ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Which one is your team? Supraordinate identity around the classic match

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Abstract

Objective: The article analyzes up to what extent the supraordinate identity made up by the classic match, influences fans' consumption intention of media and official merchandise, through a justifiability mediation, while assessing a moderation effect that an identity threat has on the proposed model.

Method: The phenomenon was tested through structural equation modeling on a 439 fanbase sample. Participants are fans from both of the clubs who play the Classic match of their league and were randomly allocated into a threat circumstance or a control situation in order to test the identity threat moderation effect.

Results: Findings suggest that this supraordinate identity has a positive impact on media and merchandise consumption intentions, while legitimacy and permeability forecast its existence. These results argue that fans from both teams experience an identity threat either when their club is under menace and when their rival is.

Conclusion: This is the first article examining a supraordinate identity fabricated by salient rivalries, which is counterintuitive, and how these individuals experience an identity threat when their rival is at risk. The *Classic* denotes an important marketing instrument, where leagues and clubs can develop stories and rivalries to attract broader audiences.

KEYWORDS
classic match, consumption intention, legitimacy, permeability, supraordinate identity

Every major sport league has its own classic match (Parrish and Tyler 2018). This type of match is always a local major event (O'Brien 2013), capturing the attention of the press, fans, and even those usually not interested in the sport (Fletcher, Sturm, and Malcolm 2023). Such games enjoy high expectancy and engagement from the fans while representing rivalries that last for decades, or even sometimes for over a century. Some examples are the Red Derby between Manchester United and Liverpool in England, the Old Firm Derby between Celtic and Rangers in Scotland, the Derby d'Italia played by Internazionale de Milan and Juventus, the Superclásico Boca Juniors versus River Plate in Argentina, and El Clásico Barcelona versus Real Madrid in Spain. Every major league in every country has its own classic, derby, or, however, they call it locally. We are going to refer to this game as *The Classic* match.

From regional clashes to historical disputes, these rivalries fascinate both focal fans and broader audiences alike (Parrish and Tyler 2018). Rooted in geographical means, political effects (Karanfil 2017), or religious motives (Kelly 2007), these rivalries are extremely mediatic (O'Brien 2013). The attractiveness of these events means that many people who do not understand the sport or its rules are still willing to spend their time and money to watch it live (Fletcher, Sturm, and Malcolm 2023).

Becoming a fan of a sport club enables access to social identification (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002). This behavior fits with superordinate identities (Weber 2020), which allow individuals to perceive an increase in their status perception (Wenzel, Mummendey, and Waldzus 2008) and a boost in inclusiveness (Amiot et al. 2020). Furthermore, individuals may associate themselves with even higher levels of identification, migrating from superordinate to supraordinate identities. For instance, fans of a specific sport may feel identified with the classic match of a league, indistinctly of whether their favorite club is involved or not. Therefore, by identifying as a fan of one of the clubs or even the classic match itself, classic matches give enthusiasts the chance to belong to a supraordinate identity (Havard and Eddy 2013). Consequently, independent of the superordinate identity, the supraordinate identity is manifested in the classic match, providing the fan with an identification with the group that loves that same event, including symbolic social representations of the individual, such as feeling part of the city where the event usually takes place (Wear and Heere 2020).

Supraordinate identities have been explored in sport contexts in the past (Havard 2014), but there is still a lack of understanding of the variables that build them up. A possible posture is to analyze this identity creation under the key features of three social structures: stability, permeability, and legitimacy (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002; Revilla Camacho et al. 2022). Stability stands for the granted continuity of a group status (Nadler 1993); while permeability focuses on how easy it is for an individual to move in or out of the group in question (Arment et al. 2017). Legitimacy, on the other hand, measures the perception of acceptance or justification of the current group status (Caricati and Sollami 2018).

This article suggests the existence of an upper-level identification made by a sporting event such as the classic match, by examining if stability, permeability, and legitimacy could guide the creation of a supraordinate identity. At the same time, the article analyzes whether this identity impacts the fans' consumption intention of media content and official merchandise, through a justifiability mediation. No research has been found that surveyed this type of supraordinate identity and determined how it may impact fans' media and merchandise consumption intentions. In other words, the aim is to evaluate to what extent the supraordinate identity made by the classic match influences fans' consumption intention of media content and official merchandise. Furthermore, it assesses the degree to which stability, permeability, and legitimacy contribute to the construction of this identity.

Through the lens of social identity theory (SIT) and norm theory (NT), this study contributes to the sport management and marketing literature in several ways. First, it offers a better understanding of how fans build a sense of belonging toward an event, by reflecting it as a supraordinate identity. Second, it suggests that this identity could be built up by rivals, which is counterintuitive in nature. Third, it argues that supraordinate identities could be used as expenditure predictors within a sport context, and, finally, it posits that, even though fans are expected to enjoy their rivals' catastrophes, there is a limit to this sentiment as the disappearance of their nemesis generates risk feelings.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The role of SIT and NT in the supraordinate identity

SIT has been used as a framework to evaluate consumer decision making, focusing on the influence that societal norms may have on consumption intentions (Sardana, Cavusgil, and Gupta 2021). For instance, individuals tend to purchase and use products that align with their social group norms (Wang 2017). People with higher identification toward an organization tend to exhibit higher purchase intentions (Hsieh 2014) while using the organization's products or services helps them differentiate from other groups and enrich their self-expression (Marin, Ruiz, and Rubio 2009).

From a consumer point of view, NT complements SIT by clarifying why individuals embrace third-party behaviors or attitudes (Melnyk, Carrillat, and Melnyk 2022), emphasizing social norms like strong influence resources (Albrecht et al. 2017; Uribe et al. 2022). It is argued that both descriptive norms (evaluation of what the majority do) and injunctive norms (judgment of which behaviors are accepted by relevant others) can predict shopping behaviors (Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990). Therefore, social trends influence an individual's consumption intentions, especially under ambiguous circumstances (Albrecht et al. 2017). Consequently, belonging to a specific social group contributes to normalizing certain types of behaviors, including attitudinal and consumption actions.

In other words, SIT suggests that people tend to identify themselves with social groups (Filindra and Kolbe 2022), while NT argues that the choice of a group will adhere to a normality judgment. Therefore, by combination, an individual will tend to consume certain goods and services because he or she will find it normal, due to his or her belongingness to a certain group that indeed embraces this consumption behavior. There can be increased complications since identity dynamics demand the negotiation of inter-group boundaries, where subgroups interact below the umbrella of a superordinate identity (Ehala 2009). A superordinate identity is one that is comprised of other subordinate identities within it (Elsbach 2003). Many superordinate identities are straightforward such as state/provincial then national identity (Havard 2014), while others are intricate such as long-lasting rivalries suddenly holding the same flag (McKeown 2014).

Different groups could reach a superordinate categorization by the introduction of a new shared identity or an augmented saliency of an existing one (Gómez et al. 2008). We argue that as *The Classic* is a prominent categorization, rival clubs within it constitute a supraordinate category. A supraordinate identity assembles two or more superordinate personalities within it (DeDominics 2021), and, therefore, is considered a broader and general, rather than basic and specific, objective (Babler-Schrader and Schrader 2011). Because of extreme inclusion, sometimes this supraordinate identification may contain contradictions (Horowitz 2002). On the other hand, it has been argued that every self [individual] is a supraordinate structure (Kelen 1990).

Therefore, this *Classic* identity could emulate the "ethno-pluralism" concept introduced by Lubbers and Coenders (2017), where discrepancies among cultures, classic and nonclassic clubs for our purposes, are highlighted to preserve the exclusive features and. therefore, nonmixing with other "lower level" clubs. Sport fans usually recognize a latter-type affiliation, such as club–league, club–city, and region–federation relationship (Havard 2014).

Antecedents of a supraordinate identity

From a cognitive point of view, the existence of a group demands the acknowledgment of at least one other group, allowing an ingroup versus outgroup comparison context (Delia 2015). When ingroup identity is threatened, people strive to make the ingroup look positive or else abandon it (Mansfield, Delia, and Katz 2020). Nonetheless, the easiness of moving in or out of a group, and whether the source of a threat should impact or not their members relies on three major traits: stability, permeability, and legitimacy (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002).

Stability depends on group status and its conferred continuity (Nadler 1993). Groups who enjoy high status may consider stability as a source of power and resource accessibility, while a decline in stability will signify an identity threat (Scheepers, Ellemers, and Sintemaartensdijk 2009). For low-status groups, it is the opposite, as higher stability symbolizes an identity threat (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2002), while low stability circumstances usually generate a feeling of challenge (Scheepers, Ellemers, and Sintemaartensdijk 2009). In other words, stability is a promising feature for high-status groups, granting power and continuity over lower status counterparts, while low-status groups pursue conditions of instability for a chance to improve their access to relevant resources.

Permeability refers to the ease of moving in or out from a focal group, due to the penetrability level that such a group frontier has (Armenta et al. 2017). Once multiple identity options are available, permeability becomes a vital feature that individuals evaluate to allocate themselves into one or more identities (Fleischmann, Leszczensky, and Pink 2019), while determining the identity dynamic between all groups of a given context (Ehala 2009). The lower the permeability, the lesser social mobility there will be (Appiah et al. 2019), while greater levels of permeability are usually correlated to lower status groups, incentivizing their members to leave (Pettit and Lount 2010).

Legitimacy can generate a sense of justified status quo through the acceptance of both stability and permeability. Legitimacy can also question the existence of group differences (Costarelli and Gerlowska 2014) or build rejection feelings due to perceived unfairness (Reicher and Haslam 2006). Higher legitimacy perceptions drive low-status groups to leave their deprived position unchallenged (Caricati and Sollami 2018). Simultaneously, illegitimacy appraisals may derive into collective challenge actions (Lyons, Pek, and Wessel 2017), attribution bias (Costarelli 2012), or anger (Livingstone et al. 2009).

Consequently, powerful and positive focal groups are those who enjoy higher levels of stability and legitimacy, in combination with lower levels of permeability (Costarelli 2012). Such groups are constantly motivated to preserve these three very important characteristics (Shnabel and Ullrich 2013). A psychological disconnection between the self and others vanishes when a person socially allocates himself or herself into a group, particularly when group identity is more salient (Marin, Ruiz, and Rubio 2009). However, individuals tend to have multiple and simultaneous different identities (Micevski, Halkias, and Herz 2019). Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1. Greater degrees of stability will enhance the likelihood of the existence of a supraordinate identity.
H2. Greater degrees of permeability will reduce the likelihood of the existence of a supraordinate identity.
H3. Greater degrees of legitimacy will enhance the likelihood of the existence of a supraordinate identity.

Impact of a supraordinate identity on justifiability and consumption intentions

In harmony with SIT, regardless of whether it is a small-town club or a globally recognizable team, there is a broadly accepted psychological meaning of a fan's attachment to his or her favorite sport club (Delia 2015). Of its own accord, becoming a fan gives positive traits to any individual, beginning with a belongingness attribute (Delia 2019) and moving into self-fulfillment (Gantz et al. 2006).

Even though it is broadly acknowledged that rivalry threatens supporters' identity, for instance, by lessening public collective self-esteem regarding fans of the opposing club, rivalry also arises with significant positive consequences. Individuals perceive greater insights into public collective self-esteem concerning fans of nonrival opponents, plus ingroup distinctiveness and unity (Berendt and Uhrich 2016). Berendt and Uhrich (2016) argue that "these positive effects are mediated through increases in disidentification with the rival and perceived reciprocity of rivalry" (p. 1). Reciprocity stands as fans' acknowledgment that their rivalry with a different sport club is in fact mutual (Berendt and Uhrich 2016). Consequently, sport enthusiasts seem to "want" rivals (Havard and Eddy 2013) by enjoying reciprocal dislike and thrashings while strengthening their association through higher degrees of reciprocity (Berendt and Uhrich 2016).

The *Classic*, as a supraordinate identity, ought to be evaluated by the conventional attributes that any identity has (Wenzel, Mummendey, and Waldzus 2008). Its members, particularly those highly identified

with it, will exhibit a predisposition to higher degrees of media and merchandise consumption intentions (Navarro-Picado, Torres-Moraga, and González-Serrano 2020). Simultaneously, these individuals can justify themselves more easily by embracing positive behaviors, for example, supporting the *Classic* and its members. Remarkably, these arguments differ from the findings of other researchers who suggest that larger social groups are sub-optimal for self-definition reasons (Brewer 1991), while people prefer to allocate their belongingness to smaller, less inclusive groups (Hornsey and Hogg 2000). These debates guide us to the subsequent hypotheses:

H4. Greater degrees of supraordinate identity will enhance the justifiability of the fans.
H5. Greater degrees of supraordinate identity will enhance the multimedia consumption intentions of the fans.
H6. Greater degrees of supraordinate identity will enhance the official merchandise consumption intentions of the fans.

Fans justifying their consumption intentions

In line with NT, people tend to justify decisions or situations that are considered normal for members of their group and themselves (Kahneman and Miller 1986). Usually, abrupt changes or out-of-the-normal circumstances could generate sentiments of regret; favoring the status quo evaluation as normality (Feldman, Kutscher, and Yay 2020). Under this assessment perspective, individuals undergo social and contextual strains to justify their decisions (Inman and Zeelenberg 2002), assigning more importance to normality (Temerak and El-Manstrly 2019). In sport contexts, justifiability has been proposed as a significant feature of voting in athlete awards (Kopkin and Roberts 2022), and fans' consumption behaviors (Navarro-Picado et al. 2023). This leads us to the subsequent hypotheses:

H7. Greater degrees of justifiability will enhance the multimedia consumption intention of the fans.
H8. Greater degrees of justifiability will enhance the official merchandise consumption intention of the fans.

The moderation effect of an identity threat

Individuals may be subjected to social identity threats, which imply a perception that one's group is degraded (Rios 2021). When facing this circumstance, ingroup members manage to safeguard themselves by making the group itself a protective support (Veldman et al. 2021). People engage in social comparisons with near and prominent outgroups to fulfill the necessity of a sense of belonging (Micevski., Halkias, and Herz 2019) and positive self-esteem (Knobloch-Westerwick, Abdallah, and Billings 2020). Nonetheless, events that weaken the clarity of conceptual group boundaries could represent an important threat to members' evaluations of social distinctiveness (Elsbach 2003).

Different social identities are easily linked when individuals recognize similarities between these identities (Amiot, Terry, and McKimmie 2012). Large inclusive groups (high in assimilation) usually experience less identity threats but struggle to fulfill their differentiation needs, which are normally granted by minority groups (Badea et al. 2010). It has been argued that people can assimilate and simultaneously differentiate within a group that is identified by outgroup members as one single identity (Mitha., Adatia, and Jaspal 2017). At the same time, high-status groups usually enjoy a superiority evaluation; therefore, regardless of whether a member is a high or low identifier, he will perceive no need to alter his ingroup context (Iacoviello, Lorenzi-Cioldi, and –Chipeaux 2019). Consequently, we argue that being a *Classic* fan could benefit an individual through a balancing process, as they belong to the supraordinate *Classic* though recognizing himself or herself as fans of only one of the clubs.

Greater feelings of collective self-continuity are exhibited by individuals when their group is under continuity threat, subsequently increasing their need to protect their group identity (Smeekes and Verkuyten 2013). Furthermore, as group members are selective on norms to follow depending on individual motivations and circumstantial characteristics, you may expect counterintuitive behaviors during specific situations (Falomir-Pichastor, Gabarrot, and Mugny 2009). Higher chances of intergroup helping arise when a significant social identity is at risk (Van Leeuwen 2007). Therefore, we argue that, in pursuit of survival, a fan who evidently identifies with a team of the *Classic*, and simultaneously disidentifies himself or herself from the rival club, at some point would support the opponent through positive consumption behaviors. Thus, the following hypotheses were created:

H9. Fans would feel a stronger correlation between supraordinate identity and multimedia consumption intention when experiencing an identity threat.

H10. Fans would feel a stronger correlation between supraordinate identity and official merchandise consumption intention when experiencing an identity threat.

H11. Fans would feel a stronger correlation between justifiability and multimedia consumption intention when experiencing an identity threat.

H12. Fans would feel a stronger correlation between justifiability and official merchandise consumption intention when experiencing an identity threat.

METHOD

Participants

The database was constructed through a nationwide survey in December 2021. The survey has 439 valid users (881). Responses from non-Classic fans who did not pass the control questions about the Costa Rican First Division were eliminated. We confirmed participants understood that one *Classic* club was disappearing, meaning the *Classic* event would no longer be played. The data set has 349 individuals living in urban areas, 144 have a university degree, 296 were men, and their average age was 33.84 ($SD = 12.49$).

Measurement

Each scale was adapted from previous research. Multimedia Consumption Intention (MMCI) and Official Merchandise Consumption Intention (OMCI) were measured with a three-item scale based on Kim, Trail, and Ko (2011). The justifiability of the decision was assessed using a three-item scale from Inman and Zeelenberg (2002), and supraordinate identity was measured with an 11-item scale from Bruner and Benson (2018). Legitimacy and stability were evaluated using a three-item scale based on Mummendey et al. (1999), while permeability was measured employing a 12-item scale based on Armenta et al. (2017). Province of residency, age, sex, and educational level questions were incorporated to characterize the participants. To ensure the linguistic validity of the scales in a Spanish-speaking context, double translations were performed (Chapman and Carter 1979).

RESULTS

Data were analyzed through several processes including an exploratory factor analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a composite reliability test, an average variance extracted, and a discriminant validity test as recommended by Hair, Gabriel, and Patel (2014). Results suggest that the data appropriately fit the measurement model and that the instruments employed have satisfactory psychometric properties. Online
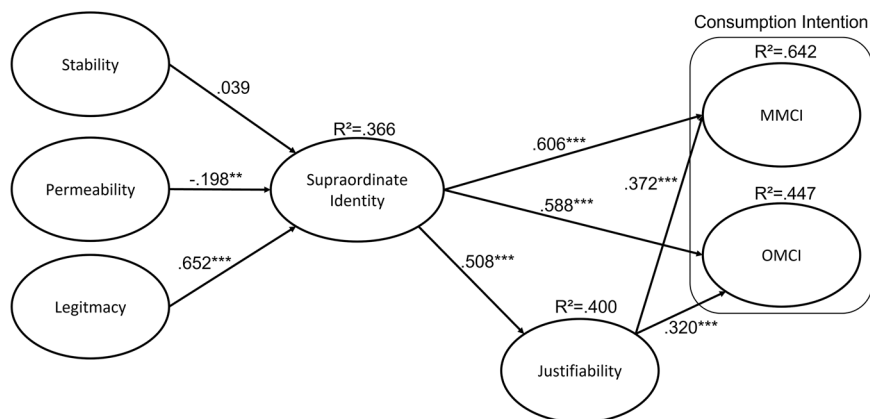
FIGURE 1 Structural model estimation.
MMCI, multimedia consumption intention; OMCI, Official Merchandise Consumption Intention.

TABLE 1 Multisample analysis: Identity threat versus no threat.

Constraint	Estimated coefficient (identity threat)	Estimated coefficient (no threat)	Degrees of Freedom (d.f.) X^2 differences	Probability
Supraordinate –> MMCI	0.627***	0.555***	(1) 6.023	0.014**
Supraordinate –> OMCI	0.488***	0.507***	(1) 0.043	0.836
Justifiability –> MMCI	0.275***	0.309***	(1) 4.134	0.042**
Justifiability –> OMCI	0.235***	0.231***	(1) 0.056	0.814

Abbreviations: MMCI, multimedia consumption intention; OMCI, official merchandise consumption intention.

Appendix A shows the CFA along with composite reliability and the respective convergent validity results, while Online Appendix B displays the correlational analysis and discriminant validity.

Adequate values corroborate model fit according to structural equation modeling (SEM). Figures show the following results: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.082, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.828, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.829, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.815, and a 3.94 normed X^2. Findings imply that all hypotheses were supported except for H_1 as shown in Figure 1.

The focal model was judged against alternative models that show similar fit figures, therefore, justifying the selection of the original model shown in Figure 1 due to parsimony. The opposing models, displayed in Online Appendix E, show the following measures: direct effects (model B) showed an RMSEA of 0.082, a CFI of 0.829, an IFI of 0.830, and a TLI of 0.815 with a 3.94 normed X^2, while the second-order supraordinate identity (model C) reported an RMSEA on 0.068, a CFI of 0.885, an IFI of 0.885, and a TLI of 0.874 with a 3.01 normed X^2.

To assess the moderation effect of behavioral differences, a multisample analysis was performed by contrasting individuals who experienced an identity threat, and those in the control group (H_{9a}—H_{9d}). Prior to the multisample analysis, a CFA invariance test was completed. Three invariance levels were tested according to French and Holmes (2006): the chi-square difference test was unsatisfactory. However, in accordance with Cheung and Rensvold's (2002) recommendation concerning the lack of feasibility and unpermissiveness of the X^2 difference test, the invariance is accepted as two out of three assessments were achieved. By generating a single solution for each model, a multisample analysis permitted us to identify disparities between the coefficients of each one of them.

Results show a strong significance in the paths between supraordinate identity toward MMCI and from Justifiability to MMCI (Table 1). These findings suggest that individuals experience higher degrees of

supraordinate identity and demand lower levels of Justifiability to consume multimedia content of the *Classic* during an identity threat circumstance. In other words, these results argue that regardless of whether their club is the one under threat or if it is their rival, fans of both clubs will experience an augmentation in their identity deriving in higher chances of multimedia content consumption, and at the same time needing less justifiability to behave in this way. Finally, there were no significant differences between supraordinate identity and justifiability toward OMCI.

DISCUSSION

Our main goal was to examine to what extent the supraordinate identity made by the *Classic* match influences fans' consumption intention of media content and official merchandise, through a justifiability mediation. Additionally, we wanted to determine the degree to which permeability, stability, and legitimacy contribute to the construction of this identity. Finally, we aimed to distinguish fans' assessment differences when undergoing an identity threat circumstance. These objectives help to clarify the path that consumers take to identify themselves as fans of the *Classic* and evaluate if this helps them justify their expenditure intentions, therefore providing a possibility to predict their broadcasting and merchandise consumption.

These variables are more relevant than ever for the sports industry as post-COVID circumstances have proven to rely heavily on massive media audiences (Knobloch-Westerwick, Abdallah, and Billings 2020), reaching broader (Navarro-Picado et al. 2023), diverse (Fletcher, Sturm, and Malcolm 2023), and far distant fans (Cobbs and Hylton 2012). At the same time, globalized economies help individuals to acquire merchandise indistinctly of where it is being manufactured and where it will be consumed (Navarro-Picado et al., Torres-Moraga, and González-Serrano 2020). Therefore, knowledge of MMCI and OMCI decision-making processes is of considerable relevance for both the literature and practitioners (Kim, Trail, and Ko 2011).

Our findings suggest that by way of a justifiability mediation, this supraordinate identity shapes the fans' media and merchandise consumption behaviors. At the same time, permeability has a negative impact and legitimacy a positive one on the establishment of a supraordinate identity, while stability has no effect at all. These results help to improve our understanding of the path that consumers take to recognize themselves as fans of the *Classic* and simultaneously it helps them justify their spending intentions by forecasting their broadcasting and merchandise expenditure. Moreover, we argue that fans of the *Classic* experience an identity threat irrespective of whether it is their club the one vanishing, or whether it is the opposing team. Finally, it appears that this menace moderates fans' consumption intentions by boosting the effect of their supraordinate identity while requiring less justifiability in their need for multimedia content.

This research contributes to the sport management and marketing literature in several aspects. First, aligned with SIT, it offers an improved understanding of how fans build a sense of belonging in relation to an event (Delia 2019), to the point of considering the *Classic* match as a supraordinate identity, unveiling the surprising finding that this identity could be built-up by indisputable rivals (Demir and Rigoni 2017). Second, through the lens of NT, our findings suggest that normatively, this supraordinate identity can work as a relevant forecaster of media and merchandise consumption (Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990) by helping supporters find it uncomplicated to justify those behaviors in these circumstances (Navarro-Picado et al. 2023). Consequently, this research determines the variables implicated in the formation of a supraordinate identity, and how this identity boosts fans' consumption intentions, thus, providing a better understanding of the influence that supraordinate identities have on consumers' media and merchandise desire.

In other words, individuals satisfy a broader sentiment of belongingness by fitting in with a supraordinate identity, which is bigger both in number and complexity than their single club identity. Similar implications were suggested to happen in voting intentions when high competition was expected (Yamada 2023). At the same time, they comply with the normative consumption behavior of this group through media content pursuit and merchandise acquisition. Individuals under these circumstances can easily justify their behavior through both identity or normality means.

Furthermore, by measuring the eventual disappearance of a club within the *Classic*, we evaluated the moderation effect that an identity threat has in these relationships. Through a multigroup analysis, we obtained results that suggest that individuals can respond in a counterintuitive manner, by arguing that focal fans and their rivals perceive a threat regardless of which of the two clubs is under menace. This result contributes to NT and SIT by unveiling the existence of a supraordinate identity made up of salient rivalries, as evidence that individuals are selective with the norms to follow (Falomir-Pichastor, Gabarrot, and Mugny 2009); while constantly searching for a continuity sentiment (Smeekes and Verkuyten 2013). On the other hand, the fact that OMCI strings did not show significant differences could be due to the long-term decision that this requires. For instance, multimedia consumption could be done in a constant and fairly easy way through radio, television, or the Internet at relatively low cost. In contrast, not even the biggest fan purchases official merchandise daily; it demands time and effort and is often expensive.

Consequently, our research contributes to SIT, by suggesting that greater degrees of legitimacy generate higher levels of supraordinate identity, whereas greater degrees of permeability negatively impact this identification. Accordingly, legitimacy emerges as an important input for identification, suggesting it is easier for people to identify and later justify their consumption behaviors under legitimate circumstances. At the same time, and in line with recent findings about NT, individuals seem to increase their identification and need lower levels of justifiability to consume media content, when confronting an identity threat. This study progresses the knowledge of NT, by arguing that in sport contexts and the course of threatening incidents, individuals' intentions are inverted compared to those expected during "normal" circumstances. Particularly, the statement that the *Classic* might vanish deriving into greater degrees of identification and lesser demands of justification to consume media content is counterintuitive. Contrariwise, during "normal" conditions, people tend to perceive lower degrees of identification and demand higher levels of justifiability to keep up with similar expenditure behavior.

Practical implications

For practitioners, the most significant contribution is the acknowledgment of the presence of a supraordinate identity contained by the *Classic*, along with the marketing repercussions this may have for the teams concerned and their corresponding leagues. For instance, in Scotland, the Old Firm Derby between Rangers and Celtic is considered a major tourism event (Allan, Dunlop, and Swales 2007). This could be emulated in other leagues around the globe, as people can easily identify and comprehend what the *Classic* means for their nations and sport leagues. Consequently, it should be effortless for individuals to comprehend what it may imply within other latitudes. Hence, the *Classic* as a concept can denote an important marketing instrument for tourist attraction, sponsor signing, and broadcasting agreements.

Limitations and future research

The reader should bear in mind that this study only considers one single football league. Even though there is no doubt about the popularity that football has worldwide, this limitation should be considered when interpreting the findings. Finally, readers should notice that the sample involves only fans from the *Classic* teams; hence, findings may not be transferable to the entire fanbase. Future investigation should consider the assessment of several sports or lower tier clubs, where a smaller resource availability or different insights could produce unique reactions. Therefore, the reproduction of this research, gathering data from different fan bases and sports, is highly recommended.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.