Comparative study of corporate reputation based on the examples of Adidas and Nike

Master thesis
for receiving the master’s degree
at the Faculty of Cultural and Social Sciences of the
University of Salzburg

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__________________________________________  Salzburg, 26th of April 2018
Felix Mindermann
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1. Introduction

For a long time two brands have been battling a storied race to be the biggest sports brand in the world. Although Adidas is the veteran, being founded already on August 18th, 1949, it seemed like Nike (founded on January 25th, 1964) had won that fight for a long time. Only a few years back Nike had established its empire by conquering a significant share of the market especially in the US in many different sports. But following recent trends and news reveals that Adidas quickly made an impressive comeback in the last few years.

In 2018 Adidas still continues to tease its recently struggling US rival Nike and intends to significantly increase its own market share in Nike's home country. "We have a share of at least 15 to 20 percent in every market in the world," Adidas CFO Harm Ohlmeyer told "Börsen-Zeitung" (boersen-zeitung.de, 2018). He continues: "Our medium-term goal is to get there also in the United States." At present, Adidas is still well below this figure. Market researchers estimate the figure at around 10 percent. However, in the past two years, the company has approximately doubled its share in the USA. "The demand there is still high," said Ohlmeyer. "But the growth was too fast for our infrastructure." This year, Adidas is expanding its warehouse capacities in the USA in order to eliminate delivery difficulties that occurred at times in the second half of 2017.

Gaining unique advantages is the most efficient way to set your brand apart from competitors. Adidas invented the Boost sole technology together with the world’s leading chemical company BASF in 2013. In 2018 they sold their first sneaker with a 3D printed sole in a collaboration with Carbon. While these technologies provided Adidas with a significant technological lead over other sports brands, Nike is slowly catching up by selling their first sneaker with a 3D printed upper.

Since most top brands in their field achieve a very similar standard regarding product quality and technologies, these brands have to resort to other qualities to establish salience compared to the competition. Like every big brand Adidas and Nike try to establish unique qualities that are inimitable by the competition. These inimitable qualities present themselves not just with new technologies but in various ways. One example would be a contract with famous and popular influencers like Ronaldo and Messi. Another way to create salience is to create a new product in a unique collaboration like Nike with Jordan and Off-White or Adidas with Pharrell Williams and Parley for the oceans. Creating and marketing shoes together with individuals who have an enormous
influence on society “is a quality that cannot be mimicked by others” (Lagnese, 2017, p.51). But both of these ways and many other factors result in another unique quality that competitors cannot imitate: corporate reputation.

Therefore, corporate reputation gained a lot of importance over the last two decades as an intangible asset providing considerable competitive advantages for companies (Raithel et al. 2010; Schwaiger and Raithel 2014). The corporate interest in reputation soon resulted in an increasing relevance of reputation for scientists and researchers. The importance of reputation for any company and the role of media is emphasized by multiple researchers who defined media reputation as a comprehensive assessment of an organizations value in the media (Deephouse, 2000; Eisenegger, 2005; Imhof, 2014). Many brands have long started working actively on their corporate reputation to establish salience and to beat the competition in an inimitable way.

This study aims to quantify each brand’s success in the German public and media by measuring their corporate reputation among young people in Germany who are targeted by the two brands as well as measuring the media reputation in German online news articles. Utilizing a two-staged research design, analyzing both the media and the public, promises to reflect each company’s corporate reputation in a comprehensive manner. As a result, this study aims to deliver a deeper understanding of how corporate reputation works in the media and the public and which factors and dimensions exert the greatest influence on a company’s reputation.
2. Theory

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and a foundation of concisely explained and precisely defined core terms. These terms will be derived from the relevant theories regarding this study and are going to enable operationalizing and conducting this reputation study. To answer the research questions presented in chapter 4, we need a comprehensive definition of reputation, which represents the central construct of this work. To explain the connection between a company’s reputation in the selected online articles and amongst the target group of 18- to 35-year-old people, a broad and detailed understanding of the framing theory is also mandatory. The specific relevance of the individual theoretical parts for the entire study will be exemplified in the respective chapter. The following chapter will focus on the definition and understanding of corporate reputation in a communication sciences context. Hereby, I refer to the Reputation theory by Eisenegger and his three Reputation dimensions, which most of this research study is based on.

2.1. Reputation

The current market situation is also characterized by shortening product lifecycles, increasing media costs and an ever more homogeneous variety of products, making it harder for companies to compete. Companies are facing increasing difficulties to distinguish themselves from competitors and factual differences between companies are becoming increasingly blurred, which is why the immaterial and hard-to-imitate values of companies are becoming more attractive and significant (cf. Hüttl, 2005, p. 11 ff.; Meffert, 1994, p. 134; Schwaiger & Eberl, 2004, p. 623). This increasingly tough competition is resulting from the globalization and has been forcing companies to search for inimitable and sustainable competitive advantages for some time now. (cf. Essig, Russel & Semanakova, 2003, p. 13; Reischauer, 2005, p. 52). Reputation therefore, is often treated as a resource and an intangible asset. Accordingly, Kaden also points out that a strong corporate reputation can act as a hidden reserve, which can be a welcome counterbalance for the company in times of crisis (cf. 2002, p. 5). Various scientific works proved the sustainable advantages which corporate reputation contributes to the success of a company. The reason for the growing interest in reputation lies in the increasing competition and the globalized economy, also reflected in the growing demand and extensive efforts to identify the most effective drivers of sustainable competitive advantage. (cf. Schwaiger, 2004, p. 46)
Academics from, both, social sciences and economics as well as practitioners see reputation as a valuable and sustainable resource that is difficult to acquire. In contrast to products and other tangible values, it can hardly be imitated by the competition. Therefore, corporate reputation is also a very popular and efficient approach to gain strategic advantages over the competition. The following is intended to provide a broad overview of the various scientific literature concerning this subject.

Caminiti, Dowling, Eidson & Master, Preece et al. and Nakra have all made it evident in their scientific work that a particularly high corporate reputation helps them to establish a strong competitive edge in the fight for talent and also to secure the loyalty of their own employees (Caminiti, (1992), p. 49; Dowling, (1986), p. 112; Eidson & Master, (2000), p. 17; Preece et al. (1995), p. 88; Nakra, (2000), p. 35). Similarly, Cravens, Oliver & Ramamoorti point out that a strong reputation also allows companies to charge higher prices for their products, receive significantly more applications, have more loyal and productive employees and achieve more consistent revenues (Cravens, Oliver & Ramamoorti, 2003, p. 203). Stigler even proves that a positive corporate reputation can result in a significant drop in production costs per unit (Stigler, 1962).

The advantages gained by a company by maintaining a good reputation also apply to its customers. Various researchers have proven that a strong corporate reputation also improves how advertising claims are received, strengthens customer confidence in a company's products and services, and affirms consumers' buying decisions (vgl. Goldberg & Hartwick, 1990; Fombrun & van Riel, 1998, S. 6; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). In addition, a good corporate reputation improves customer loyalty (cf. Caminiti, 1992, p. 49; Preece et al., 1995, p. 88), which in turn enables higher prices and sales rates (cf. Klein & Leffler, 1981; Milgrom & Roberts, 1986). Eisenegger and Imhof point out that a positive reputation increases customer confidence, facilitates easier access to the capital market, lowers capital procurement costs and reduces regulatory pressure from the authorities (cf. 2009, p. 251). Likewise, Beatty and Ritter state that companies with a good reputation often have better access to the capital markets and, consequently, can also benefit from lower capital costs (cf. 1986) and lower acquisition and procurement rates (cf. Schwalbach, 2000, p. 285). When looking through the wide range of academic literature from economics, it is evident that a company with a positive and well-established reputation improves its profitability considerably, while keeping in mind that “building up a strong reputation takes its time, and that the payoff from reputation may require longer periods to become visible” (Schwaiger, 2004, S. 51). The advantages of a strong and positive corporate reputation turn out to be manifold.
Because of the many definitions and theoretical works on reputation, there are several attempts to create a common definition. However, there is still no such standard definition which has been universally accepted. Rather, there are definitions in the scientific literature that vary widely (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 245). Eisenegger and Imhof also write that there was a long-standing backlog in the area of theory-driven definitions of reputation (2007, p. 1). First, distinctions have to be drawn from the concepts of image and prestige in order to sharpen the concept of reputation and focus the goal of this study. Subsequently, the formation of a reputation is discussed and the final definition underlying this study is developed and explained. In doing so, both the theoretical basis of the work will be presented and the concrete relation to the topic of this thesis will be explained in each part. Thereby, the sub-definitions and sub-dimensions of reputation which are used in this study will be discussed. The three sub-dimensions (functional, social, expressive) of reputation are elaborated and explained in detail since the operationalization of this thesis heavily relies on a consistent and concise terminology. The reputation index, which is also essential for the realization of this study, is then defined. Finally, the connection between reputation and the public is established, which also facilitates the thematic transition towards framing.

To start off, the terms reputation, image and prestige must be distinguished from each other, since they are often used synonymously in science as well as in practice. (cf. Eisenegger, 2005) Among other things, this also enables a targeted operationalization and improved measurability.

### 2.1.1. Reputation and Prestige

The reputation and prestige of a company can be distinguished from the concept of image, since both reputation and prestige only concern acting subjects (including companies), whereas the concept of image can also refer to objects (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 19). In addition, reputation can only be attributed by uninvolved persons outside the personal social environment for example in the form of status (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 21). In contrast to reputation, however, each person can also gain prestige in his or her social environment (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 21). Accordingly, Eisenegger also writes that reputation, unlike prestige, can arise from information and communication beyond personal contact networks and thus functions on a superordinate level. (2005, p. 21) Since reputation enables a higher-level follow-up communication across personal networks, it can also be attributed to public communication.
As a result, the relationship between reputation and framing can also be concluded, since frames deal selectively and structurally with the sub-areas of a topic in public communication and thus influence its information content. The relevance of framing for this survey will be explained in detail in Chapter 2.2 Framing.

In terms of a company’s reputation, communication in the media is therefore of particular importance. Since the companies are researched beyond personal contact networks in public communication, this study will focus on the reputation of Adidas and Nike and ignore their prestige. Companies such as Adidas and Nike must develop strategies that can lead to a positive recognition in the media and, thus, enhance their reputation. (cf. Eisenegger, 2015, pp. 447 f.) For this reason, a study of the company’s reputation in the public eye will form the core of this work. However, additionally to the various angles from which the concept of reputation is being defined and additionally to reputation being treated as a synonym of prestige there are other challenges while defining reputation. At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that the distinction between reputation and image must also be clearly identified, so that operationalization and a successful analysis of the reputation of Adidas and Nike are feasible.

2.1.2. Reputation and Image

Accordingly, Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, while equating image and reputation, describe that the corporate image must be seen as the product of symbols perceived from the respective companies and individuals (2006, p. 34). In this work, however, this description is understood as a definition of the company’s reputation and as a distinction from the corporate image. In the same sense, Eisenegger differentiates between the terms image and reputation: While images in the definition of this term also refer to specific individual segments of the perception of an object or subject, reputation represents an aggregated and condensed bundle of ideas. (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 23) So, instead of focusing on individual aspects of the perception of a company or a person, reputation must be understood as a collective overall reputation. The overall reputation of the company is then derived from the different reflected images (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 254). Accordingly, reputation always refers to acting (collective) subjects, whereas images also refer to objects (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 23; Fleischer, 2015, p. 63). Thus, in contrast to the corporate image, the corporate reputation always has an evaluative function (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 254, Eisenegger, 2015, p. 443).
Joachim Schwalbach as well as Charles Fombrun and Cees van Riel also try to make a different distinction between reputation and image. According to their definition, reputation is understood on the one hand as external perception with feedback function, the image on the other hand is defined as the self-image of a company (Schwalbach, 2004, p. 1264; Fombrun & van Riel, 1997, p. 10). This differentiation will also be considered in the operationalization of this work, as it will be analyzed how companies are perceived by respondents and in online articles. Markus Eberl defines these terms in a similar way. He addresses reputation and image in connection with external perception and self-portrayal. Communication from the company to the outside as it is also approached in classic public relations studies, thus determines the corporate image, while the corporate reputation is constituted by experience and communication from others regarding the companies (see Eberl, 2006, p. 11). Another possible distinction between reputation and image can be made as Eisenegger explains: Images are particularly important, wherever direct experience is not possible or only possible under difficult conditions, for example in the perception of public figures with whom no direct contacts are maintained. (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 23) Transferred to companies that provide their customers with real and direct product experience and direct customer service and contact, the companies examined here could be interpreted as directly addressable. According to this distinction, Eisenegger's reputation is therefore more relevant to companies than their image. But this distinction is not sufficiently distinct for operationalization. For this reason, a reasonable definition with parts from the above-mentioned definitions is required. The overall reputation of a company consequently consists of a collection of the different reflected images, refers to subjects and is understood as an external perception with feedback function.

2.1.3. Product of Communication

As established above, reputation can be created through attention and public recognition and by the means of communicative strategies. Reputation can, therefore, be understood as a product of communication (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 21f.). Accordingly, Eisenegger also writes that individuals, organizations and institutions inevitably acquire good or bad reputation if they act publicly (e. g. publish) or act as objects of public communication. (2005, p. 22,) This means that a company's reputation is created as soon as it acts in public - regardless of whether it is planned or unplanned. There are various ways in which reputation can be built up. It is, for instance, possible to build a reputation based on, both, communication in the media and direct experience (cf. Dozier, 1993, p. 230).
The most important possibilities for forming and measuring reputation are, therefore, the mass media and particularly online media. They provide information about companies to the public in the form of online articles, and thereby, influence the building of reputation among consumers and customers. The chapter on framing will provide more details on this topic. The analysis of corporate reputation in this thesis will therefore be based on both online articles and surveys (cf. Eisenegger, 2015, p. 448). Reputation building and reputation management may both be time-consuming, but they are becoming increasingly volatile and fragile. Eisenegger attributes this to increasingly popular trends such as moralization, scandalization and personalization (cf. 2015, p. 448; Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 256).

As has already become clear, companies are by no means the sole controllers of reputation building, although this has been a popular thesis in classical PR theory (see Walter Fischer, 2002). The media and the public control the formation of reputation to a large extent, as Eisenegger and Imhof also note: The media build up hope, but they can also fall from their throne just as quickly and with great publicity. (2009, S. 255). Since the media have a function of evaluating and presenting, and since this has a direct impact on the reputation in the public eye, a company's reputation is linked to the concept of sociological publicity. Despite a number of PR-scientific and business studies approaches, the concept of reputation is not considered to be a sociological public dimension that only concerns stakeholders, but rather a collective factor. Thus, reputation building becomes an aggregation process that combines the different perceptive patterns in processes of public validation into an overall picture. From this it can be deduced that the connection between reputation and the concept of publicity subsequently needs to be explained. For the reputation constitution to be defined here, however, it can be deduced that a company's reputation is mainly formed in the public discourse and therefore manifests and consolidates itself by combining different perceptions and by the media and public confirmation of this reputation. Thus, the media presence of a company plays an important role in building its reputation. Therefore, topics and frames that have a high news value are also necessary for media perception and hence for successfully building a reputation.

Eisenegger also formulates corresponding selection criteria for a message which builds up reputation. These include social, objective, temporal or spatial dimensions (2005, p. 66). The social dimension is supported by the increasingly prominent concepts of personalization, privatization and moralization (Eisenegger, 2005, p. 66).
From a factual point of view, communication is also increasingly focusing on conflicts and scandals (see Eisenegger, 2005, pp. 66f.). The news value of such information is met over the time dimension. Both subjective involvement and geographical proximity determine the spatial dimension of the news selection. These dimensions thus strongly determine the communication of companies in their intention to establish a positive and sustainable reputation. Reputation can be understood as a social resource that is communicated to unknown third parties in the public sphere and thus goes beyond the personal contact network. Deephouse describes corporate reputation as "overall evaluation of a firm presented in the media" (2000, p. 1097). Therefore, Reputation is a communicative product or rather the result of communicative mediation and staging. Consequently, the result can be both intended and unintended. When organizations actively enter the public eye and communicate it is considered an intended product of communication. When talking about organizations in the public eye it is considered an unintended product of communication. The public, and the media public in particular, produce a reputation regardless of whether the objects of their observation do something for, against or do nothing at all. (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 22) The media and the public have a high relevance and a great influence on reputation building and the frames surrounding it. For this reason, the connection between reputation and the public sphere will now be discussed before the reputation itself can be defined.

2.1.4. Reputation and the Public Sphere

The precise understanding of the public sphere provides the foundation for the subsequent analysis of communication and reputation processes. In the structural transformation of the public sphere, Jürgen Habermas (1990) describes not only an entanglement of the public sphere, but also a political change of function of the public sphere. The focus of this change is the new public sphere produced by the mass media. It replaces a public sphere marked by the class system and the influence of the bourgeoisie. For this research, reputation is defined as the aggregated perception of actors in the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere can be understood and interpreted in various ways. Among these concepts the more descriptive concepts (cf. Gerhards, 1994, p. 87f.) can be distinguished from the normative concepts (cf. Habermas, 1990, p. 69ff.; cf. Imhof, 2011, p. 99f.; cf. Neidhardt, 1994, p. 7f.). The public sphere can occur at different levels with the most common definitions essentially distinguishing between three levels. Jarren describes, first, the encounter public sphere which can be directly experienced via personal conversations.
Second, he describes the assembly or topic related public sphere and last, he describes the mass media-produced public sphere (cf. Jarren, 2008, p. 330f.). To answer the aforementioned research questions and explain the framing processes, this research will work with the normative concept of a mass media public. Following that normative concept, the public opinion plays a decisive role for democratic societies and must meet certain quality standards (cf. Peters, 1994, p. 45f; cf. Jarren & Vogel, 2011, p. 22).

In modern society, the mass media have become an increasingly powerful force (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 53), which is based on their power of thematic selection and its institutionalization, inherent to the media system through its constitution and manifested in framing the news. The introduction and selection of communication by the media characterizes the information that shapes contemporary public discourse. By selecting information, connecting communication can be initiated and take place. (cf. Herger, 2006, p. 177) Additionally, one of the media's fundamental responsibilities remains to exercise control over those in power and charge. All this testifies to the great importance of the media for the constitution of reputation. Eisenegger also notes that the extensive reach of the media often makes it the only source of reputation information for recipients. (cf. 2005, p. 54) Therefore, the media and the public sphere hold a high responsibility regarding the creation and maintenance of a company's reputation in the public.

Additionally, Eisenegger concludes that frames have an important role to play in defining the media agenda. Depending on which frames are considered socially relevant, the media coverage will be adapted to the frames. (2005, p. 64 f.) The framing theory will be thoroughly explained and defined subsequent to the reputation chapter.

2.1.5. Definition of Reputation

On the one hand, as previously explained in detail, reputation has become very important for business and science. On the other hand, it is often criticized that the concept of reputation has not yet been defined clearly enough, making it difficult to conduct an in-depth examination. In the past, general definitions have helped to bring together various interest groups from different scientific disciplines. However, more complex definitions are required for a meaningful operationalization. (cf. Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2009, p. 36) Correspondingly, researchers found out that about three quarters of the scientists they interviewed did not contradict the statement "the 'academic' definition of corporate reputation is 'not sufficiently practical'" (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000, p. 234; cf. Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2009, p. 36).
This would suggest that the majority of the respondents considered the existing reputation definitions to be insufficiently operationalizable. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many people criticize the attempts to define reputation as insufficiently substantiated or too narrowly defined (cf. Eisenegger & Schranz 2015, pp. 133ff.). In the following, a reputation will be defined in a way that enables a thorough reputation analysis, which will provide the foundation for this study.

Eisenegger and Schranz establish a reputation definition that is broad enough to cover all aspects of a company’s reputation and is specific enough to allow a concrete analysis of the company’s reputation. This definition is based on both rational and affective aspects and thus also forms the framework for this work: Reputation refers to the reputation that a person, organization or institution enjoys in the public sphere for its specific contribution to the realization of collectively shared goals and values. Positive reputation arises when actors meet the expectations of the public in the long term and when the information of expectation conformity diffuses within public communication processes. (2015, S. 140)

The terms organization and its reputation also apply to the companies examined in this thesis. Therefore, this definition enables an investigation of the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike. Also, according to this definition, a positive reputation presupposes that public expectations are permanently fulfilled. The time factor from this definition thus contributes significantly to the understanding of reputation in this thesis.

As Mast also observed, images are generally rather short-lived, since companies and the media can influence them in the short term by means of communication efforts (see Mast, 2016, p. 48). However, reputation can rather be understood as a sustainably and long-term constructed phenomenon (Mast, 2016, p. 48). The time factor from the reputation definition of Eisenegger and Schranz, thus, reveals another distinct difference to the image. In order for reputation to have a lasting and noticeable effect on the other business dimensions, a certain amount of time is required to build up the corporate reputation. Schwaiger also writes in 2004: "Due to the similarity to attitude concepts, we must bear in mind that building up a strong reputation takes its time, and that the payoff from reputation may require longer periods to become visible.". (S. 51)
Thus, both the temporal dimension and the establishment of a reputation play a significant role. As is often the case with the more well-known reputation analyses (see Dr. Doeblin), the reputation of the companies Adidas and Nike is therefore examined over a period of one year. In order to be able to investigate the framing effect explained below, this period of time extends over a period of one year until exactly when the questionnaires for the second part of the study are handed out. In order to analyze the reputation of Adidas and Nike in detail, however, it is necessary to build on the already established understanding of corporate reputation and explain the specific dimensions of reputation as well.

Various researchers, including Gray and Ballmer, tried to enable the analysis of corporate reputation by means of a more specific and comprehensive definition. In their attempt to define the company's reputation as a purely objective evaluation of the company's characteristics through its stakeholders, the emotional component of the company's reputation was almost completely ignored (1998, p. 696f.). Accordingly, Fombrun (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Rindova, 2000, p. 78f.) also tries to define the reputation as a general assessment of a company by its stakeholders in the form of customers, investors, employees and the general public. However, contrary to Gray and Ballmer, Fombrun only analyzes emotional reactions and omits rational reactions, which does not represent a company's reputation either. A holistic definition of reputation requires more than just the affective perception. An attempt to define both the cognitive and affective components of corporate reputation was made by Hall in 1992 (p. 138), in which he included the knowledge and emotions of individuals. (see also Schwaiger, 2004, p. 49) This understanding of Hall's reputation is also adopted by Schwaiger in his own works. He describes, both, rational and affective influences on reputation. (cf. 2004) Such an understanding of reputation will also be the basis for this study.

Since the public and media landscape and thus the way in which reputation has been built and maintained, especially in the last 15 years, have changed considerably, this text will be based primarily on Eisenegger's understanding of reputation, which is not only more up to date but also takes a far more detailed look at the various dimensions of reputation that Schwaiger tried to define in 2004. This allows for both more up-to-date and accurate definitions and, as a result, more effective operationalization.
This soon to be introduced combination of emotional and rational components also shares basic similarities with the definition of Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg in 2003 (p. 168 et seq.). The authors interpreted reputation as a construct based on attitudes. These attitudes were based on subjective, emotional and cognitive thoughts.

The concept of corporate reputation therefore includes factual aspects such as the success of the company and the quality of its products. On the other hand, corporate reputation also includes emotional aspects such as personal affection for a company regardless of its success. (cf. Schwaiger, 2004, p. 49) However this does not yet define the reputation comprehensively and consequently an analysis is not yet feasible. For this reason, the aforementioned and more up-to-date definition of the dimensions of reputation is used. It basically follows the same principles but manages to explain the various aspects of reputation in a both holistic and specific way.

In order to be able to examine corporate reputation in detail, it is therefore important to distinguish between three sub-dimensions. Eisenegger and Schranz explain their concept of the three dimensions of reputation in 2015 as follows: Reputation is a three-dimensional construct. Firstly, the actor is expected to fulfil subsystem-specific, functional role requirements competently (functional reputation), secondly, to behave morally correct (social reputation), and thirdly, to have an attractive and credible profile that marks a difference and creates opportunities for identification (expressive reputation). (p. 140)

Based on Weber’s three-world concept, which has been further developed by Habermas, Eisenegger conceives a three-dimensional reputation approach (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2007, p. 3f.). Despite its roots and although it is from 2007, this definition with its three dimensions is still providing the ideal means to analyze the reputation of actors in our modern society. This study pursues that division into three parts in order to examine the reputation of the global players Adidas and Nike. The following table from Eisenegger and Imhof provides a crucial aid in the detailed operationalization of these three dimensions of reputation.

The three reputation dimensions will be translated and defined in detail in the following three subchapters on the basis of this table and subsequently transferred into the operationalization of this research.
While these three dimensions will be operationalized in the media content analysis exactly as explained hereafter, they will be divided into ten even more detailed characteristics for the analysis of the public opinion poll.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputational Level of Reference</th>
<th>Functional Reputation</th>
<th>Social Reputation</th>
<th>Expressive Reputation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation Indicators</strong></td>
<td><strong>Objective Surrounding</strong>&lt;br&gt;Performance based functionsystem; explained with cognitive cause-effect relations</td>
<td><strong>Social Surrounding</strong>&lt;br&gt;Moral and normative standards</td>
<td><strong>Subjective inside world</strong>&lt;br&gt;Individual character and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluationstyle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Competence, success</strong>&lt;br&gt;(facts and figures)</td>
<td><strong>Integrity, Social Responsibility, Legitimacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attractivity, Salience, Authenticity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation Intermediaries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actors with cognitive referencing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Experts, Scientists, Analysts</td>
<td><strong>Actors with normative referencing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Moral entrepreneurs, Intellectuals, political actors, religious groups, civil societal actors</td>
<td><strong>Actors with aesthetic referencing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Communications-, marketing-, and style consultants, artists, designers, spin doctors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: functional, social and expressive reputation (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2007, p. 6)

### 2.1.6. Functional Dimension of Reputation

The first reputation dimension required for this study is the functional reputation dimension. In order for content to function in this rational dimension, the criteria of purposeful rationality must be fulfilled (cf. Weber, 1980, p. 13). The companies must therefore be perceived in a world of cognitively describable cause-and-effect relationships. The key indicators which enable a functional context to be identified and analyzed are the competence and success of the company. A functional dimension is therefore always attributed in this thesis if the reputation of the companies Adidas and Nike is perceived in a cognitive and rational context through their success or competence. In an economic context, this is also reflected, for example, in sales and profits.
Adidas and Nike are thus measured by the achievement of certain rationally measurable performance targets derived from the economic system and whether they use the appropriate means to achieve those goals. Eisenegger and Imhof describe this as follows:
When performance targets of functional systems (e.g. business) become the benchmark for the evaluation of actors, we are talking about functional reputation (2007, p. 7). At this point, they also elaborate on the distinguishing features of the functional reputation dimension. The concrete criteria to which the functional reputation dimension can be ascertained are empirically verifiable statistics. In the process of the constitution of reputation, the objective world follows a strictly cognitive logic: Functional success or failure are determined by key figures that allow for empirically verifiable statements. (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2007, p. 3)

The functional success of a company, such as Adidas and Nike, is therefore primarily represented by key figures that document the company’s success. In the context of this research work, contents with a clear objective reference to the fulfilment of the company’s economic performance targets are also to be assessed as functional. This can be expressed in concrete terms, for example, through content relating to personnel and production decisions, which aim to increase the company’s turnover and are clearly placed in a rational-cognitive context. Depending on whether companies can fulfill their functional performance expectations, i.e. are able to achieve significant profits, they gain a positive or negative functional reputation.

2.1.7. Social Dimension of Reputation

The next reputation dimension mentioned in the table above is the social reputation dimension. In the social reputation dimension, the social world around the protagonists is characterized by a normative and moralizing context. In order for content to function in this normative and moralizing dimension, the criterion of value rationality must be fulfilled (cf. Weber, 1980, p. 12). In this context, society evaluates whether a company’s actions are legitimated in terms of social reputation. In particular, the integrity and legitimacy of a company are evaluated, and the public evaluates whether the commonly accepted social norms are met. In order to achieve a positive reputation, companies like Adidas and Nike must not only strive to achieve economic and objectively measurable success in the sense of a functional reputation dimension, but also have to act morally appropriate in the sense of a social reputation dimension. Within the social reputation dimension, it is measured to what extent companies take social values and norms into account while pursuing economic performance targets.
Due to society's expectations that companies play by the generally applicable and more or less clearly agreed rules and values, there are great risks and opportunities for a company's reputation here. Criticism from the most diverse areas and with a wide variety of motivations, such as environmental activists, human rights activists or anti-capitalists pose great challenges to companies since they act as unofficial supervisory institutions. The social reputation dimension can have an enormous impact on a company's reputation. For this reason, these activists often try to combat non-compliance with social and moral rules by companies with high publicity impact. But even without the active contribution of critics and activists, companies must take the social reputation dimension into account and pay great attention to compliance with social norms and regulations in general. Both Adidas and Nike have experienced the strong media impact of the social reputation dimension. Nike, for example, is still struggling with its history of terrible human rights treatment, especially in the 1990s. Adidas has had a similar history, but today, Adidas is mostly benefiting from the social reputation dimension. Adidas has achieved this mainly thanks to collaborations such as their recycled sneakers with Parley for the Oceans and campaigns such as the I'm Here to Create campaign, which featured female athletes. Another testament to the power of the social reputation dimension is Greenpeace's Detox Challenge, aimed at global companies such as Adidas and Nike. The aim of the campaign was to prevent Adidas and Nike suppliers from leaking toxins into the environment. The impact of these campaigns today is so immense that companies are immediately restructuring their entire production chain. In the case of the Detox Challenge, for example, Adidas, Nike and even Puma have each voluntarily drawn up a plan in just a few weeks in which they aim to produce completely free of toxins by 2020.

The social reputation dimension is thus in a strictly normative relation to the world and the protagonists are measured by their ethical correctness or incorrectness. Eisenegger and Imhof also write in accordance with the aforementioned examples: Losses of reputation in the social world outweigh losses of reputation in the objective world by far: questioned cognitive competence can be corrected if the respective success is restored. Perceived ethical deficits have a more lasting impact on the company's reputation and can usually only be compensated for by taking radical measures, such as public concessions of guilt. (2007, S. 4) Depending on whether companies can fulfill their social expectations, i.e. are producing sustainable products, they gain a positive or negative social reputation.
Due to the great importance of the social reputation dimension on a company's general reputation, many companies focus on a reputation gain and strong perception through this reputation dimension. In addition, a perception of the functional reputation dimension allows for fewer distinctions from the competition. For example, a company's profitability has become much more of a basic requirement, which is why companies are increasingly focusing on normatively correct behavior. Consequently, factual arguments are fading from the public agenda. The social reputation dimension thus has more weight in the perception of overall reputation in society than the functional reputation dimension. However, with regard to the economy and companies, the third, the expressive reputation dimension is now taking on an even more powerful role than the others thanks to communication strategies such as influencer marketing.

2.1.8. Expressive Dimension of Reputation

The functional and social reputation dimensions evaluate the protagonist's relationship to their environment and their status in society as objective and rational or normative and moralizing criteria. The third dimension of reputation, taken from the table shown above and which will also be measured in this work, is the expressive reputation dimension. Contrary to the other two dimensions, the expressive reputation dimension evaluates the character and emotional identity of the protagonist. This means that expressions or gestures that suggest the character, personality and emotional nature of the protagonist are judged, based on their effect on others. Positively perceived character traits result in a positive, affective attitude towards the protagonist, which leads to a positive reputation of the protagonist within the public and the respective environment. The indicators of the expressive reputation dimension, such as attractiveness, uniqueness and authenticity, facilitate the detailed evaluation of the reputation of each company. Expressive reputation can result from companies appearing attractive by presenting themselves or being presented as unique, authentic, fascinating or sympathetic (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 248). This can also occur in connection with functional and social reputation. The decisive factor here is how the companies are perceived and in which ways they achieve their individual reputation goals (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 248). The most practical unit to evaluate corporate reputation in a subjective world is the emotional impact (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 245).
The already mentioned authenticity and uniqueness of a company enable the company to establish and shape a unique profile to distinguish it from its competitors. This enables the company to adopt a unique identity, making it easier for it to establish and maintain emotional contact with the target groups than it is for its competitors. (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2009, p. 250)

As mentioned before, the expressive reputation can appear simultaneously with the objectively and socially perceived reputation of a company. For example, the company Adidas may appear to be emotionally attractive because they collaborate with Parley to produce various sneakers made of plastic from the oceans. As a result, the company is perceived as environmentally friendly and sustainable, which, on the one hand, can be seen as positive in terms of its social reputation. On the other hand, it can also happen that the company’s target groups perceive Adidas as emotionally attractive and develop a subjective affection for such a company, which results in a positive impression of the company regarding its expressive reputation.

As can be seen from this example, this environment-friendly collaboration is not only perceived in a normative context via the social reputation dimension but is also perceived emotionally and thus perceived via the expressive reputation dimension. The emotional attraction of a company can therefore also be perceived in a functional or social context (cf. Eisenegger & Imhof, 2007, p. 5).

For the operationalization and data analysis in this work, however, this also entails a considerable degree of uncertainty. Due to the fact that reputation can be perceived in many different ways, it is sometimes very difficult to strictly divide content or pieces of communication into the individual reputation dimensions and to attribute them to only one of them. In order to enable an unambiguous evaluation of the data collected in this thesis, the more strongly perceived reputation dimension will therefore always be encoded. In order to ensure a clear operationalization, these subtleties are defined precisely and in detail in the codebook in chapter 10.

To summarize, the most recent understanding of reputation will be followed. The most useful foundation for this is provided by the reputation definition and subdivision into the three sub-dimensions of Eisenegger and Schranz (2015). In this thesis too, the functional reputation represents the actual and measurable success of the company. The social reputation measures the company's social sense of duty and morally correct conduct. The expressive reputation is defined by aspects such as emotional appeal, sympathy,
credibility, unique selling points and identification possibilities (cf. Eisenegger & Schranz, 2015). Transferred to the operationalization of this work, it will be especially interesting to investigate how often the tendency for emotionalization is reflected in the media and to what extent the protagonists Adidas and Nike are perceived and evaluated via the expressive dimension of reputation and whether this can help them to gain a positive reputation. In her study for example, Sandra Kirstein concludes that the affective reputation component sympathy is more likely to affect buying decisions than the cognitive reputation component competence (cf. 2009, p. V.).

Another result of her investigation was that the expressive category attractiveness and the social category corporate social responsibility were identified as the most important reputation drivers in the purchasing decision process (Kirstein, 2009, S. V.). The expressive reputation dimension thus seems to have a significant influence on the general perception of a company and thus on its overall reputation. In order to be able to evaluate this overall reputation of a company in a way that allows a comparison between Adidas and Nike, careful data collection and analysis are required. The most important tool to allow that comparison is the reputation index, which will be defined and explained in the following chapter.
2.1.9. Reputation Index

In order to compare the reputation of Adidas and Nike, Eisenegger’s reputation index is measured and calculated using the following formula. Doing so, allows the hypotheses which are defined later on to be quantitatively falsified or verified, which ultimately allows the previously defined research questions to be answered.

Reputation index:

\[ RI_0 = \left( \frac{Pos_A - Neg_A}{N} \right) \times 100 \]

Legend:

- \( RI_0 \) = Reputation index
- \( Pos_A \) = Amount of positive articles
- \( Neg_A \) = Amount of negative articles
- \( N \) = Total amount of positive, negative, controversial, and neutral articles

Figure 2: Reputation Index (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 181)

This formula will be explained in detail below. The formula also explains how to interpret the results of the reputation index. The Reputation Index measures the reputation of a reputational entity on the basis of all media articles encoded within a specified period of time and can assume values between -100 and 100 at most. The hypothetical value of +100 means that the object of reputation has received only positive evaluations and has also been centrally discussed in all coded articles. Vice versa, a value of -100 means that the object of reputation has exclusively been rated negatively and has been central to all articles. (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 94-96).

It becomes clear that in the case of the online articles examined later, it is important not only to code whether Adidas and Nike are evaluated positively or negatively in the online articles, but also how central their role is in the respective article. During the survey, the target group will also be asked to evaluate the reputation of each company with the response options positive, negative and neutral, which means that the reputation index can be applied without any restrictions. The exact method and procedure to gather data will be explained in more detail in the later chapters.
2.2. Framing

The framing theory plays a major role in the present work alongside the aforementioned reputation theory and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters. Framing is used in many scientific fields and disciplines. Research of framing is mainly applied in psychology, sociology and communication studies (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 24). In the field of communication studies, framing mostly takes place in content analysis. Due to general variety of application fields, there are many definitions, but not all of them are relevant in this paper. For this thesis, only definitions from the field of communication studies are used. The most important definitions are provided by Matthes, Potthoff, Entman and Scheufele. In this chapter, the theory of framing will be described in more detail so that it can be applied to the research presented here. In addition to some definitions that are used in communication studies, the added value and criticism, the principles, the mode of operation, media and personal frames and the framing process are described.

2.2.1. Definition of Framing

Nowadays, journalists are forced to make a selection regarding the news whether that is conscious or unconscious. Given the complexity of today's news, this step is unavoidable for the media and journalists. Through this selection, different perspectives are placed either in the background or in the spotlight and can influence the recipient's perception. However, the recipient decides for himself which topics and information he considers important. As mentioned above, the definitions used for this paper are mainly taken from the works of Entman, Scheufele, Matthes and Potthoff, all of which are limited to the field of communication studies. In the following chapter the definitions are introduced, their core points are explained and important characteristics and aspects for this work are elaborated.

Framing was first mentioned by Erving Goffmann, a Canadian sociologist, in 1974. The approach towards framing by Goffmann is aimed at communication in everyday life. According to Goffmann, frames are basic structures that try to influence and steer the perception of reality. Its primary function is to identify situations and therefore to derive courses of action and behavioral patterns. (cf. Goffmann, 1974, p. 21f.) Framing research in communication studies was significantly shaped by an article published by Robert Entman in 1993. Matthes says that Entman's article is regarded as one of the milestones in today's prevailing framing research (2014, p. 30f.).
“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (cf. Entman, 1993, p. 52)

Entman’s definition of framing is states that parts or perspectives from a text are selected and afterwards highlighted. The aim is to present certain perspectives and opinions on a topic in a certain way. The significance of framing can be seen in the fact that it can influence race and gender with regards to cultural studies, public opinion and voters with regard to political science, or cognitive studies with regard to social psychology. However, these examples are only a small part of the reason why framing is relevant for this thesis. (cf. Entman, 1993, p. 55f.) Scheufele developed a quite similar definition of framing. He states that Framing is a procedure in which certain objects and relations between them are highlighted, meaning that framing describes certain aspects of reality and makes them more salient. (cf. Scheufele, 2003, p. 46)

Like Entman’s definition of framing, Scheufele emphasizes that certain sections of reality are selected, and certain objects or information are made salient. Jörg Matthes describes framing as an active process of highlighting certain information and the resulting communication can be described as frames (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 10f.). As strategic framing, Matthes describes the process of communicators trying to impose their own views on the public and receive media attention (2014, p. 14). Despite these definitions, to the present day there is no generally accepted definition of framing. Since the object is immaterial, it is very difficult to define framing. Potthoff describes statements about what frames are as creative statements, which were formulated only on the basis of considerations. Certain characteristics are defined within these expressions and these characteristics must be present in order to identify a frame and ensure empirical verifiability. (cf. Potthoff, 2012, p. 30). Another barrier to a clear definition is the complexity of framing. Framing can be applied in many areas of research, such as psychology, sociology or communication studies (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 24). Therefore, it can be difficult to distinguish the different points of view. Also, the essence of framing is not clear. It is still debatable, whether it is a theory, a paradigm, an approach or a concept (cf. Matthes, 2007, p. 146). Since the conceptual understanding is very broad and heterogeneous, Matthes always talks about a framing approach (2014, S. 10). Despite all that, the definitions presented are similar in many aspects. In summary, framing does not only put topics on the agenda, but also decides which areas are to be placed in the foreground or in the background and from which perspective certain topics are discussed.
2.2.2. Four Elements of Framing

Entman describes four functions or elements that can be identified in frames. However, these elements do not necessarily have to appear together in a text but can present themselves independently. The first element is the definition of a problem that defines the framework for the existing problem. (1993, p. 52). Parts of it can be the thematic focus, the participants, or highlighting certain areas of a topic (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 11f.). The second element is the diagnosis of the cause, for example the identification of the causes and forces that lead to the problem (see Entman, 1993, p. 52). These causes can be of a personal or situational nature, which is why actors or a situation are responsible for the problem (see Matthes, 2014, p. 11f.).

The third element can be the making of moral judgments, and therefore the assessment of the perpetrators and the effects. The fourth element refers to the function of the call for action and the proposed solution. According to Entman, frames suggest certain solutions and predict possible effects. As already mentioned above, the presented elements of the frames do not necessarily have to be all contained in one text (see Entman, 1993, p. 52). In literature, it is controversial how many of the elements mentioned above and which of the four elements must be contained in a frame in order to speak of a frame in the sense of Entman (cf. Matthes, 2007, p. 138).

According to the works of Entman, Matthes divides frames into two categories, the implicit frame and the explicit frame. These frames are created from the existing number of individual frame elements. An implicit frame exists if at least two of the aforementioned elements can be identified in a text. However, an explicit frame exists, when all four of the aforementioned elements can be identified in a text. (cf. Matthes, 2009, p. 138) Matthes justifies the implicit frame from the perspective of impact research by describing that the missing elements of a frame are automatically activated by the recipient as soon as the four elements are mentioned beforehand in the news. (Matthes, 2007, pp. 138,145,259) A frame is thus defined when at least two of the four elements 'problem definition', 'diagnosis of the cause', 'evaluation or call to action/solution' can be identified in one text.
2.2.3. Principles of Framing

Frames are subdivided into the ambivalence principle, the selection principle, the consistency principle and the competition principle to describe how frames work in detail. The principle of ambivalence suggests that different areas and topics can be perceived from different angles and perspectives. In contrast, the selection principle describes how certain topics or information are perceived as being more important than other aspects and are thus brought to the forefront of attention. (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 20) Accordingly, frames are always selective fragments of a specific topic. The consistency principle is about the consistent linking of elements of a frame, which results in a connected horizon of meaning. This connected horizon of meaning is created by problem definitions, instructions for action, cause attributions, solution attributions and assessments. However, several argumentation chains can be displayed in a message post, thus several frames can occur. (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 21)

The competition principle is described by Matthes as follows: “The goal of strategic communicators is to enforce their interpretation in public discourse. This includes the success of one’s own frame in media coverage and the persuasive power of said frame to convince the audience.” (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 20) Thus, he describes that individual recipients are competing because they have different views on a topic and therefore represent different points of view on different topics. Frames are therefore dynamic and changeable. (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 22)

2.2.4. Function of Framing

Frames work by deliberately highlighting or ignoring certain information. They try to bring information to the spotlight by making it more eye-catching, memorable and relevant to the target group. This works, for example, through intentional placement, repetition or with the connection of well-known, cultural symbols. Thus, the integration of the frame into the receiver’s belief system should be guaranteed. However, influencing the audience’s way of thinking is not necessarily given by frames as the emphasis of information is based on action between text and recipient. (see Entman, 1993, p. 53) Framing is used particularly in reporting. Due to the complexity of many events and messages, a selection is necessary. In this way, certain aspects are consciously or unconsciously put into the background or emphasized. As already emphasized, the media broaden the news coverage by selecting and emphasizing certain areas which they include in the published articles (see Matthes, 2009, p. 17f.).
Therefore, it is hardly possible for the media to report completely objectively, as they report this information, which they consider to be important and relevant, within a certain framework (frames) (cf. Matthes, 2009, p. 22).

Matthes writes accordingly, that if we assume that the cornerstones of the framing approach are selection and emphasizing (salience), mechanisms such as selectivity, imbalance and judging do not appear as undesirable distortion of journalism, but as functionally necessary conditions and side effects of communication. (cf. 2014, p. 21)

In summary, it can be observed that it is almost impossible for media companies and journalists to report all the perspectives and links of a topic. For this reason, Matthes emphasizes that framing is an indispensable accessory of communication and must not be seen as a distortion of journalism. Each recipient classifies the various media reports in his or her own way (personal frames) and thus plays an active role in the process of creating the framing, alongside the communicators and media (cf. Matthes, 2014, p. 18ff).

Scheufele locates framing in a horizontal and a vertical plane. The horizontal level is located in the media system or journalists, in the population (recipients) and among various actors, political organizations and the economy. The vertical level, on the other hand, refers to a textual and cognitive level. (cf. 2003, p. 47)

For this research, both the horizontal and vertical levels are important, since on the one hand the media coverage of manufacturers of sporting goods such as Adidas and Nike will be analyzed and on the other hand the cognitive level of the recipients will be surveyed in the questionnaire.

2.2.5. Locating Frames

Frames can be found in different places or areas in the communication process. In this regard, Entman describes four places where frames can have an impact. These consist of the communicator, the recipient, the text or the culture. Depending on how the communicator’s belief system is controlled, the communicator consciously or unconsciously decides on certain frames. With respect to the receiver, frames may differ from the communicator, so the communicator cannot guarantee which frames are received by the recipient. In the text, frames can be sentences that reinforce or judge topics, standard expressions or pre- or non-occurring keywords. This ‘omitting’ or ‘highlighting’ has the effect of placing topics in a certain light. In culture, frames can act as an accumulation of accepted frames within a social group. According to Entman, all four places of the frames have similar effects. They use highlighted components to argue solutions, problems and causes. (Entman, 1993, pp. 51ff.)
These effects on the recipient or the public and in articles play an important role in this work. The quantitative media content analysis of newspaper articles about Adidas and Nike serves to show the framing effect in the text whereas the effect on the recipient is derived from the quantitative questioning of said recipients regarding the two sports brands.

All four forms of frames can be applied in this work. Since a media content analysis and a survey of Adidas and Nike will be conducted, both, the recipient and communicator are affected, as well as the places of impact in the text and possibly in the cultural field.

2.2.6. Different Types of Frames

Frames have different characteristics, depending on where they work and by whom they are consumed. Frames can be divided into media frames and person frames. Media frames are frames that are distributed by the media to the public and personal frames are frames that each person creates or designs for him- or herself. Media frames are interpretation patterns offered by various media and their journalists. (cf. Bonfadelli & Friemel & Wirth, 2010, p. 631) Media frames are larger complexes of meaning that consist of the different elements of a frame. By emphasizing the individual elements, they are able to structure and organize the contents of the topics. (cf. Harden, 2002, p. 88) The goal of media frames is to communicate certain views on a topic and then influence the viewpoint and attitudes of recipients. (cf. Bonfadelli & Friemel & Wirth, 2010, p. 631) The term "media frame" describes how a topic is presented in the final product in the media and how it is communicated. In contrast to the media frames, personal frames are individually designed. Each person perceives media frames in a different way. Depending on the opinion, attitude, point of view or beliefs of the person, the perception and reception of media frames varies. Whether media frames can influence the public opinion and person frames depends on each individual. Whether or not recipients can be influenced by media frames is up to them. Person frames are therefore difficult to control and can differ from person to person.
The framing research is focusing on discovering how media frames can influence the individual person frames and whether media frames are the result of journalistic routines. Scheufele describes journalistic frames as selection criteria and structuring aid, which have an impact on the widespread public media. According to Scheufele, journalistic frames are formal frames that are often used as content-bound frames. In addition, Scheufele states that media frames, in contrast to journalistic frames, are understood as groupings with sense. (cf. Scheufele, 2003, p. 59)

Another important part of the frame research is how person frames influence the motivation to behave in a certain way and how individual persons are influenced by media frames in their responsibility, for example. In addition, frames of people can be examined for potential consequences (cf. Bonfadelli & Friemel & Wirth, 2010, p. 631). In the work presented here, media and person frames are important, since a two-dimensional analysis is carried out. Media frames play a crucial role in quantitative media content analysis, as different articles from newspapers about Adidas and Nike are analyzed. Person frames, on the other hand, are important in the quantitative survey as people are questioned about the companies Adidas and Nike and each respondent reveals their own person frames. Therefore, both person frames and media frames are essential for this work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Questioning</th>
<th>Frames as ...</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Frames</td>
<td>How are media frames influencing the person frames of recipients?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person Frames</td>
<td>How do person frames influence the motivation to behave in a specific way?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Media and Person Frames (cf. Scheufele, 1999, p. 109)*
2.2.7. The Framing Process

This illustration by Scheufele 1999 intends to simplify and illustrate how frames are formed, which actors are affected, how media try to set frames and what effects frames can have on the recipients. In the upper part, the processes of the media can be seen, whereas in the lower part, the processes of the target groups or the recipients can be seen. Through standards, ideologies and the influence of their clients, journalists have certain conditions influencing their perspective in their reporting. Based on these conditions, journalists write and publish topics and information, creating so-called media frames. This process is called frame building. Whether the recipients follow the given media frames and perspectives and let them flow into their perception of the topic is called Frame Setting (Gröppel-Klein & Germelmann, 2009, p. 27). The final step deals with the effects of media frames on the individual recipient. Such effects can arise in behaviors, beliefs or attitudes on a wide variety of topics. As already mentioned in chapter 2.2.6., media frames and person frames are relevant in relation to the work presented here, since this two-dimensional research design aims to examine both the media and the recipient side. It is important here that media create frames from a certain perspective and publish them (frame building).
The aim of the media is to set or create frames from a certain angle for the recipients. Accordingly, the media generate specific frames with regard to Adidas and Nike, which are published from the point of view of the journalists or the specific media. These media frames try to generate a certain frame for the recipient (frame setting).

These media frames are guided by certain norms and values of society, such as the sustainable and environmentally friendly production of Adidas and Nike products or the influence of the media owners (frame building). The aim of the media is therefore to set frames, by reporting on certain perspectives and views on the two manufacturers of sporting goods in order to generate influence among the recipients. In this work, media frames and person frames are investigated in order to investigate the influence of media frames on person frames.

2.2.8. Criticism of Framing

Like many other concepts, the framing approach, too, faces various criticism. Especially Entman's definition of framing has been criticized, as this definition is a milestone in the current understanding of framing. One point of criticism here is that the separation from existing theories, such as the News Bias approach or gatekeeper theory, is not sufficient. Entman's definition of framing can be interpreted in such a way that all recipients are victims of political manipulation, for example, since the recipient has little space for constructive information processing behavior. (cf. Pan & Kosicki, 2005, p. 176f.)

Another area that Potthoff, among others, criticizes about Entman's framing definition is the naming of the elements of a frame. The four elements of a frame define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies are neither theoretically nor empirically justified. With regard to these points of criticism, Potthoff asks himself whether recipients perceive frames in this way at all. (2012, p. 40)

Consequently, Potthoff explains that the division of a frame into these four elements or categories appears to be random and is only justified by its operationalizability. (2012, p. 41)
One strength of framing is that it does not specify a tendency towards value. This makes it possible to investigate faults and sources of media services in a more detailed and differentiated way. (see Dahinden, 2006, p. 20) In addition, Dahinden describes that with the framing approach, individual adjustments can be made to a wide variety of circumstances and that this can therefore be adapted to time and cultural circumstances. (2006, p. 18f.) According to Esser, the framing approach offers further positive features. The approach offers more than just the theoretical collection of texts. Here are the individual coding units, larger and more important units. (cf. Esser & Schwabe & Wilke, 2005, p. 317). The framing approach thus makes it possible to broaden the perspective that media services include networks of significant units that can produce a new sense structure or horizon of meaning. Furthermore, the texts of journalists can be connected with the feelings and attitudes of these journalists, and afterwards connected with the feelings and attitudes of the recipients regarding these texts. (cf. Esser & Schwabe & Wilke, 2005, p. 317).

2.2.9. Framing and Second-Level Agenda-Setting

This work aims inter alia to explore the relation between media reputation and corporate reputation. The causality between the two is generally covered by the framing theory. However, there is another concept explaining this causality in a more universal way. The second-level agenda setting concept is preferred and employed by various researchers such as McCombs, Shaw and Weaver who generally consider the framing theory to be part of the agenda setting theory operating as the secondary effect. Researchers such as Eisenegger, Schranz, and Schneider, for example, aimed to explore the relation between media reputation and corporate reputation in Switzerland on a large scale in their benchmark work in 2010, employing the second-level agenda setting instead of the framing theory (cf. Eisenegger & Schranz & Schneider, 2010). Their pioneering work employed, both, first and second-level agenda-setting instead of the framing theory. There are several reasons to explore the relevance of second-level agenda-setting as a theoretical framework for this study. With the framing theory already defined and examined beforehand, this sub-chapter focusses on useful definitions and tools coming especially from second-level agenda-setting concepts and the final take on which definitions will serve best to define the theoretical foundation of this study, to enable an easy operationalization, and to explain the final results.
The second-level agenda-setting is sometimes called attribute agenda setting which in itself already explains the perspective and principle of the concept. While agenda setting generally explains how the media set the agenda for the public the attribute agenda setting explains how the media shape the way we discuss this agenda. This concept aims to explore the influence of attribute salience and which qualities and characteristics are ascribed to the objects of the news agenda and in which tonality these are transported (cf. Wu & Coleman, 2009, p.776). In the beginning, agenda setting was formally developed and confirmed by the researchers McCombs and Shaw who examined the American presidential election and proved a strong correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda in Chapel Hill (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). After more and more researchers proved and supported the agenda setting theory, McCombs went on and showed in a study (McCombs et al., 1997) that there is not only an issue salience but also an attribute salience, arguing that the media not only provide objects for the public agenda to focus on but also shape the way how the public is thinking about these objects. This form of framing can manifest itself in many ways. It can for example occur in news reporting that presents popular issues in a much worse light than they actually are or in press releases that present a company’s problem in a much better light than it actually is. In doing so, the media own a great deal of power not only by forming a company’s reputation in their news coverage but also by shaping the company’s reputation in the public opinion. The problem is that generally all of the above-mentioned applies to both framing and second-level agenda setting. Therefore, the similarities and differences between the two will be discussed in the following.

Accordingly, both framing and second-level agenda setting focus on how objects are presented in the media. Therefore, they are both concerned with the most salient characteristics attributed to these objects. Both theories explain ways of thinking about something instead of concerning themselves with objects of thinking (first-level agenda setting). The differences between the two theories are mostly explored by Scheufele who claims that the two are in fact not synonymous due to three aspects: news production, information processing and media effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). First, he claims that the framing theory has stronger ties to the news production process than agenda setting. Thereby, Scheufele and Tewksbury argue that framing is more strongly concerned with how interest groups shape the public discourse with attributes than agenda setting. This study’s main purpose is not to examine these groups and their attempts to shape the public opinion but rather to examine the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike in both the media and the public.
Therefore, this study will follow the attribute agenda setting theory and examine a narrower but also more precise field. This includes the corporate reputation of each company in both fields, but does not examine the specific interest groups and their news production.

Second, Scheufele points out that for framing to take effect messages need a significant amount of audience attention whereas attribute agenda setting only relies on the audience to be repeatedly exposed to certain messages. This study will focus on the second condition since the amount of attention of the audience is not going to be relevant but rather the number of messages the audience is exposed to. Therefore, this study will follow the attribute agenda setting in this point as well.

Third and last, Scheufele is arguing that framing concerns itself with the extent to which media frames are compatible with the preexisting points of view of the audience, while second-level agenda setting concerns itself with how easy it is for the audience to retrieve frames from their memory. In this study the preexisting frames of the public are not relevant for the result, while the ease with which people recall media messages is somewhat relevant, which is why some of the questions of the public opinion poll will go into that direction.

After explaining and applying these three differences to the context of this study the result is that framing and second-level agenda setting will be treated synonymously except for the three aforementioned differences. In all of these three aspects this study will follow the attribute agenda setting theory instead of the framing theory. With the theoretical framework of this study set and defined the following chapter will explain the Hypotheses underlying this study.
3. Research Fundamentals

Since this paper’s research is focused on the reputation of Adidas and Nike the following chapter will elaborate on the specifics and background of each of the companies. Additionally, the two daily newspapers from which the data is drawn in the first research method as well as the population group from which the data is drawn in the second research method will be presented in detail.

3.1. Adidas

Adidas AG, headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Germany, is an internationally active sporting goods manufacturer. Adidas had a market capitalization of 39.6 billion US Dollars in early 2017, making it one of the 100 most valuable companies in the world (Forbes, 2018). Their CEO Kasper Rørsted has recently started to increase his public appearance. With its two core brands Adidas and Reebok, the company offers clothing, shoes, sports equipment, accessories and licensed products such as watches, cosmetics and eyewear worldwide through its own stores and retail outlets. After Nike, the group is the second largest manufacturer of sporting goods in the world and is known as an important supplier of famous athletes, sports teams and international sporting events (see Langenscheidt & Venohr, 2010). After initially operating under the name Adidas International Holding GmbH, the company was renamed Adidas AG in 1993 and converted into a stock corporation. In 1995, the Adidas shares were placed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange for the equivalent of EUR 1.68 billion. Adidas was admitted to the MDAX on March 18th, 1996 and to the DAX on June 19th, 1998.

Today’s Adidas AG was founded on August 18th, 1949 by Adolf Dassler as Adi Dassler Adidas sport-shoe factory with 47 employees. On the same day Dassler patented a shoe model and the three parallel stripes as a trademark. The company name is an acronym composed of Dassler’s nickname Adi and the first three letters of his last name.

In the post-war years, Dassler’s football shoes were used by the German national football team, among others, whose victory at the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland - the so-called Miracle of Bern - eventually made the Adidas shoes with the three stripes and the innovative screw studs world-famous. In 1989 Adidas lost world market leadership to Nike (focus.de, 10/14/2004).
Adidas has a brand awareness level of 97% in Germany. The best-known Adidas brand logo has been three parallel stripes since the early years. Adidas still uses the slogan "Die Marken mit den 3 Streifen", which is sometimes (also in English and French: “The brand with the 3 stripes”, "La marque aux 3 bandes") attached to the products themselves, such as on the tongue of sports shoes.

![Adidas brand logo](image)

*Figure 5: Adidas brand logo*

In 1997, Adidas Originals was launched with new editions of famous Adidas shoe models, such as the Stan Smith Superstar, and textiles. Since then, the three-leaf logo has been used exclusively for this original series, for which Adidas has its own stores worldwide.

![Adidas Originals logo](image)

*Figure 6: Adidas Originals logo*

From the beginning of the 2000s, the Style division brought together highly fashionable articles from collaborations with Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto "Y-3" since 2002, British designer Stella McCartney "adidas by Stella McCartney" since 2005, and Porsche Design "Porsche Design Sport" since 2007. Since 2005 there has been a cooperation with the American singer Kanye West, from which the Yeezy fashion collection emerged.
In addition, under the heading "adidas by" there are collaborations on high-priced clothing and shoes with designers Raf Simons since 2013, Rick Owens since 2014 and Yohji Yamamoto since 2001 and the Japanese designer brand Kolor since 2015. Since 2014 there has been a collaboration with the American artist Pharrell Williams (Complex, 2016).

Some of the most famous brand ambassadors are Lionel Messi, Manuel Neuer, David Beckham, Pharrell Williams, Katy Perry, Justin Bieber and James Harden. Adidas also sponsors various teams such as FC Bayern Munich and the German, Argentinian and Spanish national teams, to name but a few.

In the last decade Adidas kept pushing the limits of innovation with technologies like Boost (Complex, 2015) and 4D Futurecraft (adidas-group.com, 2017) and with creative collaborations like the ones with Kanye, Pharrell or Parley for the Oceans. The innovative power and creativity of the brand with three stripes comes with no surprise as they created Hydra Ventures and the Adidas Anticipation GmbH to discover, drive and fund creative and sustainable innovations and disruptive business concepts. Adidas is the first to actively work on storefactories and the Speedfactory in Ansbach, Germany, allowing them to produce individual sneakers on the spot. Consumers can enter the Adidas storefactories, create individual sneakers and go home with the finished product shortly after.
3.2. Nike

Nike Inc. Greek “vnikh” nike, the Greek goddess of victory, was founded in 1964 and 1971, respectively, and is an internationally active US-American sports goods supplier. Its headquarters are in Beaverton, Oregon. Nike has been the world’s leading sporting goods supplier since 1989. Nike had a market capitalization of $91.2 billion in early 2017, making it one of the 100 most valuable companies in the world (Forbes, 2018). Bill Bowerman, a former sports coach at the University of Oregon at Eugene, founded Blue Ribbon Sports in June 1964 together with Philip Knight.

The company first sold sports shoes of the Onitsuka Tiger brand, today: Asics, before producing shoes under the name Nike itself from 1971, which were lighter and had more profiled soles than the usual American ones. (cf. Panati, 1994, p. 233 f.) In 2017, the CEO of Nike Mark Parker ordered a 71% cut in his own salary because Nike had laid off 1000 employees.

Nike's commercial success was linked to his commitment to successful athletes. The company equipped Steve Prefontaine, who finished fourth at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich over 5000 metres. He introduced Nike shoes to other runners. In 1978 Nike started selling shoes in Europe.

In 1984, Nike signed the then basketball player rookie Michael Jordan. Together they designed their own collections. In its first year of collaboration, Nike generated $130 million with the Air Jordan brand. Jordan is said to have generated a total turnover of about 2.6 billion US dollars for the company. (cf. Fortune, 1998; cf. Forbes, 2015) 1996 followed the next coup after Michael Jordan with the (then still little known) golfer Tiger Woods. For five million US dollars a year, Nike became the supplier of the future golf star. Later the professional cyclist and triathlete Lance Armstrong was won over to the company. In September 2003, Nike acquired the Converse brand for $305 million. (cf. New York Times, 2003)

When Nike was founded, it was initially only about the manufacture and distribution of sports shoes. The brand is still best known today for its various, mostly eye-catching
shoe models; today this shoe range also includes popular sneakers and casual shoes and various running shoes in numerous colours and variations.

The most recent collaboration with Virgil Abloh's Off-White presented various sneakers which gained a lot of positive attention and hype. (Nike.com, 2017)

Over the years, many other sporting goods have been added to the range. These articles are among others: Shorts, headbands and wristbands, hoodies and sweatshirts, jackets and vests, jerseys, running trousers or gym and training pants, T-shirts and polo shirts. There are also numerous sports accessories, equipment and accessories from Nike. These include bags and backpacks, hats and caps, tennis balls, basketballs and footballs, shin guards, socks, gloves, towels and watches. Some of the best-known brand ambassadors include LeBron James, Michael Jordan, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar Jr., Zlatan Ibrahimović, Tiger Woods, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

In November 2017, Nike was listed in the Paradise Papers. (see Paradise Papers, 2018) The Süddeutsche Zeitung reported that Nike is a client of Appleby, a law firm that helps Nike pay almost no taxes in Germany. Nike is reported to be using a tax loophole in the Netherlands, known as the CV-BV structure. (cf. sueddeutsche.de, 2017) The Paradise Papers were published in 2017 and have a correspondingly bad effect on Nike's corporate reputation in the media.

Graphic design student Carolyn Davidson designed the logo, the so-called swoosh, for around 35 US dollars. (cf. designguide.at, 2018) Today, this "Nike hook" is one of the best-known trademarks in the world, as is the slogan "Just do it". The two trademark elements are used either on their own or in combination to identify a trademark.

![Figure 7: Nike Logo "Swoosh"](image)
3.4. Bild Zeitung

"Bild Zeitung" is a German, national tabloid newspaper that is published on weekdays. It is the newspaper with the highest circulation in Germany. The tabloid, published by Axel Springer since 24th June 1952, has long been Europe's highest-circulation daily newspaper. The paid circulation is 1,620,758 copies, a decrease of 63.2 percent since 1998 (ivw.eu).

The newspaper is published Monday to Saturday in a national edition and in 27 regional and city editions, varying in scope and content. On Sundays, the sister newspaper "Bild am Sonntag" is published. It is originally a newsstand newspaper but can since also be subscribed to. Nevertheless, it is still offered today like the first representatives of the genre of tabloid on the street or boulevard. The mobile newspaper vendors used in the past were supplemented and partially replaced by vending machines. This corresponds to a decline of 2,788,462 copies. The practically continuous downward trend was stronger than in almost all other tabloid newspapers, national daily newspapers and Sunday and weekly newspapers (Niggemeier, 2012). Subscriptions account for 6.43 percent of the paid circulation.

According to BILD's own figures, in 2006 about 17.9 percent of the total German population aged 14 and over, bidding about 11.63 million people. Of these, about 4.30 million are women and 7.33 million men. This means that 63 percent of readers are men, 43 percent of readers have a lower secondary school leaving certificate with apprenticeship, 35 percent have a middle school certificate and 4 percent have university entrance qualification. 7 percent of the readers are self-employed, 34 percent are employees or civil servants and 37 percent are skilled workers. The target group is therefore - also in accordance with the guidelines of the founder Axel Springer - not the class of executives or educated and intellectuals, but the class of the working and consumer population (cf. Axel Springer AG - Marktforschung, 12.02.2018). One of the very few age groups in which the readership has grown since 2006 are the 20-29-year-olds, for whom circulation growth of 17 percent was recorded (cf. Axel Springer AG - Marktforschung, 12.02.2018).
3.5. Süddeutsche Zeitung

The Süddeutsche Zeitung (abbreviation SZ) is a German national subscription daily newspaper. It has been published by Süddeutscher Verlag in Munich since 1945, when the Information Control Division of the American occupying power granted it a licence to print as an "important opinion-forming" daily newspaper. The paid circulation is 357,918 copies, a decrease of 13.5 percent since 1998 (ivw.eu). Since 29th February 2008 81.25 percent of the south German publishing house belong to the Südwestdeutschen Medien Holding (SWMH) with seat in Stuttgart.

What is specific to the Süddeutsche Zeitung is the weight it has given to culture in recent years. The respective feuilleton follows directly after the political part. In addition to the glosse "Streiflicht" at the top of the front page, "Page 3" is a special feature of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, in its own spelling DIE SEITE DREI. Large daily reports and background articles are published here. On the fourth page, the opinion page, readers can find an editorial written daily by well-known authors of the Süddeutsche Zeitung. In addition, a supplement with a selection of English-language articles in the New York Times was delivered with the SZ until the end of 2017 and the SZ magazine is published on Fridays. On Thursdays, only in the edition for the Munich region, there is the event supplement SZ-Extra. Since 18th October 2014, the Süddeutsche Zeitung has been published on Saturdays under the title "Süddeutsche Zeitung am Wochenende" in a considerably expanded version, which will not only be a daily newspaper, but also a Sunday or weekly newspaper. On Thursdays, only in the edition for the Munich region, there is the event supplement SZ-Extra. Since 18th of October 2014, the Süddeutsche Zeitung has been published on Saturdays under the title "Süddeutsche Zeitung am Wochenende" in a considerably expanded version. (cf. sueddeutsche.de, 15.01.2015)
3.6. Opinion Poll Target Group

The target group for the opinion poll includes all 18- to 35-year-old Germans. This selection is based on several criteria:

First, the advertisements and product communication of Adidas and Nike are mainly aimed at this target group (adidas-group.com, 10.02.2018; businessinsider.com, 07.04.2015). The two sporting goods manufacturers target them because they are more open to their communication and more interested in sports. This qualifies the target group as both interested and informed in the two sports brands. This argument is also based on data in figure 8.

Second, this target group is selected due to the resource economics of this study: 18- to 35-year-old Germans are the most accessible target group for the researcher to conduct the survey.

In the following, the key facts and characteristics of this target group are discussed and put in relation and context with this study. According to destatis the estimate population of 18- to 35-year-old Germans in 2018 is 17.382.000 (destatis, 12.02.2018).

The closest quantification of this target group’s relevant characteristics is collected on the best for planning website (b4p, 12.02.2018). The following table displays the most relevant and interesting key facts about the population of 18- to 35-year-old Germans for this study. The presented data set allows to reveal approximate tendencies and contextual information on the opinions and behaviors of the target group. These findings can be held against the average opinion and behavior of the 14-96-year-old Germans.
best for planning 2017 I Market Population Statistics

Target Group 1: Respondents: 18 to 35 years - Sample: 7.450 Sum: 17,34 Mio., 24,73%
Target Group 2: Total Population - Sample: 30.121 Sum: 70,09 Mio., 100%

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Mio.</th>
<th>% vert.</th>
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**Sport-/Outdoorclothing Frequency of buying for yourself**

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<td>once a semester</td>
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<td>11,38</td>
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<td>once a year</td>
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**Sports shoes Frequency of buying for yourself**

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<th>% vert.</th>
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<tr>
<td>once a month</td>
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<td>1,5</td>
<td>0,66</td>
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<td>once a quarter</td>
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<td>12,7</td>
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<td>once a semester</td>
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<td>less frequently</td>
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**Fashion/Clothing Brand familiarity**

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<td>94,7</td>
<td>65,23</td>
<td>93,1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
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<td>86,3</td>
<td>56,77</td>
<td>81</td>
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**Fashion/Clothing Brands considered for new purchases**

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<td>60,5</td>
<td>33,3</td>
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<td>Nike</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>24,8</td>
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**Sneakers Brand familiarity**

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<tbody>
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<td>92</td>
<td>61,96</td>
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<td>Nike</td>
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<td>52,2</td>
<td>74,5</td>
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**Sneakers Brands considered for new purchases**

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<th>Basis 1</th>
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<td>Nike</td>
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<td>24,18</td>
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**Sneakers Buying criteria**

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<td>high quality</td>
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<td>46,9</td>
<td>32,61</td>
<td>46,5</td>
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<td>60,1</td>
<td>33,81</td>
<td>48,2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I do not buy that</td>
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<td>0,6</td>
<td>0,41</td>
<td>0,6</td>
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### Fashion Buying criteria

<table>
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<td>attractive design</td>
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<td>35,7</td>
<td>25,31</td>
<td>36,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high quality</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>25,9</td>
<td>14,54</td>
<td>20,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific brand</td>
<td>0,11</td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>0,45</td>
<td>6,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8: Target Group Statistics (b4p, 12.02.2018)*

As can be taken from Figure 8 the total population 17,34 million 18- to 35-year-old Germans are pretty close to the 17,38 million 18- to 35-year-old Germans presented by destatis and can, therefore, be used as an approximation to the characteristics of the target group. The second data set from b4p presents the characteristics of the 14-96-year-old Germans which allows to roughly spot the characteristics distinguishing this study's target group from the rest of the population. The data allows approximate conclusions on the target groups opinion and behavior regarding sports clothing, sports shoes, brand popularity, and the criteria most likely to influence the buyer’s decision.

The first observation is that the target group buys sportswear and sports shoes far more frequently than the rest of the population. The characteristics "several times a month", "once a month", "once a quarter year", "once a semester" and "once a year" apply noticeably more frequently to the target group than to the rest of the population. Accordingly, the characteristics " less frequently " and "never " are noticeably more frequent among the rest of the population. As Adidas and Nike also have such big data available, it is therefore no wonder that the two companies have such a strong focus on this target group with their communication. Consequently, this target group is perfectly suited to examine the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike.

With regard to the brand awareness towards Adidas and Nike, it is striking that the Adidas brand seems to be very well known to all age groups, both for shoes and normal clothing. This is the result of the fact that Adidas is a German brand and therefore has a significant home advantage. However, the Nike brand is much better known to the target group of 18- to 35-year old Germans than to the rest of the German population, both in terms of shoes and the rest of the clothing. This is certainly due to the fact that Nike is targeting this population much more strongly. For this reason, too, the target group is best suited to examine the corporate reputation of both companies.
Regarding the question which brands are considered for a new purchase of clothing and shoes, other striking characteristics can be identified. The target group is much more willing to buy new Adidas and Nike shoes and clothing than the rest of the population. It is therefore not only evident that the target group has bought sportswear and sports shoes more frequently in the recent past, but also that in the near future the target group will prefer the brands Adidas and Nike considerably more to buy new clothing and shoes. Thus, this is another reason not only for Adidas and Nike to focus on this target group but also for this study to research this target group.

Last but not least, this data set indicates that the target group pays much more attention to the brand and an attractive design when deciding to buy shoes. With regard to the decision of buying clothing, it is equally striking that the target group pays much more attention to the brand and an attractive design. In both cases it can therefore be assumed that the target group shows a much higher brand loyalty and generally a higher brand awareness than the rest of the population. This last argument reaffirms the fact that this target group is the most suitable fit for investigating the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike.

**4. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Examining the reputation of two global brands like Adidas and Nike reveals a lot of questions and potential discoveries. In light of this study’s focus there will be two main areas of interest: A reputation study on Adidas and Nike in the media and public on the one hand and a study on the influence of the media reputation on the public reputation. Additionally, the study aims to unveil the most important factors for each company’s reputation. The main research questions this study is concerning itself with:

1. What is the corporate reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike in the German media “Bild Zeitung” and “Süddeutsche Zeitung” during the period of February 12th, 2017 to February 12th, 2018?

2. What is the corporate reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike in the German public amongst 18- to 35-year-olds during the period of February 12th, 2018 to March 12th, 2018?
3. In which way does the newspaper-mediated reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike have an influence on their reputation with 18- to 35-year-old Germans?

Answering these research questions will be facilitated with several hypotheses from which some are based on both data sets and some on just one of the two data sets.

4.1. Hypotheses Based on Both Methods

Generally, this study aims to observe the reputation of Adidas and Nike utilizing a two-staged research design. Based on the combination of both research designs the following three hypotheses are examined:

H1: Adidas' total reputation index is higher than Nike's total reputation index.

H2: The newspaper-mediated reputation of Adidas and Nike is lower than the reputation of these companies among 18- to 35-year-old Germans.

H3: The reputation index of both companies in the public opinion poll is closer to the reputation index in the tabloid newspaper than to the reputation index in the quality newspaper.

Utilizing a two-staged research design allows a comprehensive assessment of corporate reputation but it also allows to examine several issues within each of the research designs.

4.2. Hypotheses Based on Content Analysis

Due to the home-advantage of Adidas in Germany it is expected that the reputation of Adidas is significantly higher than the reputation of Nike. Also, it is expected that the boulevard daily newspaper is more critical towards big corporations and is more likely to utilize scandals and negative headlines to increase their audience. Due to the higher circulation of the Bild Zeitung it can be expected that their content has a bigger influence on the public opinion than the Süddeutsche Zeitung. Due to the rise of corporate social responsibility it is also assumed that the social reputation dimension is used significantly more often than the other reputation dimensions.
Based on the online articles the following hypotheses are examined:

H4: Adidas’ media reputation index is higher than Nike's media reputation index.

H5: The media reputation index of both companies is lower in the boulevard daily newspaper than in the quality daily newspaper.

H6: The online articles are more often located in the social reputation dimension than in the other reputation dimensions.

4.3. Hypotheses Based on Opinion Poll

Same as with the media content analysis it is expected that the German company Adidas has a significantly higher reputation index compared to the US company Nike due to their advantage in Germany. Despite the media probably often reporting in a social context it can be assumed that the public still value expressive qualities in companies such as popular brand ambassadors the highest. Although both companies show a strong communication towards women recently it can still be assumed that the company's receive a higher reputation among male respondents. Last, this poll allows to find out which aspects factor most into each reputation dimension. Therefore, based on the questionnaire the following hypotheses are examined:

H7: Adidas’ reputation among 18- to 35-year-old Germans is higher than Nike’s reputation.

H8: The interviewees locate the companies more often in the expressive reputation dimension than in the other reputation dimensions.

H9: Within the functional reputation dimension, product quality is more important for a company’s reputation building than other factors.

H10: Within the social reputation dimension, a good employer image is more important for the reputation of a company than other factors.

H11: Within the expressive reputation dimension, popular influencers are more important to a company’s reputation than other factors.
5. Research Design

The research method utilized in this paper is presented in the following chapter. This thesis deals with a range of topics that require different methodological approaches. Firstly, the reputation index of the two main companies Adidas and Nike is to be determined. On the other hand, framing effects between the news coverage in online articles and the public should be investigated in order to discover possible interrelationships and influences. The Reputation Index and framing effects are captured through a two-stage research design.

Therefore, the study draws on, both, a comprehensive quantitative media content analysis and a public opinion poll to generate the necessary data to answer the just mentioned hypotheses. In addition, the theoretical framework of the content analysis and the opinion poll as well as each investigation period, the media and interviewee sample and the used variables for the reputation quantification are explained in detail. After explaining each study design, the respective data collection is described in detail.

5.1. Content Analysis

Merten defined the media content analysis as a method of assessing social reality in which characteristics of a manifest text are used to draw conclusions about characteristics of a non-manifest text (cf. Merten, 1995, p.59). Another definition of content analysis was developed by Früh: He defined content analysis as an empirical method for the systematic, intersubjectively comprehensible description of content and formal characteristics of messages (cf. Früh, 1998, p. 24).

Both definitions indicate that content analysis is an empirical method that allows certain things to be described. Possible descriptions in both definitions are 'social reality' or 'characteristics of messages'. On the basis of the definitions of Früh and Merten of the media content analysis, the following statement can be made: The quantitative content analysis captures mass media content, visual or text messages, using predefined categories and subsequently quantifies them (cf. Rößler/Geise, 2013, p. 271).
According to Atteslander, the content analysis can be used to examine communication content such as texts, images and films, with the emphasis on text analysis (cf. Atteslander, 2008, p.181). When applying Atteslander's statements to this work, content analysis proves to be an appropriate method.

Atteslander divides the content analysis into eight different steps: (see Atteslander, 2008, p.197)

1. establish the hypotheses
2. determine the total data set and the sample size
3. procure the material to be investigated
4. define the investigation units
5. develop and test the category system (pretest)
6. encode the material
7. statistical evaluation based on the hypotheses
8. publication of the results

The methodology of this work is based on Atteslander's eight steps. Point one has already been explained and elaborated in the chapter before this. With regard to point two "determine the total data set and the sample size", according to Rössler and Geise it must also be noted that the more varied and extensive the definition of the selection unit, the greater the personnel and time required for procurement, archiving and coding of the material (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 263). In addition, according to Rössler and Geise it is advisable to divide the data into five different levels: period, geographical scope, media genre, media offering and department or format in order to determine the relevant media material (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 264).

Based on that it is noted that this study will examine all articles which are relevant in the time from February 12th, 2017 to February 12th, 2018 from the German daily newspapers Bild Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung. This definition covers a period, a geographical scope and a media genre. The data set emerging from these definitions will be explained later.
Another elementary level of Atteslander's eight steps is the encoding of the material. The central instrument for carrying out the encoding is the codebook. This codebook defines and describes all essential rules for a survey. It serves as a working basis for the coder. In general, a codebook consists of two parts: the introduction with explanations on the investigation, the procedure and definitions and the main part with the category system. The categories consist of exact definitions of what is to be collected and measured. The media content is then encoded to enable subsequent statistical evaluation and quantification of the research purpose (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, pp. 278-279). These codes are incorporated into the so-called coding sheets.

As a basis for the encoding of this work, the codebook with the coding sheet was worked out in detail right at the beginning. All relevant variables were clearly defined in the codebook and explained precisely in which case which value of the variable is to be encoded. The codes were then entered into the previously created coding sheets in order to facilitate the final quantification and evaluation of the data.

Two of the most important quality criteria of a content analysis are "reliability" and "validity", as they are central indicators for evaluating the overall accuracy of a content analysis.

Reliability, also called accountability, provides a standard for the reliability of measurements. High reliability ensures that with repeated measurements the same result is achieved. In contrast to validity, reliability can be determined relatively easily. By encoding all of the articles twice with a two weeks break in between a thorough and reliable measurement of the codes was guaranteed.

Validity is another important quality criterion: it indicates whether what is to be measured was measured. The codebook is an instrument that makes it possible to check the validity within the framework of a content analysis. (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, pp. 281 - 282).
As already mentioned, validity is not as easy to determine, since it requires a more far-reaching argumentation, which discusses the findings together with other research results against the background of the original research questions (cf. Rössler, 2010, p. 197). The validity check is therefore not only about the content but also about the purpose of the measurement, i.e. whether the instrument used (codebook) measures what is to be measured in order to be able to answer the research questions. There are three types of validity checks. First, analytical validity, content validity and criterion validity (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, pp. 283 - 284).

The analytical validity examines how well the content analytical recording of the coders is compatible with the views and research questions of the researchers (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 283). In this case, there is only one person filling out the roles of coders and researchers by conducting this master thesis single-handedly. However, analytical validity is attempted to be achieved by encoding the articles of this research multiple times with time passing by in between each session. For this study the articles chosen from APA were encoded by the author of this master thesis twice with two weeks between each of the encoding sessions. Proceeding in this manner resulted in only very few deviations which were analyzed thoroughly to decide which code is most applicable to the respective article.

Content validity indicates whether the construct to be measured is fully covered by the instrument of the study (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 284). Since a comprehensive reputation study involves, both, a media content analysis and a public opinion poll, the method of this thesis is fully covering the construct of corporate reputation.

For criterion validity, comparisons with external sources and comparable surveys are made to assess the plausibility of the results in content analysis (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 284). Criterion validity is supplied by comparing the results of this study with other comprehensive reputation studies later on.

In addition to reliability and validity, there are other quality criteria for the content analysis. To be mentioned here are the definition of the analysis units, the population, the investigation period and the selection of media (cf. Rössler/Geise, 2013, p. 285). These criteria are all selected with care, attention to detail and respect to the available resources for this master thesis.
The reputation and framing survey was carried out with the help of both, a quantitative media content analysis and a public opinion poll. For the content analysis, meaningful articles have been selected in the APA database available to students of the communication studies department of the Paris-Lodron University Salzburg. The selection of articles is limited to the two most significant German daily newspapers of which one is a quality daily newspaper called "Süddeutsche Zeitung" and one is a tabloid daily newspaper called "Bild Zeitung". These newspapers were chosen due to the high circulation and relevance in the German media landscape. The articles from these two daily newspapers were analyzed accordingly. All articles are from the period from February 12th, 2017 to February 12th, 2018. This period was chosen because of its topicality and because there are studies that suggest and prove that media content from up to one year ago can still frame the public opinion. Since the public opinion poll of this study was conducted from February 12th, 2018 until March 12th, 2018 the articles analyzed in the content analysis precede the questionnaire by exactly one year.

For the reputation study, relevant articles were filtered using the APA database. The search strings (ADIDAS) and (NIKE) were used to filter articles in the first step. These search strings show all articles containing the words "ADIDAS" and "NIKE" in their copy or title. This search resulted in 404 Adidas articles and 408 Nike articles. This list of articles was cleaned up by manually sorting out duplicates or mismatching articles. After this manual selection, a list of 156 Adidas articles and 120 Nike articles turned out to be relevant for the present research work. The number of articles was reduced during manual selection process due to the high number of mismatched articles containing police reports about perpetrators wearing Adidas or Nike clothing. These articles were excluded, since they are rarely read and do not influence the reader's opinion of the brand significantly.

This selection of articles was finally coded according to the following formal and content variables. The variable "centrality" was encoded first to exclude articles with a less then peripheral notion of the two brands in the beginning.

All of the variables are precisely defined in the codebook attached to this master thesis. The codebook must contain all variables that can be used to clearly identify reputation, frame elements and communication event. The top priority in developing the codebook is a clear and concise wording and the minimum possible size of the codebook to facilitate the analysis. The variables were derived from the preliminary theoretical discussion and followed by a pretest to discover any necessary adjustments.
By precisely defining the category system, the validity of the content analysis can be optimized. (cf. Mayring, 2015, pp. 52) The reasoning behind using each of the variables will be explained in the following:

Formal Variables:

- Article Number
- Title
- Date
- Month
- Media

The formal variables “article number” and “title” are drawn from the articles to ensure an easy and direct accountability of the data and articles. With that information it is later possible to follow which of the codes were drawn from each article. The Variables “Date”, “Month”, and „Media“ are drawn to allow calculating the correlation of the content variables along a timeline and according to each of the two media types.

Thereby, it is possible to measure the other content variables for each month and to examine months who are significantly different from the other months regarding their respective reputation index for example. The same accounts for encoding the two media separately, allowing the examination of each company’s reputation index in both the “Bild Zeitung” as a boulevard daily newspaper and the “Süddeutsche Zeitung” as a quality daily newspaper. This allows us to answer specifically H3 and H5 in detail:

H3: The reputation index of both companies in the public opinion poll is closer to the reputation index in the tabloid newspaper than to the reputation index in the quality newspaper.

H5: The reputation index of both companies is lower in the boulevard daily newspaper than in the quality daily newspaper.
Content Variables:

- Reputation
- Reputation Dimension
- Centrality

The variable “reputation” is drawn from the data to facilitate the calculation of each brands reputation index between February 12th, 2017 and February 12th, 2018. To do that, the reputation of each brand is encoded in each of the articles according to the codes “neutral”, “controversial”, “positive”, and “negative”. Thereafter, the number of articles for each code is calculated together according to the reputation index formula from Mark Eisenegger for each month and for the total timeframe examined in this research (cf. 2008, pp. 94–96).

This allows answering the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5:

H1: Adidas' total reputation index is higher than Nike's total reputation index.

H2: The newspaper-mediated reputation of Adidas and Nike is lower than the reputation of these companies among 18- to 35-year-old Germans.

H3: The reputation index of both companies in the public opinion poll is closer to the reputation index in the tabloid newspaper than to the reputation index in the quality newspaper.

H4: Adidas' media reputation index is higher than Nike's media reputation index.

H5: The media reputation index of both companies is lower in the boulevard daily newspaper than in the quality daily newspaper.

The variable “reputation dimension” is drawn from the data to facilitate the calculation of each brands reputation dimension according to the reputation calculated for both of them between February 12th, 2017 and February 12th, 2018. To do that, the reputation dimension of each brand is encoded in each of the articles according to the codes “functional”, “social”, and “expressive”. This data enables to explore which reputation dimension is predominantly used in media and in the public. It also allows to analyze the composition of each company’s reputation in more detail.
This allows answering the hypotheses H6, H9, H10, and H11:

H6: The online articles are more often located in the social reputation dimension than in the other reputation dimensions.

H9: Within the functional reputation dimension, product quality is more important for a company’s reputation building than other factors.

H10: Within the social reputation dimension, a good employer image is more important for the reputation of a company than other factors.

H11: Within the expressive reputation dimension, popular influencers are more important to a company’s reputation than other factors.

The variable “centrality” is drawn from the data to note the relevance each article has for the two research objects Adidas and Nike. After guaranteeing minimal centrality of the brands for the articles by using the search strings “ADIDAS” and “NIKE” in the APA databank it became quickly apparent that a lot of the articles were still mismatched. Therefore, each article is encoded for this variable first to filter out the remaining mismatched articles manually. The remaining relevant articles are then encoded correspondingly to how central the respective brand is to the article. This centrality of each brand in the articles allows to calculate any possible correlations between centrality and the reputation index or media type, for example, as well as it allows to weigh the reputation.

The whole codebook can also be found in chapter 10.

To answer the remaining hypotheses and to ultimately answer all research questions a second method to gather data is employed: the public opinion poll.
5.2. Opinion Poll

A representative and comprehensive reputation index of a company relies on two data sets. The first data set is gathered and quantified with the aforementioned media content analysis. The second necessary data set is gathered by employing the public opinion poll. There are several methods and tools to achieve a comprehensive and useful dataset representing the public opinion as well as possible. Due to Adidas and Nike mostly targeting people between the ages of 18 and 35, this study, too, aims to gather data from this target group instead of the general public. A survey researching the public opinion through a poll relies on a particular sample, representing the targeted audience. Therefore, this opinion poll aims to represent the opinion of 18- to 35-year-olds regarding the reputation of Adidas and Nike. This is done by conducting a series of questions which allows drawing to general conclusions within confidence intervals. Before defining and deciding how representative this study is aiming to be, the methodology of the survey employed to gather the data is defined in the following.

This survey aims to collect data in form of a questionnaire which is distributed to 18- to 35-year-old Germans. Thereby, this study aims to research the opinions of the target group on the reputation of Adidas and Nike and to allow their statistical analysis.

The whole survey can also be found in chapter 11.

5.2.1. Survey Tool

Most people nowadays fulfill the software and hardware preconditions to access the Internet and web-based questionnaires and the target audience for this research should be in possession of the software and hardware to access Adidas and Nike advertising and information on the one hand and be able to read online news articles on the other hand. Therefore, this way of distributing the questionnaire provides the most suitable and effective approach to generate the necessary data for answering the research questions.

The questionnaire is created on the web-based platform SurveyMonkey, providing the following advantages compared to other survey methods (SurveyMonkey, 12.03.2018).
First of all, SurveyMonkey allows the researcher to create a questionnaire with low initiative costs and low maintaining costs. It allows a very straightforward and intuitive realization of the questionnaire and implementation of very helpful functions, such as randomizing the Likert Items for each respondent, guaranteeing a more reliable and valid result.

It also guarantees the anonymity of each respondent which is important for the success of the questionnaire for several reasons explained later on. Web-based surveys generally also allow more details and depth than other ways of questioning. Additionally, SurveyMonkey allows to individualize the branching and the structure of the questions, showing certain questions only if specific answers were given. This specific function was used to allow asking for the department which students specialize in while not bothering people with this question who are for example already working and not studying anymore.

Most people nowadays fulfill the software and hardware preconditions to access the Internet and web-based questionnaires and the target audience for this research should be in possession of the necessary software and hardware anyways. On the one hand they need to be able to access Adidas and Nike advertising and information and on the other hand they need to be able to read online news articles. Therefore, in sum, this way of distributing the questionnaire provides the most suitable and effective approach to generate the necessary data for answering the research questions.
5.2.2. Survey Quality and Process

There are several sets of criteria formulated by researchers which need to be taken into account for a successful surveying process with high quality. In the following the relevant ones will be discussed, resulting in the final presentation of the method used to conduct the survey for this research.

To conduct a successful survey, Groves et al. formulated the following methodical challenges and decisions (2009). After introducing these steps, they will be discussed in the context of this study including whether and how they will be implemented. Groves et al. narrowed it down to the following categories:

1. Identify the target group
2. Contact the sample individuals, especially those who are hard to reach
3. Evaluate and test the survey questions
4. Determine the tool used to gather the target groups answers to the questions
5. Create reliability with other interviewers and supervise them (if they are involved)
6. Control the data set for internal consistency and accuracy

The first step to a successful survey was fulfilled by defining 18- to 35-year-old Germans as the target group. They are the part of the population being targeted most by sports manufacturers since they are in favor of sports the most and invest their own resources into buying the necessary equipment and clothing. Therefore, their decision making and the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike among this age bracket is most interesting to this research.

The second step is irrelevant for the method utilized here which is a web-based survey. The third step was fulfilled by carefully matching the questions in the questionnaire with the hypotheses and then pretesting the survey with a sample of 12 people.

The fourth step is fulfilled by facilitating the survey with SurveyMonkey – a web-based questionnaire tool.

Step five can be ignored since this research is conducted by only one person and conducted online anyways.

Step six is taken by pretesting the questionnaire and building it based on the theories underlying this research.
Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, and Jeanne put together another set of criteria. They present six steps necessary to construct a questionnaire that will produce reliable and valid results (2011) which were put together in a more concise and fitting way for this research:

- Determine the kind of information you want to collect
- Determine the method and tool to conduct the questionnaire
- Create the questionnaire along your hypotheses
- Pretest the questionnaire
- Finalize and open the questionnaire for the defined time frame

These steps were all followed precisely to guarantee reliable and valid results for the second step of the research design underlying this study.

5.2.3. Likert Scale

The comparison between the reputation index which can be easily obtained from the media content analysis and the reputation values gathered in the survey proved quite difficult. However, a carefully worded Likert scale allows metric calculations with otherwise ordinal data and, therefore, allows comparison with the metric reputation index. To allow the collection of reliable and relevant data about the corporate reputation of Adidas and Nike among 18- to 35-year-old Germans this special question design is employed.

Research employing quantitative questionnaires very often also involves the use of a psychometric scale called Likert scale. Respondents answering to a Likert item define their level of disagreement or agreement on a symmetric and balanced scale. This is done by presenting a set of statements regarding the research object, allowing the interviewees to rate them on an agree-disagree scale. Thus, this scale allows to capture the thoughts and intensity of feelings for the research object, making it the most widely used approach to quantify the internal thoughts of people regarding the research object (cf. Burns & Burns, 2008, p.245).

A Likert scale allows answering the question by selecting the level of agreement or disagreement towards certain statements. Thereby, the Likert scaling assumes that the distances between the individual items are equal, thus resulting in a symmetric scale.
Van Alphen et al. define this symmetry and the equality of distances between these items as follows: "All items are assumed to be replications of each other or in other words items are considered to be parallel instruments" (van Alphen, Halfens, Hasman & Imbos, 1994, p. 197).

Simply put, a Likert item is a statement evaluated by the interviewee. The Likert item can be rated with a quantitative value resulting most commonly in a dimension representing the level of agreement or disagreement the person has towards the Likert item. A Likert item’s quality is measured by its balance and symmetry. The Balance is guaranteed if the distance between the values for each item is the same, so that quantitative comparisons such calculating the average with more than two candidate values is possible and valid. The symmetry is provided by an equal number of positive and negative positions with their respective distances bilaterally symmetrical around the neutral value (cf. Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 250). Although many researchers suggest the use of more levels, the use of five candidate values is the most common and reliable. Accordingly, an empirical study revealed that objects with five or seven levels can achieve slightly higher mean scores in relation to the highest possible accuracy, compared to those resulting from the use of more levels resulting in a statistically significant lower accuracy (Dawes, 2008).

Typically, Likert scales offer values close to the following options:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Since the target group is German, the survey is conducted in German as well. Accordingly, for the questionnaire used in this research the following values are utilized:

- Zutreffend (Agree)
- Eher zutreffend (Rather Agree)
- Neutral (Neutral)
- Eher nicht zutreffend (Rather Disagree)
- Nicht zutreffend (Disagree)
Additionally, since some Likert items were not guaranteed to be well known to all respondents, the value “Weiß ich nicht” was offered as a possible answer.

The opt-out value “Weiß ich nicht” is translated as “I do not know”. This value also allowed to research how many of the respondents answered for each item. In doing so, the Likert scale tracked which items were answered the least and, therefore, gathered data about the importance of each item for the whole reputation. If items were answered less frequently they are less important for the whole reputation than the items which are answered by almost all respondents. The second and fourth value aimed to offer an option that is exactly in the middle between agreeing and disagreeing completely and being completely neutral towards the Likert item.

A well composed and expedient Likert scale, as above, provides a strict symmetry of values qualified by a clear and concise wording. In doing so, equidistant attributes as well as an equal amount of values on each side of the neutral middle value are provided. By creating a symmetric and balanced Likert scale, the researcher achieves an interval-level measuring tool. Generally, the Likert scale will result in ordinal data. But if well composed, it may generate data that may allow interval-level measurement. Therefore, the questionnaire is able to produce even more detailed data. Ultimately, the type of analysis needs to be appropriate for the presentation of the Likert scale within the questionnaire.

The rest of the questions which are not utilizing the Likert scale are employing a multiple-choice design or, in two cases, an open question. As mentioned before, all of the questions are presented in chapter 11.
5.2.4. Distortion of Results

The following address of the respondents in the beginning of the questionnaire aims to rule out any distortions in the results caused by respondents not answering truthfully:


Bitte geben Sie die zutreffende Antwort ein oder wählen Sie die passende Antwort aus.“

Interviewees can distort a Likert scale for several reasons. First of all, respondents might want to avoid extreme values when rating each Likert item due to a central tendency bias. This bias leads respondents to answer as neutral as possible since they try to obviate being perceived as having strong or even extremist views and try to pick the socially desirable value instead. This distortion of the results is avoided by guaranteeing anonymity within the address to the respondents in the beginning of the survey.

Another bias distorting the results could be the acquiescence bias which leads especially children and people with a strong dependence on others to respond to the Likert scale in a way which they think fits the opinion of the people they depend on. In their eagerness to please the people they depend on they try to answer not honestly but the way they expect the stronger people to answer. Another reason for this bias is the fear of the answers being used against the respondents or the fear of making erroneous statements and the attempt to avoid negative consequences generally. By choosing only people from the age of 18 to 35 for this survey that issue is mostly eliminated. Since each questionnaire is answered in an individual and anonymous setting, people do not have to fear others to see their answers and can freely answer to their hearts honesty.

Other respondents could be “faking good” and thereby provide answers to appear strong and good. In opposition to that respondents could be “faking bad” as well trying to appear weak and bad instead of answering honestly. These issues are also met by guaranteeing anonymity and immunity to all respondents and providing them with a safe atmosphere to answer the questionnaire.
5.2.5. Survey Representativeness

Since surveying the whole population of 18- to 35-year-old Germans is not feasible for this research, a sample of the population will be more expedient. By conducting a sample survey instead of a census, a reasonable sample has to be questioned. Since this study is using a sample it is also subject to sampling errors dependent on the representativeness of the sample. This uncertainty reflects the chance and margin of error. Usually, the researcher has to define a sensible balance between the resources available and the desired representativeness. As for most studies, this research will work with a confidence interval of 95 percent. Most researchers also aim to stay within a margin of error of 5 percent resulting in a sample size of 385 respondents.

Generally, it is advised to stay between 1 and 10 percent for the margin of error. With 10 percent resulting in a sample size of 100 respondents this survey and its 143 respondents are well between 5 and 10 percent margin of error. According to destatis the estimate population of 18- to 35-year-old Germans in 2018 is 17,382,000 (destatis, 12.02.2018). With that population and the confidence interval of 95 percent and this study’s sample size of 143 the margin of error is at 8 percent:

![Calculate Your Margin of Error](image)

Figure 9: Margin of Error (SurveyMonkey, 12.03.2018)

To sum it up, this method of media content analysis and these variables facilitate the calculation of all relevant and necessary data to answer the hypotheses used to ultimately answer the research questions of this master thesis. To gather the remaining necessary data to answer the research questions, a public opinion poll is employed. The
combination of both methods facilitates answering all research questions quantitatively and thoroughly.

5.3. Mixed Method Research Design

As previously explained, a media content analysis of the Bild Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung from February 12th, 2017 to February 12th, 2018 and a survey of 18- to 35-year-old Germans from February 12th, 2018 to March 12th, 2018 are used to comprehensively examine the reputation of Adidas and Nike. This generates two data sets that allow a detailed reputation analysis. As with Eisenegger, Schranz and Schneider 2010, for example, the survey of a company’s reputation through a media content analysis is already a well-established method. In order to establish a comparable reputation research by conducting a survey, a new research design is used that first divides the reputation of the two sports manufacturers into the three dimensions of reputation - functional, social and expressive - and then divides them into a total of ten sub-characteristics. These ten characteristics are surveyed as ten separate items in the form of a Likert scale for each of the two companies. These ten separate items were put together to represent each of the three reputation dimensions as comprehensive and detailed as possible. After researching and analyzing other reputation studies did not result in a useful set of items, the author of this master thesis created his own set of characteristics as follows:

**Expressive Reputation Dimension:**
- Trustworthy
- Sympathetic
- Authentic
- Popular and Sympathetic Influencers

**Social Reputation Dimension:**
- Good Employer
- Environmentally Friendly
- Transparent
- Socially Responsible

**Functional Reputation Dimension:**
- Product Quality
- Financial Success
These ten characteristics appeared as Items on a Likert scale in a randomized order within the opinion poll as shown in the following on the example of Adidas:

Figure 10: Survey: Ten characteristics (1)

Figure 11: Survey: Ten characteristics (2)
The translations to these items in the same order are the following:

Adidas is a trustworthy company.
The products of Adidas have a good quality.
Adidas is a good employer.
Adidas is a sympathetic company.
Adidas is an authentic company.
Adidas has a good social engagement.
Adidas is represented by sympathetic and popular influencers such as Lionel Messi, Kanye West, and Pharrell Williams.
Adidas adheres to environmental standards.
Adidas is a financially successful company.
Adidas is a transparent company.

Respondents were able to select one of the following answers:

*agree*
*rather agree*
*neutral*
*rather disagree*
*do not agree*
*I don’t know*

Respondents are offered the possibility to choose *I don’t know* if they don’t know enough about it or don't want to answer this category. This reveals, among other things, which specific aspects have a greater impact on a company’s reputation and which specific aspects do not have an impact on the reputation of the companies among the interviewees. This allows quantifying the relevance of each of the ten aspects for the overall reputation of the company.

On the other hand, those respondents who want to make statements about the ten characteristics will be given the opportunity to rate positive statements on the respective category as *agree, rather agree, neutral, rather disagree, and do not agree.* This Likert scale makes it possible to convert the respondents' consent to the ten characteristics into metric data and thus allows to calculate an average value for each of the three reputation dimensions of Adidas and Nike.
Together, the ten characteristics result in the three dimensions of reputation, which in turn quantify the overall reputation of the two sports manufacturers among those surveyed.

Thus, on the one hand, the relevance of the respective characteristics to each of the three reputation dimensions as well as the relevance of these reputation dimensions for the overall company reputation of the respondents can be calculated. On the other hand, a reputation value can be calculated for both companies, which can be translated into the same scale of -100 (absolutely negative) to 100 (absolutely positive) and thus be compared at least roughly with the reputation index drawn from the media content analysis.
6. Results

The following chapter presents the results of the study. In the evaluation phase, the previously acquired data was processed. In the reputation analysis based on the articles and the reputation analysis based on the survey, the data is visualized and evaluated using Excel and SPSS. The results are used to verify or falsify the initial hypotheses. To verify the individual hypotheses, first the relevant calculations and observations are described and finally an interpretation of the results is made. If possible from the data level, the hypotheses are checked using statistical key figures. The classification of the observations into a superordinate framework follows in the conclusion, which is in the next chapter.

6.1. Descriptive Statistics

Before the individual hypotheses are tested and thus the research questions of this work can be answered, a few characteristics of the collected data sets are highlighted descriptively. The data drawn from the articles of the Bild Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung over the examined period from February 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2017 until February 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2018 provides several preliminary information in the form of descriptive statistics. In this chapter the descriptive statistics and immediate results of the research will be presented and reflected. In order to present the analyses and conclusions in a comprehensible way, the individual variables and the categories which were collected for this study as well as the groupings of individual data into condensed categories will be presented first. After presenting the descriptive statistics and any salient characteristics of the data sets in this chapter the hypotheses and, ultimately, the research questions are answered in chapter 6.2. Main Results.
6.1.1. Centrality

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the daily newspaper articles regard to the two sporting goods manufacturers in a peripheral way averaging at roughly two thirds or 67.4% in numbers. However, only 21% of the total amount of articles treat the two sporting goods manufacturers centrally. This could be due to the aforementioned fact that the media try to provide an objective reporting of the economy to not face corruption claims or be accused of a biased news reporting. Therefore, media outlets try to cover companies in a neutral and unbiased manner to avoid criticism such as being bought by the companies and publishing corporate fake news.

![Figure 12: Centrality of Companies](image)

6.1.2. Resonance

Analyzing the resonance of Adidas and Nike in the articles of the Bild Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung over the examined period from February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018 provides the following graph:
Seeing a strong difference in resonance between months like October and November makes a deeper qualitative look into the article contents advisable. In October, on the one hand, there were only very few articles on the two sporting goods manufacturers. An article about the Speedfactory of Adidas in Ansbach producing shoes intelligently and independently utilizing modern techniques like 3D printing is worth mentioning in that month. In November, on the other hand, there were noticeably more articles. This is due to various issues that coincide in November - a new sponsorship contract with Victoria Beckham, the third quarter figures, the new national jerseys for the 2018 World Cup, and a lot of articles on the Panama or Paradise Papers, to name a few of the reasons coinciding. These various topics coinciding in November 2017 also affect the reputation of both companies significantly as will be explained in detail later on.

In April both newspapers reported more often about the two companies than usually as well. For Adidas, the higher response in April is mainly due to a movie about the Dassler brothers, to Kasper Rørsted’s much-discussed suggestion that football matches should also be played abroad, for example in China, to interviews with the Adidas CEO, to reports about the Adidas Speedfactory in Ansbach, as well as to the fact that Adidas replaced Nike regarding the best-selling sneaker for the first time in 10 years - the revived “Superstar” sneaker. Nike also receives a higher response in April 2017, but for other reasons. Nike is mentioned mainly in the context of sweatshops, competitors such as Adidas and Lululemon, and especially Nike's guerrilla marketing with players like Aubameyang. From these findings, the following hypotheses can be derived and would be interesting to examine in future research.
1. The more Adidas utilizes personalization strategies including their CEO Kasper Rørsted, the higher is the resonance they achieve in the media.

2. The more Nike utilizes their guerrilla marketing strategies with Aubameyang, the higher is the resonance they achieve in the media.

Analyzing the data from the media content examination with IBM SPSS produced the following tables highlighting the basic characteristics of the data.

Regarding the two daily newspapers the following table provides interesting insights. The numbers in the circles describe the amount of articles each of the newspapers wrote about the respective company during the research period from February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018.

While the Süddeutsche Zeitung wrote a similar number of articles about Adidas (53,7%) and Nike (46,3%) respectively the Bild Zeitung wrote noticeably more articles about Adidas (62,5%) than about Nike (37,5%). This could be due to the fact that quality newspapers try to provide a more diverse and neutral reporting of the economy while the Bild Zeitung might give Adidas more of a home advantage.

This could be explained by employing the news value theory. Due to their attempt to provide a diverse quality reporting of the news, the Süddeutsche Zeitung, on the one hand, might give more importance to the news value of *elite actors* which also covers companies with great success and global relevance.
The Bild Zeitung, on the other hand, might give more importance to the news value of *meaningfulness* which means that companies from the same country are reported more frequently due to their higher relevance for the readers.

During the period under study, the Süddeutsche Zeitung wrote 188 articles on the two companies and the Bild Zeitung only 88 articles. The Süddeutsche Zeitung has thus written more than twice as many articles about the research objects. However, as stated in chapter 3, the Bild Zeitung has a much higher circulation with 1,620,758 copies while the Süddeutsche Zeitung has a circulation of only 357,918 copies. To put the two news outlets into relation the following calculation is utilized. Multiplying the number of articles with the circulation of the respective daily newspaper the Süddeutsche Zeitung results in the reference number of 67,288,584 with their 188 articles while the Bild Zeitung would reach a reference number of 142,626,704 with their 88 articles.

The Bild Zeitung, therefore, probably still has a higher impact on the public opinion despite their lower number of articles on the research objects. However, the relevance of this impact of each newspaper of course depends on the reading manners of the target group. Since this information is entailed in the survey, the following hypothesis can be falsified by looking at the respective data.

Analyzing the behavior and information acquisition manners of the target group delivers the necessary data to evaluate the hypothesis:

\[
H_1: \text{The Bild Zeitung has a higher impact on the target group's opinion on Adidas and Nike than the Süddeutsche Zeitung.}
\]
6.1.3. The Target Group

The answer to that hypothesis lies in the following data. The data drawn from the public opinion poll produced the following figures regarding the profession and the news sources of the target group. The German 18- to 35-year-old respondents of the survey chose the following answers in the respective frequency:

As can be taken from this data, 62.9% of the respondents are students which does not fit the main target group of Bild Zeitung as introduced in chapter 3.4. Since Süddeutsche Zeitung targets readers with an academic background more strongly than Bild Zeitung, they might be more impactful on the target group’s opinion of the two sporting goods manufacturers. The news reading behavior of the target group can be described more detailed using the following data.

![Figure 16: Profession Frequency of Respondents](image-url)
These figures prove that the target group keeps up to date with online news very frequently with half of them reading online news several times a day and another 21.3% reading them 5-7 times per week. However, this does not describe their affinity to the Bild Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung as their respective news source of choice.

The following two figures aim to explore each daily newspapers' role in the target groups' acquisition of online news.
As can be taken from these two figures the Bild Zeitung on the one hand is actually never read by 58.0% of the target group with a cumulative 81.8% of the target group reading the Bild Zeitung at most *less than once or twice per week*.

![Süddeutsche Zeitung Frequency](image)

*Figure 19: Süddeutsche Zeitung Frequency of Respondents*

The Süddeutsche Zeitung on the other hand is targeting academics more strongly and is, therefore, read *less than 1-2 times per week or once or twice a week* by 55.3% of the respondents. The impact of each of the newspapers on the target groups opinion will be explored in more detail later on when discussing the reputation of the two companies among both the two daily newspapers and the among the target group.

The data drawn from the public opinion poll allows more information about the respondents.
The respondents were distributed almost evenly between the genders male and female with two respondents not feeling represented by the terms male and female.

The figure above indicates that most of the respondents are 24- to 29- years old with the highest and lowest ages of this target group rarely being selected and less represented. While this agglomeration of the respondents among the middle values is probably reducing the variance of answers and opinions within the group of respondents, it also promises a stronger indication of this group’s tendencies and characteristics.
Meaning, the data from this sample of interviewees will give a better indication of the basic opinions held in the target group of 18- to 35-year old Germans. The following statistic shows that the mean of the age of the respondents is at 25.75 while the percentiles 25 to 75 show that at least 50% of the respondents are of the ages 24 to 28. The range of 15 also shows that a few of the extreme values are missing – in this case the none of the respondents selected the ages 18, 19, and 34.

Statistics
Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>25.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<pre><code> | 24.00 | 26.00   | 28.00   |
</code></pre>

*Figure 22: IBM SPSS: Age of Respondents Statistics*

Another question in the survey of 18- to 35-year-old Germans attempted to determine where the target group mainly obtains their information regarding the two sports manufacturers. These information sources included news from the media, the corporate websites, the social media of the companies, conversations with friends, advertisements, and the communication of influencers concerning the respective company.

*Figure 23: Target Group Information Sources*
For both companies it becomes immediately apparent that corporate websites and the statements of influencers seem to be of very little relevance to the target group while social media and conversations with friends seem to be of bigger importance when acquiring information on the two companies. While it comes with little surprise that the corporate websites are less important it is surprising that influencers seem to be of little importance as well although contemporary corporate marketing efforts put great emphasis on the communication through influencers. While companies communicate a lot through influencers the target group does not consciously consider this an important source of information about the companies. However, everyone indisputably perceives influencer communication several times a day and thus learns a lot about the companies behind these influencers. A good example would be Cristiano Ronaldo or Kanye West who have millions of followers on all kinds of channels. This hints towards the thesis that the communication of these influencers is perceived in a very subtle and unconscious way, making it even more effective and persuasive and even harder to measure.

To put the opinions and the reputation of Adidas and Nike among the 18- to 35-year old Germans into additional perspective, in the following their possession of products from the two sporting goods manufacturers as well as their means to acquire information about them will be illustrated.
Both these figures show that the target group owns a significant amount of Adidas and Nike clothing. As the data in chapter 3 suggested, the target group has a tendency of owning more Adidas than Nike products. The data shown in the two figures above also suggests, that the target group does not only favor one of the two brands but seems to have an affinity towards sports clothing in general, allowing the verification of the following hypothesis.

\[ H_1: \text{Respondents who own more Nike products also own more Adidas products.} \]

With \textit{More than 5 Pieces} equaling the value 4, \textit{3-5 Pieces} equaling the value 3, \textit{1-2 Pieces} equaling the value 2, and \textit{None} equaling the value 1, a chi square test resulted in a clear significance of .000 falsifying the \( H_0: \text{There is no correlation between the amount of Nike and Adidas products owned by the respondents.} \) Instead the positive value of 41,362 proves that the \( H_1: \text{Respondents who own more Nike products also own more Adidas products.} \) is verified. This result suggests that 18- to 35-year old Germans like to buy sporting goods a lot but do not own a lot of brand loyalty when deciding between Nike and Adidas. While Nike and Adidas are fighting for market shares the target group seems to not really see an issue with buying both brands likewise.
### 6.1.4. Reputation

In the following a first impression of the reputation of Adidas and Nike in the news reporting of Bild Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung as well as the reputation of the two sporting goods manufacturers among the target group will be presented. The corresponding hypotheses will be answered in the following sub chapter. This is a preliminary take on the data gathered within this study to acquire a general overview and first impression of the data.

#### Company * Reputation cross table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adidas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The articles from the two daily newspapers published within the research period produce the data shown above. While Adidas is reported more strongly in a neutral and positive way Nike is reported in a more diverse and varying way. The reputation index for both companies in the media over the whole examination period unfolds as follows. As both daily newspapers try to avoid criticism of being biased they aim to report neutrally.
Accordingly, more than half of the analyzed articles reflect the reputation of Adidas and Nike within the articles in a neutral or controversial way.

Added together, 60.8% of the articles were encoded as either controversial or neutral with neutral articles claiming the big margin of all articles with 51.4%. This result confirms the aforementioned claim that the media try to report as neutral and unbiased as possible. But, as can be seen in the table there is still a number of articles rating the two sporting goods manufacturers either positive or negative.

With corporate organizations traditionally being evaluated rather negative than positive the abovementioned figures come with a little surprise since there are 66 positive articles and 42 negative articles. The majority of these positive articles, however, is attributed to Adidas, while Nike claims the majority of the negative articles. Surprisingly, almost one third of all of the negative articles are attributed to Nike in just one month as illustrated hereafter.

![Reputation Index over time](image)

**Figure 28: Reputation Index of Adidas and Nike (cf. Eisenegger, 2005)**

The reputation index for Adidas revolves mostly close to their overall reputation index during the full time which is roughly at 30.13 on a scale from -100 being absolutely negative and 100 being absolutely positive. The reputation index of Adidas mostly swings from values over the average to values below and back changing each month. On the same scale, the reputation index of Nike does not change as frequently as the one of
Adidas but takes more drastic changes towards the end of 2017. Their overall reputation index lies at around -19,17. Over the longer part of the research period their reputation index is above this average but takes a drastic hit in November with 20 articles of which all 20 are negative resulting in a reputation index of -100.

These articles cover the topics of their corruption scandal in Qatar (once), their frequent appearance in the Panama and Paradise Papers (seventeen times), and the bad quality of their tearable NBA jerseys (twice). In the same month the reputation of Adidas within the examined articles achieves their record high of 75 with most of their articles covering topics like their world cup jerseys and football (four), their high Christmas salary (twice), and their innovative technologies (once). The reputation of these companies behaves noticeably more balanced in the public opinion poll among the 18- to 35-year-old Germans. The following two tables show the frequencies of the answers chosen by the respondents when asked about their opinion of each company.

The scale included the following values: 1 being very negative, 2 being rather negative, 3 being neutral, 4 being rather positive, and 5 being very positive.

![Nike Reputation](image)

*Figure 29: Survey Nike Reputation*

The modal value is 4, which means most respondents answered with rather positive. That result argues in favor of a broadly accepted reputation of Nike within the target group of rather positive.
This goes well with the data presented in chapter 3.6. explaining the multiple reasons, why the target group is the most suitable for the communication of sporting goods manufacturers such as Adidas and Nike. Since they already hold a positive and open opinion towards these companies they are also more susceptible for their communication efforts and campaigns. Similar results can also be found for Adidas:

On a scale with 1 being very negative, 2 being rather negative, 3 being neutral, 4 being rather positive, and 5 being very positive the Adidas Reputation has a modal value of 4. This means that most respondents answered with rather positive. For the reputation of Adidas, it is also worth mentioning that noticeably more respondents picked the extreme positive very positive option compared to Nike. This, again, argues in favor of a commonly accepted reputation of Adidas within the target group of rather positive.

To determine the reputation index among the target group more detailed the Likert scale allows calculating the mean of the selected values by the respondents resulting in a reputation of 4.02 for Adidas and a reputation of 3.91 for Nike. These values are very close together and also very close to the aforementioned modal value of 4.
The reputation of Adidas proves to be more positive in both the articles as well as the opinion poll. This is likely due to the fact that people are generally more favorable towards companies and organizations from their own country giving actors a home advantage. Furthermore, it is remarkable that neither of the respondents chose the answering option very negative for any of the two sporting goods manufacturers. This is indicative of the generally positive reputation of sports companies among the younger generations. The final results regarding the reputation information gained from the two data sets will be discussed later.

Figure 31: Survey: Reputation Adidas and Nike
6.1.5. Reputation Dimension

As discussed in the theory chapter, the reputation term can be split into three sub dimensions giving it more detail and the ability to explain the observed phenomena better. As the reputation dimensions within the public opinion poll are obtained with a new method and also part of calculating the general reputation of Adidas and Nike among the respondents, they will be presented later on. This sub chapter will, therefore, instead focus on the data drawn from the media content analysis. Analyzing the data from the whole research period from both daily newspapers produces the following figures:

Company * Reputationdimension cross table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reputationdimension</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adidas</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>16,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>27,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>21,4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 32: IBM SPSS: Company * Reputationdimension cross table

Overall, it quickly becomes apparent that Adidas is reported in a noticeably more functional way while Nike is reported in a more diverse way with all three reputation dimensions revolving around the 30% mark.

To allow analyzing each of the newspapers the following data will be used. This data is also drawn from the articles of the Bild Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung during the research period from February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018. This data produces the following figure regarding the use of the different reputation dimensions by each of the newspapers regarding each of the companies.
As the figure above illustrates the predominant reputation dimensions for each company and daily newspaper are quite obvious. That allows clear evaluation of the news reporting of each newspaper. The articles taken from the Bild Zeitung show a very strong tendency to report about Adidas in a functional way while they tend to report about Nike in an expressive way. Surprisingly, the social reputation dimension remains mostly untouched when the Bild Zeitung reports about the two sports manufacturers. Apparently the Bild Zeitung does not give a lot of credit to moral thoughts and responsibilities regarding global companies. Taking a qualitative look into the respective articles shows that the Bild Zeitung is reporting about Nike mostly in the context of personalities and football players representing the company. However, when reporting about Adidas they mostly report about their high Christmas bonuses. The use of these reputation dimensions, therefore, can be explained with their readership mostly consisting of employees, who are mostly interested in their sports idols and the payments that concern them as potential employees. Regarding the reporting of the Süddeutsche Zeitung it becomes apparent that they clearly use the functional dimensions remarkably more frequently than they use the other reputation dimensions. The other big difference to the reporting style of the Bild Zeitung is that the Süddeutsche Zeitung reports in a way more social way about Nike. Taking a deeper look into the articles’ content shows that this frequent use of the social reputation dimension for Nike is due to the media reporting about Nike’s involvement in the Panama and Paradise Papers. In November 2017 especially, the Süddeutsche Zeitung reported that the American sports manufacturer is

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**Figure 33: Articles: Reputation Dimension * Company * Media**

![Reputation Dimensions Chart](image-url)
cheating European countries out of their tax money and is disregarding their moral obligation to pay the full taxes in the right countries.

6.2. Main Results

In this chapter, the hypotheses will be examined one by one resulting in the answers for the three research questions underlying this reputation study. Since the first two hypotheses are based on the results of both research designs they will be examined after the hypotheses of each single method are validated.

6.2.1. Media Content Analysis

First, the hypotheses based on the data from the media content analysis will be validated examining the respective data.

H4: Adidas’ media reputation index is higher than Nike’s media reputation index.

This hypothesis requires the data over the whole research period from February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018 to be examined for the variable reputation in connection with the company dealt with in the article. According to the reputation index introduced in chapter 2 the following values were calculated for each company’s media reputation index:
On the scale from -100 being absolutely negative to 100 being absolutely positive the reputation of Adidas and Nike are both in a spot that is reasonable compared to other reputation studies. The reputation study of traditional Swiss companies by Eisenegger, Schranz and Schneider in 2010 for example shows that the reputation index of these companies both in the public and in the media is mostly located between -50 and 50:
As expected in the hypothesis H4 the media reputation index of Adidas with 30,13 is a lot higher than the media reputation index of Nike with -19,17. With more than 50 points difference the Hypothesis 4 was, therefore, validated and confirmed. Due to the home advantage of Adidas among the German newspapers this result was to be expected.

**H5: The media reputation index of both companies is lower in the boulevard daily newspaper than in the quality daily newspaper.**

As can be seen in the figure below the reputation index for both sporting goods manufacturers is noticeably higher in the tabloid newspaper Bild Zeitung than it is in the quality newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung.
Contrary to the hypothesis the reputation index for both companies is actually higher in the boulevard daily newspaper than it is in the quality newspaper. So, contrary to the assumption that tabloid newspapers are more critical towards companies and utilize scandals more frequently it turns out that quality newspapers seem to be more critical towards companies. This might be due to the fact that the Bild Zeitung generally concerns itself remarkably less with the economic topics and, therefore, does not report about economic scandals such as the Panama Papers. The Süddeutsche Zeitung however reports a lot more about economic topics and systemic issues and, therefore, also reports about the downsides of such companies a lot more. Also, it can be assumed that the quality newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung attempts to report in a much more neutral manner to meet their more academic readership’s needs of a detailed and balanced reporting of the economy. The Bild Zeitung, however, is reporting matters from the perspective of their readership who are mostly employees. That is why they might tend to glorify certain aspects about the companies such as the high Christmas bonuses they pay their employees. To sum it up, the tabloid newspaper Bild Zeitung is reporting in a much more positive way about Adidas and Nike than the quality newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung does. Thereby, the hypothesis H5 is falsified.
H6: The online articles are more often located in the social reputation dimension than in the other reputation dimensions.

As the following chart shows, the most frequently used reputation dimension used for Adidas is clearly the functional reputation dimension. This is mainly due to their remarkable financial success in recent years and their technological advances, such as the speedfactories and the storefactory in Ansbach, setting them apart from their competition. As for Nike, the news reporting about them is much more balanced between all three reputation dimension ranging from functional articles about their financial success, over social articles about their appearance in the Panama Papers due to their tax avoidance methods, to expressive articles about their sponsorship deals with players and idols like Aubameyang and the respective guerilla marketing strategies.

To sum it up, the functional reputation is used a lot more often than the other two reputation dimensions for Adidas and the reputation dimensions are utilized almost equally for Nike. Therefore, the hypothesis H6, which states that the social reputation dimension is more frequently used in the articles to describe the two sports manufacturers than the other reputation dimensions, is falsified.
6.2.2. Public Opinion Poll

H7: Adidas' reputation among 18- to 35-year-old Germans is higher than Nike's reputation.

The reputation of Adidas and Nike among the respondents was calculated in two different ways.

On the one hand, there was a simple question asking the respondents to evaluate Adidas and Nike with the corresponding values as follows:

- Positive: 5
- Rather Positive: 4
- Neutral: 3
- Rather Negative: 2
- Negative: 1

Since the answers are distributed in equal distances to each other along a Likert scale, the mean of all of the answers given by the respondents was calculated with the following result:

![Figure 38: Survey: Reputation Adidas and Nike](image-url)

Since the answers are distributed in equal distances to each other along a Likert scale, the mean of all of the answers given by the respondents was calculated with the following result:
This means that the average reputation of Adidas among the respondents is at roughly 4 while the average reputation of Nike among the respondents is at roughly 3.9. Both roughly equal the value of 4 = Rather Positive.

Test bei einer Sichprobe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-seitig)</th>
<th>Mittlere Differenz</th>
<th>95% Konfidenzintervall der Differenz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NikeReputation</td>
<td>58,133</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>3,90909</td>
<td>3,7762 to 4,0420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdidasReputation</td>
<td>57,593</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4,02239</td>
<td>3,8842 to 4,1605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 39: SPSS: Reputation Significance

The test for significance above shows the mean of both company’s reputation as calculated before. The figure also provides the lower and higher limit values for each company’s reputation value. For Adidas, with a mean of 4.02, the lower limit value is 3.89 while the higher limit value is at 4.16. For Nike, with a mean of 3.91, the lower limit value is 3.78 while the higher limit value is at 4.04. Since the two company’s reputation values are too close together it cannot be said for sure which value is actually higher. With a confidence interval of 95%, it becomes apparent that it cannot be said for sure which company’s reputation is actually higher among 18- to 35-year-old Germans. To give an example, due to the confidence interval Nike could also assume the highest possible reputation value of 4.04 while Adidas could assume the lowest possible reputation value of 3.89. That would result in Nike having the higher reputation.

So, although Adidas has a higher reputation than Nike by calculating the mean, this result does not have any significance since the values could turn out higher and lower respectively due to the confidence interval allowing Nike to have a higher reputation in certain constellations. Therefore, the hypothesis H7 is falsified.

In addition to the just presented “simple” evaluation of the companies, the survey also asked detailed questions about the specific attributes of the three dimensions of reputation. This other method allowed to calculate the reputation of Adidas and Nike by using the data drawn from the questions about these ten core attributes of the companies. These results were then used to determine a detailed and comprehensive reputation index for both companies from the ten individual characteristics and reputation dimensions. This resulted in the reputation values of 3.72 for Adidas and 3.41 for Nike on a scale from 1 to 5.
As with the values of the “simple” evaluation these values, however, only serve to determine a tendency of Adidas having a higher reputation without certain significance though.

**H8: The interviewees locate the companies more often in the expressive reputation dimension than in the other reputation dimensions.**

This hypothesis demands a deeper analysis of the data drawn from the survey regarding all different characteristics that were questioned regarding each of the two sports manufacturers. For each of the two companies there were ten items which could be rated on a Likert scale with corresponding values as follows:

- **Agree** 5
- **Rather Agree** 4
- **Neutral** 3
- **Rather Disagree** 2
- **Disagree** 1
- **I do not know** 0

The last option *I do not know* was a chance for respondents to opt out if they did not have an opinion on the matter. That is the reason why these answers were disregarded for the analysis. This also allowed to measure which characteristics the respondents felt the most confident and knowledgeable enough to answer and to reflect about which of the ten items they had a strong opinion about.
The characteristics of each sports manufacturer were divided into the following terms:

**Expressive Reputation Dimension:**
Trustworthy
Sympathetic
Authentic
Popular and Sympathetic Influencers

**Social Reputation Dimension:**
Good Employer
Environmentally Friendly
Transparent
Socially Responsible

**Functional Reputation Dimension:**
Product Quality
Financial Success

The following two figures illustrate these numbers and represent which reputation dimensions most of the respondents had an opinion about and which reputation dimensions were avoided answering the most. Out of the 143 respondents the following average numbers answered for the items of each of the reputation dimensions:

![Figure 40: Survey: Nike Number of Opinions](image)
As can be seen in these charts, the respondents had a very similar percentage of people opting out on each of the reputation dimension for both companies. Most respondents, by far, felt comfortable about placing the companies within the functional and expressive reputation dimension. This also means that most respondents have an opinion when asked about each of the sports manufacturers functional or expressive reputation features such as their Financial Success and Product Quality as well as their Trustworthiness, their Sympathy, their Influencers, and their Authenticity, respectively. In contrast to that, almost half of the respondents avoided answering any of the social characteristics such as whether the companies are Environmentally Friendly, Transparent, Socially Responsible, or a Good Employer. The respondents did not feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to locate the companies in the social reputation dimension. This means that the functional and expressive reputation dimension play a much bigger role in the perception and reputation building process of sporting goods manufacturers among the target group of 18- to 25-year-old Germans.

Since the respondents locate both companies in the functional and expressive reputation dimension equally the hypothesis H8 is, therefore, falsified. The main result coming from this analysis and observation is that the respondents avoid voicing their opinion about the social reputation dimension of both components.
The respondents would rather answer with *I don't know* instead of evaluating any of the social characteristics (the companies are *Environmentally Friendly, Transparent, Socially Responsible, or a Good Employer*) while they felt a lot more comfortable and knowledgeable to answer all of the functional (*Financial Success and Product Quality*) and expressive (their *Trustworthiness, their Sympathy, their Influencers, and their Authenticity*) characteristics.

**H9: Within the functional reputation dimension, product quality is more important for a company's reputation building than other factors.**

Analyzing the data drawn from the public opinion poll regarding the functional reputation dimension results in the following chart:

![Figure 42: Survey: Functional Reputation Dimension](image)

Almost all of the 143 respondents answered the questions for each company’s product quality and financial success and had an opinion about it. Therefore, it cannot be said that one of the two functional reputation characteristics is more important than the other. The following chart emerges regarding the answers that the respondents selected for the product quality and financial success of Adidas and Nike:
It can be said that the financial success of both companies is evaluated by the respondents as more evident and agreeable than the product quality. The difference between the two functional characteristics is especially high for Nike, which, on the one hand, is the biggest sports manufacturer worldwide and, on the other hand, has an arguably worse product quality than Adidas in the public eye with respect to the articles in November 2017 which described Nike’s NBA jerseys as tearing too often and too easily.

To sum up the result of analyzing this hypothesis H9, it cannot be said for sure whether the financial success or the product quality is more important for the functional reputation dimension of the two sports companies. Therefore, the hypothesis H9 is falsified.

**H10: Within the social reputation dimension, a good employer image is more important for the reputation of a company than other factors.**

Analyzing the data drawn from the public opinion poll regarding the social reputation dimension results in the following chart:
Out of the 143 respondents only 67 and 70 respondents respectively answered the questions for each company’s Employer Reputation and had an opinion about it. In comparison, more respondents answered the questions for each company’s Environmental Friendliness and Transparency. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Employer Reputation is more important for the general social reputation dimension of any of the two sports manufacturers than the other characteristics. The following chart emerges regarding the answers that the respondents selected for the four characteristics of the social reputation dimension of Adidas and Nike:

![Social Reputation Dimension Chart]

*Figure 44: Survey: Social Reputation Dimension*

*Figure 45: Survey: Social Reputation Dimension*
The first observation is, that the respondents evaluated Adidas higher than Nike regarding all of the four characteristics of the social reputation dimension. Especially the values regarding the *Environmental Friendliness* and the *Good Employer Reputation* show a bigger difference, which could be led back to the fact that Adidas promotes their sneaker collaborations such as the *Parley for the oceans* much stronger recently. In 2017 Adidas sold one million Parley sneakers resulting in eleven million plastic bottles from the oceans being repurposed into blue sports shoes. As for the *Good Employer Reputation*, taking a look into the articles of the Bild Zeitung especially shows several articles praising Adidas for their high Christmas bonus for example.

To sum up the result of analyzing this hypothesis H10, it cannot be said that the *Good Employer Reputation* is more important for the social reputation dimension of the two sports companies. Therefore, the hypothesis H10 is falsified.

**H11: Within the expressive reputation dimension, popular influencers are more important to a company's reputation than other factors.**

Analyzing the data drawn from the public opinion poll regarding the expressive reputation dimension results in the following chart:

![Figure 46: Survey: Expressive Reputation Dimension](image)

Out of the 143 respondents comparably many respondents answered the questions for each company's expressive reputation dimension and had an opinion about it. Most of them had a very equal level of confidence voicing their opinion about whether they think...
the two companies are *Trustworthy, Sympathetic, Authentic* and have *Popular Influencers*. However, it cannot be said that one of the four characteristics is selected by the respondents clearly more often than the others. Therefore, it cannot be said that the *Influencers* are more important for the general social reputation dimension of any of the two sports manufacturers than the other three characteristics. The following chart emerges regarding the answers that the respondents selected for the four characteristics of the social reputation dimension of Adidas and Nike:

![Expressive Reputation Dimension](image)

*Figure 47: Survey: Expressive Reputation Dimension*

The first observation is, that the respondents evaluated Adidas higher than Nike regarding all of the four characteristics of the expressive reputation dimension. Especially the values regarding the *Sympathy* and the *Authenticity* show a bigger difference, which could be simply led back to the fact that Adidas has German roots. Additionally, Adidas made noticeable efforts since 2017 to promote their numbers and strategies by publicly presenting their CEO Kasper Rørsted more frequently which might also pay into their publicly perceived sympathy and authenticity. In general, all of the four characteristics of a company’s expressive reputation dimension seem to be evaluated similarly.

To sum up the result of analyzing this hypothesis H11, it cannot be said that the *Popular Influencers* are more important for the expressive reputation dimension of the two sports companies than the other expressive characteristics. Therefore, the hypothesis H11 is falsified.
6.2.3. Both Methods

After analyzing the hypotheses of the two research design utilized in this study separately, the two hypotheses H1 and H2, which are based on the combination of the two research designs, will be analyzed. The first hypothesis based on the mix of both methods is the following:

**H1: Adidas' total reputation index is higher than Nike's total reputation index.**

To calculate the answer for this hypothesis the media reputation index as well as the public reputation index need to be determined. The media reputation index was determined as follows:

![Media Reputation Index](image)

*Figure 48: Media Reputation Index*

The reputation of the two sporting goods manufacturers among the target group of this research was determined as follows:
When comparing these two data sets, two problems are encountered. First, these data sets are not calculated on the same scale. Second, the reputation value for the survey is based on the simple question, how the respondents evaluate the respective sports company. This does not compare to the depth of details that underlie the data of the media reputation index. To calculate a reputation index with a comparable amount of data and certain background, the following calculations are necessary.

In addition to the simple evaluation of the companies, the survey also asked detailed questions about the specific attributes of the three dimensions of reputation. The three dimensions of reputation were, therefore, subdivided into ten character traits as presented in beforehand.

The comprehensive data of these ten characteristics were presented in detail in the previous subchapter in the figures 41, 43, and 45. These results can now be used to determine a detailed and comprehensive reputation index for both companies from the ten individual characteristics. This generates the following values:

![Reputation Chart](image)
This results in the reputation values of 3.72 for Adidas and 3.41 for Nike on a scale from 1 to 5.

Translating these values to the reputation index of Mark Eisenegger results in the following values:

This chart shows that Adidas enjoys a higher reputation both in the media and within the target group. Comparing the overall reputation of Adidas and Nike, it becomes clear that the reputation of Adidas is considerably better than the reputation of Nike.
Therefore, the hypothesis H1 was validified and accepted.

**H2: The newspaper-mediated reputation of Adidas and Nike is lower than the reputation of these companies among 18- to 35-year-old Germans.**

As can be seen in figure 49 the reputation of Adidas and Nike is higher among the respondents of the target group than the reputation in the two daily newspapers. The hypothesis H2 was, therefore, validified and accepted.

**H3: The reputation index of both companies in the public opinion poll is closer to the reputation index in the tabloid newspaper than to the reputation index in the quality newspaper.**

The Hypothesis H3 aims to disclose framing effects between the two newspapers and the target group of 18- to 35-year-old Germans. Calculating the media reputation index is facilitated by using the reputation index formula by Mark Eisenegger introduced in chapter 2. This results in the reputation indices as introduced in figure 34 above. The calculations of the data drawn from the articles resulted in the reputation index of 20 for Adidas and 9.09 for Nike within the Bild Zeitung and a reputation index of 0 for Adidas and -29.89 for Nike within the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Calculating the reputation index of Adidas and Nike among the 18- to 35-year-old Germans was facilitated in two ways. First, the data for the respective question “How do you evaluate Adidas/Nike?” could be evaluated. These values were 4.02 for Adidas and 3.91 for Nike. The values coming from that question were translated into the same scale that was used for the media reputation index resulting in the values 51 for Adidas and 45.5 for Nike. These reputation values coming from this comparably simple method are, hence, from here on referred to as “simple” reputation value or as in the figure 50 “Public_Simple”.

The other method was described in detail in sub-chapter 5.3. The average values of ten characteristics were calculated together resulting in the values for each of the three reputation dimensions of each company. These values were then calculated together to form the overall reputation values of 3.72 for Adidas and 3.41 for Nike. These values, too, were translated to the -100 to 100 scale of Eisenegger’s Reputation Index with 36 for Adidas and 20.5 for Nike.
Adapting all of these reputation indices to the -100 to 100 reputation index scale by Mark Eisenegger allowed a rough (and easier) comparison between the corporate reputation index among the target group and the media reputation index. The comparison can be seen in the following figure:

![Reputation Index](image-url)

**Figure 52: Both Methods: Reputation Index**

The simple method resulted in a very positive reputation for Adidas and Nike and the comprehensive method resulted in a rather positive reputation. As the reputation index for both companies is higher in the Bild Zeitung than it is in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, the Bild Zeitung is closer to the reputation of Adidas and Nike among 18- to 35-year-old Germans in the simple query as well as it is closer to the reputation values drawn from the comprehensive method.

While this is validating the hypothesis H3, it does not necessarily mean that the Bild Zeitung is able to frame the target groups opinion of the two sports manufacturers. As the descriptive statistics about the target group revealed, the boulevard daily newspaper is not widely read among the random sample of 18- to 35-year-old Germans used in this study.
6.3. Research Questions

After validating or falsifying all of the hypotheses, sufficient information and findings have been gathered to answer the research questions underlying this whole study. In the following each of these research questions will be answered according to the results of the data drawn within this study.

1. What is the corporate reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike in the German media “Bild Zeitung” and “Süddeutsche Zeitung” during the period of February 12th, 2017 to February 12th, 2018?

The data to answer this research question was presented in hypotheses H4 and H5. As expected in the hypothesis H4, the media reputation index of Adidas with 30,13 was more than 50 points higher than the reputation index of Nike with -19,17. This result was very likely caused by the home advantage of Adidas among the German newspapers. Examining the hypothesis H5 showed that, contrary to expectation, the reputation index of both, Adidas and Nike, was higher in the Bild Zeitung’s news reporting than it was in the news reporting of the Süddeutsche Zeitung. This result could be caused by the fact that the Bild Zeitung generally concerns itself remarkably less with the economic topics and, therefore, does not report about economic scandals such as the Panama Papers. The Süddeutsche Zeitung, however, reports a lot more about economic topics and systemic issues and, therefore, also reports about the downsides of such companies a lot more. Also, it can be assumed that the quality newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung attempts to report in a much more neutral manner to meet their more academic readership’s needs of a detailed and balanced reporting of the economy. The Bild Zeitung, however, is reporting matters from the perspective of their readership who are mostly employees. That is why they might tend to report more positively on certain aspects about the companies such as the high Christmas bonuses they pay their employees.
2. What is the corporate reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike in the German public amongst 18- to 35-year-olds during the period of February 12th, 2018 to March 12th, 2018?

Although the simple method resulted in a higher reputation for Adidas with 4,02 compared to Nike with 3,91 by calculating their mean, this result does not have any significance since the values could turn out higher and lower respectively due to the confidence interval allowing Nike to have a higher reputation in certain constellations.

In addition to the aforementioned “simple” evaluation of the companies, the survey also asked detailed questions about the specific attributes of the three dimensions of reputation. This other method allowed to calculate the reputation of Adidas and Nike by using the data drawn from the questions about these ten core attributes of the companies. These results were then used to determine a detailed and comprehensive reputation index for both companies from the ten individual characteristics and reputation dimensions. This resulted in the reputation values of 3,72 for Adidas and 3,41 for Nike on a scale from 1 to 5. As with the values of the “simple” evaluation these values, however, only serve to determine a tendency of Adidas having a higher reputation without certain significance though.

The reputation of Adidas and Nike among the German 18- to 35-year-olds was measured with a scale from 1 (negative) over 3 (neutral) to 5 (positive). On that scale, all of the resulting values were located more or less close to the value 4 (rather positive). The simple method resulted in a comparably very positive reputation for Adidas and Nike and the comprehensive method resulted in a rather positive reputation. Adidas always came out slightly ahead of Nike. However, this difference was never significant.
3. In which way does the newspaper-mediated reputation of the sporting goods manufacturers Adidas and Nike have an influence on their reputation with 18- to 35-year-old Germans?

To obtain all of the information needed to answer this research question, several research methods had to be used. The simple method within the survey resulted in a very positive reputation for Adidas and Nike and the comprehensive method within the survey resulted in a rather positive reputation. The media content analysis showed that the reputation index is higher for both companies in the Bild Zeitung than it is in the Süddeutsche Zeitung. Therefore, the Bild Zeitung was closer to the reputation of Adidas and Nike among 18- to 35-year-old Germans in the simple survey method as well as it is closer to the reputation values drawn from the comprehensive survey method than the values of the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the Bild Zeitung is able to frame the target groups opinion of the two sports manufacturers.

As the descriptive statistics about the target group revealed, the boulevard daily newspaper is not widely read among the random sample of 18- to 35-year-old Germans used in this study. The data from the survey suggested, that 62,9% of the respondents were students which did not fit the main target group of Bild Zeitung as introduced in detail in chapter 3.4. Since Süddeutsche Zeitung targets readers with an academic background more strongly than Bild Zeitung, the suspicion arose, that they might have been more impactful on the target group’s opinion of the two sporting goods manufacturers. The figures from the descriptive statistics also discovered that the target group keeps up to date with online news very frequently with half of them reading online news several times a day and another 21,3% reading them 5-7 times per week. However, as can be taken from the survey’s data, the Bild Zeitung on the one hand is actually never read by 58,0% of the target group with a cumulative 81,8% of the target group reading the Bild Zeitung at most less than once or twice per week.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung on the other hand is targeting academics more strongly and is, therefore, read less than 1-2 times per week or once or twice a week by 55,3% of the respondents. But, the reputation index reported within the Süddeutsche Zeitung was actually quite far from what the respondents of the survey thought of Adidas and Nike.
To sum it up, both newspapers were not able to frame the target group’s opinion of Adidas and Nike or show great influence. The Bild Zeitung reported about Adidas and Nike in a way that roughly resembled the way the target group thought about the companies, but the target group almost never reads the Bild Zeitung. The Süddeutsche Zeitung was read more often by the target group but reported about Adidas and Nike in a negative or neutral way, while the target group had a rather positive opinion about the companies.
7. Conclusion

In this chapter the results obtained within this research will be presented in a concise manner. Furthermore, the steps made to achieve these results as well as the two-step research design will be reflected. This serves to provide learnings for future research on corporate reputation. These learnings are based on the data driven results and the experience made with the methods. During this study there were also several results based on the data which suggested interesting hypotheses for future research on corporate reputation. These findings and hypotheses will be presented here as well.

7.1. Resume

This research study provides several interesting learnings about the sports industry and their reputation performance among 18- to 35-year-old Germans as well as daily newspapers. Utilizing a two-step research design allowed to examine and compare the reputation of Adidas and Nike in both the media and the public. Since the data for this research was drawn from a media content analysis and a public opinion poll, a comprehensive picture of the reputation dynamics of Adidas and Nike emerged. The findings of this study deliver both scientific explanations as well as learnings for communication strategies in the economy. The composition of a new method to obtain broad data of each company's reputation among the public allowed to research and calculate the corporate reputation in a detailed and comprehensive manner. This allows conclusions to be drawn about the forces that have an impact on the company's public reputation from the inside and from outside.

By dividing the reputation of the two sports companies into the three dimensions of Eisenegger's reputation theory, a more detailed investigation was possible. These three reputation dimensions have already been used in many studies but, for the first time have been divided into ten sub-categories for this study, which aimed to enable an even more detailed and comprehensive analysis of a company's reputation. These ten individual aspects of the company's reputation were each queried as items on a carefully planned and tested Likert scale and could, thus, be metrically converted into mean values. This made it possible to calculate both the significance and the evaluation of these sub-aspects for each of the three respective reputation dimensions. Furthermore, the significance and evaluation of the three reputation dimensions for the overall reputation of Adidas and Nike among the target group could also be determined.
The data from this survey suggested that the social reputation dimension plays a much less significant role for the overall reputation compared to the functional and expressive reputation dimension (cf. figure 38 & figure 39). Analyzing this data revealed another interesting finding about the social reputation dimension. Interestingly, the very reputation dimension on which the fewest respondents wanted to make a statement and to which the respondents gave the least importance was also the reputation dimension, which was rated as the most negative by far (cf. figure 48). The German 18- to 35-year-olds either did not care about the moral and normative aspects of Adidas and Nike or they evaluated Adidas and Nike negatively because of this moral context. In contrast, the functional and expressive reputation dimension had a similarly high importance for the overall reputation of the sports manufacturers. However, the evaluation of the functional reputation dimension was noticeably more positive, while the expressive reputation dimension was still evaluated as rather positive. The factual-rational and individual aspects of both sports brands were perceived much more strongly. While both dimensions received positive evaluations, the factual and rational aspects scored higher.

Compared to the results of the media content analysis it became apparent that the social reputation dimension is only of little importance for Adidas in the news reporting as well while the reputation dimensions for Nike seemed to be more levelled in the media. This was based on the fact that Nike received a lot publicity for their appearance in the Panama and Paradise Papers. As a result, it has often been negatively mentioned that Nike does not meet its moral and legal obligations to pay taxes.

One of the key findings of this study is that the social reputation dimension of companies, both, in the media and in the public eye, is less important than the functional and expressive dimensions of reputation and is also rated worse than the other two dimensions of reputation. However, due to a major crisis such as the Panama Papers, the social reputation dimension can exceptionally become significantly more important for a company's overall reputation, as can be seen on the example of Nike.
Another key finding of this study is that the reputation of sports brands is significantly lower in the news reporting of quality newspapers compared to tabloid newspapers. Qualitative evaluation of the articles used in this research showed that this is due to the claim of the quality newspapers, which try to report as critically and neutrally as possible and accordingly also investigate more thoroughly and question PR activities of companies. The tabloid newspapers, on the other hand, have different standards as a result of their readership of employees and, therefore, try to convey information about the companies as employers, which often makes their reporting less critical than it is in the quality media.

Among the 18- to 35-year-old Germans it was found that most hold a rather positive opinion of Adidas and Nike. The public reputation of Adidas and Nike was generally more positive among the target group than it was in the media. The two media outlets analyzed in this research study did not seem to have a framing effect on the target group of this study since the respondents only rarely read the Süddeutsche Zeitung and almost never read the Bild Zeitung.

### 7.2. Reflection and Perspective

Aside from the aforementioned results, reflecting the research conducted in this study provided several learnings about the operationalization and method. Reflecting on the research study also provided hypotheses which would be interesting to examine in future research.

In retrospect, calculating the reputation index by drawing data from public opinion polls through the ten characteristics used in this research proved to be a useful and helpful method. However, the ten items used in this study to comprehensively represent the three dimensions of reputation may still need to be extensively examined in order to identify any categories that may still be missing for future research. In addition, the influencer category proved very difficult to question and articulate. Future research in this field will require more detailed definitions and refinements. An equal number of categories for each of the three reputation dimensions would also be helpful for future research.
Analyzing the content of the articles during the months which were especially positive for each company’s reputation showed that these months also repeatedly were written about the same topics. This led to the conclusion that certain topics seemed to be especially beneficial for each company’s communication and reputation. Thereby, the data drawn and analyzed in this study suggests the following hypotheses for future research:

\[H_1: \text{The more Adidas utilizes personalization strategies including their CEO Kasper Rørsted, the higher is the resonance they achieve in the media.}\]

\[H_2: \text{The more Adidas utilizes personalization strategies including their CEO Kasper Rørsted, the higher is the reputation they achieve in the media.}\]

\[H_3: \text{The more Nike utilizes their guerrilla marketing strategies with Aubameyang, the higher is the resonance they achieve in the media.}\]

\[H_4: \text{The more Nike utilizes their guerrilla marketing strategies with Aubameyang, the higher is the reputation they achieve in the media.}\]

Analyzing these topics and the communication of each of these companies promises useful information for both science and economy. In science, the reputation theory and organization communication would benefit from the results of these hypotheses, while in economy the communication departments of Adidas, Nike, and comparable companies would receive important and interesting data driven learnings.

The drastic hit which the reputation of Nike took in November 2017 can be interpreted in the context of the reputation theory underlying this thesis. It is characteristic of the media society that reputation-building crisis cases of individual reputation objects quickly penetrate to the system level and that media start searching for "new targets". For example, a corporate scandal (primary reputation) under media conditions threatens to quickly grow into an industry problem and, therefore, threatens to affect the reputation of other companies (secondary reputation). Due to their news value-driven agenda, (mass) media are looking to generalize crisis-like individual cases or to standardize them into system failures in order to attract new attention and to produce subsequent stories. (cf. Eisenegger, 2005, p. 43) However, as can be seen from the reputation values of this study, Nike's negative reputation in November 2017, for example, does not seem to affect Adidas' reputation in any way.
Instead, it can be assumed that, according to the news value-driven media agenda, this negative reputation will rather spread to companies such as Apple and Amazon, which are also appearing in the Panama and Paradise Papers. Accordingly, the hypothesis for future research in the fields of reputation and crisis communication can be generated:

H₁: If a company’s reputation is suffering from a crisis, the reputation of other companies being affected by the crisis is getting worse as well.

This could even affect companies on a broader scale if the characteristics of Nike being a foreign country and abusing the tax systems abroad are applied.

H₂: If a company’s reputation is suffering from a crisis, the reputation of other companies coming from abroad is getting worse as well.

Also, a broader comparison of sports brands including other global competitors such as Under Armour, Puma, and even Lululemon would provide interesting insights. Additionally, a bigger sample of respondents would allow more certainty in the results and a smaller margin of error.

Researching the aforementioned hypotheses and areas would provide valuable data and knowledge for the fields of reputation theory, organization communication, and crisis communication.

Finally, although the ten aspects used in this study served their purpose and granted a detailed and comprehensive analysis of corporate reputation, there might be still aspects missing or aspects that need refinement. A qualitative research unveiling all of the aspects which together result in a company’s reputation would be incredibly valuable for any further quantitative research with a similar methodology in this field.

This study provides detailed and comprehensive data and results on the nature of the corporate reputation of the two leading sports brands in the German public and the German media. The new survey method introduced in this work lays a possible foundation for future reputation research. The results of this thesis also offer important learnings for corporate communicators in the free economy of Germany.
8. Literature


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10. Codebook

In order to enable the evaluation of the online articles of the Bild Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung in the period February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018, a codebook is required that explains the criteria. According to these criteria or codes the data can then be collected. This codebook clarifies the categories developed in this study, as well as their definitions, detailed conventions, and coding specifications. These are used in the collection of data and the subsequent analysis of online articles.

10.1. Selection of Articles

The relevant online articles were collected using the APA tool. The articles were taken from the media sample "Bild Zeitung" and "Süddeutsche Zeitung" in the period February 12th, 2017 until February 12th, 2018. Since only articles that contain Adidas or Nike are relevant for this research, their relevance was guaranteed by using the search strings "Adidas" and "Nike" respectively. In this investigation, 404 Adidas and 408 Nike articles were collected and then filtered manually to exclude duplicates and wrongly attributed articles. Only articles which cover Adidas or Nike at least once with a clear relevance for the brand’s reputation are left in the data set. As a result, the amount of data from APA which is relevant to this investigation remains at 156 articles for Adidas and 120 articles for Nike.

10.1.1. Formal Categories

1. Article Number

Definition: The articles are named consecutively according to the template "company number". Examples are "Adidas 1" and "Nike 300".

2. Title

Definition: The main title of the article is noted here. Subtitles are ignored.
3. Date

*Definition:* The contribution date is collected in the format DD. MM. YY.
Example: 14.02.2017

4. Month

*Definition:* The month in which the contribution was published is noted separately with the abbreviation of the month.
Example: «Feb»

5. Media

*Definition:* The medium is noted with the name of the daily newspaper.

*Codes:*
- 01 *Bild Zeitung*
- 02 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

10.1.2. Content Categories

6. Reputation

*Definition:* This variable captures how Adidas and Nike are evaluated throughout the article. The evaluation is therefore recorded separately for each article. The following codes can be applied:

*Codes:*
- 01 *Negative:* The companies are primarily valued negatively.
- 02 *Controversial:* The companies are discussed stating both positive and negative aspects.
- 03 *Neutral:* There are no clear company evaluations.
- 04 *Positive:* The companies are primarily valued positively.

*Convention:* Title and lead are given a higher weighting in the ranking.
7. Reputation Dimension

*Definition:* Here, the type of reputation of the research object is recorded. In doing so, reference is made to Max Weber’s three types of rule and a distinction is made between functional, social and expressive reputation.

*Codes:*
- *01 Functional:* Articles, which are mainly related to the company’s success and objectively measurable criteria.
- *02 Social:* Articles, which are mainly concerned with moral and ethical aspects.
- *03 Expressive:* Articles, which are mainly based on subjective and individual characteristics of the companies.

*Convention:* The more dominant reputation dimension is encoded.

8. Centrality

*Definition:* This variable aims to record the positioning of the brand within the article. In doing so, distinctions are made between each of the brands being mentioned peripherally, prominently, or centrally. These codes will then be weighted to quantify the relation between the media reputation and the public reputation of Adidas and Nike. Only articles which cover Adidas or Nike at least once with a clear relevance for the brand’s reputation are left in the data set.

*Codes:*
- *01 Peripheral:* This code is assigned to articles which mention the brand for the brand’s sake at least once.
- *02 Prominent:* This code is assigned to articles which discuss the brand for more than one third of the article.
- *03 Central:* This code is assigned to articles which discuss the brand as the main subject of the article.
Convention: The highest applicable code for each article is encoded. If the brand is named in the article’s title the next higher code is applied. Articles which mention the brand once without really referring to the brand will be disregarded. Examples for articles which mention the brand but will not be taken into evaluation: “Der verstorbene, langjährige Adidas-Chef Robert Louis-Dreyfus […]” „Der Täter trug eine Adidas-Hose mit weißen Streifen!“
11. Survey

1. Allgemeine Fragen


Bitte geben Sie die zutreffende Antwort ein oder wählen Sie die passende Antwort aus.

OK

2 von 16 beantwortet

1. Welchem Geschlecht ordnen Sie sich zu?

☐ Männlich
☐ Weiblich
☐ Andere

3 von 16 beantwortet

2. Wie alt sind Sie in Jahren?

18 [ ]
35 [ ]

3 von 16 beantwortet

3. Was ist Ihr Beruf?

☐ Student/in
☐ Selbstständig
☐ Arbeitnehmer/in
☐ Arbeitslos
☐ Andere

4 von 16 beantwortet
4. Falls Sie studieren, was ist Ihr Hauptfach?

5. Wie häufig lesen Sie Online Nachrichten-Artikel?
- Nie
- Seltener als 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 3-4 mal pro Woche
- 5-7 mal pro Woche
- Mehrmals täglich

6. Wie häufig lesen Sie Online Artikel von der "Bild Zeitung"?
- Nie
- Seltener als 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 3-4 mal pro Woche
- 5-7 mal pro Woche
- Mehrmals täglich

7. Wie häufig lesen Sie Online Artikel von der "Süddeutsche Zeitung"?
- Nie
- Seltener als 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 1-2 mal pro Woche
- 3-4 mal pro Woche
- 5-7 mal pro Woche
- Mehrmals täglich
8. Nennen Sie bitte die drei Sportartikelhersteller, die Ihnen als erstes in den Sinn kommen.

Sportartikelhersteller 1

Sportartikelhersteller 2

Sportartikelhersteller 3

Bitte geben Sie die zutreffende Antwort ein oder wählen Sie die passende Antwort aus.

Informationen über Nike und seine Produkte beziehe ich aus...

- den Nike Webseiten.
- Gesprächen mit Freunden.
- Social Media.
- der Werbung.
- der Medienberichterstattung.
- Influencer Statements.
- Sonstiges (bitte angeben)

Zutreffend   Eher zutreffend   Neutral   Eher nicht zutreffend   Nicht zutreffend   Weiß ich nicht
10. Wie viele Nike Produkte besitzen Sie?

- Mehr als 5 Stück
- 3-5 Stück
- 1-2 Stück
- Keine

11. Wie bewerten Sie Nike?

- Sehr positiv
- Eher positiv
- Neutral
- Eher negativ
- Sehr negativ
12. Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu? 

Nike ist ein finanziell erfolgreiches Unternehmen.  
Ich finde Nike von beeindruckend und sympathischen Bekanntheiten wie z.B. Cristiano Ronaldo, Michael Jordan und Roger Federer repräsentiert.  
Die Produkte von Nike haben eine gute Qualität.  

Nike hat ein gutes soziales Engagement.  
Nike ist ein sympathisches Unternehmen.  
Nike ist ein guter Arbeitgeber.  
Nike ist ein transparentes Unternehmen.  
Nike ist ein authentisches Unternehmen.  
Nike ist ein vertrauenswürdiges Unternehmen.  
Nike hält sich an Umweltstandards.
Umfrage zur Unternehmensreputation

3. Fragen zu Adidas

Bitte geben Sie die zutreffende Antwort ein oder wählen Sie die passende Antwort aus.

OK

13. Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?

Informationen über Adidas und seine Produkte beziehe ich aus...

- der Medienberichterstattung
- Gesprächen mit Freunden
- Influencer Statements
- Social Media
- den Adidas Webseiten
- der Werbung
* 14. Wie viele Adidas Produkte besitzen Sie?
- Mehr als 5 Stück
- 3-5 Stück
- 1-2 Stück
- Keine

* 15. Wie bewerten Sie Adidas?
- Sehr positiv
- Eher positiv
- Neutral
- Eher negativ
- Sehr negativ
**16. Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aussage</th>
<th>Zustimmend</th>
<th>Eher zustimmend</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Eher nicht zustimmend</th>
<th>Nicht zustimmend</th>
<th>Weiß ich nicht</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein vertrauenswürdiges Unternehmen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Die Produkte von Adidas haben eine gute Qualität.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein guter Arbeitgeber.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein sympathisches Unternehmen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein authentisches Unternehmen.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adidas hat ein gutes soziales Engagement.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich finde Adidas wird von beliebten und sympathischen Berühmtheiten wie z.B. Lionel Messi, Kanye West und Pharrell Williams repräsentiert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adidas hält sich an Umweltstandards.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein finanziell erfolgreiches Unternehmen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adidas ist ein transparentes Unternehmen.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>