic brand can retain this authority even when myths that are encapsulated lose their significance as important cultural models (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

### ***Subjectivity & Normativity***

Through brand co-construction, the concept of subjectivity arises as a consumer can co-construct a brand through their own reality. Branding is a form of marketing, an ideology (Marion, 2006). Here, marketing is concerned with social spaces that are relevant to the product it is offering, where marketing ideology highlights how marketing creates an assumption that the interests of the consumer and company are aligned (Marion, 2006; Wood & Ball, 2013). Then, when considering subjectivity, the question remains whether the assumption from the brand is still correct.

Looking from analytics of cultural practice, it relies on a poststructuralist or postmodern conception of subjectivity where the subject is acknowledged as an instrument and condition for agency. However, according to poststructuralist assumptions about language and discourse, not only the 'agent' performs the action, but rather the 'subject' who is also subjected or subordinated to various cultural practices and material conditions (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). This results in the subject views as constituted through representational systems and discourses, which is then a product of interplay between cultural discourses and everyday discursive practices.

Subjectivity is conceived in terms of multiple and changing subject positions, which people take and are given, possibly also subvert and resist, and which are produced or made available by the discourses that are called on in different situations and historical contexts (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Davies and Harré (1990) claim that the position that one individual becomes assigned largely determines the conditions of possibility for acting and constructing realities. According to this theory, "the subject position is incorporated by both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire" (Davies & Harré 1990, p. 46).

By taking a specific position as your own, a person then proceeds to see the world from only that vantage point where concepts, images, or storylines are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies & Harré, 1990). Therefore, subjectivity largely stems from a product of the individual's positioning within a system of representation or discourse in a field of power (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Subjectivity is then realized through multiple and changing subject positions. These positions can be both interactive or reflexive; interactive meaning one person's opinion positions another and reflective being that people position themselves, which rarely happens intentionally or consciously. The assigned positioning of the individual largely determines the requirements of the possibility for acting and constructing reality (Moisander & Valtonen,



2006). Subjectivity is viewed as distributed and contextual rather than singular, independent, and self-generative. The subject is not conceived as existing of one single 'true self', but rather multiple selves or continuously changing and flexible history of relationships.

Explanations through a normative angle given through subjectivity are based on choices among cultural values and ultimately on some premises about the nature and purposes of human existence (Rothenberger et al., 2016). Wilkinson and Young (2005) believe in the importance of theory and practice to understand the necessary match between normative theories of marketing and the types of environment in which they are effective and appropriate and those in which they are not. The normative theories for one environment will not necessarily work in the other or have limited relevance. While more complex environments and normative theories are appropriate for those more complex environments and will prove to be inefficient and ineffective in those environments that are less complex (Wilkinson & Young, 2005).

The interconnectivity that now exists among consumers and brands has then produced complex and turbulent environments, where brands face uncertainty. A turbulent environment is defined by Wilkinson & Young (2005) as dynamic environments where dynamics come from actions and reactions of competitors as well as from within the environment itself. Also, the actions of a brand affect competitors and have direct and indirect effects on other aspects of the environment (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). A brand needs to participate effectively, help co-create, and sustain networks of relations where there essentially is no control. This point requires change in management ideals, values, and strategies.

In terms of management ideals, the interconnected world provides means to bring people and brands closer together. The changing relationships between managers, brands, and networks do not only extend and enhance the brand's existing resources and functionalities but also create new types of functionalities (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). Brands are becoming more aware of and sensitive to the wider effects of their actions and continue to elaborate the role of more collective strategies, by bringing more stakeholders, such as consumers and suppliers, into the development process earlier (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). Brands also need to be included in others' planning and strategy development. To achieve this an ability to adapt goals as well as means in response to others, be an effective follower and leader, is of importance.

Change in strategies needs to be found in key strategies issues when it comes to network positioning and repositioning. This is especially important for brands to identify and engage in generative relations through which they can sense, interpret, and reinterpret their

environments and how to act and respond to them (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). The relevant environment or relations for a brand is not confined to a specific industry, place, or nation, but can be found beyond this space.

Subjectivity indicates that consumers can construct their own reality through representation and discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Following this theory, communication from marketers to consumers can differ from the intended brand identity and can then take on multiple meanings and values through the consumer's subjectivity and normativity. Therefore, it is crucial for a brand to constantly be interactive and co-construct new ideas and strategies of the organization. As indicated by Moisander and Valtonen (2006) subjectivity is not one single truth, rather a continuously flexible and changing truth to oneself.

### ***Hypermasculinity***

To explore how female F1 fans look at the sport, the acknowledgment of the role of men versus women in F1 is of utmost importance. As the sport has always been dominated by males, the female role has been marginalized for almost its entirety of existence (Sturm, 2011). Through gender stereotypes, people often conform to stereotypical beliefs and behaviors and commonly conform to and adopt dominant norms of femininity and masculinity (Courtenay, 2000). The inclusion of women was pushed into promotional models – the grid girls – with its purpose of upholding patriarchal traditions of men as active participants and women serving as passive decorative figures (Tippett, 2019).

Hegemonic masculinity has been prominent in studies concerning men, gender, and social hierarchy over the last two decades since the concept was defined. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have defined it as a societal pattern where stereotypical male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideal and how they are therefore maintaining the dominant social roles over women and other groups associated with femininity. These stereotypic beliefs and behaviors result in a connection between F1 and the hegemonic culture of masculinity, where the predominantly male audience and sport were adorned by the passive role of grid girls (Tippett, 2019). Institutionalization and the marginalization or delegitimization of alternatives have allowed hegemonic masculinity to stay in F1 for as long as it has. However, cultural consent and discursive centrality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) have changed the stand of the FIA in recent years with the social and political movement taking the forefront.

Moreover, hegemony works through the production of epitomes of masculinity in the sport. Lumsden (2010) notes how the relationship between cars and masculinity can help to establish and (re)negotiate hierarchies of power and status among men. Explaining further how women in the car culture have negotiated their way through it but employing complex combinations of compliance, resistance, and cooperation with the masculine values of the group (Lumsden, 2010). The inclusion of women in the F1 culture for long was found in the grid girls, then in 2020 F1 announced the W Series, consisting of an all-female line-up will eight F1 races throughout the 2021 season (F1, 2020b) after a successful run in 2019 of six European races (W Series, n.d.). It exemplifies how hegemonic masculinity can be co-constructed within F1 and the male-dominated landscape is changing.

Marketing and consumer research has expanded to representations of masculinity, while also considering the specificities of women's experience and their experience of active embodiment (Brace-Govan, 2010). Hypermasculinity, a form of male heterosexual attitudes and behaviors, such as hardness and stoicism, rooted in dominance over women and other masculinities, stands firmly on a foundation of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Martin et al., 2006; Hickey, 2008).

As noted by Martin et al. (2006), none of the existing theories of gender and consumption completely encapsulate the engagement of women in hypermasculine activities. They explored the subculture of bikers and concluded women riders engage in hypermasculine activities and trappings of biker culture as part of an identity project in which they expand, complicate, and empower their own femininities. The women who choose this hypermasculine context for their identity work appear to do so because they find traditional feminine social roles to be constraining, limiting, and chafing (Martin et al., 2006). Furthermore, when discussing F1 grid girls, a key element is the focus on women's choice, how these girls earn their living and not according to someone else's rule (Tippett, 2019).

Moreover, the theme of empowerment is recurring about females in masculine environments, specifically grid girls in F1, as promotional modeling symbolizes post-feminist ideology. It is presented as a self-sufficient right, where these women chose to be in this role as reflective of subjectivity (Tippett, 2019). Here, the concepts of (dis)empowerment and choice were used as arguments by media in the debate of F1 as concluded by Tippett (2019). Furthermore, the role of grid girl was seen as a celebration of feminism and a self-sufficient right, including that the right to choose is also symbolic for empowerment.

This opposes what Lumsden (2010) concluded about the relationship between women and the car culture, where women have to adopt societal definitions of being masculine for

them to be authentic towards the male participants. Most female participants in the car culture were found to be passive and to be accepted as authentic participants, the girl racers had to adopt hegemonic boy racer characteristics, such as bravado, toughness, aggression, and competitiveness (Lumsden, 2010). In a male-dominated subculture, the men's rejection of females as legitimate and authentic allowed for them to shift attention away from the masculine nature of the subculture.

Regarding F1, the continuation of stereotypes resulted in the normalization of restrictive gender roles in sport, where acceptance of these roles led to self-fulfilling prophecies of stereotypical beliefs and behaviors (Courtenay, 2000; Tippet, 2019). These two opposing views are where the debate stems from as it can be viewed as an emancipated state of modern femininity or as an outdated image not in line with modern values (Tippett, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter explores the methodology of the thesis, where the study design and justification of the methodology is explained. Further, the sampling process and the data collection is described as well as the operationalization of the literature discussed in the previous chapter. The analysis framework and process are also examined, and lastly, the validity and credibility in cultural research and this thesis are considered.

#### **Study Design and Justification of Method**

The thesis aims to explore the perception of the female audience of F1 and its initiative and recent events, such as the ban of the grid girls. The goal is to see how female F1 fans interpret the organization's stance on diversity and equality based on the initiative and following recent cases of the grid girls' ban and the scandal surrounding one of the drivers, Nikita Mazepin. To answer the main research question 'What is the female consumer's perception of Formula One's initiative "We Race As One"?', the research has a qualitative approach through semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 female Formula One fans.

Qualitative research is the most suitable method as it allows for adaptation and adjustment of the approach as the research proceeds to respond and explore what emerges correctly (Owen & Chandler, 2002). Fluidity and responsiveness are key aspects of qualitative research. As noted by Owen & Chandler (2002), a quantitative approach does not allow this in a great capacity, and as the goal of this research is to explore female perception, fluidity and responsiveness are extremely important.

To analyze the collected data, reflexive thematic analysis was chosen. Reflexive thematic analysis is an approach used to analyze qualitative data and to answer broad or narrow research questions, concerning people's experiences, views, and perceptions of a given phenomenon (Braun et al., 2019). Reflexive thematic analysis is also theory-driven. This means that both the research question and the thematic approach are influenced by the researcher's position in the academic field. Therefore, being explicit, thoughtful, and deliberate in the application of the theory and method is crucial (Braun et al., 2019).

Furthermore, one of the benefits of reflexive thematic analysis is the flexibility it offers. It is able to provide a flexible and useful research tool and can therefore offer a detailed as well as a complex account of data based on theory (Braun et al., 2019). Thematic analysis can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, thus making the range broad. However, due to the flexible nature of thematic analysis, being

rigorous about the application of theory and method is essential, as previously mentioned (Braun et al., 2019). This is done by systematically working through the data.

By applying the six-step phases of thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2020b), this rigorousness is achieved. The six steps exist out of: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. As this research has a deductive approach, the codebook is derived from the theory established in Chapter 2. The focus is on themes and what the data is proving or disproving (Braun & Clarke, 2020a).

In terms of coding, a deductive approach is adopted through thematic analysis, following the processes and procedures by Braun and Clarke (2020b). A deductive approach allows for the data to be driven by the theory where the coding process is specific to the main and sub-research questions. Through this procedure of coding, there is a detailed analysis of the aspect of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020b). The result of the analysis is a theme explaining people's experiences, perceptions, views, or representations of a given topic.

The aim of coding and theme development in reflexive thematic analysis is to provide a coherent and compelling interpretation of the data, which is grounded in the data. Therefore, the researcher is seen as a storyteller, who is actively engaged in interpreting data through the lens of their own cultural membership and social positioning, combined with theoretical assumptions, ideological commitments, and scholarly knowledge (Braun et al., 2019)

The approach used in this thesis is semi-structured interviews, as it allows more flexibility in the data gathering process, and is therefore favored instead of structured interviews, as well as giving participants the freedom and space to answer questions from their frame of reference, which is imperative to qualitative research. All interviews cover the same topics and concepts as the interview questions are theoretically driven.

In-depth interviews are the chosen method as it allows for the researcher to seek for deep information and understanding (Johnson, 2001). Deep understandings can be found among participants in some activity, event, or place. For this research, deep understanding refers to F1 and therefore, the participants are fans of F1. Furthermore, in-depth interviewing aims to explore the contextual boundaries of an experience or perception, allowing to uncover what is usually hidden from ordinary view or reflection as well as reveal how our commonsense assumptions, practices, and ways of talking partly constitute our interests and how we understand them (Johnson, 2001).

Previous academic research regarding F1 in relation to brands has mainly focused on sponsorship effectiveness (Quester, 1997), the niche portfolio strategy in marketing (Jensen et

al., 2014), and tourist experience (Chiu & Leng, 2019). The latter also incorporated an analysis between male and female tourists by stating that male tourists were more likely to mention “F1” and “fan” while female tourists were connected to themes relating to the atmosphere (Chiu & Leng, 2019). While it does display a difference between the male and female perception of a Grand Prix event, it fails to go in-depth about the motivation of the tourists and their perception of F1 as a brand. Furthermore, there is at this point no existing literature discussing F1 and branding.

Other academic literature discussing the male vs female dynamic in F1 was by Sturm (2011), mainly focusing on masculinity in leisure activities, and Tippett (2019) exploring the ban of the grid girls in a postfeminist third wave in Great Britain. While both are interesting, none look at female supporters of the sport and in what way the masculine environment of the sport affects them. Moreover, there is no existing research looking at how sports, seen as masculine like F1, are branded and the attitude towards this from a consumer’s perspective, specifically a female consumer.

The initiative “We Race As One”, launched by F1 in 2020, focuses on diversity and inequality (F1, 2020a; F1, 2021). As the sport is known as a masculine sport through the all-male drivers’ line-up as well as the projection of the sport on audiences (Sturm, 2011), how is this seeming change received by female consumers? Since the ban of the grid girls in 2018, there have been mixed responses by sponsors as well as the former grid girls themselves (Tippett, 2019). Moreover, in 2020 one of the rookie drivers, Nikita Mazepin, was involved in a controversial video posted by him on social media, with his team Haas opting to keep him as a driver for the upcoming season. How is this initiative then received by the consumers, specifically by the females as it promises diversity and more equality, however, recent actions can be seen as questionable in regard to the initiative?

By interviewing only female fans, this can be researched. The diversity and especially equality promised within the sport, directly affects female consumers. By discussing the initiative “We Race As One” as well as the cases of the ban of the grid girls and the Nikita Mazepin scandal, results will further develop on Tippett (2019) and give a deeper insight to female consumers within a masculine environment.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

The researcher contacted 30 people to participate in the interviews. The people that answered, agreed to participate, and qualified to partake in the research resulted in 10 participants, all-female, and 18 years or older. The sampling strategy used is purposive

sampling as it allows for a selection of participants that meet the criteria set to participate in this research. All the participants are from different countries and are F1 fans who understand the sport, the initiative, and recent changes and trends within the sport. The main reason for this is to explore the deeper understanding of the participants of the previously stated examples where it is crucial to have background knowledge of F1. Furthermore, the number of people to reach saturation was found at 8 participants.

In order to find these participants, first is looked within the immediate circle of the researcher where there are some female fans. However, to create a more representative sample, the goal is to have multiple nationalities among the participants, preferably from different continents to provide generalizability. Therefore, recruitment also took place on the social media platform Instagram. Instagram is of great importance as there are numerous fan accounts of F1 run by females on the platform which present knowledge of the sport and its changes and trends. The thesis aims to form a general perspective of the female consumer of F1's branding and the initiative. Therefore, participants with multiple nationalities provide a varied sample in terms of social context and perceptions.

All interviews were conducted online on Zoom and approximately lasted 45 to 60 minutes. An online interview allowed for the safety of both the interviewer and the interviewees during the pandemic. Moreover, the participants are from different parts of the world, thus doing it online allows for the easiest access to the participants and the most efficient way to carry out the research. All interviews were conducted and thus transcribed, in English. Due to the international nature of the research, English is the most accessible language for the researcher and participants. As most participants are also active on Instagram in an international community, no language barriers are present. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants were asked for a written consent with a notification of the recording of the interview. A recorded verbal consent also proved sufficient.

### **Operationalization**

For the main research question "What is the female consumer's view of Formula One's initiative "We Race As One"?", two sub-questions were developed in order to answer the main research question completely and validly. The first sub-research question is "To what extent is F1 brand activism is perceived effective?". The second sub-question is "How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?". Both sub-research questions were developed in relation to the conceptual framework as this would then provide a complete operationalized view of the relevant theory and can therefore



thoroughly answer the main research question. Each concept connected to a sub-question was then developed as a theme and based on the conceptual framework, concepts within this theme were built and allocated.

The first sub-question “To what extent is F1 brand activism is perceived effective?” relates to two concepts used, namely brand activism and hypermasculinity. By directly answering the question of how the authenticity of F1’s brand activism is seen through the female consumer’s perspective offers an operationalization of the two concepts. It offers a total look into these concepts and helps answer the main research question as the initiative is the marketing tool of brand activism and the female consumer’s view on the matter completes the aspects of the research question.

The second sub-question “How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?” operationalizes the three concepts brand co-construction, subjectivity, and normativity from the framework. By looking at F1 as a brand as well as the initiative, the sub-question gives further completion to the main research question. Through this question, the intended brand identity from F1 and the “We Race As One” initiative is further explored and presents answers to its brand co-construction, subjectivity, and normativity among female consumers.

### *Themes*

The second theme that belongs to the first sub-question is hypermasculinity. This concept is addressed in the conceptual framework in relation to the five chosen concepts, namely choice, disempowerment, empowerment, passive, and active. All five concepts were thoroughly defined within the conceptual framework and provide a solid background in the coding processes concerning the sub-question and the main research question. It can further operationalize and exemplify how female consumers position themselves within F1 and the F1 community as fans.

The second theme is brand co-construction. Again, this concept was developed in the conceptual framework and is now serving as a theme. Within this theme, there are six concepts: values, rituals, symbols, identity, brand authority, and authentic. All six concepts were also addressed and explored within the conceptual framework and under brand co-construction. By classifying these concepts within this theme, brand co-construction can be researched as all concepts offer a perspective from the participants within the sub-question.

The last theme to answer the second sub-question is subjectivity. This was also a concept explored in the conceptual framework. There are four concepts within this theme:

representation, interactive, reflexive, and intended brand identity. The concepts were addressed within subjectivity and normativity in the conceptual framework. All concepts are related to the participant’s positioning through discourse and system of representation and are therefore relevant in answering not only the second sub-question but also the main research question.

| <b>Theme</b>          | <b>Category</b>                         | <b>Codes</b>            |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hypermasculinity      | Female disposition                      | Choice                  |
|                       |                                         | Disempowerment          |
|                       |                                         | Empowerment             |
|                       | Female role                             | Active                  |
|                       |                                         | Passive                 |
| Brand Co-construction | Relationship between brand and consumer | Values                  |
|                       |                                         | Rituals                 |
|                       |                                         | Symbols                 |
|                       |                                         | Identity                |
|                       | Brand activism                          | Authentic               |
| Brand Authority       |                                         |                         |
| Subjectivity          | Subject positions                       | Interactive             |
|                       |                                         | Reflexive               |
|                       | Cultural authority                      | Intended brand identity |
|                       |                                         | Representation          |

Figure 1. Coding frame

**Female F1 Fans Speak up**

The goal of the interview is to answer the main research question and the two sub-questions by asking questions that are related to the themes and concepts within the theory and conceptual framework. The interview questions were developed and set up by dividing them per theme to ensure clarity and a structural way to interview participants with an eye on the coding process as well as the analysis. However, answers by participants can overlap as the semi-structured interview allows for this flexibility.

The majority of participants were approached on Instagram through direct messaging. By first introducing the thesis as research on F1’s branding and the “We Race As One” initiative, the message continued by saying the research requires female F1 fans and whether

they were interested in an interview about this topic. When the participant expressed interest, the interview was explained more elaborately explaining how the main focus is on their personal views and opinions on F1 and the initiative and the interview will touch upon grid girls, Nikita Mazepin's scandal, and the future of F1. After this, a date and time to meet on Zoom were established.

The interview protocol starts with asking for some background information of the participant as well as some ice breakers, such as their favorite driver and team. The ice breakers served to make the participant more comfortable and ease into the topic of F1. The interview then moved to brand co-construction by going into why they are a fan of F1, how people in their environment respond to them being a fan, and whether they thought F1 was catered enough towards them as a female fan.

The following section is hypermasculinity, where questions were asked about them being a female fan, such as if it bothered them that F1 is viewed as a man sport, whether they find themselves accepted within the F1 community and their experiences being a female F1 fan. In relation to this, participants were asked about their view of grid girls and their ban.

The next section focuses on brand activism, where the participants are asked about the initiative "We Race As One", such as their opinions when it was announced and the need for it within the sport. To further elaborate, the example of Nikita Mazepin and the controversial video is discussed and whether this had made an impact on their view of the initiative.

Lastly, the future of F1 is discussed and how the participant sees the future of the initiative and where they see the sport within five years in terms of diversity and equality. Moreover, the role of females within the sport in the future is also discussed.

By following this structure and division of concepts as well as asking these types of questions, the themes and concepts were operationalized in an interview form where the view of the female consumer of F1 and the view of the initiative could be explored in-depth. Specifically, the answers to the questions are able to be conceptualized in the coding process and the analysis as it offers the participant's subjective view and co-construction on F1 and the initiative.

### **Analysis Framework and Process**

As stated previously, this thesis uses thematic analysis to research and explore the collected data. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns, also called themes, within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The organization and description of the data set are in great detail as well as an interpretation of the data.

While it is possible to have emerging themes from the data in thematic analysis, this was not opted for in this research. Rather than having an inductive approach, a deductive approach was applied where the theory and conceptual framework form the foundation of the analysis framework. By opting for this, the themes are already existing, including its concepts, and can therefore be matched with the collected data. This choice allows for a structured and clear approach to analyze the data with the existing conceptual framework. As all themes and concepts are well-defined within the theory, the data shows how these themes reside within the research topic. The themes and concepts were therefore developed before the analysis started and therefore falls under the coding reliability approach (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Thematic analysis differs from other analytic methods as it seeks to describe patterns across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It allows for more flexibility compared to, for example, grounded theory and does not need to subscribe to implicit theoretical commitments. By having a coding reliability approach, there is a structured way to process the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

There has been no previous research that is similar to this research topic in terms of F1, branding, and brand activism. Therefore, the analysis is not specifically built on previous academic literature. However, Tippett's (2019) research on F1 grid girls was a great influence on this thesis as it this research connects with the topic in terms of an exploration of females within the sport. While the angle is different from this research topic, it allowed for a gateway for the theme of hypermasculinity and its concepts.

With the themes already in place, the analysis was done through Atlas.ti. The transcriptions of the interviews were done through the recording of Zoom. After checking the transcription next to the recordings of the interviews, the transcriptions were uploaded to Atlas.ti. Here, the transcriptions were coded with the themes and concepts. By using Atlas.ti, the codes were easily visually displayed for the researcher.

Evidence for the themes and concepts was identified by finding answers or context of the participants' answers. As the interview protocol already offered a structured foundation, the answers most likely fit in that theme as well. However, overlap between these can exist and that is why the answers of the participants were carefully placed within the right context in which this was answered from the participants' perspective, as it might differ from the previously structured themes in the interview protocol. The three figures below visualize the coding chart and how each theme is subdivided and defined.

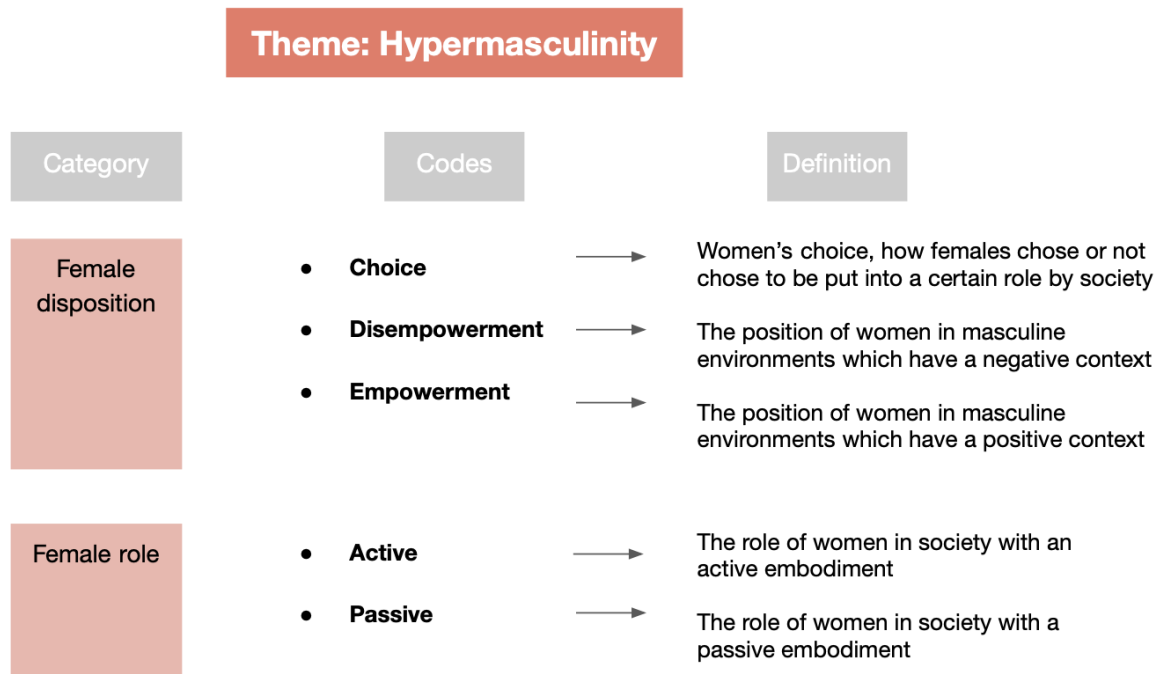


Figure 2. Code Chart Hypermasculinity

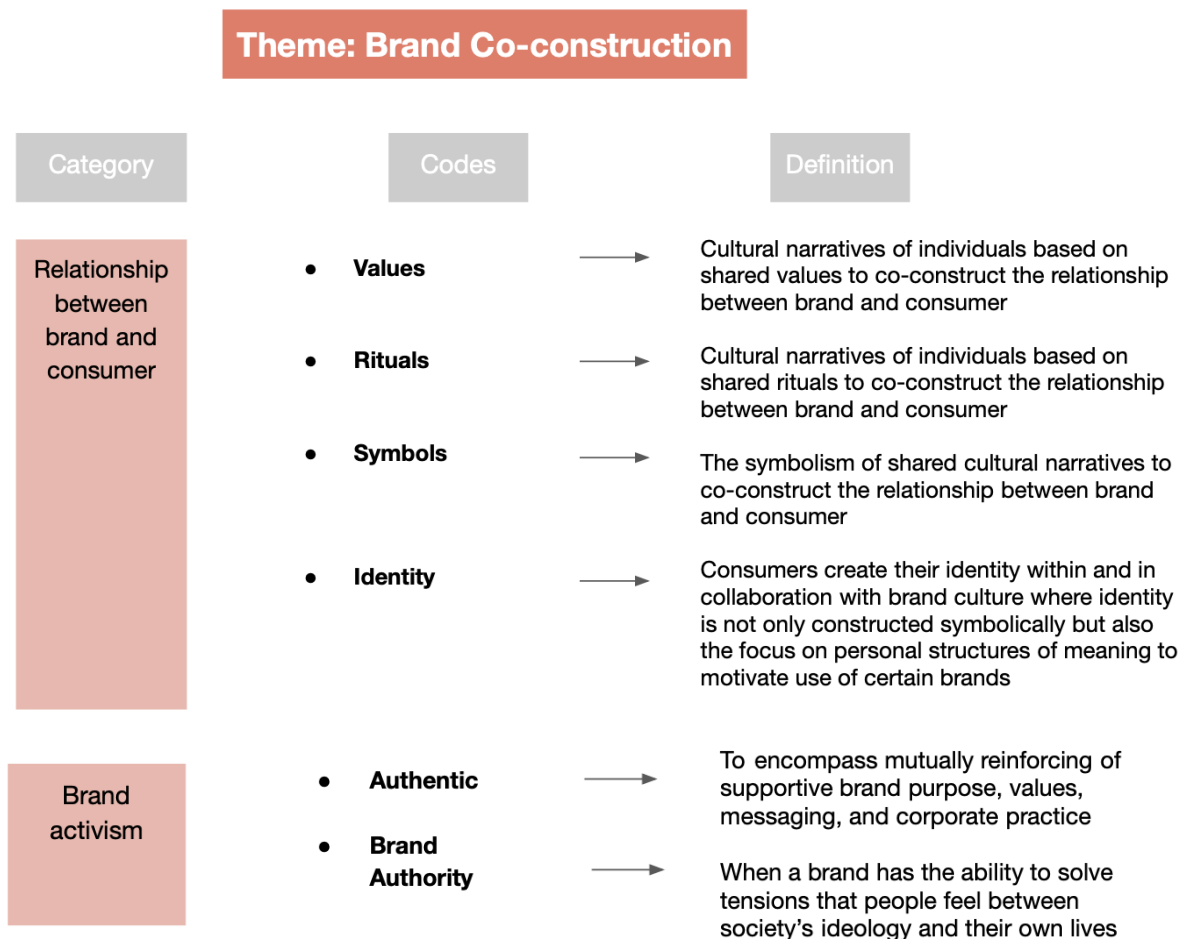


Figure 3. Code Chart Brand Co-construction

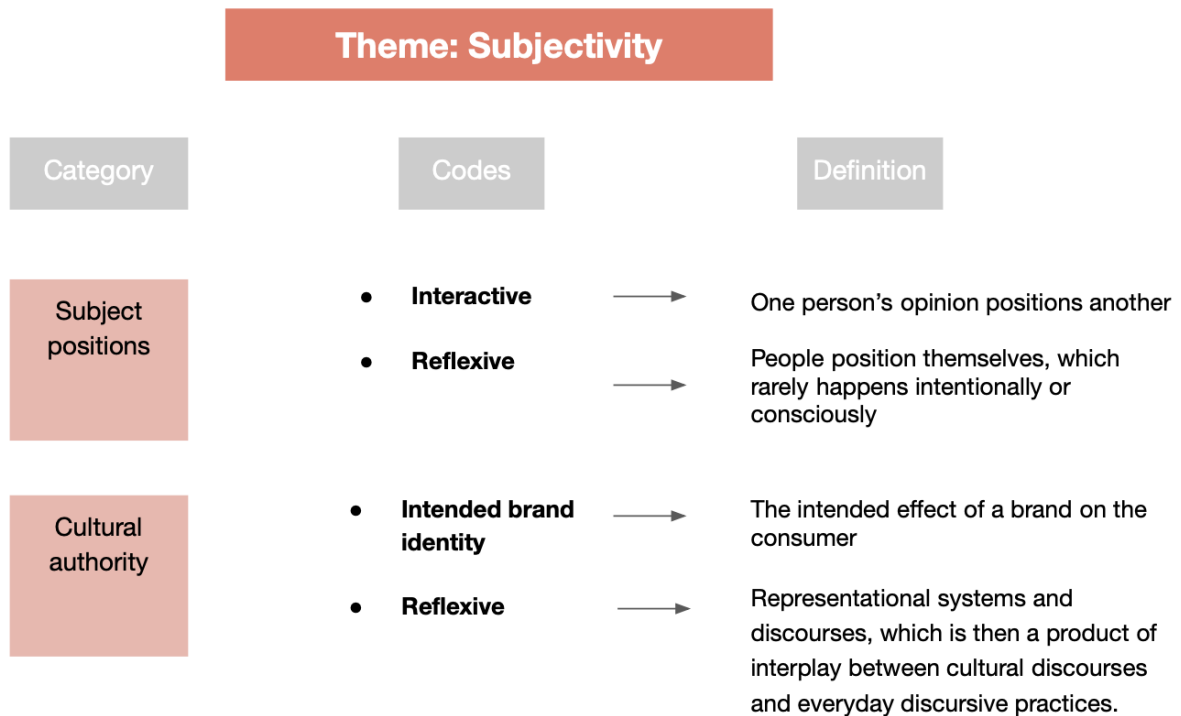


Figure 4. Code Chart Subjectivity

### Validity and Credibility

According to Moisander and Valtonen (2006), there is no way to transcend or break out of our historical and cultural circumstances to produce objective accounts of reality or to reproduce the meaning or intention of social actors. To overcome this uncertainty in research with a cultural approach, the criteria of good research are not discovered but rather negotiated (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). This is then derived from community consensus among researchers on what is trustworthy and useful. Moreover, what has meaning for action and further steps?

Despite in any case the lack of certain final ultimate criteria, it does not mean that in qualitative cultural research 'anything goes' (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). While there is no definite solution for the problem of validity in cultural research, researchers constantly make judgments, which is necessary. Following Silverman (1993), social science can overcome relativism by making three contributions to society: participation in debates about public policy, provide people with new opportunities to make their own choices, and offer new perspectives to practitioners and other social actors.

### ***Validity in Cultural Research***

Moisander and Valtonen (2006) point out that this also applies in cultural marketing and consumer research. So, cultural marketing and consumer research go against the notion of knowledge as a value-free search for causal accounts of phenomena, which then can be empirically tested and confirmed against observation using all the available or representative evidence (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Validity is problematic in this context as an ultimate truth cannot be reached with any method about the state of social life.

However, questions of validity cannot be dismissed. Since this thesis is based, like most cultural research, on an understanding of a topic founded in a cultural construction in a complex network of powers and is thus not value-free, objectivity or objective truth do not seem appropriate (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Objectivity and accuracy are subjected to negotiation and argument as well as there being no access to the truth about social reality. Therefore, improving validity through systematic methods for analyzing data, assessment, and accounting for the impact of the actual context, are crucial. Moreover, transparency from the researcher is imperative, applying this to the methodology, setting, and being aware of the context (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). By using specific techniques and protocols, researchers can develop more nuanced and interesting interpretations and accounts.

In this research, the coding process is done through the theory and conceptual framework, thus all interviews have the same coding book. By analyzing and comparing all interviews, despite possible deviations from interview protocol, allows for a systematic method for analyzing the data and assessing and accounting for the impact of the context and researcher (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

Furthermore, as realities are culturally constructed and also account for these realities as cultural constructions (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), the sample of this research will consist of multiple cultural contexts. By providing a cultural context from multiple regions across the world, the results are not from one single social reality but rather a co-construction from multiple perspectives. This approach provides a framework of multiple social realities, improving validity as it gives more nuanced and interesting interpretations and accounts of the research topic (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

### ***Reliability in Qualitative Research***

Considering the logic of reliability, namely the replicability of the research by other researchers and coming up with the same results, qualitative researchers often are transparent

about the research process by describing the methodological approaches and processes in a detailed manner (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In cultural research, it is highly unlikely and impossible to produce research with consistent results of social reality. The transparency of methodological processes is specified primarily to evaluate the quality of the study drawn from the conclusions.

Additionally, theoretical transparency also plays an important role in cultural research. By taking an explicit theoretical stance, the position of the interpretations of the results can be taken into account. The theory and conceptual framework also produce a particular standpoint and excludes others. Thus, the theoretical stance should be made clear.

For the first sub-question, the authenticity of Vredenburg et al., (2020) is of importance. Here, the criteria of authentic brand activism are adhered to and compared to the answers of the participants. Moreover, in terms of females in F1, Tippett (2019) is used as it provides a solid framework of females within the sport. The role of women being passive or active in F1 is further questioned as Martin et al., (2006), Lumsden (2010), and Tippett (2019) all had different conclusions of females being in a hypermasculine activity or environment.

Keeping the second sub-question in mind, brand co-construction by consumers as researched by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and Schembri and Latimer (2016) tell that an intended brand meaning by marketers does not have to be the interpretation of the consumers. This thesis explores whether this is the case of F1. How the co-construction of the F1 brand takes place through female fans, if it does at all, is discussed. Also, iconic brands are able to hold their authoritative position (Holt, 2002; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), so this research further explores this in F1.

Looking at subjectivity, Moisander & Valtonen (2006) play an important part. Mainly looking at the participant's positioning within the cultural context as well as whether this position is interactive or reflexive. Moreover, Wilkinson and Young (2005) have touched upon the importance of theory and practice to understand the necessary match between normative theories of marketing and the types of environment in which they are effective and appropriate and those in which they are not. The normative theories for one environment will not necessarily work in the other or have limited relevance (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). Seeing how this translates to each participant will further the understanding of the participant's positioning.



#### **4. Results**

The main research question of this thesis is as follows: what is the female consumer's view of Formula One's initiative "We Race As One"? To answer this research question, two sub-questions were developed. The first sub-question is: "to what extent is F1 brand activism perceived as effective?" and the second sub-question is: "how are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?".

Three main points are used to answer these questions. Firstly, there is The Boys Club. Here, hypermasculinity takes a central role, where it is explored how female F1 fans find where they fit into the masculine world of Formula One and its community. Secondly, is The Girls Club. In this section, the interaction of female F1 fans and the world of F1 is analyzed as female F1 fans shift and own their place in this environment, where "We Race As One" plays an important part. Lastly, The Future is Female (and More) is used to delve into how female F1 fans examine their place within the sport in the upcoming years.

##### **The Boys Club**

In this section, the female disposition and the female role is discussed within the theme of hypermasculinity. From the interviews, all of the participants indicated that, while Formula One is seen by the general public as masculine and as a men sport, they have no problem with this perspective. Moreover, when asked if they ever felt excluded by F1, no participant indicated that this was the case at any point. While all participants agreed on the fact that F1 being viewed as a man sport is not bothersome, arguments as to why did differ between participants. One interviewee said that she did not mind that it is a masculine sport, she did add that the marketing was troubling:

I would say that I don't mind that it's a masculine sport, where like, it's very like catered to men. Because I can understand that. I just don't like the fact that it is always marketed as like a men's sport because it's not. (Manon, 22).

Comments similar to this were linked to identity where participants indicate that they connect their identity with their own representational system and not that of Formula One or the community surrounding it. She pointed out further how "there's female drivers, like maybe not in Formula One, but ... in the other competitions." Other participants made the argument that they got into Formula One knowing it was already a men sport, with Alessandra (18) saying that it is the same way in soccer.

On the other hand, Lara (20) commented how the new, younger generation of drivers bring a lot of new fans with them, mainly women. According to her it showed how the sport is changing:

“It definitely had a lot of trouble being something for women too, for a lot of years, I think it was just advertised towards men. But now I see it as maybe the new drivers coming in, they brought a lot of women into F1” (Lara, 20)

She goes on to give the example of Lando Norris, saying he “brought a lot of fans” and how “most of them are women”. When asked about some of the changes she has witnessed in recent years, she comments how the type of content of Formula One is different, where they talk more about the drivers than previously. Also including the We Race As One initiative, she finds that that was a way to include women in the sport, but saying she doesn’t “agree with the way they're doing it”.

Under the code rituals, most quotations refer to participants telling the story of how they got into Formula One as a consumer. Most participants indicated that they got into the sport due to their fathers or other male figures watching the sport when they were younger, and it therefore become a ritual. In later years, participants indicated that they either started watching on their own or are still watching with their fathers. Moreover, due to their fathers or other male figures watching, they not only developed an interest in the sport but also further researched the history of the sport and teams and went on social media to find more about the drivers.

Another interviewee (28) expressed how women might be luckier than men by being able to like and do manly activities, while men cannot do the same the other way around, especially in regard to the merchandise of F1. This is then linked to empowerment as females can be empowered more than men. Furthermore, when asked about the manly view on F1, she replied:

No not really. On the contrary, actually, I am not expecting for a woman to drive in Formula One, to be honest. But to me, it's just so exciting seeing how little by little women are starting to get included in the sport. Whether it's as engineer, as team principal. I mean even the girlfriends of the drivers nowadays play such a bigger role than they used to in the past (A, 28)

She further explained that while females playing an active role within F1 will most likely remain limited on the grid itself, the women associated with the drivers are nowadays able to build a brand on their own, thanks to the acclaimed fame they now have. This agrees with Lumsden (2010), who said that women within the car culture have negotiated their position within the masculine environment. Nevertheless, as Manon (22) indicates, F1 does not necessarily have to be a man sport. Following her reasoning, the conclusion of Lumsden (2010), where females have to adopt hegemonic boy racer characteristics does not ring true. According to A. (28), the active role of females in F1 is claimed by the drivers' girlfriends which are accepted by the F1 community as well as the drivers within the sport.

However, while all participants indicate having no problem participating in a male-dominated activity, most of the interviewees who are active on social media did say that they got negative responses from male fans online. This is linked to disempowerment, a passive role, and interactive positioning, as females are pushed into a diminishing role by males. Some participants indicated that it was worse when they just started to become active online and the negative responses have become fewer, others indicate that negativity from males is still present. Phoebe (24) is part of a Facebook group and talking about the commercialization of the sport, she said that some people within the Facebook groups are "toxic" and have "not bad, but ... not appropriate, not PC opinions".

A negative experience due to a bigger audience is also shared by A. (28) that while men are accepting women in F1, she has also received more hate comments since her blog has become more popular, explaining how men comment, as she is a woman, she is only posting about F1 to gain visibility. She also explains how she ignores and deletes all negative comments on her blog and does not let any comment, good or bad, get to her, indicating that how people "start getting depressed or lacking confidence". This is connected to empowerment, as she was able to empower herself as a female despite commentary from other people.

Furthermore, the passive position of women in a masculine environment (Martin et al., 2016) is explained by Yara (19) who has experienced negative comments from men ever since she opened her website and Instagram account. She says she feels very passionate about it because it "disturbs" her as men "try to minimize our role in the sport" and say "we are attracted to a certain driver" and saying that is the reason to watch Formula One. She points out that "so many girls" are also "technically and strategically" involved in the sport.

Phoebe (28) explains how people position other people into a certain perspective that is, most of the time, not accurate. In regard to driver Lewis Hamilton, the first and only black

driver on the grid, she says: “the people who like Oh, if you don't like Lewis, then you're racist or Lewis isn't the GOAT because of his color”. Here, she explains how frustrating having an opinion or supporting a certain driver can be, especially being female. Alessandra (18) shared the same frustration, as she tells how males respond to her being a fan of driver Lando Norris:

I just said that I'm a Formula One fan and that I like the Lando Norris and I support him is just totally different. But he cannot just put everybody in a box. You say like oh she's a Lando Norris fan because he is attractive. Because if we're talking about attractive guys I wouldn't watch Formula One, because I can just go somewhere else you know. (Alessandra, 18)

As Jane's (21) account was mainly focused on fashion, she decided to start a separate Instagram account that focused on Formula One. She tells how she at the beginning on her social media account received bad comments through her stories. According to Jane, she would only respond through sarcasm and has now received fewer bad comments.

Brony (33) explains how F1 is about being the best driver, regardless of gender. Her involvement as a fan of the sport has to do with her liking “the speed” and “technical” knowledge that makes F1 interesting. Therefore, being a fan of F1 is not due to finding social roles as a female constraining, but participants did find it constraining to be put into that role by other male fans. Here, it is linked to the codes active and identity, as females are taking an active role due to their identity.

### ***Grid Girls***

From the interviews, it seems that the female opinion on the concept of grid girls is divisive between participants, with a slight majority leaning towards grid girls not being problematic. Thus, more participants thought that grid girls were a free choice by the women themselves, while on the other hand, other participants indicated how they did not like the grid girls and thought that it was a sexualized image of females on the grid. Here, the theme subjectivity takes a central role as through an interactive or reflexive subject position (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), realities of the female consumers are constructed in combination with hypermasculinity.

The reasoning as to how they came to their opinion did vary among most participants. A couple of participants indicated that being a grid girl was merely a job. These participants

stressed how a grid girl is a job for models and does, therefore, not vary greatly from other modeling jobs such as Victoria's Secret. However, some participants addressed the fact that it was the choice of the grid girl to be put in that role, thereby declaring that the grid girls know what the job entailed when they took it. Both angles were linked to the code choice as participants made it clear that grid girls were there by their own choosing, with the nuance being whether this was interpreted as a negative, disempowerment, or positive connotation, thus empowerment. Another participant pointed out the same fact, although with different reasoning, saying the following:

Women can wear whatever they want, wherever they want. It should be men, the ones that should be educated. But in this case, I think it's sexualizing. But I don't think it's wrong for Formula One. Formula One was looking for girls. For me, in my opinion, I get that the women would lose their jobs because they were the ones that were accepting to be sexualized and to be seen as an object. (A., 28)

So, while she did accept that women should have their own choice and freedom in their personal choices, the grid girls were still a sexualized image that went too far. She was also the only participant who brought up the fact that the problem of the sexualization of the grid girls was not that of fans, but of Formula One itself. She further explained how there are different degrees between models, where some in high fashion are more likely to be taken more seriously than the women choosing to model in low brow consumption. She said: "You're coming here to be sexualized, not even to be treated as a woman, more like the trophy of the man or whatever, so you can't expect ... in a big company if that is against probably their policies" (A., 28).

The passive role of the grid girl (Tippett, 2019) was further confirmed when most participants referred to grid girls not having a role multiple times between interviewees. Most consumers pointed out that this passive role did bother them, especially combined with the sexualized image they had.

Some participants also alluded to the fact the sexualization of the grid girls, and therefore the perception of them to the consumer, is not that of Formula One or the grid girls, Rather the blame would be on the public itself as they are the ones who conceived this perception, according to them. Yara (19) said that "they promote stuff, they promote sponsors, their job is to talk with a lot of people in the paddock alongside drivers, but it's up to us, it's how people saw them that made FIA and Formula One ban them". Here, the passive

role of the female is due to the brand co-construction of the consumer, mainly the symbols of how the consumer has co-constructed the image of the grid girls in Formula One.

However, this particular brand co-construction is not the case of other interviewees. There were also a couple of participants who did not mind the passive role. Brony (33) explained how she found that the grid girls were not a bad thing as “they were just standing there”, saying how “it was their choice” and “they wanted to be there, and they knew all the people will look at them”. Participants who shared the same opinion all found that they felt indifferent towards the grid girls. Thus, participants who did not find the grid girls problematic, often found it was the choice of the models that put them in that position. Thus, while the symbol of stayed the same, the co-construction to make sense of everyday life (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) does differ.

Furthermore, when asked about grid girls and empowerment, most participants agreed that being a grid girl is not an empowered move, whether they agreed with the concept or not. Most found that, while understanding the grid girls’ opinion of finding their jobs empowering (Tippett, 2019), participants did not agree. Some participants pointed out that it is not empowering to be a grid girl, referring to the fact that it was merely their job. Others believed that, again, consumers made that sexualized image, and therefore disempowering the image of the grid girls.

Two participants also mentioned how the role of the grid girls behind the scenes was not discussed publicly when they left the sport. In light of the #MeToo movement, both participants point out that there might be more going on that the public knows about. It is noteworthy to mention that these claims were never mentioned by F1, the press, or the grid girls. However, it does show how females F1 fans are wary of the masculine environment and the role that the grid girls played within that world.

All participants did agree that the ban of the grid girls came as no surprise. “The world is changing” as well as that “it was a matter of time”, indicating that whether they agreed or disagreed with the concept of the grid girls, all participants were aware of the fact that the concept would be forced out of the sport due to sociopolitical reasons. So while these issues do show divisiveness between female F1 fans (Moorman, 2020) caused by an individual assigned to a position in their constructed reality (Davies & Harré, 1990), all interviewees do realize that these sociopolitical issues take the forefront in the sport at this moment.

## **The Girls Club**

F1's initiative "We Race As One" was received well by all participants as this section focuses on brand co-construction, and takes a closer look at the relationship between brand and consumer as well as brand activism. According to most interviewees, the initiative showed goodwill and intentions from F1's side, as most fans indicated a desire for more females in the sport. Other participants also mentioned the want and need for more diversity in general in Formula One. Some participants also demonstrated how the initiative helped them be educated on the Black Lives Matter movement and the inequality within the sport and in society as well. One participant does express concern about the initiative, explaining how it possibly might overtake the importance of quality of the sport as people can be chosen based on their gender or ethnicity.

Besides this, most participants were quick to point out that while the initiative is good and should be there, they question how it is put into practice. Therefore, quotations were linked to authentic as the authenticity of the initiative was questioned often. Over the last season, most participants felt that it was there for show and it can therefore be interpreted as performative brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). One participant made the following comment on the matter, saying:

I just think it's very interesting how they say Oh, We Race As One but they race in countries where there are like seemingly human rights violations. And the We Race As one is like you know, it looks like a rainbow right for like the LGBTQ people. You know well in Russia you can't be gay, in the Middle East you can't be gay. (Phoebe, 24)

Here, she raised a point that multiple participants expressed their distrust in F1 as a brand to have follow-through on their commitment through the "We Race As One" initiative. Manon (22) pointed out that there seemed to be a need to announce this initiative in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and driver Lewis Hamilton's critique on F1. And that there is not diversity shown through ethnicity at all, saying "if you look at every single race, like, when they film the garages of like the teams, what do you see? It's mainly men. It's, if there's women, they're white. Men are white. There's no diversity whatsoever". Comments similar to this, discussing the pressure Formula One must have felt to launch the initiative was coded with brand authority as the brand is able to push through the will of the initiative by still not fully connecting with "We Race As One" according to most participants.

For instance, Ana (34) addressed four points that go directly against the initiative and explains her frustration with the sport of dealing with the issues they have. She explained how “you have the Nikita Mazepin, you have the deal with Aramco, ... we have the GP in Saudi Arabia. And then you have a guy named Vitali Petrov” who commented on Lewis Hamilton being vocal about Black Lives Matter saying “that he didn't like that kind of behavior and they are like obligating all of the people to be gay”.

Moreover, a majority of the interviewees expressed how Lewis Hamilton has been the pinnacle for the initiative as “he was a victim of racism” (Alessandra, 18) from the start of his career. After more than a decade in the sport and only raising these issues now, shows how difficult it is to be in the sport and voice concerns, according to the interviewees. One interviewee expressed how Hamilton was only able to speak out about this topic and raise concern was due to the fact of his achievements in the sport, saying that if he was not as successful as he is right now, he would not have been able to be as vocal about it as he is now.

Another concern raised by some participants are the activities by F1 to put the initiative into practice. As the initiative “We Race As One” alludes, the lack of unity within the sport, also mentioned by Lewis Hamilton, causes concern among the participants as multiple interviewees point out that what the initiative does in practice, is not that much. Participants can seem to only recall that the drivers take a knee before the race and have a minute of silence as a fight against racism. However, as participants point out, not all drivers kneel. The fact that this cannot be done unanimously, is only further proof for some participants how performative the initiative feels towards fans.

This means that while the self-brand identification among consumers seems to be high (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), the individual’s positioning in relation to brand activism results, in this case, in a lack of authenticity due to failing of practical relevance of the initiative in the sport.

So while willingness is high amongst the participants, the belief in the initiative is questionable as most indicate a desire for change but the follow-through of the sport is doubted. Moreover, the divisiveness that Moorman (2020) indicates, is somewhat present as some consumers are hesitant towards sociopolitical correctness versus the quality of the sport.

### ***Commercialization of F1***

Subjectivity and brand co-construction both play a crucial role in identifying the needs of the female consumer regarding the belief of the motivation behind the initiative. During the interviews, some participants also expressed how the “We Race As One” feels like a draw for



a bigger audience or due to having a bigger audience compared to a few years ago. It falls back to the earlier point where participants indicated that the sport needs to change as the world is also changing. One participant pointed out how she felt the initiative was targeting one particular group of people, and therefore excluding other issues in the world.

Participants were also quick to point out that Formula One is a business and businesses need money to keep growing. Multiple participants referred to this as “cash is king”. Here, the codes values and brand authority are linked as the brand shows their authority towards its consumers going against the initiative at times. This then portrays the values that consumers connect to the brand and co-construct the brand further.

One participant expressed how she felt that F1 has always felt like an exclusive, elite sport where drivers are just drivers. She said that nowadays “everything has to be like monetizable. So that’s then, they started making the driver into celebrities”. She further goes on that F1 felt as if that was not enough and therefore brought more young people into the sport. She explains how including women felt the same way, and while she felt it is amazing, it was not done with the intention of being inclusive but that “they’re doing it with the purpose of reaching bigger audiences to make more money”. Her explanation as to why it is happening lies in social media, where “everyone gets offended over everything” (A., 28).

Besides wanting to draw a bigger audience, most participants also shared how they found that money within the sport is an important factor to become a F1 driver. So, wanting to be inclusive in the sport is important to most interviewees, they all acknowledged how being talented is not the only thing you need in the sport as money is also important. Thus, while the quality of a driver should bring you into the sport, interviewees expressed that money can also buy you a seat.

The analysis of the commercialization of Formula One mainly comes from the participants’ individual positioning within a system of representation or discourse in a field of power (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). As not every participant shared this view or mentioned this view in the interview, shows how consumers are able to co-create a new meaning not just to the brand F1 but also within the sport (Schembri & Latimer, 2016). Moreover, F1 is aware of the need for more diversity and inclusivity and is thus trying to compensate through the initiative (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). Although female fans are not entirely convinced F1 does it because the brand wants to be inclusive, rather wants to be attractive to a bigger audience by giving the perception of being inclusive and diverse.

### ***F1 and Inclusivity: Nikita Mazepin***

Talking about the Nikita Mazepin scandal, there seems to be a divide between female fans, mostly due to subjectivity and normativity affecting the view of hypermasculinity in this case. While all participants showed consensus on the fact that what Mazepin did was wrong, the consequences of these actions were interpreted differently among each participant. The majority of the participants feel that he has been punished enough and should not be blamed and hated against anymore because of his actions, while other participants said that F1 and Haas did not do enough and “no one is actively taking a stance against him” (Manon, 22). Especially those who find that there needs to be more action taking against him from F1 were fierce and vocal about their disappointment in F1 in handling the situation. Manon (22) said the following on the matter:

Because you have the entire diversity campaign, you have this campaign where you're like oh equality for all. But then you have this chance to show your diversity protocols .... And then you don't banish this guy that has posted a video of himself like, assaulting a woman, you say no we're handling it internally. Like that is the most performative action ever. (Manon, 22)

Other participants who shared the same opinion were equally as passionate about the lack of action from Formula One's side. Ana (34) explained how she found it “very emotional” and “very painful” to see a driver do this with the lack of consequences that followed, according to her. She goes on to say that it took her a week to post on her Instagram about the incident and that she “does not agree with him being in Formula One” and “can't imagine how the girls working Haas must feel”. She says that she knows why he is still there and that it is money related as he brings the money to the team. This is a point that every participant brought up when talking about this topic, saying that Mazepin is in F1 in the first place because they “knew that they had to accept the money from, like, Mazepin's daddy otherwise they wouldn't be able to race that year” (Phoebe, 24).

On the other hand, there was the majority of the participants who expressed their dislike towards the hate Mazepin is getting on social media at the moment. One participant noted how #WeSayNoToMazepin was used under social media posts after the death of someone in the team of Haas.

One factor as to why Mazepin's actions should not be a further problem that was mentioned multiple times was that his actions were done on his personal time and therefore, has nothing to do with his professional life. The point was made by the majority of the

participants that the video is separate from what he does in his career and should thus not be judged or punished in his professional career. Some participants pointed out that he deserves a second chance and that he has learned his lessons. Another participant made a point that the public does not know exactly what happened and should therefore not only blame him. Furthermore, she said that it was not that problematic as people made out to be because “who hasn't gotten her boob grabbed by somebody, you know”. Two participants also pointed out that she was not raped, thus the public therefore should not make it bigger than it actually is.

When asked whether the “We Race As One” initiative still rings true and effective after the incident, most participants feel that these two entities are able to exist next to each other. This was linked to the code authentic as the authenticity of the initiative was either questioned or further established. One participant notes how “the behavior of Mazepin had nothing to do with ... all the drivers and the sport in general” (Jane, 21). Some participants say that they did not make a connection between the Nikita Mazepin incident and the initiative at all.

However, the interviewees who believe that the consequences should have been more severe do say that the initiative comes across as less effective and authentic after the scandal. Lara (20) expresses her frustration as Formula One released a video with the drivers talking about We Race As One, featuring Nikita Mazepin. She finds it “so hypocritical”, while accentuating the fact that she found that Formula One went about it all wrong, saying:

“... You just cannot do things like hiring a driver that had all those past actions, you know, or just announcing a race in a country that is so against everything that they are telling the We Race As One initiative. So I just don't think it was the right approach.” (Lara, 20)

As opinions of both sides are far apart from each other as well as each side having several different arguments as to why subjectivity plays an important role. Here, the normative angle of each subjective opinion shows how cultural values, and thus premises on nature (Rothenberger et al., 2016) differs among multiple cultures around the world. One normative theory does not work in the other (Wilkinson & Young, 2005), as shown through these interviews. As each participant is from a different country and different continents, the interviewees have constructed their own representation and discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), despite having a consensus on the incident at question.

## **The Future is Female (And More)**

All participants expressed a desire for more females in the sport. Hypermasculinity and subjectivity play a big role in how the female consumer co-construct this want and need within the sport. However, some interviewees are fast to indicate that the realistic prospect of having females, particularly drivers, in the near future, or ever, seems very unlikely. Other participants feel it might be possible as the fans and people within the sport want the change and the initiative being a good step forward. Quotations around this topic mostly existed out of representation and intended brand identity. As most found representation important but are aware of the realistic chances of it happening as Formula One is attracting females, indicating the intended brand identity but not truly fulfilling it according to most.

The most common opinion stated across all interviews was the desire for more prominent roles for women within the sport, as participants feel that this has not been the case as of yet. An example that was mentioned several times by participants was former Williams team principal Claire Williams. She is often mentioned as a pillar and example that having women in Formula One, and in a prominent role, is indeed feasible. Moreover, the point was made that when looking “at the pit wall, there are not a lot of girls” (Jane, 21). More women in the engineering side of F1 is a strong desire by all participants, including having a woman in charge such as a team principal.

Some participants point out that other sports have different leagues and competitions for each gender and that it might be for the best if Formula One did this as well. These interviewees refer back to genetics and the biology of women, saying that, while they would love to see it, maybe different competitions are not the worst solution. One participant elaborates on this point, saying:

Maybe I'm very unfemale by saying this, in all the other sports right, males and females are in like different categories. Because you know they have different capabilities. Like, maybe you could argue that the car kind of cancels that out, but maybe it doesn't. (Phoebe, 24)

She explains further how the audience has never seen a woman competing against a man and can therefore not be compared. She goes on to say how “maybe they just are different ... not worse but just different”. Other participants seem to agree on this point, saying that maybe it is for the best not to have a woman as a driver as she would be greatly criticized for every mistake and action she does. They point out it might be better not to

subject any woman to that environment. An interviewee then opted for a female reserve driver in the near future, as she felt that was a more attainable goal for F1.

Two participants are concerned about diversity and inclusion affecting the quality of drivers on the grid. One interviewee explains how certain quotas have already affected the movie industry and does not want F1 to be subjected to the same principle, saying “it should be about talent, not about color”. The other interviewee pointed out how she would “would love to see a new female driver first” but adding that “if they had a really wrong performance, if they did a bad performance, I can agree to the fact that she's not good”.

Building further on this, the two participants from Lebanon expressed their desire for more equal chances from people who are from countries like theirs. One participant said that “if you stay here, you cannot dream”, exemplifying how the initiative can not only be great for getting females into the sport, but also young children and offering them more opportunities than there are now.

Besides the majority wanting to see more female representation in the sport, some participants also noted that diversity in ethnicity is also an aspiration. Mainly resulting from the fact that Lewis Hamilton is still the only black driver on the grid, and with the arrival of rookie Yuki Tsunoda, a step in the right direction was made. One participant noted how there is a lack of diversity as most people in F1 are Western European. Other interviewees made similar observations, saying that gender equality is important, but ethnic diversity is just as important for the sport to keep developing.

Moreover, a couple of participants indicate the desire for the grid to represent the variety of fans as the sport is not doing that right now. Ana (34) says the following about this:

“They don't represent the variety of the fans, you know. Because you have gay fans, you have straight fans, you have the LGBT community that like Formula One, you have women that are really vocal about Formula One. ... but you don't see a lot of that in F1.” (Ana, 34)

When talking about the impact of the “We Race As One” initiative, most participants agreed that making permanent, lasting change takes time. Therefore, while the need for change in the sport is prominent, most interviewees acknowledge that this will take years for Formula One to make a change where women will have a notable role within the sport.

All in all, the section The Boys Club concludes that female F1 consumers do not find it constraining to be part of a masculine environment and are not bothered by its definition. However, most have had negative experiences and being stereotyped due to being a female.

The Girl Club section shows how females have taken back their power in a masculine environment and are able to criticize and analyze their position and those of others in the world of F1. Lastly, this female empowerment comes back in the last section, as it is highlighted how the female consumer expressed their desires for more diversity and equality in the sport, despite the hesitations and doubts that come with that decision.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the last chapter of the thesis, the answer to the main research question and the sub-questions are going to be defined and constructed cohesively. First, the effectiveness of the initiative is going to be highlighted, followed by the co-construction of F1 and We Race As One. Furthermore, the social and practical implications are going to be discussed as well as the limitations of the research. To conclude, considerations for future research on this topic are analyzed.

### **The Effectiveness of We Race As One**

To answer the main question “How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?”, two sub-questions were created to get a deeper understanding of the female consumer in the world of Formula One. The first sub-question is “To what extent is F1 brand activism perceived as effective?”. Here, the initiative was received well by female consumers, indicating a need for change in the sport. However, when following Vredenburg et al. (2020), authenticity which entails mutually reinforcing and supportive brand purpose, values, messaging, and corporate practice, the participants indicate a lack of or complete absence of authenticity.

As authenticity lies in three characteristics (Vredenburg et al., 2020), Formula One manages to mostly not validate all three, if any, of these according to most participants. Through the results, it becomes clear that female consumers want to have shared values, rituals, and symbols (Gambetti et al., 2014) with the brand Formula One, but cannot find any in the practicality of the We Race As One initiative. And while these characteristics are constantly co-constructed, nurtured, and negotiated, the female consumer tends to find themselves in new roles through the brand but finds it unsatisfactory. This is caused by the meanings the consumers attach to the initiative, which is something else than the intended message due to the process of negotiation of cultural surroundings and the social environment (Schroeder, 2009).

The interconnectivity that exists between brands and consumers nowadays also provides a complex environment (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). The uncertainty of brands, in this case Formula One, causes them to take action as it was felt from a normative angle in society, according to participants. While the female consumers do want the normative angle to change in the sport through transforming ideals, values, and strategies, the subjectivity of the consumer results in a representational system and discourse in Formula One some do not agree with. Especially in relation to quality versus quantity – relating to the amount of female

and ethnic-diverse drivers – there is a reluctance to accept the changing environment due to the initiative if quantity overrides quality, specifically concerning “We Race As One”.

The authenticity of the initiative is further examined through the participants’ individual positioning within a system of representation or discourse in a field of power (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Here, the commercialization of the sport is taken as an important factor by the female consumer, for the brand to introduce the initiative. The need for diversity and equality in Formula One was fueled by pressure from consumers and other sports. Participants found that the change in the sport is mainly due to societal pressure rather than the brand’s own values and ideals. The ‘cash is king’ comment was repeated often as a way to indicate how Formula One heavily relies on financial income and backing from sponsors as consumers find the initiative more often found that the initiative stemmed from this purpose only.

### **Brand Co-construction in Autosport**

In the next section, the concept of brand co-construction in relation to the sport and the initiative is discussed as subjectivity and normativity play a big role in consumers’ reality. The second sub-question “How are F1 and We Race As One co-constructed through the view of female consumers?” further explores the topic. It is first answered how female consumers co-construct Formula One and then the latter part of the sub-question, how the initiative “We Race As One” is co-constructed is examined.

#### ***Co-construction of F1***

Most participants first got interested in Formula One through family, all men. This correlates with how the sport is viewed by the female consumers, as all know Formula One is a men's sport. However, almost all participants are not bothered by this except for one. Especially the new generation of drivers comes with a new generation of fans, which exists out of a significant number of women according to participants.

It is evident from the interviews that the female consumer follow Davies and Harré (1990), where the specific position they take, largely determines the conditions of possibility for acting and constructing realities. Furthermore, the representational systems and discourses (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) are formed by the female consumer, resulting in taking a new position in a masculine environment where they chose not to adhere to conformities and find empowerment in the hypermasculinity (Courtenay, 2000; Lumsden, 2010; Tippet, 2019) found in their surroundings.



As the larger part of the participants are active on social media via their Instagram accounts which are mostly dedicated to F1, they can also be considered co-creators. This follows the theory of Pongsakornrungrungsilp and Schroeder (2011) and Schembri and Latimer (2016) where consumers attach their own meanings to brand messages and consumption of brands. By creating their own meaning on F1 through posts and stories, they are actively involved in brand meaning-making as well as showing their own meaning to the rest of the F1 community. It also results in the consumer creating their own reality and subjectivity as an instrument and condition for agency (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

The negative experience being a female consumer of Formula One mainly comes from other male consumers. Here, males are often condescending towards the female consumer, especially at the start of a social media account on a platform or in chatgroups. Lumsden (2010) has pointed out how women have to negotiate their way through the car culture and employ complex combinations of compliance, resistance, and cooperation with the masculine values of the group. The same aspect applies to the female consumer of Formula One, as they have to negotiate why and how they are consuming the sport and often have to defend their opinions and views on the sport and drivers as it is not accepted as valid oftentimes in the first instance.

The hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) displayed in Formula One through grid girls (Tippett, 2019) was also discussed and resulted in a division between participants. There was a slight majority that found the grid girls not problematic where the motivation as to how they came to this conclusion varies among the consumers. Some participants followed Tippett (2019), where the grid girls present a self-sufficient right where these women chose to be in this role as reflective of subjectivity. However, most did note that they found that they did not find it a symbol of empowerment to be a grid girl but accepted that the grid girls themselves could potentially see it that way.

Those female consumers who were opposed to the grid girls found the role passive (Tippett, 2019) and sexualizing. The submissive role of the grid girls was found inappropriate by most participants, as some noted to be empowering as a female, it has more impact to be working in the teams as a mechanic or engineer. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) noted how male traits are dominating over female traits, which the grid girls is a confirmation according to some female consumers. The passive role indicates a submissive position of the grid girls in question, following the reasoning of the participants who indeed disagreed with the grid girls.

The difference between the participants is due to the co-construction and subjectivity. The cause of the differences cannot be found in age, as the older participants did not share the same opinion regarding the grid girls, and the same going for the younger participants. In terms of cultural differences, the differences in Europe and Latin America can be found as well, as participants in each continent also disagreed on the grid girls. As Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) noted, the geographic community can be simulated or replicated virtually, and the brand co-construction does therefore not need to be restricted on location only. As most participants are active online, it indicates that the online brand co-construction has a significant influence.

Schroeder (2009) also already alluded that brand co-construction is a process of negotiation between the marketing domain, cultural surroundings, and the social environment. Both of these theories ring true, as female fans attach their own meaning to what it is like being a female F1 fan. Furthermore, while some fans within the same cultural network do not find that females have a legitimate place within F1, female fans negotiate their place within the social environment and cultural surroundings.

These findings also confirm that the conclusion of Martin et al. (2006) where women who choose a hypermasculine context for their identity work, do so because of finding traditional feminine social roles to be constraining, limiting, and chafing, is mostly untrue in the case of Formula One. None of the consumers found it constraining to be put in feminine social roles, only in the context of Formula One itself. Especially in the case when they are put there according to other male fans, thus in an interactive subject positioning (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Some noted how empowering they would feel to be a part of the sport. On the other hand, some participants indicate that F1 does not have to be viewed or marketed as a male sport in general.

### ***Co-construction of We Race As One***

The latter part of the second sub-question and how female consumers co-construct the initiative We Race As One was done through the Nikita Mazepin scandal. There was a consensus among the participants that what Mazepin did was wrong. However, in the follow-through of Formula One in terms of consequences created, once again, a division. While some participants found that he had not been punished enough, the majority of participants found that Formula One handled correctly as his actions had nothing to do with the sport as it happened in his personal time, according to the interviewees.

The majority of the participants, therefore, did not necessarily connect the incident with the We Race As One initiative. The participants who believed that not enough action was taken by Formula One regarding Nikita Mazepin did point out that it reflected badly on the initiative. Most of these participants previously already stated that they found the initiative inauthentic and ineffective. However, other female consumers that shared the latter statement, found that Formula One handled it correctly. Thus, the production of symbols and meanings by consumers that are incorporated into the system of representation in which people act and make sense of their everyday life (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), can differ greatly among female consumers, meaning that while one consumer can fall into different categories.

Here, the normative angle of each subjective opinion shows how cultural values, and thus premises on nature (Rothenberger et al., 2016) differs among multiple cultures around the world, as one normative theory in a specific environment does not work in another environment (Wilkinson & Young, 2005). As each participant is from a different country and different continents, the interviewees have constructed their own representation and discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), despite having a consensus on the incident at question.

It correlates with Miller (2016) who indicated the difficulty of diversifying within Formula One. However, contrary to Miller (2016), the impossibility of activism properly mandated proofs to be insufficient as Formula One has taken a public sociopolitical stance. The results of lack of changing attitudes among motorsport fans does not go for female Formula One consumers as the attitude towards the sport has changed. The want and desire to change was there and Formula One did so with the announcement of the initiative. The reactions to the initiative were also in a positive manner and is a success, despite previous findings. While Miller (2016) did focus on greenwashing and not equality or diversity, the initiative is now moving towards including sustainability in the season 2021. This was well received by participants, but the practicality of the initiative was again questionable.

There seems to be a difference among participants in terms of favorable attitudes towards the initiative “We Race As One”. While all participants are in favor, the follow-through is found questionable (Mukherjee & Althuisen, 2020), as mentioned previously, among most as well as the authenticity of the initiative (Vredenburg et al., 2020). While Miller (2016) found no success among motorsport fans in terms of environmental activism, there seems to be more willingness among female F1 fans for change in the sport, especially concerning gender equality. But, as previously stated, the belief in Formula One to booking significant results, remains doubtful.

## **We Race As One Through Female Consumers**

By answering the two sub-questions, the opinions and views of female Formula One fans were brought to light. The perception of the female consumer of the initiative “We Race As One” is found to be inauthentic, and mostly a way to satisfy the rising need and desire from the consumers and society. Moreover, in terms of female unfriendly behavior by one of the drivers, most female consumers do not find that it reflects negatively on the initiative. Those that do find that it reflects poorly on Formula One and the initiative were vocal and fierce in their commentary, expressing their disappointment and some finding it a confirmation as to why the initiative does not handle its realization in practice sufficiently.

While the world of Formula One is still viewed as a men's sport and a masculine environment by most consumers, it seems that the female consumer does not feel that as a burden, or even bothersome. All participants indicate the need for change in the sport, whether it is due to societal pressure or a genuine desire to change from within Formula One. The female consumers note that the We Race As One initiative indicates that needed change within Formula One, but find the lack of follow-through or seen progress disappointing. Especially the departure of Claire Williams is a sore point as many interviewees found her to be a primary example of being a female success in the sport. Many did note that the acceptance of females within the sport has gotten better over the years, while some found that they were always accepted.

The role of mass media and social media was also found as a big part of Formula One and the initiative. Participants expressed most of the negativity they experienced through social media by mostly men and found that the internet can be a toxic place in this fanbase. Female consumers found that especially when they first expressed being a Formula One consumer, that the responses tended to be condescending and normative angles were taken by male consumers, where liking the sport was set in female traits than in male traits (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), for instance watching the sport because of finding a driver handsome and not watching because a female consumer can like the sport.

In terms of the initiative and the future of Formula One, interviewees indicated that the effect of the initiative remains to be seen as the authenticity and practical follow-through from Formula One is doubtful. All participants noted the want and need for more females in the sport. The realization of that happening in the form of a female driver is found to be improbable by most as Formula One is rooted in rich, white males according to the female consumers. Female participation does not have to be as a female driver but also as a team

principal, mechanic, engineer, or strategist. The most important factor to the female consumer is that females get a more prominent role in the sport where they can be visible. The interviewees also indicated that the same goes for other parts of society that are currently not represented in the sport, such as more ethnicities and LGBTQ community representation.

### **Societal and practical implications**

Women in a masculine environment have mostly learned to adapt to exclusions, expectations, and conformities (Martin et al., 2006; Lumsden, 2010; Tippett, 2019). However, as indicated by Tippett (2019), the need for female empowerment has been rising and put into practice in sports such as Formula One. This thesis, however, indicates how females tend to be comfortable in their roles in Formula One, and do not feel a need to compensate or change being a female consumer in a masculine environment. Many interviewees find that the female role in the sport has changed over the years, positively.

While most female consumers indicate not to be bothered by the masculine environment of Formula One, the interaction between male and female consumers remains unequal and condescending towards the females. So, the problem of being in a masculine environment as a female consumer mostly lies, not with the brand, but with other consumers. It is noteworthy to mention that there might be a correlation of female representation and treatment in the sport for years that makes the behavior of the male consumer acceptable for the brand and the male consumer themselves.

The initiative “We Race As One” was received well by female consumers as most found that equality in the sport is one of the bigger problems. They found that Formula One was stepping up in sociopolitical issues, even though this was mainly due to seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton. The circumstances in which the initiative found its actualization was met with doubts and performative activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020) as female consumers pointed out that Formula One mainly acted due to pressure from consumers and the criticism of Lewis Hamilton on the sport. Furthermore, some participants doubt if Hamilton never spoke out or was not as prominent and important in the sport, if the initiative would have ever launched.

The need and desire for equality and diversity in Formula One seem to be heard by the brand, which mostly came as a pleasant surprise for consumers, but the execution of the initiative “We Race As One” seems to be neglected. The practical implication of the initiative is found minimal according to female consumers due to the lack of, or absence, of follow-through. Some female consumers express that it should be given more time to see the real,

actual results of the initiative, and other interviewees want the results to be seen in the immediate future. However, all agree that the effort in putting the initiative into practice with visible results is not sufficient.

Thus, doubt of the impact of the initiative is great among female consumers. Most find the initiative to be a good effort from the sport to get involved and hope this means more diversity and equality in Formula One as they are now publicly announcing their stance on sociopolitical issues for the first time. On the other hand, female consumers tend to be hesitant to believe in the lasting impact it can have on the sport as practical implications are not visible. Therefore, if Formula One wants to make a change, female consumers want to see diverse and equal teams where it is visible and empowering for younger generations watching the sport.

### **Limitations**

This thesis gives a representative image of how female consumers co-construct Formula One and its initiative “We Race As One”. However, some limitations within this research could further improve the results to give a more accurate sample of the issue at hand. One of the techniques that would give the research more validity is triangulation. By adding triangulation, such as mixed methods of interviews and critical discourse analysis on news articles, there is more nuance in the results. Triangulation in cultural research in this context, can help by overcoming partial or biased views and by looking at Formula One from multiple standpoints (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). This way, the production of a more true and certain representations of the sport can be done. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to time constraints.

Another limitation in this thesis is the representation of the female consumer in a worldview. While the research still gives an accurate description of the stance of the female consumer, there is no participants from the United States or Asia. The participants do present an accurate image due to the fact that they originate from different continents and have a wide range in age. Nonetheless, finding participants over 18 years old in the previously mentioned contents proved to be difficult. One of the reasons found as to why, might be that Formula One is not as big in these continents, especially the United States. Also, female consumers were found in Asia but did not qualify due to being underaged.

The female consumer’s perception was mainly done through fans of the sport. Therefore, parts of female consumptions were missed, such as females involved in Formula One itself. Having a female perception on the sport and the initiative from someone who

works in Formula One, could have offered more in-depth insights as to what the experience is of a female consumer inside the sport. Females in Formula One, such as PR, journalists or strategists, could have given the research more variety in terms of participants. It also potentially factors into triangulation as the research can include expert interviews as well.

### **Future Research**

This research already fills the gap in literature concerning Formula One and branding as this has not been done before. Exploring the views and opinions of female Formula One consumers is also new territory in academic literature and while this research is new in its field, certain suggestions can be helpful to further explore Formula One and its consumers.

As already mentioned previously, one interesting angle might be in researching women who are working in Formula One in different capacities and roles. It can help give a further insight, from an expert objective, to what it is like being a female in the Formula One environment. Moreover, it can help prove a deeper understanding of the change currently taking place in the sport. While female consumers as of yet have been unexplored, having the perspective of a female in the sport professionally, might help give nuance to the findings of this study.

Building further on this, in this thesis the consumer and the consumer's brand co-construction were the central focus. It can also help to have the intended brand identity researched, to help gain insight to the intentions and goals that were set from the brand's perspective. Therefore, having a deeper look into the brand management of Formula One and the intentions (Schroeder, 2009) might offer interesting new angles. Having a research that looks into Formula One's intention compared to the received interpreted messages from the female consumer can have interesting new insights that are useful for the brand. As previously stated in this thesis, there is no research done on Formula One and branding, so a research looking at this angle would be the first to do so.

Looking at the end of the female consumer was a new and interesting angle, especially in a masculine environment such as Formula One. However, there is also no research on the perception of that of the male consumer. Thus, taking the male consumer's perception in mind concerning the recent changes in the sport, such as the initiative, can offer new insights that might possible not be addressed in this research. It might be interesting to see whether there are significant differences between the interpretation of Formula One's brand identity and the initiative compared to this research.

As indicated by several participants, the impact of the initiative and the long-term changes it can bring to Formula One can only be interpreted over time. Therefore, it can be interesting to explore the initiative in a few years when it has been up and running for a longer period. The female consumer's perception of the initiative as well as Formula One are potentially changed in that time, including the changes that the sport wants to eventually make to see the follow-through of Formula One and the initiative. The opinions of most of the interviewees at this time tend to be pessimistic concerning equality and diversity in the sport. According to them, only time will tell whether the promised changes will be put into practice. It can be interesting to examine this further in a couple of years to find the impact of the "We Race As One" initiative and the state of Formula One in terms of equality and diversity.



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## Appendix A Thesis Participant List

| <b>Participants</b>      | <b>Age</b> | <b>Country</b>     | <b>Anonymous</b> |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Alessandra<br>Rufa    | 18         | Venezuela          | No               |
| 2. Phoebe<br>Mak         | 24         | United<br>Kingdom  | No               |
| 3. Manon<br>Derks        | 22         | The<br>Netherlands | No               |
| 4. A.                    | 28         | Mexico             | Yes              |
| 5. Jane<br>Thomas        | 21         | France             | No               |
| 6. Brony<br>Vasut        | 33         | Czech<br>Republic  | No               |
| 7. Ana Sara<br>Calheiros | 34         | Portugal           | No               |
| 8. Diana<br>Azrafil      | 20         | Lebanon            | No               |
| 9. Yara<br>Oneissy       | 19         | Lebanon            | No               |
| 10. Lara Maia            | 20         | Brazil             | No               |

## **Appendix B Interview Protocol**

### **Background**

- Ask for personal information:
  - Could you please introduce yourself: age, where you are from/are currently living, occupation, etc.
- How long have you been a fan of F1?
  - Potential follow-up if they have a fan account on social media: How long have you been active as a fan on social media? When did you start your account on Instagram/Facebook?
- Who is your current favorite driver? Why?
- Who is your current favorite racing team? Why?

### **Brand co-construction**

To start off, I am going to ask you some general questions about F1 and you as a F1 fan.

- How did you become a fan (e.g. through family, friends, social media)?
- Why are you a fan of F1?
  - What attracts you the most in F1?
  - Why did you start your account on Instagram?
- How do the people around you react when you say you watch and love F1?
- Do you think as a female fan, that F1 is catered enough towards you (e.g. merch, advertising, social media)
- Have you noticed changes in the sport, looking back from the moment you became a fan, up until now?

### **Hypermasculinity**

F1 is a sport that includes mostly men, within the sport as well as the fans. The next questions dive deeper into this as I am interested in knowing your view as a female F1 fan and the impact it might have on you and your love for the sport.

- Does it bother you that it is viewed as a man sport?
- Do you find yourself accepted as a female F1 fan in the community (e.g. on social media)?

- Have you ever experienced disadvantages/negativity/comments by being a female fan of the sport?
  - Do you find yourself defending liking F1 towards other people because you are a woman?
- How do you experience masculinity within F1?
  - How do you experience masculinity within the F1 community?
- Have you ever felt excluded within the F1 community being a female fan?
- Are you happy with the current female representation in F1?

### ***Case 1***

#### *Grid girls*

In January 2018, it was announced that the grid girls were banned from F1. They found it was inappropriate and the FIA would rather honor children involved in youth racing during the ceremonies. There was backlash from several host cities and drivers, as well as the grid girls themselves (Walker, 2018). As you know, they are still not back in F1. I am going to ask you a couple of questions regarding this topic.

- What did you think of the grid girls?
- What is your opinion on the ban of grid girls?
- Considering the grid girls' opinion, do you feel like being a grid girl was a more empowering move as females within the sport?
- What would you like to see in F1, when it comes to females within the sport?

#### **Brand activism**

As you most likely know, F1 has launched its initiative 'We Race As One' in the summer of 2020. This was done after the killing of George Floyd and Lewis Hamilton's criticism of the slowness of diversity in the sport (Smith, 2020). According to Hamilton, there is a lack of leadership in the diversity issue in the sport as well as unity. I am going to ask you some questions about the initiative and your feelings towards it.

- What was your reaction after the announcement of the 'We Race As One' initiative?
- Do you find differences in your stance towards F1 after the 'We Race As One' initiative?
  - Did you find it necessary?



- Do you feel there is now more diversity?
- Do you feel there is now more equality?
- Do you think there is a need for more equality and diversity within the sport?
  - Can this be done through the ‘We Race As One’ initiative?
- Could F1 have done something sooner in regard to diversity and equality?

## **Case 2**

### *Nikita Mazepin scandal*

As you are most likely aware, a video popped up late last year on Nikita Mazepin’s Instagram of him inappropriately touching a woman. It resulted in a lot of backlash from F1, FIA, and Haas, but most importantly the fans. It resulted in a social media storm including hashtags, for example #WeSayNoToMazepin and a petition online calling for Mazepin to be removed from the team (Fogarty, 2021). I am going to ask you some questions concerning this scandal.

- What do you think of the video posted by Mazepin inappropriately touching a woman?
- What is your opinion of the response of F1 and Haas?
- Was it the correct way of dealing with the problem?

Months after the incident, Mazepin responded himself at the media day in Bahrain, saying he “was not proud of it” and that he “didn’t behave as I’m meant to behave, being in Formula 1 and the transition phase of realizing what I have achieved has been very short, and I didn’t adapt to it as I should have had.” He said he has “taken responsibility for it, and ready to keep doing so.” (Smith, 2020).

- What do you think of his response to the scandal?
- Do you feel it was the right decision of Haas and F1 to keep him as a driver?
- Is the initiative ‘We Race As One’ still sincere to you, after the scandal?

## **Future**

Lastly, I am going to ask you several questions of how you see the future of F1.

- F1 has announced that they are continuing with “We Race As One”, at least this season, with three main focus areas: diversity & inclusion, sustainability and community. What do you think of this and the impact it will have?
- Where would you like to see F1 in five years in terms of diversity and equality?
- Would you like to see more females in F1?
  - If yes, what would that look like, what roles would they have in the sport?
  - If no, why not? Are you satisfied with the way it currently is?
- Would you like to see more female F1 fans?

## Appendix C Coding Frame

| Theme                 | Category                                | Codes                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hypermasculinity      | Female disposition                      | Choice                  |
|                       |                                         | Disempowerment          |
|                       |                                         | Empowerment             |
|                       | Female role                             | Active                  |
|                       |                                         | Passive                 |
| Brand Co-construction | Relationship between brand and consumer | Values                  |
|                       |                                         | Rituals                 |
|                       |                                         | Symbols                 |
|                       |                                         | Identity                |
|                       | Brand activism                          | Authentic               |
| Brand Authority       |                                         |                         |
| Subjectivity          | Subject positions                       | Interactive             |
|                       |                                         | Reflexive               |
|                       | Cultural authority                      | Intended brand identity |
|                       |                                         | Representation          |

## Appendix D Codebook

| Codes                                            | Definition                                                                                     | Example                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choice</b></p> | <p>Women’s choice, how females chose or not chose to be put into a certain role by society</p> | <p>“You know, I think we have to do what we want to do so if that's what they like to do it's okay. Like it's not like if a girl is dressing like that, on the grid, it's we are all like that. It's not like it's a bad thing, what she's doing, she's just working” (1:18)</p> <p>“I do agree that everyone should be allowed to express themselves the way they want and like. You know, like, if you want to be a grid girl, you should. Which is why I'm not like, these women were not at fault, they never were. Because they were just doing their job...” (3:7)</p> <p>“It's not like they were forced to do it, so they just like doing it. And I think when you, you have the feminism, you just, you just do what you want to do, not what others want you to do.” (10:16)</p> |
|                                                  |                                                                                                | <p>“But the thing that which disturbs me a bit, is the fact that they don't have a real role like if. It was more a job of just showing themselves and showing sexy girl in the paddock. And I won't be disturbed by that kind of things, even if they were dressed like this, if they had a real role, I don't have no, I</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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| <p><b>Disempowerment</b></p> | <p>The position of women in masculine environments which have a negative context</p> | <p>don't have any idea what kind of role they can have but not just taking an umbrella just waiting to a driver” (5:4)</p> <p>“But there are so many boys who tries to like, I don't know how to pretty much say it, but they try to minimize our role in the sport and say that we are attracted to a driver because we're watching or we just like it, because the car go vroom vroom. I'm sorry but that's not how things are.” (8:9)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p><b>Empowerment</b></p>    | <p>The position of women in masculine environments which have a positive context</p> | <p>“But to me, it's just so exciting seeing how little by little women are starting to get included in the sport. Whether it's as engineer, as team principal. I mean even the girlfriends of the drivers nowadays play such a bigger role than they used to in the past.” (4:5)</p> <p>“It bothers me a lot because we can be as good as them. And they used to say that the only helmet a girl should wear, is the one at the hairdresser. And I'm like this is so wrong, like absolutely wrong. Because I can be passionate for the sport, I can give my commitment to the sport and show that I can be as good as so many drivers in this sport, but I just don't have the opportunity for that. So it's wrong to like shame me or shame females that we don't know how to drive, or we should not be in this motor</p> |

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|                      |                                                                | <p>sport, when you don't even give us the opportunity.” (8:14)</p> <p>“And I wanted to inspire girls to know who those women were, and if you have a dream in Formula One, you can achieve it, because you have a woman everywhere.” (9:2)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Active</b></p> | <p>The role of women in society with an active embodiment.</p> | <p>“I would like, I would like seeing girls on the grid like divers. It would be really interesting because it will be like, we can see how good women are in this sport as well. I understand boys can be more aggressive, I can understand that, but that doesn't mean a girl is not aggressive, because if a girl wants to be the best, she will be the best.” (1:29)</p> <p>“There's a lot of females now on the grid, I mean with the team, we know enough of them. We'd love to see more team principles, CEOs, managers, I don't know, mechanics, why not.” (7:8)</p> <p>“But you are really interested in motorsports and we are really interested in the sport in general, at the technique side when it comes to the team, when it comes to the area, when it comes to the whatever it is. Like the view, everything that concerning the sport technically and strategically, like we care about it and so</p> |

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|                |                                                                                                                       | many girls like me cares about those stuff.” (8:6)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Passive</b> | The role of women in society with a passive embodiment.                                                               | <p>“I always just felt like I was watching the objectification of women live on TV. Especially if they would wear like these sexy sort of revealing costumes” (3:3)</p> <p>“And I don't know, I never actually saw that as a bad thing, to be honest. They were just standing there and no, no one with them to stay, to stand there, you know. It was their choice, they wanted to be there, and it was a job, as every other job you know.” (6:2)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Values</b>  | Cultural narratives of individuals based on shared values to co-construct the relationship between brand and consumer | <p>“I just think it's very interesting how they say Oh, We Race As One but they race in countries where there are like seemingly human rights violations. And the We Race As one is like you know, it looks like a rainbow right for like the LGBTQ people. You know well in Russia you can't be gay, in the Middle East you can't be gay.” (2:8)</p> <p>“But in this case, I think it's sexualizing. But I don't think it's wrong for Formula One. Formula One was looking for girls. For me, in my opinion, I get that the women would lose their jobs because they were the ones that were accepting to be sexualized and to be seen as an object. Or like a thirst trap or whatever you want. They</p> |

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|                |                                                                                                                        | were the ones that accepted it, they were the ones that took the job” (4:8)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Rituals</b> | Cultural narratives of individuals based on shared rituals to co-construct the relationship between brand and consumer | <p>“I have always watched Formula One. I, my first memories, when I was like nine, nine or eight years old, and was because of my dad. I remember, my, my first memories with him is like we were, every Sunday, we were watching together the race, yes” (6:7)</p> <p>“I think it's been in, in this community for a long time. I think this idea that the sport is for men, it's been there from the start and it's going to be very, very hard to change it.” (10:12)</p>                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Symbols</b> | The symbolism of shared cultural narratives to co-construct the relationship between brand and consumer                | <p>“But then, when I got into Formula One, their passion is just different because, I don't know, it's just you hear the sound, you hear the crowd and it's just really different.” (1:1)</p> <p>“It was basically the time we spent together with my dad. It was like some kind of ritual, but I was like, yeah, he always says to me that from since the first moment I was like you know stuck on the screen and and watching all the stuff and asking about tires and about everything. So yeah it was like I just fell in love in really early age, it was basically the reason” (6:11)</p> |



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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identity</b></p> | <p>Consumers create their identity within and in collaboration with brand culture where identity is not only constructed symbolically but also the focus on personal structures of meaning to motivate use of certain brands</p> | <p>“I think, be very difficult. But maybe maybe I'm a very unfemale by saying this, and all the other sports right, males and females are in like different categories. Because you know they have different capabilities. Like maybe you could argue that the car kind of cancels that out, but maybe it doesn't. And the fact that we haven't actually seen. Maybe they haven't had the opportunity that when you see if females trying to compete at that level” (2:12)</p> <p>“I think we can see some difference by the content that they are making now. They are talking more about the drivers, the fans like, like Lando Norris who have the account from Formula One posting a lot of videos from him from Twitch. And they are mostly you know for fans and his fans are mostly women. So, and the We Race As One initiative started to, and I think that was a way that they had to include women” (10:6)</p> |
|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>“Like what are you doing? Are you donating to diversity campaigns? Are you hiring diverse staff? Are you, are you creating like a diversity management team, to ensure that diversity in teams? No they're not doing that. Or like, I think if they were doing that, they would have announced it as probably to the world, as</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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| <p><b>Authentic</b></p>       | <p>To encompass mutually reinforcing of supportive brand purpose, values, messaging, and corporate practice</p>       | <p>they announced this entire campaign, like oh look at it. But they're not doing that, they really aren't" (3:10)</p> <p>"I think, that Formula One is a sport, that is just for like, it's just money is very important, that it's money. So whatever they do is for money. And the second, that they put iust looking like that We Race As One, you just cannot do things like hiring a driver that had all those past actions, you know, or just announcing a race in a country that is so against everything that they are telling the We Race As One initiative. So I just don't think it was the right approach." (10:20)</p>                                     |
| <p><b>Brand Authority</b></p> | <p>When a brand has the ability to solve tensions that people feel between society's ideology and their own lives</p> | <p>"But then I realized there was just something, like, he wanted to make like a statement, instead of like something bad that had happened. So I think that's great, in that sense. I just, the initiative is great, because now, all of the drivers are involved in it. And you see it in their helmets and they're like, in their cars and their, whatever. And their social media, so I think that's amazing." (4:10)</p> <p>"It's not for that, it's really, it's a real issue. So yeah, it's more than words, like you have to, they have to show that they act against any racism, against any stuff. Give more time, it's a really important thing, like the</p> |

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|                           |                                               | <p>knee they do or the one minute, I don't know if it's one minute or less before the restart. They must speak that to more than different levels, like make it more important" (7:15)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>Interactive</b></p> | <p>One person's opinion positions another</p> | <p>"It's kinda 75/25. you know. There's a lot of more, much more women are getting involved, much where men are accepting women. But then there's like trolls, bullies, whoever you want to call them." (4:6)</p> <p>"It would be hard for the, for the girl also if she's not good enough. To be in the sport, she will be pushed there, and she will not go fine, or good enough, it would be really hard for her, herself. And yeah, people are mean, you know that, on social media and stuff like that, so I guess it would be, it would be like the hell, you know, if the woman would like, probably like I don't know crash to someone. You know when, when, when the men do that it's like oh poor boy. Don't worry the next race will be fine and if would ,that would be a woman, it was like oh woman she can't drive you know" (6:24)</p> |
|                           |                                               | <p>"They talk like generally like the fans of motorsport, like they are not like the boys, not like the girls. This topic, are the people who are making it. Like we are the ones that want</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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| <p><b>Reflexive</b></p>               | <p>People position themselves, which rarely happens intentionally or consciously</p> | <p>to do like with parts of, the girls like Formula One because of the boys, for example, and we are the ones that are creating it, it's not really Formula One is doing it, so I don't feel like that" (1:12)</p> <p>"That's cool that they're including more women, but I don't think they're doing it with the purpose of being inclusive. I think they're doing it with the purpose of reaching bigger audiences to make more money, that's my perception" (4:14)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Intended brand identity</b></p> | <p>The intended effect of a brand on the consumer</p>                                | <p>"So I read something about a week ago, which was really interesting, because at the beginning, they were in the sport because they wanted to be more in, involved in sport. And so they didn't really know how to be involved in, and so they started by the provocation and that's why they were wearing a miniskirt and things like that. And so it was a way for women to be in the sport and I found that was really interesting. But then it became more something to sell" (5:3)</p> <p>"I mean when he said that Formula One doesn't take any action. That was when they just started taking every possible action to just you know, please Lewis for me. And I don't think they should have done something like that. I think they just needed to support the</p> |

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|                              |                                                                                                                                                     | <p>cause and not just show off that oh my God we are supporting Lewis, we are supporting all this Black Lives Matter, we are supporting women, and the LGBT community. They are just showing you know, for me. They are not meaning it at all, so I think it was just wrong the way they did it” (10:22)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Representation</b></p> | <p>Representational systems and discourses, which is then a product of interplay between cultural discourses and everyday discursive practices.</p> | <p>“You know, I I like that We Race As One. It's a logo and, and, the meaning of it is something that is amazing. It should be targeted on more, like more people, not just about the skin color I guess, you know. Those, there are so many issues in the world and the color of skin is not just one, so yeah” (6:6)</p> <p>“They don't represent the variety of the fans, you know. Because you have gay fans, you have straight fans, you have the LGBT community that like Formula One, you have woman that are really vocal about Formula One. And then, but you don't see a lot of that in F1.” (9:37)</p> |

## Appendix E Code Manager

| Color | Name                    | Groundedness | Groups                |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| ●     | Active                  | 53           | Hypermasculinity      |
| ●     | Authentic               | 65           | Brand Activism        |
| ●     | Brand Authority         | 41           | Brand Activism        |
| ●     | Choice                  | 37           | Hypermasculinity      |
| ●     | Disempowerment          | 63           | Hypermasculinity      |
| ●     | Empowerment             | 48           | Hypermasculinity      |
| ●     | Identity                | 72           | Brand Co-construction |
| ●     | Intended brand identity | 61           | Subjectivity          |
| ●     | Interactive             | 35           | Subjectivity          |
| ●     | Passive                 | 34           | Hypermasculinity      |
| ●     | Reflexive               | 46           | Subjectivity          |
| ●     | Representation          | 67           | Subjectivity          |
| ●     | Rituals                 | 36           | Brand Co-construction |
| ●     | Symbols                 | 50           | Brand Co-construction |
| ●     | Values                  | 109          | Brand Co-construction |