Generation Z and Attending Traditional Spectator Sports: A Study of Contemporary Sport Consumer Behaviour

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Dedication

First, to my family and friends.
Without your undying love,
support, patience, and encouragement,
I would not have accomplished this.

Second, to the many individuals who have suffered head injuries while playing sports. I know how difficult it can be to adjust to life afterwards and that, for some of us, life will never be the same. However, I urge you to continue chasing your dreams and living life with a brightness that would make even the stars jealous. No matter how dark it may seem, there is a light to be found in family, friends, and love. Hold them close, and the darkness fades. Most importantly, don’t let anyone – especially yourself – tell you that you can’t accomplish something because of your mental health.
Abstract

Understanding consumer behaviour and attracting new generations of consumers are important aspects of operating a successful sport organization (Teed et al., 2008). However, limited academic attention has been given to the most recently emergent generation: Generation Z (Gen Z). Moreover, it has been shown that the interest level in traditional spectator sports is waning amongst younger consumers (Richelieu & Pons, 2005; 2009) and, most recently, Gen Z (Kuchefski, 2018; Whistle, 2018). The purpose of this research was therefore to better understand the sport consumption behaviours of this Gen Z by examining both the motivators and inhibitors to their nominal spectator sport consumption. Participants (n=17) were recruited physically in Hamilton, Ontario and virtually through social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Using a semi-structured format, a total of three synchronous online focus group interviews were conducted with individuals from Gen Z. It was clear from a thorough analysis of the data that participants viewed the consumption of traditional spectator sports analogously with attending live games. Thus, the data, its themes, and its implications were inherently linked to attending traditional spectator sports. Although there were important intragroup differences found, several important motivators and inhibitors were present. Socialization, status, and experimental behaviours all presented as significant motives for Gen Z to attend traditional spectator sports. Alternatively, issues with affordability and a shared unrest proved to be important inhibitors to nominal spectator sport consumption. Directions for future research and recommendations are presented and discussed.

Keywords: Generation Z, spectator sports, consumer behaviour, segmented marketing
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List of Abbreviations

AHL: American Hockey League
CFL: Canadian Football League
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility
ECHL: East Coast Hockey League
FOMO: Fear of Missing Out
Gen Z: Generation Z
MLB: Major League Baseball
MSSC: Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption
NBA: National Basketball Association
NHL: National Hockey League
OHL: Ontario Hockey League
PCM: Psychological Continuum Model
SFMS: Sport Fan Motivation Scale
SSIS: Sport Spectator Identification Scale
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Gen Z consumers expect to be at the center of every brand’s universe. They demand an experience catered to their individual needs at any given moment...Brands are struggling to meet these demands.” (Fromm & Read, 2018, 129)

Background

As an integral part of sport marketing research, consumer behaviour is an important topic for organizations seeking to understand and develop relationships with current and future customers. In recent decades, researchers have attempted to maintain pace with increasingly diverse markets by placing considerable attention on the behavioural complexities expressed by consumers of sport. Increased entertainment options have broadened consumer interests and desires, encouraging sport organizations to intimately research and understand their consumers (Funk, 2002; Mullin et al., 2014; Richelieu, 2012). Faced with these challenges, organizations must understand consumer needs and the differences in consumption habits if they are to create effective marketing campaigns (Gladden et al., 2001; Kunkel et al., 2014; Mullin et al., 2014). It is therefore critical to the success of sport marketing initiatives that organizations first familiarize themselves with, and understand the behaviours of, their consumers.

The need to understand differences in consumption behaviour has encouraged greater focus on marketplace segmentation within spectator sport (Casper, 2007; Funk, 2002; Ogles & Masters, 2003; Ross, 2007). Although these developments have stimulated interest into the importance of market segmentation within sport, the effectiveness of segmented marketing in sport has remained an area in need of greater study. While there have been many studies highlighting the importance of segmented marketing in professional spectator sport (Funk, 2002;
Kunkel et al., 2013; Richelieu & Pons, 2005; 2006; Teed et al., 2008), very little has been done to isolate and study specific segments. Likewise, although a number of studies have sought to typify consumers into a set of classifications (Agas et al., 2012; Giulianotti, 2002; Quick, 2000; Richelieu & Pons, 2005; Stewart & Smith, 1997; Tapp & Clowes, 2002), there has been scant analysis to date that has thoroughly examined specific consumer demographics to better understand the efficacy of segmented marketing in sport. Moreover, evidence from sport marketing segmentation research has suggested that in many instances, marketing initiatives have misread the needs of certain segments, leaving much to be desired (Dick & Turner, 2007; Richelieu & Pons, 2005; 2006).

One way in which researchers have commonly segmented the market is by differentiating generational cohorts. Consumers have been studied extensively by examining baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (better known as Millennials) to understand the differences between different age groups and how their consumption behaviours differ. However, there is an emerging generational cohort – Generation Z (herein referred to as Gen Z) – which has merited further investigation. Typically used to describe individuals born between 1995 and 2012 (Zorn, 2017), Gen Z presents as a distinct subset of consumers and actors than their predecessors from Generation X and Generation Y (Fromm & Read, 2018). Also referred to as ‘Generation Always Connected’ (Mullin et al., 2014) and as ‘Pivotals’ (Fromm & Read, 2018), Gen Z is anticipated to significantly alter the way sport marketers present content due to their unique desires and consumer behaviours.

Existing research on Gen Z (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017; Duffet, 2017; Fromm & Read, 2018; Jain et al., 2014; Priporas et al., 2017; Shatto & Erwin, 2016) has provided some initial insight into the nuances of this cohort. However, the extant literature on these consumers has
been limited. Moreover, aside from a small selection of studies concerning Gen Z’s indirect relation to sport (Funk, 2017; Parker et al., 2012; Pilgaard, 2013), a significant gap has existed in the sport marketing literature regarding this generational cohort of consumers. In particular, researchers must place a greater emphasis on the isolation of specifically unique segments so as to gain a greater understanding of sport consumers and their behavioural motives. Segmented marketing, and the emergence of Gen Z as a prominent demographic within consumer behaviour, are therefore important topics which must be explored in more depth.

It is increasingly important within the realm of traditional spectator sports to examine Gen Z. With a wealth of entertainment options available to contemporary consumers, a majority of Gen Z males were found to reject traditional spectator sport (such as baseball, football, hockey, basketball, and soccer) in favour of non-traditional ‘sports’ such as competitive video gaming (Whistle, 2018). In terms of sport participation, an overwhelming majority of Gen Z males preferred the direct engagement of niche activities like rock climbing to the passive consumption of traditional sports (Kuchefski, 2018). Furthermore, Gen Z has shown a general apathy toward consuming traditional spectator sports both in person and through televised outlets (Evans, 2019). This is a major concern for sport teams who operate within the realm of traditional spectator sports, such as basketball and hockey, that rely heavily on attendance and gate receipts for revenue through the purchase of tickets, merchandise, and experiences. It was alarming then that an overwhelming majority of Gen Zers reported that the entertainment value of spectator sporting events had depreciated and had not been improved, while 65% claimed that they did not find joy in attending a live sporting event (Lefton, 2019). As an emerging influential consumer group, Gen Z therefore represents a demographic of vital importance to the long-term
financial success of sport teams who are at risk of losing the interest and engagement from their future fans.

**Purpose of Current Research**

The purpose of this research was therefore to better understand the sport consumption behaviours of this Gen Z, addressing the dearth of research into this new wave of consumers. To date, research has shown it to be a massive challenge to win the attention of Gen Z consumers, with a clear need to develop highly engaging creative content (Southgate, 2017). Moreover, it was shown to be extremely difficult to attract and retain the loyalty of Gen Z consumers who did not trust brands as easily or as often as their predecessors (Gutfreund, 2016). As such, sport teams must seek efficient ways to motivate this cohort to attend games, purchase merchandise, and become involved in team culture. The current study therefore explored the inhibitors of motivation to consume spectator sport expressed by Gen Z and examined how the consumption behaviours of Gen Z were influenced in order to generate a better understanding of the antecedents to consuming sport. In so doing, the study addressed the following central research questions:

1. What are the antecedents that motivate Generation Z toward nominal sport consumption?
2. What are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Generation Z consumers?

Importantly, this study’s emphasis on Gen Z was rooted in both scholarly and professional need. First, although there has been significant research on the consumption behaviours of previous generations, Gen Z is the most recent cohort of consumers and thus, there was considerable need for greater insight into their values and behaviours (Fromm & Read, 2018). Second, market trends and consumer purchasing behaviours have historically been
heavily influenced by youth culture (Fromm & Read, 2018), and as Gen Z consumers are beginning to determine the brand health and financial performance of companies all over the world, it was deemed crucial – from a marketing perspective – to understand how they behave. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the traditional college demographic – which is currently comprised predominantly of Gen Zers – is an influential yet elusive set of consumers who hold billions of dollars in buying power every year but who are often overlooked in marketing research (Johnson & Lee, 2011). As Fromm and Read (2018) argued, understanding the consumer behaviours of Gen Z should be prioritized as, “with $44 billion of their own money to spend, and potentially influencing more than $665 billion in family spending, Pivots are a formidable market with intense buying power” (p. 75). However, their disposition towards traditional spectator sport may be waning: young consumers have been showcasing increasing levels of apathy toward sport (Richelieu & Pons, 2009), highlighting the need for greater study.

Understanding the consumption behaviours of Gen Z is particularly important in sports and events for the purposes of marketing a brand (Funk, 2008). There are numerous motivators which influence consumer behaviour and therefore become the basis for the development of marketing actions in sport and related business (Funk, 2008). In order to successfully market a sport brand, Funk (2008) argued that it is imperative for marketers to understand the personal, psychological, and environmental factors that influence consumer behaviour. This is especially true for Gen Zers who are set to become the world’s most influential consumer cohort, representing 40% of all consumers by 2020 (Fromm & Read, 2018). Considering the relationship between consumer behaviour and marketing, it was crucial to generate a better understanding of Gen Z’s consumption behaviours and what exactly these young consumers consider as antecedents to their consumption (Mullin et al., 2014). Gen Z’s current and projected financial
prowess warranted research into their nominal spectator sport consumption, so that marketers and organizations can better understand the potential monetary value of this cohort. By examining the motivators which drive Gen Z toward spending money to attend spectator sport events, this study explored the antecedents to this generation’s nominal spectator sport consumption.

**Value of Current Research**

This study presented a lens through which to analyze the antecedents to sport consumption behaviour that had yet to be explored in-depth. As a cross-sectional analysis of Gen Z, the study seeks to examine participants at a specific time and age in their lives, thus providing findings that afford new insight into contemporary sport consumption behaviour, and creates a foundation from which to build future knowledge on generational sport consumption. As such, this study uncovered barriers to the success of segmented marketing in contemporary spectator sport which will allow the practitioners of brand management to re-evaluate their marketing initiatives and better satiate their consumers. By uncovering strategies to target Gen Z consumers more successfully, practitioners will be able to attract these consumers more effectively. This is important both in theory and practice: theoretically, in an effort to contribute to the existing literature by addressing a significant gap, this study generated new insight into the relationship between consumer and team. As segmented marketing is increasingly important to the success of sport brands, it was crucial to find new ways to understand Gen Z. Indeed, it is imperative for sport organizations to target marketing tactics toward specific types of consumers, a stratagem that has far too often been overlooked in the field of sport marketing (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). By exploring the antecedents to nominal spectator sport consumption of Gen Z consumers, the current study has provided a framework for organizations to better market to young consumers.
Furthermore, by identifying a specific type of sport consumer from within a larger typology to examine and research in an isolated manner, the present study has addressed an aspect of sport marketing that has received very little attention in the existing literature.

Practically, concerning the growing competition for the entertainment dollar of consumers, it is crucial that sport organizations seek methods in which to set themselves apart from the competition. Attracting a new generation of sport consumers is a necessity for organizations seeking to generate greater future revenue and financial success (Teed et al., 2008). Perhaps the greatest way in which to surpass the competition is to gain the trust and loyalty of consumers – a feat which cannot be accomplished without first uncovering their specific needs, desires, and behaviours (Gladden et al., 2001). By understanding the experiences of Gen Z and potential antecedents to nominal consumption behaviour, brand managers can create more sincere and direct marketing campaigns which will hopefully inspire the next generation of consumers to attend spectator sporting events. The current research therefore endeavored to contribute to the existing sport marketing and consumer behaviour literature by generating new, in-depth insight into an underexplored aspect of sport marketing and consumer segmentation.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour, defined by Peter and Olson (1990) as the dynamic interaction of cognitive, behavioural, and environmental elements which influence the exchange aspects of human lives, has been thoroughly analysed in the marketing literature as a necessary means of developing a successful business strategy. Successful strategies require an intimate knowledge of consumers and why they choose the products they do; above all else, they depend on consumer satisfaction (Foxall, 1977). Several scholars, such as Katona (1971), analyzed consumer behaviour through an economic lens, discussing the importance of elements like household income and inflation in shaping the behaviours of consumers. Other authors have likewise studied the increasing importance of psychological motivators to consumer behaviour, such as emotions (Myers & Reynolds, 1967), attitudes (Foxall, 1977), and cognitive factors such as abilities in comprehension (Peter & Olson, 1990). Elsewhere, scholars have examined different socializing processes that motivated consumption behaviour, such as demographics and lifestyle (Reynolds & Wells, 1977) and identity and socialization (Desmond, 2003). These studies uncovered important distinctions in trying to understand consumer behaviour as each distinct motivator has contributed to a more holistic understanding of consumers, allowing marketers to understand how and why they have valued certain products or services.

Within traditional spectator sport, consumer behaviour has been a focal point for organizations as they have sought to generate a deeper understanding of their fans. As an early tool used to understand fans, the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) developed by Wann and Branscombe (1993), differentiated fans based on their levels of identification and psychological attachment to a team. Based on differing levels of identification to a team, the
SSIS was used as a tool to classify individuals into different groups of fans (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Shortly thereafter, the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) was created to differentiate sport fans by categorizing them based on shared consumption motives (Wann, 1995). The SFMS was designed to uncover the motives behind an individual’s affinity to sport ranging from economic, such as betting or gambling on the outcome of a game, to psychological, in that sport provided an outlet for escape (Wann, 1995). Theoretically, the SSIS and SFMS provided organizations with an early framework to classify likeminded sport consumers based on motives and, subsequently, analyze the different fan groups based on their reasons for consuming and participating in sport.

In more recent years, the sport marketing literature has heightened its attention towards consumers and has explored their behaviours and perceptions in a variety of ways. In their influential study, Trail and James (2001) created the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC), a model from which to analyze motivating factors to sport spectator consumption. The MSSC was the first meaningful attempt to understand the psychometric influences on sport spectators (Stander & van Zyl, 2016), and provided an important basis for understanding sport consumption behaviour (Trail & James, 2001). In a later study of sport consumer behaviour, Kim and Trail (2010) constructed a model by which to explain the varying behaviours of consumption, which included both motivators and constraints. Both the motivators and constraints of consumption were found to have been influenced by both internal (needs, values, and beliefs) and external (environment and media) factors (Kim & Trail, 2010).

In this respect, understanding the behavioural patterns and purchasing habits of fans has thus been of vital importance to marketers and practitioners. Better appreciating the consumers’ drivers for consumption has afforded sport organizations with the opportunity to enhance future
consumption by tailoring their marketing strategies to meet specific desires. Heterogeneous customer demands were in this way forcing sport organizations to focus on their consumers by providing high levels of consumption value (Yoshida et al., 2013). Consumption value has been argued to be highest, and therefore fan satisfaction and retention greatest, when there was perceived utilitarian (monetary, convenience, etc.), symbolic (social prestige, peer identification, etc.), and hedonistic (experiential, emotional, etc.) value offered by the brand (Yoshida et al., 2013). Accordingly, consumer behaviour was influenced positively by this value, as it facilitated a stronger connection to the brand while encouraging increasing involvement. Fostering strong and positive relationships with consumers has been something that could only be accomplished through an intimate understanding of the sport consumer and their associated behaviours (Gladden et al., 2001).

As an extension of this important initial sport consumer behaviour research, a number of parallel streams and considerations have since emerged within the sport marketing and consumer behaviour literatures. Ko et al. (2017) for example, studied the effect of personality traits on sport consumers, concluding that personality traits (such as extraversion, openness, and agreeableness) and individual needs (including arousal, achievement, and affiliation) had significant effects on consumption behaviour. The authors contended that the consumption of sport was determined largely by psychological factors, concluding that higher levels of involvement in sport led to greater levels of consumption. Gau and Korzenny (2009) likewise argued that attitudes (such as risk-taking or long-term oriented-ness) and values (including honesty, wealth, and success) influenced consumption behaviours. Kim et al. (2011), by contrast, took a different approach to analyzing sport consumption behaviour, as they examined the importance of building a quality relationship between a team and its fans. The authors proposed
several relationship quality constructs from which to analyze consumption behaviour: trust, commitment, intimacy, identification, and reciprocity. When taken together, these elements significantly increased the frequency of sport consumption behaviour, specifically in terms of attendance, media consumption, and merchandise consumption (Kim et al., 2011).

In studying National Hockey League (NHL) fans, Hyatt (2007) approached sport consumer behaviour from the perspective of a team’s most loyal fans. By studying the relocation of a team franchise, Hyatt (2007) examined the psychological effects on the team’s loyal fans, post-relocation. One of the primary findings was that the relationship between the fans and the team was effectively ruined, to the point that very few fans maintained a positive relationship with the team or any other associated NHL entity. This provided evidence that consumer perceptions and behaviours could be influenced – negatively in this case – by environmental factors such as geography and history. In a later study, Hyatt and Foster (2015) discussed the relationship between fan and team through identification theory and proposed a model of fan de-escalation, or how sports fans become non-fans. Two major themes leading to fan de-escalation were specifically related to team structure: the first being individual team players, while the second was certain characteristics of a team (such as its management or its greater social image). Conversely, Andrijiw and Hyatt (2009) explored how fans of non-local teams acquired their fandom, noting that the most important reasons for non-local fandom were the physical attributes of a team (such as the team’s uniform) and a psychological affinity to the team (such as an attraction to a star player).

Considering the fan-team relationship, one area of consumption behaviour that can be significantly influenced is a consumer’s purchasing intent. Consumer purchase intention refers to the cognitive evaluation process that a consumer experiences while purchasing a product or a
service (Adnan et al., 2017). For example, celebrities significantly increased the purchasing and re-purchasing intent of consumers, through their endorsement of a given brand (Adnan et al., 2017). This showed that consumption behaviours were susceptible to external factors and were able to be influenced through the strategic marketing of a brand. Ultimately, purchasing intent was influenced by the consumer’s acceptance of a brand; the more readily accepted the brand was in the consumer’s mind, the more likely the consumer would purchase that brand (Aaker, 1972). The association between branding and consumer behaviour made it much more likely that an individual would be positively motivated to consume a sport brand that understood how to market specifically to their desires. Thus, it became critical to examine the intricacies of consumption behaviour on an in-depth scale. The greater that consumers were understood, the easier it would become to assess, analyze, and predict the inhibitors and motivators of their consumption behaviours.

The consumption behaviours of sport consumers have been analyzed to assess and predict motivators to buy tickets to games, memorabilia, and other brand-related merchandise. Richelieu and Pons (2005) for instance, explored how different types of fans intended to budget for tickets to sporting events as well as how they spent their money on sport brands and items, such as magazines. Purchasing intent was used as one measure of behaviour to calculate fandom, categorizing individuals based upon distinct inhibitors of consumption (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). In studying compulsive sport consumption, Aiken et al. (2018) found that individuals who exhibited compulsive, or obsessive, attachment to a sport entity, spent considerably higher amounts of time and money on sport consumption than did their counterparts. A high degree of intimacy within the fan-team relationship resulted in positive consumption behaviour and, “…when psychological familiarity, closeness, and openness between sport consumers and the
team exist, sport consumers are more likely to attend games, follow team related information through media, and purchase team licensed merchandise” (Kim et al., 2011, p. 586).

Sport consumer behaviours have also been extensively analyzed through various processes of socialization. In an early exploration of the socializing aspects of a sport event, Melnick (1993) discussed how sport enabled individuals to become social beings. In particular, the author recommended that sport managers should enhance the socializing features of events, such as the conduciveness of stadium design and providing social ground for tailgaters in order to increase the satisfaction and engagement of consumers (Melnick, 1993). Other studies have used socialization to analyze differences in sport consumer behaviour, including: how levels of income and differences in socioeconomic status influenced fan attendance at live sporting events (Lera-Lopez & Rapun-Garate, 2005; Siegfried & Peterson, 2000; White & Wilson, 1999); the relevance of race – particularly amongst African-American consumers – in determining attendance at professional sporting events and levels of sport consumption (Armstrong, 2002; Armstrong & Perretto Stratta, 2004; Blank et al., 2014; Brown & Bennett, 2015); the differences between genders, and how female fans experienced both marginalization and empowerment through sport (Bush et al., 2005; Hoeber & Kerwin, 2013; Sveinson & Hoeber, 2016); and how parent-child dynamics influenced sport fandom, particularly in how children socialized their parents to become engaged and consume a certain sport and/or team (Hyatt et al., 2018; Tinson et al., 2017).

The extent to which researchers have analyzed the differences in sport consumption behaviours across a wide array of psychosocial lines underscores its importance as a topic. As the literature has shown, it is imperative that organizations understand and categorize consumer differences so that they are able to differentiate between segments of the market. Therefore, it
has become necessary to differentiate groups of individuals into segmented models so that
behavioural patterns can be identified and examined to further our understanding of the
consumer and their preferences.

**Market Segmentation**

In analyzing the discrepancies between consumers, researchers had to sort, organize, and
label these differences in order to create distinguishable cohorts. These distinct groups were what
allowed marketers to create more efficient and targeted campaigns. The myriad consumption
behaviours revealed within the literature presented marketers with a complex, yet necessary
challenge in understanding consumers (Milne & McDonald, 1999). However, although
consumption behaviours were diverse, they could be grouped into segments of individuals who
shared similar values, traits, characteristics, or interests, meaning that the marketplace was
comprised of several groups with differing yet distinct motivations or desires. The heterogeneity
of consumers’ desires, as Reynolds and Wells (1977) argued, necessarily split the market into
separate segments thereby allowing marketers to tailor their initiatives more precisely to what
their consumers wanted. In other words, the reality of diverse consumption behaviours inherently
created the need for market segmentation.

During their discussion of the importance of segmenting the industrial market, Bonoma
and Shapiro (1983) defined segmentation as the process of separating a market into groups of
customers, potential customers, or buying situations, such that the members of each group were
more like the other members of that particular group. There were three major reasons to segment
a market: for analysis and to understand how and why customers buy; market selection (choosing
the segments which best fit the company’s competencies); and lastly, to manage marketing
through the development of strategies that best satiate the consumer while providing the company with a competitive advantage (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1983).

Market segmentation was developed into a normative theory by Claycamp and Massy (1968) as a means of integrating it into marketing strategy in a way that could be applied both in theory and in practice. The authors developed a multistage approach to market segmentation, beginning with identifying perfect discriminations among consumers, followed by an analysis of micro and macro segmentations, which were then applied to the ‘mass market’ (Claycamp & Massy, 1968). Dowling (2004) later stressed the importance of segmentation in marketing strategy by outlining a three-pronged approach which included: strategic segmentation (defining the industry and subsequent strategies); product-market segmentation (matching broad types of products and services with broad types of customer); and finally, tactical segmentation (getting close to consumers so that marketing initiatives were designed for each target segment). These strategies were supported by the logic of segmentation, which Dowling (2004) defined as the financial benefit an organization would accrue when it recognized different groups of consumers as having varying perceptions of value and who then offered different products accordingly.

In relation to spectator sport, market segmentation has been applied throughout sport marketing scholarship and practice as a means of understanding sport consumption by increasing both the knowledge of, and efficiency in, marketing to the consumer. A range of segmentation approaches have been theorized within the extant literature, including Funk’s (2002) model of segmentation of the sport market which categorized fans into casual, moderate, and loyal consumers based on differing levels of loyalty to a team. Other approaches have proposed segmenting initial fans of a newly introduced team (McDonald et al., 2016); classifying participants of fantasy sports via their consumption behaviours (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010; Dwyer
et al., 2011); categorizing the purchase intentions of sport participants based on their demographics and differing levels of skill (Casper, 2007); differentiating sport fans based on various degrees of brand association (Ross, 2007); typifying market profiles based on sport participation (Taks & Scheerder, 2006); and segmentation based on different motivations of sport participation (Ogles & Masters, 2003).

The myriad segmentation models proposed have equally informed the development of several fan typologies seeking to define and differentiate sport consumers across demographic and psychographic measures. Early models of fan typologies were created using binary classifications so that sport consumers were understood as occupying one side of a coin. Of these models, various distinctions were proposed in an effort to segment fans. Quick (2000), for example, distinguished fans based on how they evaluated the value, or logic, of consuming a specific team, labelling them as either ‘rational’ or ‘irrational’. Fans were therefore typified based on the cognitive processes which led them to believe that sport consumption could be rationalized. Conversely, Bristow and Sebastian (2001) utilized the concept of brand loyalty to divide fans into ‘die-hard (extremely loyal)’ or ‘less loyal’, citing purchasing behaviour and childhood exposure as antecedents. Hughson (1999) classified fans based on their psychological and emotional identification to a team, classifying them as either ‘expressive’ or ‘submissive’.

Beyond such binary classifications of fans, however, several authors proposed tiered typologies which segmented fans into more than two distinct categories. The shift to tiered typologies indicated that fans could not only be differentiated, but also categorized based on their beliefs and values (Stewart et al., 2003). For example, authors created tiered typologies based on different levels of involvement and internalized identification of a team, noting the importance of emotional commitment expressed by consumers (Kahle et al., 1996; Sutton et al., 1997). In a
more comprehensive approach, Tapp and Clowes (2002) classified football supporters into three types based on several factors, including game attendance, spending behaviours, and game-day routines. The three distinct segments were: casuals (broken down to include committed and carefree); regulars (those who supported the club but did not prioritize it in their lives); and fanatics (those who exhibited extremely high degrees of loyalty and consumption toward a club).

Given the complexity and heterogeneity of sports consumers, Tapp and Clowes’ (2002) classification of supporters exemplified the increasingly multifaceted typologies which have defined much of the contemporary sport consumer literature, intended to capture the diversity of values and interests of sport fans. By specifically focusing on the motivations for game attendance and the frequency of attending games, for example, Smith and Stewart (1999) created a multidimensional typology that considered the different behaviours and attitudes of fans. They listed a total of five different types of sport consumers: ‘passionate partisans’ who were loyal to the team and were regular attendees of games; ‘champ followers’ who were committed to their team only when it performed well; ‘reclusive partisans’ who were loyal to the team but did not frequently attend games; ‘theatergoers’ who attended games purely for their entertainment value; and lastly, ‘aficionados’ who consumed sport for its skill and strategic complexity. Similarly, Hunt et al. (1999) produced a typology with five distinct types of fans. Commitment was used as a significant measure of fandom, but Hunt et al. (1999) added time and space as distinguishing factors: ‘temporary fans’ were committed so long as the team was winning; ‘local fans’ derived their fandom by being located in a team’s geographic region; ‘devoted fans’ were fans because of how they included their team as being part of their prevailing self-identity; ‘fanatical fans’ expressed fandom through physical and public rituals such as painting their bodies; and lastly, ‘dysfunctional fans’ were obsessive in their fandom, to the point that it controlled their lives.
Giulianotti (2002), by contrast, conceptualized fans in a different perspective: by considering the sociological effects of sport’s historical commodification, modern sport consumers could be understood on a four-part taxonomy as one of the following: ‘supporters,’ who were culturally contracted to their respective team through a long-term personal and emotional investment; ‘followers,’ who followed the developments of specific entities such as star players, coaches, or even a team, in an impersonal and mostly symbolic manner; ‘fans,’ who developed a love or intimacy for a team but who exhibited their fandom more indirectly through the consumption of team-related products and services; and lastly, ‘flaneurs,’ whose spectatorship was depersonalized and constructed largely through virtual, cosmopolitan means, such as the Internet. With Giulianotti’s (2002) model, it became clearer how various socializing processes played an important role in defining the differences between consumers.

Other authors have also explored fans and the differences in sport consumerism using various socializing processes as a lens. The importance of socialization and factors like parental influence or internalizing and self-determination personality traits have been studied extensively (James, 2001; Kolbe & James, 2000; 2003). Armstrong (2002) meanwhile, examined the relevance of race in shaping behavioural patterns in sport consumption, noting that there were differences in how individuals were motivated to consume sport across racial lines. Differences in sport consumption have also been examined across gender specific motivators (James & Ridinger, 2002). James and Ridinger (2002) found that while female consumers identified as being motivated to consume sports generally, they did not feel a particular sense of attachment to a specific sport team.
Perhaps most prominent within sport fan research, Funk and James (2001) introduced the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) (see Figure 1) as a means of segmenting sport consumers based on their level of psychological affiliation toward a sport or team.

**Figure 1: Psychological Continuum Model (Funk & James, 2001)**

By differentiating between various levels of psychological commitment and involvement from sport consumers, the PCM became capable of classifying sport consumers into four types: ‘awareness,’ which involved the recognition that different sports and teams exist; ‘attraction,’ which involved selecting a favourite sport or team; ‘attachment,’ which occurred when a person created a stable psychological connection to a sport or team that allowed certain mental associations to become intrinsically important; and lastly, ‘allegiance,’ which was the final stage of fandom as it represented that an individual expressed loyalty toward a sport or team.

Although the PCM was initially used as a conceptual framework to advance the understanding of the sport consumer’s psyche, it was later revised to document and outline the movement between the four stages (Funk & James, 2016). The revised model included internal
and external influencing factors that could contribute to the overall psychological connection an individual had to a sport team (Funk & James, 2016). A later addition included elements of the consumer decision-making process, indicating that movement between the stages could be attributed to internal decision-making mechanisms and an increasing complexity of behavioural engagement through the four stages of the PCM (Funk & James, 2016). Another important revision was implemented by Beaton and Funk (2008) in which the authors argued that the PCM should be used as a stage-based framework which could be used by researchers to develop and empirically test theories to explain how certain phenomena worked. Subsequently, the PCM was used to study sport consumer behaviour and widely used in a variety of literature as a theoretical framework from which to empirically validate the stages and the differences between consumer segments (Funk & James, 2016). With the creation of the PCM, Funk and James (2001) advanced the notion that sport consumption was fluid.

The notion of fluid sport consumption suggested that there were various psychosocial levels with which an individual could be identified. Furthermore, the argument that sport consumerism was fluid indicated that the material nature of fandom could be manipulated and influenced to increase levels of hedonistic behaviour. Attempting to create a typology of sport consumerism that captured both these psychosocial and hedonistic variables, Richelieu and Pons (2005) classified four distinct types of consumers: the super, social, experiential, and contextual fan types. In then analyzing how efficiently the strategic vision of a professional sport team’s brand was satisfying the desires of its fans, Richelieu and Pons (2005) identified these four groups of consumers who shared distinct behaviours and patterns of consumption (see Figure 2).
Figure 2: Typology of Consumers (Richelieu & Pons, 2005)

Richelieu and Pons (2005) explored how fans of a professional ice hockey team expected to be marketed to and how they perceived the team’s brand to be meeting (or not) their specific desires and needs. By studying the perspective of the consumer and identifying what exactly they were seeking from the brand, Richelieu and Pons (2005) argued that “...the implementation of a brand positioning strategy that reaches these consumers should be the priority for marketing managers in sports franchises” (p.161).

Using their typology as reference, Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) argued that deeper analyses of the behaviours of specific consumers were necessary in the pursuit of intimately understanding their desires and needs. An important element of Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) segmentation was the inclusion of age as an identifying factor amongst the different types of fan. Although age stood out as irregular in relation to the other variables in Figure 2 due to its non-behavioural nature, it was actually a very important distinguishing factor within segmentation. In fact, one of the most commonly used forms of segmentation in marketing research has been classifying consumers as generational groups, or through identifying strategic target groups based on age (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018). By including age as a measure, Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology highlighted the importance that age can have for the inferential explanations of
different consumption behaviours. Moreover, this typology provided further evidence that
different age brackets fit into different types of consumer cohorts and that there were, in fact,
stark differences between generational sport consumers, in line with past consumer behaviour
research into age demographics.

**Generational Segmentation**

Because different age brackets have different psychological and hedonistic behaviours,
generational segmentation has historically been viewed as useful and an effective means of
differentiating consumers. Segmenting the market into distinct groups based on age in this way
has been used extensively in *a priori* literature: the personalities, values, and norms of
individuals are inherently influenced by the time in history when they were born and, as such,
different generations of consumers often share similar traits with their generational peers
(Fromm & Read, 2018). For example, individuals born in the 1960s would often share similar
values to one another, based on their shared experiences (i.e. growing up in the Cold War), but
would likely differ from those born in the late 1990s who grew up as digital natives. These age-
based differences allowed for the generational segmentation of the market, thereby grouping
consumer perception and behaviour into distinct cohorts. Slootweg and Rowson (2018) noted
that contemporary marketers have been most concerned with three distinct generations: Baby
Boomers; Generation X; and Generation Y.

As consumers, the baby boomer generation – born between 1946 and 1964 (Zorn, 2017)
– is such a large cohort that Reisenwitz and Iyer (2009) argued that it should be deconstructed
into unique segments, as there are many behavioural variables that characterized this generation.
Many studies have attempted to uncover the behavioural complexities behind this large and
powerful generation of consumers: Dinkins (1994) studied baby boomer expenditures across
racial and ethnic differences; Brown and Orsborn (2006) analyzed female baby boomer consumers, emphasizing their diversity of behaviours and market influence; Lipschultz et al. (2007) looked at how cultural shifts had influenced the psychosocial makeup of baby boomers; and Miranda-Moreno and Lee-Gosselin (2008) examined the behaviours expressed by baby boomers toward out-of-home activities. Baby boomers have been a clear example of how the consumption behaviours of a generational segment are not only distinct, but also varied, thus generating the need for marketers and practitioners to understand them more thoroughly.

Following the baby boomer generation, Generation X – born between 1966 to 1976 (Zorn, 2017) – has been characterized in marketing research as being well informed, to have expectations of high quality and efficient customer service, and to be less likely to be loyal to a brand (Glass, 2007). Such differences in generational values necessitated an evolution in consumer behaviour research and marketing practice, including greater emphasis on: examining the influence of popular culture and shared history on the values of Generation X (Brabazon, 2017); analyzing the impact of parenthood on Generation X consumer traits and expectations (Howe, 2010); and outlining a holistic blueprint of Generation X consumers (Ritchie, 2002). As the children of baby boomers, Generation Y (also referred to as Millennials) have been commonly conceived of as being individuals born between 1977 and 1994 (Zorn, 2017). Generation Y is argued to be an inherently misunderstood cohort (Fromm & Garton, 2013) due to its considerable behavioural complexity, prompting many investigations into their consumer traits. Such investigations ranged from examining the motivators of college-aged Generation Y consumers (Noble et al., 2009), to studying the antecedents to brand loyalty expressed by Generation Y consumers (Lazarevic, 2012), to comparing the age differences within Generation Y to analyze differences in attitudes and consumption motivations (Martin & Turley, 2004).
Within sport consumer theory, researchers have also shown considerable interest in these generational consumer segments. Generation X has often been referenced in the literature by their relation to extreme or ‘action’ sports and the proposed inclusion of these alternate sports at the Olympic Games (Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011). Rather than spectating and participating in traditional sports, Turco (1996) argued that Generation X often preferred high-risk activities and non-traditional sports, such as skateboarding. Female Generation X consumers differed from their male counterparts, as they offered a distinct set of perceptions and held unique consumption habits, defining them as a separate sport consumption community (Shoham et al., 1997). The differences expressed by Generation X sport consumers stressed the need to understand their desires and motivations to consume spectator sport activities (Kennett et al., 1998).

Similarly, Generation Y has been thoroughly examined within the sport literature. Bush et al. (2004) studied the extent to which sport celebrities influenced the behavioural intentions of Generation Y consumers, finding that these figures positively influenced brand loyalty and purchasing intentions. Bednall et al. (2012) explored the attendance motives of Generation Y at spectator sporting events, finding that the strongest influence on positive attendance was the presence of friends. These studies suggested that Gen Y consumers were influenced to consume spectator sport through external factors including celebrity endorsements and the behaviours of peers. Interestingly, Gen Y was particularly concerned with the experience of sporting events and wanted to ensure that it was an effective outlet to enjoy spending time with friends (Bednall et al., 2012). More in-depth studies have applied variables such as gender and physical activity level in analyses of Generation Y to better understand their consumer behaviour preferences (Stevens et al., 2005). Stevens et al. (2005) found that there were differences between genders in how they were influenced to purchase sport apparel, and the motivators behind purchasing
certain sporting items; most Gen Y boys were influenced by their fathers, whereas most girls were influenced by their mothers. Therefore, the influence from both parents and friends was a significant antecedent to the consumption behaviours of Gen Y (Stevens et al., 2005).

There have also been numerous studies documenting intergenerational comparisons of consumers. The sport consumer personalities of baby boomers have been compared to those of Generation X and Generation Y (Rahulan et al., 2013). By specifically analyzing the purchasing behaviour of generational cohorts, Rahulan et al. (2013) discovered that baby boomers were less engaged with promotional material than the later generations were and required less time to reach a purchase decision. Additionally, the differences between Generations X and Y have also warranted attention (Bennett et al., 2006); in studying the media preferences of both Generations X and Y, Bennett et al. (2006) found that the latter consumed greater amounts of television and were therefore more accessible to marketers through televised advertisements. Clearly, the focus of sport researchers has centred around these three generations. However, there has been a considerable need for sport researchers to develop an understanding of generational and intergenerational consumer knowledge (Stevens et al., 2005).

These previous studies on generational sport consumption behaviour have captured important cross-sectional snapshots of generational consumers at a given time in history and while they were a certain age. In particular, many studies concerning Generations X and Y documented sport consumption behaviours from participants in adolescence or early stages of adulthood (e.g., Bednall et al., 2012; Stevens et al., 2005). These studies captured the behaviours of a generational cohort at a given age and were subject to change as generations matured, they were critical to the understanding of contemporary sport consumption and for building deeper
bases of generational knowledge. Indeed, it is necessary to further this knowledge by exploring generational demographics and behaviours across sporting consumption (Stevens et al., 2005).

This need is perhaps no clearer than in the case of Gen Z. Although Gen Z are projected to become the largest generation of consumers by the year 2020 (Fromm & Read, 2018), researchers have only just begun conducting preliminary research into their marketing preferences. Fromm and Read (2018) outlined general insights into Gen Z and the initial marketing approaches which organizations should adopt in order to meet the expectations of this generation. The authors suggested that this demographic was inherently different from their predecessors and that companies would need to understand the intricate behaviours and competencies expressed within Gen Z if they were to market to them successfully (Fromm & Read, 2018). Priporas et al. (2017) similarly documented the unique behavioural motivations of Gen Z, noting that, as products of an increasingly digital world, Gen Zers held certain expectations on how companies should address their needs through retail experiences that satisfied their own competencies and desires (Priporas et al., 2017). Moreover, Gen Z has been found to be more diverse than any previous generation and have therefore been more open-minded to differences, adding to their complexity as a consumer cohort (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). Other studies have documented the consumer perceptions of Gen Zers toward Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and how it has affected their purchasing intentions (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017). Specifically, Gen Z seems to have understood both the public and self-serving reasons why a company would participate in CSR, although these initiatives may have acted as inhibitors to consumption by negatively influencing their purchasing intention of that company’s product (Ariker & Toksoy, 2017).
Considering their relation to sport, Gen Z has been referenced briefly and mostly indirectly. For example, Funk (2017) briefly mentioned how Gen Z would be a challenge to market to in the future within an analysis of existing sport consumer behaviour research. Certain scholars argued that the future of sport would be defined by a generational shift that prominently included the preferences and desires of Gen Z (Funk, 2017). In contrast, Parker et al. (2012) analyzed the preferred coaching styles of Gen Z collegiate athletes, noting that they had different expectations and relational needs than athletes from previous generations. Pilgaard (2013), meanwhile, included Gen Z as part of an examination into age-based differences that led to development in leisure time sport and exercise, indicating that the flexible lives of Gen Zers would lead them away from routine participation in sport. These a priori studies have, at best, shown preliminary evidence into a rather small group of the Gen Z demographic. Aside from these brief insights into Gen Z, the existing sport consumer behaviour literature remains lacking in the depth of knowledge of Gen Z consumers.

**Theoretical Conclusions**

Although the importance of intimately understanding the heterogeneity of sport consumers has been stressed in the literature, the consideration of, and focus on, Gen Z consumers has been limited to date. Aside from several brief generalizations as part of larger investigations into Millennials’ involvement in sport, Gen Z has not yet been thoroughly examined. Rather, the extant literature has focused on consumers from previous generations and the intricacies shown within, and between, these segments. It has been shown through a priori research how the sport consumer profiles of baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y differ in preferences, values, and desires. In addition, the motivations of sport consumption have been examined and compared across all three of these generational cohorts. Moreover, previous
typologies and sport consumer segmentation models have not thoroughly accounted for the numerous differences present within each subtype or classification of fan.

These analyses, although beneficial for rudimentary differentiation among sport consumers, have not accounted for Gen Z nor did they provide the in-depth examination necessary for understanding their truly intimate desires. Although researchers have started to pay closer attention to Gen Z, there is much to be learned about this demographic of consumers. Considering Gen Z’s projected influence as a consumer group, and with such limited literature, it is therefore extremely valuable to study Gen Z consumers’ relation to traditional spectator sport. While general characteristics have been theorized in marketing strategies concerning Gen Z (Fromm & Read, 2018), until this demographic is isolated as a specific type of consumer and studied from the viewpoint of submarkets (such as the spectator sports industry), a knowledge gap exists concerning their intimate perceptions, desires, and motivations to consume.

Concerning segmentation, as the literature on generational marketing has shown, each age group has not only been distinct from one another, they have also been internally diverse. Therefore, although a typology might have shown that there were differences between several types of fan, this has not provided us with a thoroughly confident understanding of each specific subtype of fan. Many studies have developed segmentation models, yet the extant literature has avoided thorough examinations into one specific type of consumer or fan from within existing typologies. There has been scant analysis to date which has identified and broken down a specific subtype of fan to examine the characteristics which broad typologies may have missed. Theoretically, this is a limitation in our understanding of the sport consumer and an important distinction as,
“Future research should look more closely at the different types of sports teams’
fans, the attributes of the brand they are looking for, as well as the most
appropriate marketing actions teams could undertake in order to satisfy the
needs of their different segments.” (Richelieu & Pons, 2009, 179)

Although previous typologies of sport consumers have shown us rudimentary differences
amongst fans, they have been ineffective in showing us the true complexity of each segment’s
desires and needs. The typology proposed by Richelieu and Pons’ (2005), however, provided a
framework upon which to build further generational study into sport consumers and begin to
address the sizeable gap within the existing literature. Within their analysis of fan motivations
and behaviours, Richelieu and Pons (2005) identified what the authors referred to as the
“experiential” fan, a term used to denote the youngest cohort of fans contained within their
typology (see Figure 2). Young fans exhibited behaviours based on a high discretionary budget
for sport, contrasted against a hesitation to spend said budget, and a preference for experience
over specific team connection or identification (Richelieu & Pons, 2005).

Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology has since been referenced extensively in the
literature. In exploring the mediational role of brand trust, Filo et al. (2008), for example,
referred to the types in their discussion of sport consumer satisfaction. The generational
differences revealed in the typology provided a framework through which to examine customer
service quality, and to explore mechanisms to increase consumer brand loyalty. Conversely, in
their conversation of building equity in a global sport brand, Bodet and Chanavat (2009)
referenced Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology of fans to explain that different types of fans
could perceive marketing strategies negatively. These differences in perceptions could cause a
dissatisfaction from current loyal fans and, as such, the authors argued that marketers of sport
brands should consider how to target differences in markets when implementing marketing strategies (Bodet & Chanavat, 2009). Upon finding that there were mismatches between marketing and sport spectator crowds, Bouchet et al. (2011) concluded that managers should rethink the services they offer and “reconcile [their own] strategic vision with fans’ and spectators’ expectations” (p.50).

Unfortunately, although age was included as a measure in this study, the analysis largely ended there. The authors did not elaborate upon each age group’s intimate behaviours – but rather intimated that certain age brackets shared motives of consumption behaviour because of shared test-scores. This failed to properly and scrupulously enlighten us as to how and why (Yin, 2008) each age group behaved that way and if there were, in fact, differences within each age group. We could not completely understand why experiential fans behaved this way, nor could we know for sure if there were intricate differences in opinions or values within this segment. These intragroup differences could prove to be vitally important to marketers who may be missing key information on how to market to these consumers better. Moreover, existing initiatives based on sweeping consumer segmentations may be missing similar key information. These potentially unexplained behaviours provided an intrinsic interest to the study of spectator sport consumers, as there were unexplored antecedents to nominal sport consumption meriting further consideration (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

The current study thus aimed to contribute to sport consumer behaviour knowledge first theoretically, by better understanding sport consumption behaviour, and second practically, by finding ways in which to increase the success of organizational brand marketing strategies in a sport setting. Due to the significant gaps in the literature regarding further categorical investigations into specific segments of fan, Gen Z therefore provided an ideal topic that
warranted further investigation. As consumers, Gen Zers were anticipated to be different than their predecessors and could therefore demand completely different marketing tactics. It was thus timely and imperative that Gen Z be understood from both a sport consumption and marketing perspective (Slootweg & Rowson, 2018).
Chapter 3: Methodology

Given the limited scope of research to date on Gen Z, the current study explored the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport expressed by Gen Z and examined how the consumption behaviours of Gen Z were influenced to generate a better understanding of the antecedents to consuming sport. In so doing, the research addressed and answered two central research questions: (RQ1) what are the antecedents that motivate Gen Z toward nominal sport consumption? (RQ2) what are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Gen Z consumers? The study’s methods were intended to best address the limitations identified within the existing literature, and to answer the research questions constructed. The methodology followed an interpretivist approach, based on a constructivist framework. Data collection involved synchronous online focus group interviews which sought to understand the experiences of participants based on their interactions with others and the intersectionality of cultural and historical norms in Gen Z consumers’ lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From these interactions and participants’ shared experiences, the focus group sessions elicited a myriad of emergent themes and subthemes. These themes and the recurring patterns were then coded and analysed following a two-stage process of in vivo and axial coding, revealing several central motivators and inhibitors to traditional spectator sport consumption.

Research Paradigm

This study employed the use of a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm as it was the philosophical foundation that best fit the researcher’s beliefs, objectives, and knowledge. As a set of basic beliefs that guide action, interpretive frameworks are a necessary step in delineating the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivism is an interpretivist paradigm which adheres to a relativist position that assumes multiple realities exist and that meaning can be
learned from deep reflection (Ponterotto, 2005). While constructivism’s ontological belief is that realities are multiple and largely dependent on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions, it relies heavily on the views of participants and in the interactive processes between researcher and participants to create meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Edwards & Skinner, 2010). A primary aim of constructivist philosophy is to understand and create more informed and sophisticated knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As Patton (2015) argued, knowledge creation in qualitative research happens when researchers seek to understand a phenomenon and subsequently produce findings through investigations of real-world settings; a constructivist paradigm was therefore ideal for qualitative research seeking to understand the consumption behaviours of Gen Z.

Within sport management research, it is critical that the most appropriate paradigm is adopted to meet the needs of a study’s intent and be able to answer its research questions (Edwards & Skinner, 2010). An interpretive research paradigm is ideal for studies involving the exploration of sport consumption behaviour, particularly when the intent is to understand the meanings inherent in a participant’s experiences and perceptions (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009). Furthermore, the ideal method to understand the experiences of sports fans is often through an interpretivist paradigm (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009). As this study’s purpose was to understand Gen Z’s motivations to consume sport, constructivism therefore became an ideal paradigm as its interpretivist nature is meant to develop subjective meanings of experience from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By interpreting the meanings of participants’ contributions and making inferences about how Gen Z consumers experienced spectator sport, this research assisted in understanding the antecedents and inhibitors to Gen Z’s nominal sport consumption behaviours and how they were influenced to attend spectator sport entertainment.
Data Collection

Focus Groups

Previous studies of sport consumers and fans using an interpretivist paradigm have incorporated qualitative methods, including interviews, as a means of allowing participants to create and make meaning of their experiences (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009; Chanavat & Bodet, 2014; Hyatt, 2007; Hyatt & Foster, 2015; Yuksel et al., 2017). According to Merriam (2009), interviewing is necessary when we cannot immediately observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. Although the initial identification of Gen Z consumers is beneficial for categorizing different fans, it cannot intimately tell us about their feelings, behaviours, or perceptions. Therefore, interviewing Gen Z consumers became a necessary step in gaining an in-depth understanding of their specific desires and needs. When conducting intimate case studies of a few select individuals – Gen Z consumers in this case – interviewing is the best technique from which to gather data (Merriam, 2009). Interpretive qualitative interviews “have the power to capture the contextual complexities inherent in the processes that define phenomena” (Hyatt, 2007, p.41).

Qualitative interviews were therefore an ideal fit for this study for two reasons. First, they allowed for, and encouraged, the construction of meaning to be developed by participants. By allowing participants to share their experiences through their own views, patterns of behaviour were inductively interpreted from their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hyatt, 2007). Second, the interview process facilitated the use of qualitative data collection and analysis which fit with how the researcher of this study collected and analyzed data through a social constructivist paradigm.
Informed by this established precedent and methodological framework, the current study employed synchronous online focus group interviews as its principal method of data collection. Focus groups are useful when a researcher seeks to uncover factors that influence opinion, behaviour or motivation and can provide insight into the complexities of multifaceted behaviours (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Indeed, Patton (2015) noted that focus groups are ideal for market research studying consumer group processes of decision making and argued that they elicit “a variety of perspectives and increase confidence in whatever patterns emerge” (p.475). As the current study explored both the antecedents and inhibitors of motivation to consume sport expressed by the Gen Z consumer group (Krueger & Casey, 2009), focus groups were therefore ideal. Moreover, as this study followed a social constructivist paradigm and encouraged participants to play a large role in the research, focus groups became more logical due to their interactive nature. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that social constructivism adheres to open-ended questioning while addressing the processes of interaction among individuals “in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (p.26). Focus groups allowed ideas to emerge based on the interactions and conversations among participants which evoked a synergy that individuals alone would not have possessed (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Conducting online focus groups synchronously allowed for live discussions in which multiple participants participated at the same time (Rezabek, 2000). Organizing synchronous online focus group interviews was legitimized due to them embodying all the characteristics of a traditional focus group, including: an organized group discussion around a given topic; the discussion was monitored and guided; it was recorded by the researcher; and the explicit use of group interaction was used to produce data (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017; Stewart & Williams, 2005). Moreover, synchronous online focus groups have been successfully used in a priori
qualitative studies that have explored the perceptions of participants (Lally et al., 2018). There have also been several qualitative studies focused on sport that employed online focus groups into the methodology which explored motivational behaviours of participants (Lim et al., 2011; Ruihley & Hardin, 2011). The previous use of online focus groups increased the confidence of incorporating them into the current study’s methodology. Using Google Hangout as the videoconferencing platform was deemed an acceptable method of qualitative research and one that provided solid grounds for interactive, real-time communication using both audio and video (Nehls et al., 2015). Moreover, electronic devices with webcams were used by participants which allowed the researcher to pick up on nonverbal and social cues, adding to the depth of observable data (Nehls, et al., 2015). Facilitating online focus group sessions provided the researcher with several logistical advantages that included: low costs associated with organizing and conducting interviews; reaching a broad geographical scope that would have otherwise been extremely difficult; and providing a comfortable and convenient way of participating (Rezabek, 2000).

The focus groups undertaken followed a semi-structured format, in order to canvas respondents’ motivations, perceptions, and beliefs (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing in qualitative investigations is normally open-ended and less structured, yet when specific information is required from participants a more structured element is needed in the interviews (Merriam, 2009). Focus group interviews almost exclusively use open-ended questioning to allow participants to determine the direction of the response (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Indeed, in this qualitative study each interviewee was expected to have had unique experiences and the researcher subsequently aggregated these perceptions and knowledge from multiple respondents during data analysis (Stake, 1995).
However, to keep the discussion of focus groups on topic, questioning was sequenced such that participants could anchor their opinions and build off of their views (Krueger & Casey, 2009). As Kallio et al. (2016) indicated, there are certain prerequisites for determining when a semi-structured interview is appropriate as a rigorous data collection method. The first prerequisite is that the researcher must be able to determine some areas of the phenomenon based on previous knowledge before the interview (Kallio et al., 2016). The knowledge gained from a priori studies of sport consumption behaviour created a predetermined framework for the focus groups and established the substance of the research (Kallio et al., 2016). Secondly, semi-structured interviews are suitable for studying individual’s perceptions or when there are issues that participants are not used to discussing, such as values, intentions, and ideals (Kallio et al., 2016). Given the primary aim of the current study was to gain a greater understanding of the antecedents to nominal sport consumption amongst Gen Z consumers through an exploration of their values, intentions, and ideals, semi-structured focus groups were therefore an appropriate type of qualitative data collection to use in this study.

A large part of the current study’s focus groups was therefore guided by a list of sequenced questions, providing the researcher with the necessary prompts to generate information-rich data from all respondents. Although sequenced, questions remained open-ended which elicited in-depth conversation and allowed the participants to determine the direction of their response through their own unique worldview and emerging ideas (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, when it became necessary, the researcher utilized probing questions to have participants elaborate on important topics and clarify the meaning of unclear statements (Krueger & Casey, 2009). These probing questions were impromptu and based off of the responses of participants, hence the semi-structured nature of the focus groups.
An important distinction of focus groups is that their collaborative nature makes it difficult to ensure that participants’ confidentiality is completely guaranteed (Tolich, 2008). Indeed, using Google Hangout as the virtual space to conduct focus groups enabled participants to see the first names of whoever was speaking at any given moment. Therefore, because multiple participants were able to identify the names of their peers while they spoke, the confidentiality of participants in this study could not be completely guaranteed. However, confidentiality in the current study was promised externally; that is, the researcher did not identify any participant through the representation of data in the study (Tolich, 2008). Although real names were used within focus group discussion, the researcher reminded participants that their identities would not be divulged in any part of the study nor in any future publication. In this way, confidentiality was explained transparently to participants who were made aware of its parameters in the study and were therefore considered informed of their consent to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the researcher took great caution in the analysis of data to replace participants’ names with pseudonyms which eliminated the ability to connect data back to participants.

**Sampling Procedure**

In qualitative research, an appropriate sampling strategy to employ is non-probabilistic, or purposeful, meaning that the researcher seeks to discover, understand, and gain insight into a phenomenon and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling has the power to select information-rich cases for in-depth study which, in turn, allows the researcher to gain significant understanding about issues of central importance to the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). The initial phase of purposeful sampling involves establishing the specific criteria of the people, or sites, the
researcher wishes to study (Merriam, 2009). In line with past studies into Generation X and Y consumers, the study sought to canvas a cross-section of Gen Zers in early adulthood. The criteria specified for the current study’s focus group participants was as follows: individuals who were born in 1995 or later; were at least 18 years of age; and who were able to access a virtual platform on the Internet where the focus groups took place. These criteria were determined based upon logistical and ethical considerations and attempted to capture a broad sample.

Once the criterion-based selection had been established, the next phase in the process was to choose a type of purposeful sampling strategy to use. Participant recruitment utilized purposeful sampling and involved study recruitment posters (Appendix A) being placed around the City of Hamilton and modified recruitment posters (Appendix B) being distributed online through several social media channels. Purposeful sampling permits confidence in the sample generated and is also the most rigorous form of probability sampling from a population (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). This strategy added credibility to the current study by reducing any bias through equal distribution amongst the population (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The posters invited individuals aged 18 to 23, who identified as Gen Z, and who wished to discuss spectator sports to contact the researcher. Physical recruitment posters were displayed in public locations where potential participants could see them and learn about the details of the study at their own convenience. The locations in which the poster was distributed included spaces where Gen Z could be found spending leisure time and participating in various activities such as: local shopping malls; university and college campuses; and local coffee shops (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; 2017). Having the posters displayed in public places increased the exposure of the study to potential participants.
In attempting to identify a diverse and realistic sample for the focus groups, online recruitment posters (Appendix B) were also distributed which was effective for a variety of reasons. First, it took minimal time to construct and distribute online posters, and it took equally little time to post in online forums seeking willing participants (Ritter & Sue, 2007). Second, the wide reach of online channels increased confidence that the sample would be diverse, which minimized the effort spent in data collection and allowed the researcher to focus on maintaining rigor and trustworthiness (Ritter & Sue, 2007). Finally, Gen Z has a massive online presence and is extremely comfortable in the virtual world (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; 2017); members of Gen Z typically value online recommendations and are greatly influenced by the presence of online friends, which made the online recruitment posters highly effective (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; 2017). The researcher sought permission when necessary and followed established guidelines from the appropriate authorities to disseminate posters in both public and online spaces.

Online recruitment posters (Appendix B) were disseminated through two separate social media forums where Gen Z individuals frequently visit: Facebook and Twitter (Fromm & Read, 2018). Specifically, the poster was posted on university and college Facebook pages as most postsecondary students fall within the Gen Z demographic. Facebook has pages specifically dedicated to university and college programs and departments which consistently receive thousands of views and comments on posts. Twitter, meanwhile, has been used in a priori studies seeking to explore motivational differences in sport consumption and fan behaviour (Lamberti & Hyatt, 2018; Li et al., 2019). Distributing the posters on these platforms generated a good deal of interest from Gen Z consumers. Additionally, the online poster was posted on LinkedIn, a professional networking social media platform which furthered said interest. An incentive for participation was also included to generate interest and to ensure that the posters
did not go unnoticed within these sites. This incentive was expressed on the poster itself and in the letter inviting individuals to participate in the focus groups (Appendix C).

In keeping with the researcher’s goal of generating a diverse sample, it was important to document the sample’s diversity to ensure that the credibility of data was enhanced (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, once the researcher collected responses to the recruitment posters expressing interest in participation, individuals were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire (Appendix D). This was done so that the socio-economic statuses and demographic backgrounds of the sample were captured and could be used in data analysis. Participants were asked to self-identify across seven demographic indicators: gender, age, level of education, occupation, marital status, race, and place of residence (Patten, 2014). Because the researcher did not include place of residence on the questionnaire, this question was posed to participants separately, once they had returned the questionnaire. In asking for this information, participants were assured that it would be kept strictly confidential in order to protect the identities and confidentiality of respondents.

Upon the respondents’ completion of the demographic questionnaire, an invitation email was sent (see Appendix C) which contained greater detail about the study’s intent and methods, including a formal invitation to participate, as well as an informed consent form (see Appendix E) for their completion. Prospective participants were invited to select one of three scheduled online focus group sessions via Doodle poll, in order to allow flexibility for respondents’ schedules and availability. Additionally, participants were informed that the focus groups would take place virtually and were asked whether they would have access to the Internet and the Google Hangout platform. Once it was confirmed that participants were okay to participate virtually and that they would be able to access Google Hangout, the researcher sent the
appropriate link which would later be used to access the videoconference room. The researcher then sent an appointment email to each of the individuals, as well as a reminder email 48 hours before the focus groups which confirmed their attendance.

The recruitment phase of the current study included an incentive to participate with the intent that it would help the researcher reach data saturation. Ethically, including an incentive to increase participation was not coercive as participants acknowledged their informed consent and accepted the risks of participation (Singer & Couper, 2008). All participants signed and completed the informed consent form, thereby acknowledging and accepting the potential risks of participation. Incentives have been consistently found to increase cooperation and participation among individuals participating in a research study (Singer & Ye, 2013). The incentive used in the current study was a lottery-based prize draw (Singer & Ye, 2013) and conditional on the individual completion of participation. The incentive included in this study increased interest to participate and assisted in reaching a theoretically saturated sample (Singer & Ye, 2013).

**Final Sample and Saturation**

Saturation of the data is the point when collecting new data would produce irrelevant information or the point when any further data collection yields information which is neither new nor different from previous data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within studies using focus groups, data saturation is usually reached after three or four interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2009). According to Krueger and Casey (2009), “…the accepted rule of thumb is to plan three or four focus groups with each type of category or individual” (p.21). However, the realities of time and budget are important considerations in the construction of focus groups and the number of interviews should reflect the amount of resources that the researcher has (Krueger & Casey,
Thus, for the purposes of the current study, the researcher conducted three focus group interviews. In determining the number of participants in each focus group, Patton (2015) argued that the norm is for 6 to 10 people to be interviewed which will generate “…a variety of perspectives and increase confidence in whatever patterns emerge” (p.475).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argued that within studies using interpretive interviews, approximately 15 participants is the ideal sample from which to generate data saturation. Any number greater than 15 leads toward the law of diminishing returns, or when there are no new themes emerging from the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In keeping these guidelines in mind for the present research, an averaged target sample was determined (n=17), which ensured that data saturation was achieved. This was consistent with previous studies examining various sport topics which had used focus group interviews as the primary method of data collection (Davis & Duncan, 2006; Jones et al., 2007; Vescio et al., 2005). These studies used between one and three focus group interviews and between 3 and 24 participants per study. The final sample was composed of participants who responded to the posters through various channels. There were six individuals who responded through Facebook, five who responded through LinkedIn, two who responded via Twitter, one who responded to a physical poster via email, and three who were word-of-mouth referrals (see Appendix I).

Focus Group Tools & Materials

As an interviewer, one of the most crucial aspects of conducting a successful interview is establishing a rapport with interviewees (Patton, 2015). Within focus groups, this element is enhanced, as the interviewer must be able to navigate the nuances of group interaction while maintaining unwavering respect for all participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). From the beginning, the focus groups made participants feel welcome, comfortable, and at ease (Krueger
A friendly environment was established by engaging in pleasant small talk before the focus groups and having everything set up beforehand (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The researcher actively employed these rapport-building strategies to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and respected.

Furthermore, Patton (2015) noted that focus group interviewers are frequently referred to as the ‘moderator’ because of the collective nature of a focus group which emphasizes collaboration and “group discussion where the conversation flows because of the nurturing of the moderator” (p.477). Due to the number of people involved in a focus group session it can be difficult for the moderator to balance everything; it was therefore decided that the researcher establish a team composed of a moderator and an assistant moderator (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 2015). The researcher of the current study employed an assistant moderator during the focus groups and had them assist in preparation, administration, and data collection quality. The moderator’s primary role was to lead and maintain the discussion, while the assistant was there to support with the audio recorder, logistics, unexpected interruptions, and note-taking (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The notes that the assistant took during focus groups were extremely useful and assisted during the transcription process (Patton, 2015). Importantly, a main task of the assistant moderator was to take detailed notes about the order of speakers, so that it was clear who was speaking during the transcription process afterwards (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). The assistant moderator also completed and signed a non-disclosure agreement to further protect the confidentiality of the participants.

To ensure high quality of data, an interview guide (Appendix F) was used by the researcher to maintain consistency during focus groups. Kruger and Casey (2009) suggested that the beginning of a focus group interview and the opening question are crucial for success. The
interview guide contained opening remarks which reiterated participant confidentiality and encouraged unabated contribution. It also contained an opening question that the researcher used to break the ice which involved everyone in the conversation early (Krueger & Casey, 2009). As it was established that the focus groups in the current study were of semi-structured format, the interview guide served as a tool to help keep conversations relevant to the topic. In fact, Patton (2015) argued that an interview guide is “essential in conducting focus group interviews for it keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge” (p.439). An interview guide aligned well with the social constructivist paradigm of the current study, as the researcher used the guide to develop questions, sequence questions, and decide which information to pursue in greater depth as patterns and themes emerged from within the conversations and processes of interaction (Patton, 2015).

Completed informed consent forms are necessary before interviews take place in any qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, before the focus groups took place, each participant completed the informed consent form (Appendix E) which clearly communicated the individual’s rights as a participant. Having been emailed the informed consent forms, it was mandatory that each participant complete and return a form before meeting for the focus groups. Each one of the participants completed, signed, and returned an informed consent form before the focus groups took place. The informed consent forms communicated that participation in the study was voluntary, that each participant had the right to withdraw at any time, and that the privacy and confidentiality of each participant was of the utmost importance and would be ensured (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were also informed that the focus groups would be recorded and that the subsequent data may be used in analysis or future publication. Focus groups did not commence until each participant had finished and returned their forms via email.
Because of the pre-determined sample criterion that individuals must be at least 18 years of age, consent from a third-party was not required.

Focus groups were conducted online through a Google Hangout virtual videoconference that provided both audio and visual communication. Before the focus groups were conducted, the researcher confirmed with participants that they would be able to access Google Hangout; each one of the participants informed the researcher that they had access to the site. Because Google Hangout is a complimentary and universally accessible platform, the researcher did not need to seek permission to conduct research on this site (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because of technological advancements and the high-quality of Google Hangout’s videoconferencing, the audio and visual conditions were comparable to that of in-person, face-to-face focus groups (Nehls et al., 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). In keeping with ideal focus group etiquette, both the researcher and the assistant moderator consistently facilitated a professional and friendly environment which allowed conversation to flow naturally and freely (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest et al., 2013).

For the purposes of data collection and transcription, the focus groups were digitally recorded on an audio device. Digital recording devices were essential to a high-quality qualitative investigation as they did not “tune out” conversations, change what was said because of interpretation (either conscious or unconscious), or record words more slowly than they were spoken (Patton, 2015, p.472). In order to protect the data from any human error or technological malfunction, a second digital recording device was used to capture the voices of all parties clearly and accurately in all focus groups (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The quality of the audio was important considering that each focus group was digitally recorded and transcribed following its conclusion, making it extremely important that the audio devices were positioned
so that the conversation was clearly captured. Therefore, the researcher and assistant moderator ensured that each device was strategically placed to be able to record the entire focus group session clearly.

As previously noted, in designing the interview guide, questions were constructed with a view to uncover and explore the antecedents and inhibitors of nominal sport consumption of Gen Z consumers. Each focus group session lasted approximately one and a half hours and included a semi-structured format of open-ended questions, probing questions, and sequential questions from the interview guide (Appendix F) that explored specific issues in further detail (Merriam, 2009). During the focus groups, the discussion was focused on the experiences and stories of participants (Kruger & Casey, 2009). The focus groups were efficient in collecting participants’ perspectives of their own world and provided the researcher with the means to understand their perspectives (Patton, 2015). The researcher elicited depth on the topic of interest by building rapport with the interviewees and effectively steering the conversation toward areas relevant to the research objectives (Guest et al., 2013). The focus groups therefore allowed the researcher to focus on how participants interpreted the world around them and the processes of interaction. In keeping with social constructivist philosophy, open-ended questioning was used which encouraged significant sharing of ideas, beliefs, and experiences (Guest et al., 2013). However, it was important to keep the conversation consistent and of good quality, so the researcher referred to the interview guide (Appendix F) when supplemental questions were needed.

In interpretive interviews, not all questions are scripted or taken from a guide and it is important to use probing follow-up questions to elaborate on shorter answers (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Indeed, Guest et al. (2013) noted that the most defining feature of in-depth interviews was utilizing probing questions to generate richness within
responses. Thus, the researcher applied a process of inductive probing in each focus group; as interviewees responded to questions, follow-up probing questions were asked, when appropriate. Probes were an important element of conducting an effective semi-structured interview and assisted in extrapolating important data within and between questions (Merriam, 2009). Probing questions allowed the researcher to draw out more information by encouraging further insight; after these questions were asked, participants elaborated on an issue or on something which they had indicated was important but did not discuss in depth (Ryan et al., 2009).

Aside from semi-structured and probing interview questions, to conduct an effective focus group the moderator also relied on moderating technique. The moderator listened for markers that implied an important direction to explore further, provided verbal and non-verbal support and feedback (such as head-nodding), controlled the focus group’s timing and consistency, and maintained a friendly manner and sense of humour when appropriate (such as smiling) to facilitate rapport (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 2015). Equally as important for an effective focus group was for the moderator to record observations of non-verbal cues from participants, such as body language (Patton, 2015). Although the focus groups were digitally recorded to ensure that nothing was missed by the researcher and that all the data was saved for analysis, non-verbal cues expressed important meaning which were not captured on the audio recording device, so it was essential to mark these down as recorded observations. The researcher tasked the assistant moderator with taking diligent notes both during and immediately following the focus groups, allowing for the expedient recording of interviewees’ responses whilst ensuring not to interrupt the discussion (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). These notes included comments on the interviewees’ language (such as key phrases and terms) and on the interviewees’ body language and expressive gestures. The moderator also took small,
unobtrusive notes during the focus groups which indicated to the interviewees that what they were saying was important and helped the moderator formulate new questions as they became relevant to the conversation (Patton, 2015). Focus groups were not video or visually recorded in order to help ensure the confidentiality of participants.

The researcher also took field notes throughout the entire data collection process from the time that recruitment posters were sent out until data analysis was completed. Field notes were used extensively in the current research and were an integral part of collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, the field notes were descriptions of observations made by the researcher and were critical in helping understand interactions, settings, and situating the analysis within the context of the research (Patton, 2015). These notes ensured a richness of data and were used in a variety of ways including: documenting direct quotations and what people said; recording the researcher’s own feelings, reactions, and personal reflections on what was observed; and noting the initial interpretations, analyses, and insights about what was happening during data collection (Patton, 2015). The researcher took field notes during communications with potential participants during the recruitment process, formal and informal conversations with participants before, during, and after the focus groups, and the data analysis process. Importantly, field notes were used to maintain the researcher’s positionality within the study and for critical analysis into his role in the focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The moderator began the focus group sessions with open-ended questions. Open-ended questioning gave participants control in determining the direction of responses and revealed what was on their mind as opposed to what the moderator suspected was on their mind (Krueger & Casey, 2009). With this type of questioning, the researcher ensured that he did not lead the responses and was therefore able to extract the true contextual meanings behind participant’s
experiences and perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2015). Specifically, question two of the interview guide (Appendix F) asked participants an open-ended question about their favourite sport memory, “Describe to me your favourite sports memory.” This allowed participants the opportunity to describe in detail their favourite sport-related memory based on their past experiences. Truly open-ended questions provided interviewees the control to say whatever dimensions, themes, and words they wanted to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Patton, 2015). With this in mind, the questions in the interview guide (Appendix F) were crafted specifically to elicit thorough and richly descriptive responses by allowing participants to choose whichever response was most salient to them.

Additionally, each question in the interview guide (Appendix F) adapted one of the variables (psychological identification, level of consumption, and personal values) presented in Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) study, which was important for several reasons. First, it maintained consistency in trying to develop new and insightful knowledge relevant to sport consumption behaviour literature. Second, it allowed for these variables to be explored in an in-depth, personalized manner which allowed for greater insight into Gen Z consumers’ behaviour, thereby generating a deeper understanding. Third, it enabled the researcher to work toward addressing the central research questions of the current study. This predetermined guide did not dictate the conversation, as the participants were encouraged to carry the focus group but was used intermittently to increase the richness and depth of responses (Patton, 2015).

Questions one through three considered the psychological elements of Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology, in an effort to gain a greater understanding of the sensory reasons why Gen Zers would or would not consume traditional spectator sport. By considering the emotional and sensational aspects of sport, these questions generated a greater understanding as to what
sensations Gen Z consumers seek from spectator sport. In particular, question one explored any potential psychological inhibitors to consuming spectator sport by asking participants to describe spectator sport’s place within their lives, thereby highlighting why Gen Zers did or did not associate themselves with spectator sports. Meanwhile, question three explored the various feelings generated through the participants’ consumption of advertisements. Specifically, this question canvased the psychological responses elicited by spectator sport advertisements and what made an effective ad. Questions four through six incorporated the second half of Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology, which considered consumption behaviours. These three questions considered financial motivators, while also encouraging the interviewees to consider ways in which the costs of spectator sports and/or entertainment influenced their consumption decisions. These questions were also meant to shed light on the financial inhibitors potentially influencing Gen Zers’ consumption of spectator sport. Questions seven and eight examined what Gen Z consumers valued most about spectator sport. Obtaining first-hand perceptions outlining the value of spectator sports shed light on the antecedents to nominal sport consumption and offered insight into what motivators and inhibitors were most important to Gen Z. Specifically, question eight gave hypothetical control to the interviewees by asking what they would change, given the chance, to improve the experience of sport fans. The answers to this question proved invaluable in generating insight into the expectations of Gen Z consumers, and thus, how to better market spectator sport entertainment to them.

**Data Analysis**

Once all the focus groups were conducted, the recordings were transcribed verbatim (Merriam, 2009). Using inductive interpretation, analysis was based on patterns and themes that the researcher identified from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pseudonyms were assigned to
all participants and utilized throughout the analysis to protect the identities of the participants as well as to organize the final transcripts (Merriam, 2009). During the transcription process, the researcher ensured that the transcript’s format was tailored to enable analysis by listing confidential identifying information at the beginning, adding line numbering down the left-hand side, leaving room on the margins for notes, codes, and thoughts, and double spacing between speakers (Merriam, 2009). For the sake of organization, code files were stored within Microsoft Excel and continually updated as themes continued to emerge in both cycles of coding. All data files were securely stored on a password protected computer.

The collected data was then analyzed and interpreted by the primary researcher using an inductive approach. Inductively interpreting the data assisted in the identification and the organization of subthemes and subsequent, emergent central themes. This was conducive to the present study’s research design which intended to elicit meaning from the themes presented through participants’ experiences (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). An initial theme was constructed if a similar notion, idea, or feeling was shared across all three focus groups and discussed by several participants. From these initial themes, the researcher was able to inductively interpret factors that influenced consumer behaviour by comparing and analyzing similarities across the participants’ experiences and perceptions (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The central themes were constructed through a process of inductive inferencing about the reoccurring regularities and overlap between important subthemes; their parallels indicated an intrinsic interrelationship in how they explained the same experience or phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

**Coding**

Initially, the completed transcripts were analyzed thematically by focusing on key words and recurring patterns (Merriam, 2009). In attempting to be as thorough as possible, the
researcher employed an initial process of coding involving the completed transcripts. This included the steps laid out by Merriam (2009) in noting recurring key words, phrases, and ideas in the margins of the transcripts. In any case that there were repeated terms, words, behaviours, or language, this was noted down in the margins of the transcript so as to be able to track and identify shared patterns. By assigning codes (such as descriptive words or identifiable characteristics) to transcripts, the researcher constructed initial themes by grouping together segments of data which shared similar codes or seemed to fit together (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Once the transcripts were coded in this way three separate times, the researcher transferred the coded passages into a final codebook so that a more thorough and intimate coding procedure could be undertaken. Not only did this strategy assist with the organization of initial codes, but it was also extremely beneficial for the researcher to become familiar and feel more confident with the coding process.

Having conducted this preliminary open coding, the researcher was well prepared for a more intensive coding process. Taking what had been discovered from the initial coding of transcriptions, the researcher immersed himself in the data while looking to identify and expand upon shared patterns and correlations across the participants’ contributions. Following the coding framework set forth by Miles et al. (2014) the researcher employed a two-stage process of First and Second Cycle coding. In the First Cycle of coding, the in vivo coding method was used to highlight key words or short phrases from the participants’ own language as initial codes (Miles et al., 2014). Words or phrases that were used frequently or repeatedly by participants often pointed to recurring regularities and shared patterns across groups (Miles et al., 2014). These shared patterns, or ‘themes,’ were constructed by identifying units of data, or small bits of
information, which were compared with one another to highlight recurring regularities in the data (Merriam, 2009).

By drawing from the initial coding of transcriptions, and in using the final codebook for transferring of data, the researcher organized First Cycle coding under an ‘umbrella’ scheme to represent developing overarching themes in a hierarchical manner (Davis & Myer, 2008). For example, one of the ‘umbrella’ terms identified as important was ‘money’ which had an array of closely related terms such as ‘price,’ ‘expensive,’ and ‘dollars.’ These related terms were placed beneath the umbrella term; ‘money’ became an initial theme which was able to encapsulate related words and language that shared important meanings and relations in and across the collected data. A second ‘umbrella’ term identified was ‘saving’ which captured a multitude of related terms, such as ‘deal,’ ‘sale,’ and ‘free.’ Upon completion of the First Cycle, there were approximately 27 ‘umbrella’ terms, or codes, identified which was an appropriate number for the First Cycle (Merriam, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). This method of in vivo coding was appropriate for use in this qualitative study and was particularly useful for the novice expertise of the researcher.

After the First Cycle, which initially summarized segments of the data through open coding, a Second Cycle of pattern coding was used to group these summaries into a smaller number of core themes (Miles et al., 2014). Pulling together material from First Cycle coding, Second Cycle involved axial coding which generated codes that were explanatory and more meaningful (Miles et al., 2014). Again, the final codebook was used to transfer and organize selected and important data into a new sheet. Through refining the data and unifying axial coding results, pattern codes were identified from repeatedly observed behaviours and relationships, and from within local meanings and explanations (Miles et al., 2014). Within the Second Cycle, the
researcher coded based on relationships between the ‘umbrella’ terms identified in the First Cycle; when it became evident that there was an inherent connection between two or more of the umbrellas, this data was combined and brought into the Second Cycle as a singular code or ‘theme.’

For instance, there was a clear link between the terms ‘money’ and ‘saving’ and, upon intimately parsing through related terms and examining how their meanings explained the behaviours of participants, it was determined that ‘affordability’ was a significant overarching theme. The nuances of participants’ contributions and how their words shared meaning in explaining similar experiences was identified within this Second Cycle and from cross analyzing the initial codes generated in the First Cycle. This cross analysis of First Cycle codes led to the identification of a smaller number of central themes which were able to meaningfully capture the relationships within the data and explain the behaviours of participants. Of the five core themes that were identified, each had several important subthemes. For example, ‘affordability’ was identified as a core theme but, importantly, ‘outpriced and outclassed,’ ‘budgeting for the essentials,’ and ‘hopelessness’ were all determined to hold significant meaning and explanatory power for why ‘affordability’ was so important and were therefore classified as subthemes.

The central codes identified were eventually used to make inferences about the data collected and within procedures of analysis (Miles et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, the pattern codes generated by Second Cycle coding were used to analyze the data in a narrative description. Narrative description of codes allowed the researcher to outline the plots of human activity and how participants interpreted their surroundings and discussed their experiences throughout the course of the study (Miles et al., 2014). Moreover, the central themes and related subthemes were analyzed to identify important relationships across the data which worked
toward explaining the motivations of Gen Z consumers. Once it was put into practice, the coding method detailed above emphasized the experiences of participants and how they constructed meaning from these experiences, which followed social constructivist philosophy and interpretive methodology. Shared patterns across focus groups, and causal links between the respondents’ answers, helped to make inferences about the experiences of the interviewees and how they interpreted the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the current study sought to analyze and understand the behaviours and perceptions of Gen Z consumers, narrative description of codes was thus well-suited for this study.

**Data Representation and Trustworthiness**

The researcher represented the data in the study’s analysis using direct quotations from the participants and key words from transcription. In connecting the data with emergent themes, using direct quotations was an ideal way of supporting the report’s analysis without deconstructing the participants’ experience or contributions (Thomas, 2003). Within qualitative research, data should be represented using direct interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Following social constructivist philosophy, the intent was to minimize the role of the researcher, while drawing analysis almost exclusively from the perceptions and experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using direct quotations, the emphasis was thus placed on the participants’ experiences and the interactive processes in which they shared their thoughts and beliefs.

Using direct quotations to represent the data ensured that the participants’ voices were not delegitimized by the researcher’s interpretations and ensured that the credibility of the data was legitimate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using appropriate quotations to convey core themes was a trusted part of the data analysis in this inductive qualitative research (Thomas, 2003).
Direct quotations were used in the writing of the data which illustrated the meanings of themes and added detail and richness to the representation of the findings (Thomas, 2003). Although direct quotations were a trustworthy method of representing the data, the researcher had to be wary of how they could have jeopardized participant confidentiality (Oliver et al., 2005). Thus, the researcher ensured to only use quotations that did not directly harm participant confidentiality, or which contained identifying information. In addition, only pseudonyms were used, when deemed appropriate, to represent the data.

To ensure rigour and trustworthiness of the data, member checking was employed. Member checking was used to determine whether the data collected from participants was credible and, based on the participants’ authentication, whether it was trustworthy (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This process was crucial for the integrity of this study’s data by checking the factual accuracy of data by inviting informants to approve the researcher’s collected data (Iivari, 2018; Merriam, 2009). Based on the interpretive nature of this study, member checking was necessary because it allowed participants to approve whether the researcher correctly reconstructed their realities and interpreted their words (Iivari, 2018).

Once the focus groups had been successfully transcribed, an individualized transcript and a thank you letter (Appendix G) was sent to each participant electronically. Each participant reviewed the transcript and confirmed that the researcher had accurately transcribed the focus group and conveyed the appropriate wording. Each participant verified their own words and meanings, ultimately expressing confidence that their confidentiality would be upheld. Involving informants for their feedback at this stage allowed participants to validate that what they stated during a focus group matched what they intended to mean (Merriam, 2009). This technique
allowed participants to assess the accuracy of the data which, when confirmed by the informants, enhanced the data’s credibility (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Another crucial element in maintaining the trustworthiness of this research study was in protecting participants from harm, which was achieved through guaranteeing participants of their confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009). Confidentiality required data collection to be completed without compromising the identities of participants and the guarantee of confidentiality for all those involved in the study (Kaiser, 2009). An important element of confidentiality was that the participant’s identity was not able to be deduced from the information and, as such, personal identifiers such as names were omitted (Kaiser, 2009). For the purposes of this study, all participants’ names were replaced with pseudonyms including within the research design, focus group transcripts, both cycles of coding, the data analysis process, and any potential future publications – this was also stressed to participants within the thank you letter (Appendix G) and Informed Consent form (Appendix D). Discussing confidentiality at the outset of data collection was necessary for acquiring informed consent (Kaiser, 2009) and the current study stressed confidentiality within each document seen by participants (Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and G).

Considering that the current study collected a significant amount of data, a critical phase in ensuring participant confidentiality was data storage. The data collected from the focus groups was stored electronically on a password protected computer and only the primary investigator of this study was privy to the password. Data was also backed up and uploaded to a secondary copy which was also password protected (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Additionally, the digital audio recordings collected from the focus groups were erased once transcription had been completed. A master copy of the focus group transcriptions and the subsequent physical copies were placed in a filing cabinet under lock and key. Once the processes of coding and analysis
had been completed, both the electronic and physical copies of the transcription were destroyed. It was of the utmost importance that the identities of participants be protected, and the researcher of the current study ensured that confidentiality was achieved by adhering to the ethical principles of data storage and security (Kaiser, 2009).

Moreover, in ensuring the study’s trustworthiness and reliability, the positionality of the researcher was considered and made explicit (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity was therefore used by the researcher himself to engage in the self-understanding and identification of biases, values, and experiences that he brought to this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A researcher must actively and reflexively indicate how a connection to the phenomenon under study may influence analysis. The researcher of this study is himself a fan of many spectator sports, spending many evenings watching hockey and basketball on television and frequently attending live matches, and therefore has previous experience interacting in the specific historical and local times and places that Gen Z consumers may have interacted with regarding their levels of spectator sport consumption. Moreover, the researcher currently works within the professional spectator sport industry and is therefore aware of the inherent value of selling tickets and inspiring consumers to attend matches. Additionally, the researcher of this study has two younger brothers who, being born after 1995, are both considered to be part of Gen Z. The connection the researcher shares with spectator sports, and with Gen Z consumers more generally, clearly denoted a bias in the values and beliefs held by the researcher as they related to spectator sport consumption. However, as Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated, the writing of qualitative research cannot be separated from the author as all writing is, in fact, positioned – the best writing therefore acknowledges its position candidly and situates itself within the historical and the local.
The researcher of this study utilized a reflexive technique during the research process by reflexively observing and memoing during data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This ensured that the researcher was continually positioning himself into the research process and that he remained self-conscious about how these experiences could have shaped the findings, conclusions, and interpretations. Making perspectives, assumptions, and potential biases clear to the reader was important because it allowed for a greater understanding of how these experiences may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study (Merriam, 2009). This technique of outlining the researcher’s position allowed for what Merriam (2009) cited as crucial for the integrity of qualitative research, as it “allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (p.219). In outlining his connection to spectator sports and to Gen Z consumers more generally, the researcher of this study was hopeful that readers developed a greater understanding of how these experiences may have influenced both the design and the process of conducting this research. Moreover, the researcher of this study was hopeful that including a candid statement about his perspective and potential biases contributed to the study’s integrity and transparency.

**Methodological Conclusions**

The study’s methods, as outlined above, were designed to explore the antecedents to consuming spectator sport by focusing on Gen Z consumers, seeking to address two central research questions: (RQ1) what are the antecedents that motivate Gen Z toward nominal sport consumption? (RQ2) what are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Gen Z consumers? An interpretive, qualitative methodology was adopted, specifically targeting Gen Z consumers, providing the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the experiences and desires among a segment of consumers (Gen Z) who were harbouring previously unexplored
consumption behaviours and preferences. The resultant findings offer new insight into Gen Zers’ motivations and inhibitors to sport consumption.
Chapter 4: Results

The intent of this research was to better understand Gen Z consumers’ motivators and inhibitors for nominal consumption of traditional spectator sports. In so doing, the researcher sought to answer two central research questions:

1. What are the antecedents that motivate Generation Z toward nominal sport consumption?
2. What are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Generation Z consumers?

Through analysing the collected data, there was a clear tendency in participants’ responses to discuss the consumption of spectator sports analogously with physically attending sporting events live and in person. This tendency revealed that participants expressly viewed the consumption of spectator sports to be synonymous with attending live matches. Thus, in exploring the focus group data for motivators and inhibitors to sport consumption, five central themes were identified by the researcher which were specifically allied to respondents’ perceptions of, and experiences with, attending live spectator sport. The five central themes were divided across motivations and inhibitors, resulting in three central themes describing consumers’ motives, and two central themes framing inhibitors of Gen Z’s consumption of live spectator sport events, each of which contained several subthemes. These themes arose organically throughout the focus group sessions and in discussions with participants. A breakdown of the central themes and their subthemes is presented below in Table 1:
Table 1: Central Themes and Subthemes

Intragroup Differences

As stated earlier, previous typologies of sport consumers have not thoroughly isolated and analyzed specific consumer subtypes and are largely ineffective in showing us the true complexity of each segment’s desires and needs. Thus, the present research sought to address these theoretical limitations by examining Gen Z consumers in a traditional spectator sport setting and by expanding the knowledge of consumption behaviours through an analysis of Gen Z as a specific subtype of sport consumer. From the findings, it was evident that, although many of the participants shared similar ideas, values, and experiences, there were clear intragroup differences. For a detailed breakdown and better understanding of how the seventeen participants differed, please refer to Appendices H and I which provide brief descriptions of each participant and their contributions.

In total, there were 10 males and 7 females that participated in this study, which gave a fairly representative perspective from both genders. Generally, there were consistencies within
the data across gender that led to the development of the study’s themes and assisted in answering the central research questions. However, upon a thorough analysis of the data, there were differences found in how female and male participants interpreted their environments and made meaning of their experiences. Very early in the first focus group, one participant spoke about the effectiveness of targeted advertising and detailed the differences in efficacy based on gender:

I feel like it depends what you’re watching or what you’re listening to because a lot of ads are obviously targeted so, if a young girl or woman was watching TSN, she’s not going to be interested in a Bauer hockey stick commercial, whereas if a young guy who’s in his early twenties was watching the Kardashians and then a commercial came on for a Sephora makeup thing, he’s obviously not going to be interested in it.

This overt assertion by a participant led the researcher to search the data for gendered differences, of which there were several. In discussing what would entice participants to attend a live spectator sporting event, four females (Charlotte, Emily, Harper, and Sylvia) indicated friends as the most important factor, while only two males (Dante and Thomas) answered the same. Meanwhile, three males (Edgar, Oscar, and William) included an intriguing storyline, such as a rivalry, in what would entice them to attend, while zero females responded in this way.

During each of the focus groups, participants were asked to describe their own generation using a single word. There was a noticeable difference in how females responded compared to males. A majority of females responded using negative words such as ‘needy’ (Virginia), ‘materialistic’ (Sappho), and ‘consumed’ (Maya). Alternatively, a majority of the male participants used positive words to describe their own generation, such as ‘unique’ (Oscar), connected’ (Walt), and ‘outspoken’ (Edgar). Female participants seemed to have a more sinister
outlook on their generation’s prospects compared to their male counterparts who exhibited an acceptance and reverence towards their peers.

When asked about what they would change to make spectator sports more appealing to Gen Z, although there was some overlap, such as with cheaper prices, there were differences in how female participants responded compared to males. Whereas female participants were more inclined to focus on changes to the fan experience by increasing awareness and involvement using trends (Charlotte), celebrities (Harper), and aesthetics like fireworks (Sylvia and Virginia), male participants were generally more concerned with innovation to the sport (Roald) and introducing new ideas and elements into the overall experience (Dante, Ernest, and Oscar). It was also apparent that female participants seemed to be more concerned with sustainability than their male counterparts. In total, only one male participant (Oscar) discussed the environment and being concerned with environmentally friendly ideology, with the discussion being relatively brief. Comparatively, five female participants (Charlotte, Emily, Harper, Maya, and Virginia) discussed their concerns over the sustainability of the environment and several of them threaded these concerns into complex narratives about their purchasing intent and incorporating ethical values into company-led initiatives.

Although there was not a significant discrepancy in age, given that participants had to be of a certain age to be considered a part of Gen Z, there were differences in how participants responded to certain questions according to their general life stage. In the context of this study, life stage is defined as, “states that characterize human development and aging, and derive from various aging processes and experiences” (Moschis, 1996, p.15). Thus, based on the different experiences that participants had gone through up until this point in their lives, they were influenced in how they responded to certain realities.
Nowhere was a difference in life stage clearer than in the participants’ status of employment. When asked to think about what would motivate them to attend a spectator sporting event, four of the five unemployed participants mentioned different reasons including: rivalries between teams (William); experiencing something new (Pablo); and affordability (Walt). Conversely, nine of the twelve participants who were employed listed off reasons pertaining to escaping their daily lives including: spending quality time with friends (Charlotte, Sylvia, and Thomas); drinking alcoholic beverages (Dante, Edgar, and Emily); being excited or entertained (Sappho and Virginia); and, in the case of one participant, pure escape (Harper). Participants without a job, meanwhile, did not seek these aids from spectator sport and, instead of seeing sport as a vehicle to attain internal, psychological benefits, viewed it as a means to pass the time.

It was also evident that the financial discrepancies between the participants, caused by their variations in life stage, was influencing the ways in which they responded. Of the five participants who reported being unemployed, three said that they would make prices cheaper to make spectator sports more appealing to Gen Z (Maya, Pablo, and Walt), while only one of twelve employed participants mentioned this as a desirable change (Sappho). Clearly, this relates to the financial well-being of participants and their levels of disposable income. Those who were unemployed felt prices more dearly than participants who had employment. Consequently, cost and affordability were a greater concern for those who did not have a job.

Similarly, throughout each focus group, participants who were currently enrolled in college consistently lamented their lack of financial freedom as students. With tuition, rent, student loans, and other school-related expenses, participants who were active students claimed that they were unable to afford attending live spectator sports. Several participants directly blamed their low disposable income for entertainment on being students (Dante, Ernest, Walt,
and William), citing that there was no room in their budget for extracurriculars. On the contrary, participants who had graduated from college were less constrained by their budgets and did not show the same level of concern over spending money. Although many of the participants showed a negative attitude towards high prices, many of the graduated participants were more inclined to discuss purchasing tickets, the influence of promotions, and other sport-related merchandise.

Motivators for Sport Consumption

Despite these intragroup differences, a number of important themes nevertheless were extrapolated from the focus group data which provided insight into the perceived motivators and inhibitors to sport consumption amongst Gen Z members.

Socialization

To begin, RQ1 sought to explore Gen Z consumers’ motivations to consume spectator sport. Throughout the focus group sessions, a number of dominant themes and narratives led the discussions, which were further borne out through the coding procedures undertaken. Most prominent amongst those motivators identified were the opportunities presented by sport for socialization amongst peers and friend. The focus group discussions revealed that participants were keen on social interaction and were particularly motivated to consume traditional spectator sport because of the social benefits it could offer. Indeed, when prompted to think about what they valued most from entertainment, Dante stated, “I think the people who you’re there with is the most important because I don’t think entertainment would be entertaining without other people around… Entertainment is not fun if you’re alone.” The ability to socialize with friends was often referenced by participants as a motive to consume a traditional spectator sporting event. Participants were significantly social, and the ability to include friends in their experiences was critically important to them.
Central to this socialization, an overwhelming majority of participants made mention of the important role played by friends throughout the discussions, and the potential for shared experiences and engagement facilitated by sport. Thomas, for example, emphasized the importance of friends as a motive to attend a spectator sporting event, even more so than the sport itself:

I find that I go usually to Jays games, even though they’re definitely not my favourite team and baseball’s not my favourite sport, but literally just because of the ability to go to the game and hang out with your friends for whatever, four hours. I mean, probably watch less than half the game, but just kind of go have a good time with your friends… those are the events that I’m going to go to.

In one instance, Edgar commented on his generation’s culture:

It’s a part of the culture with the whole social aspect now… if you go to see a Blue Jays game with your grandparents, they’re just watching the game talking about how the pitcher takes his stride. If you go with your buddies, you’re maybe scoping out a girl four rows away, something like that. It’s a bit different… definitely a generational thing.

As part of the culture, it was evident that socialization was a priority and motivated participants to attend live matches. The social nature of spectator sport was an attractive feature for participants and drove their interest in consuming matches. Indeed, Maya indicated that the socialization provided by sport was the one reason she even had an interest in spectator sport:

Now sports [are] more like a social thing. So, it’s a good excuse to get together with friends and bond over something or celebrate something so, I think, in that sense my interest in sports has sort of peaked in the last few years. Purely for the social reasons and that’s why I’m genuinely interested in sport.
This ability to involve friends in an experience was so integral that many participants expressed an indifference toward the event itself, as long as they were able to spend time with friends. In discussing the important role socialization plays in his spectator sport consumption, Dante stated:

A sport game could be an easy way to spend time with your friends. So, even though I don’t really care about what’s going on I think it’s still a way to spend time with people… I don’t care if the Jays lose 108-0, who cares?… [even] if I had no interest in baseball, I still think that if all my friends wanted to go, I would be influenced.

William and Dante offered similar sentiments, reinforcing respondents’ overarching need for socialization through sport. Along the same lines, Emily mentioned the influence of her friends, admitting, “I am guilty of buying a ticket just because my friends are going.”

In one particularly revealing discussion, spectator sports became synonymous with socialization. Several participants noted how they had personally used – and how their peers use – sporting events as a social calendar to organize social gatherings. Pablo had this to say about how spectator sports offers one of the only times in an otherwise busy schedule to socialize:

…it’s kind of a time when you know your friend is going to be doing something. Okay, I know they’re going to be watching this Saturday night’s Leafs game. ‘Do you want to get beers?’ Because I know that’s kind of what their life’s oriented around. But, we kind of work on similar schedules that way, so it’s kind of finding that time to hang with friends.

Walt continued this conversation by remarking:

Outside of actually attending the event live, you can organize a social gathering around the event just to watch it from your TV, right? So, if nothing’s happening on a weekend, but the Leafs are playing, I’m more enticed to give my buddies a call to come hangout and watch a game as opposed to just sit around and not have something to watch.
Essentially, participants alluded to leveraging spectator sport events as a vehicle to provide socializing experiences with friends, prioritizing the social interaction opportunities presented by sport consumption.

Alongside participants’ socialization behaviours, respondents’ concerns about missing major events or opportunities to engage with friends and peer groups was found to be an important motivator for many. This sense of worry or fear of omission was brought up by Pablo in the midst of responding to what may prompt him to attend a spectator sporting event that he may otherwise not have considered. He identified a pervasive FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) as a strong reason to attend a spectator sport event. This sparked further consideration on the topic amongst participants and the exchange went as follows:

Pablo: In terms of an event, if I’m going to be missing out, if I’m going to be the one from the group not going to the Jays game or, you know, not making the trip somewhere to go watch the Raptors game… I’m definitely going to be more inclined to make that, because you don’t want to be left out or have that FOMO that we all know about.

Researcher: Does everyone else feel the same way about a sport event? If you’re going to be the odd guy out or the one that’s going to miss the event is that a concern for you?

Thomas: I think if all my friends are going to a Jays game or something, the only way I’m not going is if I’m fully not able to. But, if all my friends are going and I can go, I’m probably going to spend thirty dollars or whatever just to go.

William: Yea, literally for the social aspect of it.

Oscar: Yea, especially with social media, you don’t want to be at home watching all these stories while your buddies are at the Jays game or something like that.
Researcher: So, just seeing your friends on social media and you not being there physically, that would be a concern then, I guess?

Oscar: I feel like before the event, you don’t really kind of think about that, and then after once you kind of start seeing that, then you’re kind of (like) ‘oh my god… I really should have gone to that.’ You start to get that feeling like you’re missing out.

Sappho similarly identified FOMO’s influence on her interest in and consumption of spectator sports, as she explained how she did not want to miss out on socializing with her peers:

I never really used to watch sports until I went to school for Kinesiology and everyone around me loved sports and were always watching it. So, I kind of started to force myself to watch it more and get more into it so that I could have conversations with people and know what they’re talking about.

This fear of missing out on shared experiences or social interactions in fact became an ongoing and pervasive topic throughout the focus group sessions. Dante explained how the desire to be a part of what everyone else is interested in leads him to want to share the same experiences with peers:

I don’t even care that much about what I’m interested in, I care more about what other people are interested in because… I want to be on that train, right? I got interested in basketball when the Raptors started doing great and everyone else was, so I really got interested… what is everybody else interested in, because I want to be a part of that.

Drawing directly from the need for socialization, participants expressed an innate desire for inclusion through spectator sports. This need to feel included manifested in participants’ overarching FOMO and was best summarized as a motivating influence by Dante, who said,
“Everything is affected by other people because you don’t want to miss out. There’s that sense of belonging and people wanting to feel part of something, and sport can bring that.”

Ultimately, participants stressed the importance of socialization, and the important role that social interaction and engagement play in their sporting consumption. The ability to socialize with friends and the inherent fear of missing out on those social experiences are, as Edgar put it, part of Gen Z’s culture.

**Status**

As well as the shared social aspect of sport, across all three focus group sessions it was clear that status equally played a crucial role as a motivator in decision-making processes. Indeed, amongst participants the perceptions held by their peers and need for recognition were consistently espoused, even going so far as to define their generation by one word:

The one word for me, would be status. Just because the day and age we live in with social media… it really makes people think about what they should post, when they should post, what they should be wearing, what shouldn’t they be doing, [and] who’s listening to this.

(William)

This projection and reflection of status amongst participants manifested in a number of ways. A significant number of participants emphasised the importance of ‘cool’, for example, in one variation or another (i.e. cooler, coolest) throughout the focus group sessions. Being cool was frequently identified as an important concern, as Emily argued, “we’re obsessed with doing stuff for social media, we’re obsessed with having the newest, nicest, coolest thing.” Charlotte shared similar views on status, noting the importance not only of one’s projection of coolness, but also the relative perception participants experience with respect to peers of their generational cohort:
I also feel like people kind of get competitive with things like that. In a way, if you have the newest iPhone, you’re considered cooler than someone who has an iPhone 5… I think when consuming something, you’re going to consume something that would maybe add value to your life or maybe add value to you as a person… there’s this whole consumer mindset around people thinking I want the newest thing to feel like I’m the best.

Importantly, it was evident that this pursuit of status and recognition played a part in providing motive to attend spectator sporting events as well. According to Harper, attending live spectator sports simply for the sake of taking a photo and for the subsequent ‘clout’ (another word for prestige) is common and serves as an important motivator:

I think a lot of the time – it’s really evident to see at Raptors games – people who’ve never been to a game before or don’t really care for the sport, but they just go so they can get a picture of the court or being on the court. People are clearly there for the clout…

Oscar correlated this perception or projection of “cool” with Gen Zers’ internal drive to enhance their own self-image:

I feel like a lot of our generation, if it looks cool… if you can post a photo and it looks cool on social media, a lot of people are pretty interested in that. They’re trying to use Instagram to make themselves look super cool.

Elaborating on the same subject, Roald explained why this sentiment extends to the realm of spectator sports and why Gen Z may be interested in attending a sporting event:

I think Gen Z has to feel involved in what they’re doing. I know I’m guilty of this, but whenever I go to a concert or sporting event, I’ll go and take an Instagram story of where I’m at so I can show everyone where I’m at and I’m involved in the event… any way that Gen Z can be involved should be a feature of a lot of spectator sports.
The potential for an event, experience, or product to be considered cool thus was seen to increase participants’ motive to consume. Participants highlighted the ability to post an image or video physically attending a ‘cool’ spectator sporting event as a central motive. This drive for Gen Zers to be seen as cool by their peers was frequently linked to social media, and the importance placed by participants on such platforms. Maya put forth the following argument:

I think how they’re perceived. I think that’s why they care a lot about social media too, it’s because it’s a good place for people to sort of judge you. So, I think they’re pretty meticulous with their consumer choices because they want to be perceived as relevant or trendy or cool. You don’t want to be drinking the wrong thing or going to the wrong places because it’s blasted all over social media and everyone can see it.

Being able to share an experience through social media was such a critical motive, that several participants asserted that if this capability was taken away, there wouldn’t even be a point of attending a spectator sporting event. Dante offered the following explanation:

If someone were to offer you tickets to a Leafs game, but they said the one condition is that you have to leave your phone at home, I think a lot of people in Gen Z would say ‘no freaking way!’ What’s the point of even going if I can’t show everybody that I’m there?

Fundamentally, the emphasis participants placed on the “coolness” of an event or its Instagramability was rooted in the perception of others:

Pablo: I think we care, like people touched on this, but social media and we care how we’re perceived, right? We care about how other people think about us, talk about us, that’s why we do certain things, wear certain things, go certain places, post certain things… we do really care about what other people are thinking, whether they’re people close to us or not… we put a lot of weight into what the world is thinking about us.
**Oscar:** Yea, a hundred percent.

**Researcher:** Why do you think Generation Z cares about the perception of others?

**Walt:** I think the lens that’s been put on everyone, right? You’re just so much more exposed to people being able to judge you how they want through this age of media.

**Edgar:** … we definitely double think. I mean, I know personally I take a second thought of posting something. It’s (like) ‘hmm, is this going to be fine? Is this going to be stupid?’ …everyone that you know basically is going to see you.

**Pablo:** I think we grew up with our voice reaching a larger audience, right?… now, everyone’s listening or everyone’s watching… that’s what you’re so adjusted to. What is everyone else thinking? What is everyone else buying? What is everyone else doing?

**Thomas:** Yea, plus with the ability to show what you’re doing on social media to everybody that follows you… people love to just try to show what they’re doing to make an impact towards stuff. Not just because they want to do it, but more because they want to be able to show what they’re doing to everybody or their followers.

**Oscar:** Yea, I feel like it’s so easy to compare yourself to other people and you see how much fun someone’s having when they’re on vacation and if you’re at home, you kind of start thinking ‘oh, I’m not doing as much as this person’ and it kind of becomes a thing where… you’re worried about how people see you… maybe I’m not as cool as I thought.

**Walt:** I think that even on a biological level, we’ve been exposed to such a constant flow of getting notifications and messages and stuff, that when your phone does buzz, there’s a little rush of dopamine to you. So, you’re just always kind of craving that… you feel successful with a bunch of likes.
The feelings of success, achievement, and prestige noted by participants were intrinsically linked to social media sharing and the subsequent perceptions from followers. Charlotte likewise noted the importance placed on the perception of others amongst Gen Z, stating:

If you’re at home and you’re doing nothing, there’s something wrong now I feel like in today’s culture. Hyper culture is big, and everyone has to be doing something to advance some aspect of their life at all times.

The concern over others’ perceptions extended into spectator sports and became a prime motivating influence about the types of events that participants chose to consume. In attempting to explain the rationale behind choosing one sporting event over another, Emily broke down the perceptions that one might endure from others for attending a certain game:

There’s almost a perception of (like) ‘oh, you got to go to a Leafs game, or you got to go to a Raptors game’ versus ‘oh, you went to a Jays game… cool’… Maybe it’s because the capacity of the Rogers Centre is so much bigger it’s not that cool if you go to a Jays game or if you go to something at BMO [field – home to MLS’ TFC and CFL’s Argos] just because there’s so many more seats.

Certain sporting events are seemingly held in a higher regard and considered cooler than others. This perceived coolness, or the fear of what others might perceive you as if you attend an event that’s not considered cool, appears to play a large motivating influence. The theme of status, and its subthemes, were powerful in how they were presented across each separate focus group session and in how the participants stressed their importance.

**Experimental**

Lastly, the concept of Gen Z being experimental was identified from the focus group data as the final significant motivating factor. Lewis said the following in trying to define his own
generation, “If I were to put Gen Z into one word, I would select experimental.” The idea of trying new things was a constant throughout the focus groups; participants were keen on change and often expressed a desire for innovation and newness. Building off his definition of Gen Z as experimental, Lewis explained the reasoning for his classification, “we’re all experimenting with different kinds of products, different kinds of media, and experimenting with any kinds of experiences we want to have.” This observation was not felt by Lewis alone. In fact, Maya contended that her own generation was consumed by a desire for new things by saying, “what’s new and what we have and what we don’t have and what we want. I find that we’re fairly consumed.” It was Roald, meanwhile, who best summarized his generation’s need for constant gratification from new experiences:

So, I think just doing new things and going back to the idea of younger demographics always needing to be entertained and us thinking ‘oh, this is the best thing I’ve ever seen,’ you know what I mean? What’s next sort of thing?

When this notion was applied to spectator sports, participants were keen on introducing new and innovative ideas to make these events more appealing. Based on his previous experiences, Pablo suggested that implementing new ethnic food and trying to create a new atmosphere around spectator sport events would be an enticing change for him and his peers:

I think going to see that there’s something kind of new every time, at least with sport. When the game isn’t the same every time… A new atmosphere, new people. I remember I went to a Dodgers game and it was my first time ever where the entire crowd is Latino-American and the food is catered that way and it doesn’t just seem like hot dogs and popcorn. Suddenly there’s kind of this new vibe even though it’s the same game I’ve been watching my entire life.
Later, when participants answered what might entice them to attend a spectator sporting event, Pablo admitted that he’d be inclined to attend if it were a new experience, “Something new or something I haven’t done in a while. It’s been a while since I’ve actually seen a Jays game live, so that would definitely be something I want to do.” Likewise, William answered, “a crazy experience and you get to see a new atmosphere. Experiencing a new arena.”

Meanwhile, Roald indicated that he would pay to attend an event that provided him with a new experience, arguing that, “It doesn’t have to be necessarily that I learn something, or anything like that, it just has to be something that I see there that I maybe haven’t seen before.” Reiterating his point, Roald said of improving sport, “I think just consistent innovation… I would say always bringing something new to each sport.” Along similar lines, Dante explained why implementing new ideas and concepts into a spectator sport is such an enticing draw:

I think a big thing is that we always like change. So, when the Leafs made that trade [to acquire Jack Campbell and Kyle Clifford], more people tuned in because they wanted to see the new players. And when the playoff format got changed a couple years ago people tuned in because that was different. I think people like seeing things that aren’t precededent …people like things being shaken up.

When presented with the challenge of making spectator sports more exciting and appealing to Gen Z, Charlotte explained how organizations need to keep up with emerging trends and implement the changes into new experiences:

Honestly, if I was a sport organization, I would just see what’s trendy… they have to stay on top of changes in popular pop culture and the trends because… you do have control over what’s going on inside the building and so, for me, I would pay attention to changes in the trends and offer promotions according to what’s new and exciting.
Evidently, there was an appetite from participants for consuming traditional spectator sports. An important condition being that these experiences should offer something new and exciting to appease the participants’ experimental nature. Participants expressed a desire to experiment with new experiences and, in this way, were keen on seeing changes implemented within traditional spectator sports to make them more enticing. Given that these conditions could be met, Gen Z’s experimental nature was found to be an important motivator to consume spectator sport.

One of the popular pop culture trends identified by participants as holding inherent value to Gen Z was the pursuit of altruism. Notably, participants identified both environmentally friendly and charitable causes as holding important value to them. Participants showed an eagerness to pursue sustainability initiatives in support of the Earth and contribute to charitable donations that provided benefits and assistance to their communities. Importantly, throughout the discussions, it was suggested that the implementation of these kinds of initiatives within the mandates of sport properties would encourage Gen Z to attend more spectator sporting events. According to participants, sport organizations that made changes to existing sustainability frameworks or incorporated new charitable objectives into company policy would see more Gen Z consumers engaging with a team and attending their games.

With sustainability emerging early in the initial focus group as a significant subtheme, the researcher attempted to probe into how and why participants came to these conclusions throughout the course of each focus group (Yin, 2008). It was Charlotte’s description of her own generation which was the most revealing about how central these philanthropic concerns are to Gen Z:
Generation Z… I feel like we’re the cause generation… I’m big into gender equity, but everyone I would say has their thing which they’re passionate about that they think they can change. And so, I think change is definitely the thing we care about. Making a difference, changing something, and seeing a problem and finding a solution.

Like Charlotte, Oscar offered the following commentary on Gen Z’s altruistic character, “everyone’s aware of climate change now, it’s one of the biggest issues facing people… I feel like our generation’s pretty passionate about it.” Attempting to distinguish Gen Z from previous generations, Maya asserted her generation’s deviation from the established social norms of yesteryears in saying, “I think we’re also a generation that’s sort of concerned with inflicting positive change. I think we’re deviating from a lot of the gender norms, like gender roles, pay stereotypes.”

Having established altruism’s centrality, the researcher continued probing into how the implementation of new philanthropic initiatives would motivate Gen Zers to attend spectator sport matches. In nearly every instance of a participant mentioning one philanthropic endeavour or another, there was a significant implication attached to it: an increase in positive associations with a sport organization and a higher inclination to attend a live match. For instance, Thomas outlined how individuals can identify and feel connected to a sport organization that actively pursues charitable causes which, in turn, encourages people to attend games:

I think that targeting people’s emotions through social media is a pretty good way to get people interested or to recognize your organization or your sports team… that really connects with your fanbase and gives them an emotional attachment to your team. So, doing that type of stuff, like charitable donations… is really going to [tap] into the emotions of the people you want to attract to your organization and come to games.
Similarly, environmentally and ethically conscious sport organizations are more favourably looked upon by Maya when deciding whether to consume their product:

For any company, including sports teams, I guess sustainability is pretty big right now. I think I would be willing to spend a little bit more money knowing that is ethically sourced or that it comes from a company with strong values or that they’re more concerned about giving back, not just the bottom-line.

Oscar pointed out that amongst Gen Z’s primary concerns during their decision-making process that, “environmentally friendly products are a huge selling point now.” Meanwhile, when prompted to brainstorm an appealing promotion for a sport team to attract Gen Z and entice them to attend live matches, Virginia suggested the following:

I think something that would be cool would be donating a portion of the revenue to a charitable cause. I think people really sympathize [with] and love organizations that do that. I think it would incline people to buy tickets faster, so if they did that at the beginning of the season, I think they would sell more tickets to single, individual games. People are more inclined to purchase things when they know it’s going to a good cause – at least I do. I feel better about spending money if I know it’s going somewhere good.

On a more personal level, Charlotte consciously analyzed her consumption behaviour, refusing to buy products that she considered wasteful or environmentally unfriendly, stating: “the environment is really dying, and that’s kind of scary. So, if we can reduce that then I feel like if it’s something I’m just going to throw out or not use, I’m not going to buy.” Later in the conversation, Charlotte punctuated her point, further emphasizing the importance that sport organizations become more philanthropic, “I personally don’t spend my money on brands that I don’t think are equitable or environmentally friendly.” Importantly, Maya noted that, although
there are those who care less about sustainability, overall, the critical importance of environmental issues has become a driving influence for everyone in her generation, “even if you’re not someone that cares about the environment, it just looks good to care about those things, so people will follow the flow and support those causes.”

Across all three focus groups, altruistic values were expressed by participants as an important concern. This was notable in discussions about the character of Gen Z which, according to participants, included a set of philanthropic beliefs and values. Additionally, a significant number of participants supported and identified with ethically and environmentally responsible organizations which, in turn, was found to be a strong motivator to consume traditional spectator sports. Importantly, participants were more willing to experiment with sport teams and attend events that had implemented transparent philanthropic initiatives. Sport organizations that were actively involved in charitable or environmental sustainability causes drew a favourable response from participants who viewed these initiatives as drivers to attend matches. The experimental nature of Gen Z drove the participants’ desire to see innovation implemented into traditional spectator sports; in particular, participants viewed the implementation of new charitable pursuits as a strong motivator to attend live spectator sporting events. In the following sections, the major inhibitors to consumption that were extrapolated from the data will be discussed.

**Inhibitors to Sport Consumption**

With respect to the second research question, which sought to examine those factors which potentially inhibit Gen Zers’ consumption of traditional spectator sports, two primary themes were discovered worthy of examination. The first, participants’ perceived affordability of an event, or the perceived value relative to cost of a sporting event or property, was reiterated
throughout the data and affords an important preliminary step in understanding Gen Z’s consumption habits and sport consumption decision-making. It became clear from the outset that affordability was a major concern for participants; this sentiment only grew stronger in subsequent focus group discussions as important subthemes presented themselves.

**Affordability**

Emerging as a predominantly negative subtheme, price was collectively viewed as a significant barrier to attending live traditional spectator sports. In nearly all cases, terms such as ‘price’ and ‘expensive’ were associated with the decision not to attend spectator sport events. Across each focus group, when the conversation shifted to pricing and the affordability of spectator sporting events, participants became agitated and perturbed, almost as if they had been personally attacked by the question. Answers were laced with frustration as participants assessed the state of admission prices to various spectator sports, indicating that they had become too expensive. Walt outlined the reasons why the importance of price is so great:

In a lot of advertising for sports, what I look for is pricing… I don’t know what everyone’s financial situation is, but I feel like a common theme for me and a lot of my buddies is we don’t have a lot of just spending money. So, I think that pricing is huge. The price of attending a spectator sporting event seemed to be critically important to Walt; these concerns over pricing were shared across each focus group session. At one point, Dante shared an upsetting experience about having to pay to watch a university volleyball game:

I went to a Brock volleyball game at McMaster and they made me pay five dollars and I was so upset because I thought this was going to be free… no matter how good the product is… if it’s not sought after, then you’re not happy paying the price.
In this instance, price was found to be an inhibitor even for an amateur sporting event and for as little as five dollars. Conversely, when participants were asked how they felt about the admission prices to professional spectator sports, Virginia helplessly laughed as she said, “Um… unaffordable.”

Beyond ticket prices, the participants appeared to have a detailed knowledge of the costs associated with attending a live spectator sport match. In discussing the prices of traditional spectator sports, Pablo itemized the various costs attached to such events:

It’s also the full package now [with] sporting events, right? It’s not just ‘okay, the ticket’s expensive.’ It’s everything about it is expensive: the beer’s expensive; the food’s expensive… it isn’t just face value tickets – it’s the entire cost of it, which is, you know, everything is marked up or driven up…

Even when participants felt motivated to attend a sporting event, Lewis suggested that the concerns regarding cost were inherently allied to Gen Zers’ disposable income and thus difficult to overcome:

I think another thing that defines Gen Z is our expendable income. I think it’s decreased over the years and it’s getting harder for sport organizations to find a balance of how much to take from a consumer and how they can give that value and bring people into stadiums. So, I think the financial level is hard for Gen Z, compared to previous years.

The participants’ aversion to price grew stronger when the discussions began to centre on where participants lived. One consistently recurring subtheme identified throughout the analysis was the role played by the participants’ local market in their consumption behaviours and decision-making. According to many participants, a major barrier to their spectator sport consumption was that the local market was alienating, seen as overpriced and underserviced for
the market-size. Of the fifteen participants who indicated where they currently lived, seven resided in Toronto, while the remaining eight all lived just outside of Toronto (Ancaster, Millbrook, Mississauga, Newmarket, Pickering, Scarborough, and Vaughan) in surrounding suburbs and towns. This geographic limitation manifested in a significant way throughout the separate focus group sessions and across the data; namely, that the expensive prices of the local spectator sport market were unaffordable for participants and led to them feeling outpriced and outclassed. Emily compared Toronto’s sport scene to that of another grossly expensive market:

I feel like we’re just really unlucky living in Toronto because it’s basically like New York City at this point. The supply and demand for tickets is so expensive. If you looked at [tickets] when Toronto played Cleveland in the basketball playoffs a few years ago… it was literally cheaper for you to drive to Cleveland, Ohio and sit in the second bowl there.

The fact that local traditional spectator sporting events were seen to be expensive, led participants to share bold observations and revealing statements about sport consumption. William was rather pessimistic in his prediction about the market moving forward, “It’s only going to get more expensive… I don’t know how much [tickets] were a few years ago, but it’s now a war.” Virginia had been particularly alienated by local ticket prices, which she highlighted by saying, “I’ve never actually paid to go see the Raptors or the Leafs because I simply can’t afford it.” This alienation seemed to classicize spectators based on affluence which created a stark division within the market between Gen Z and businesses:

I feel like the Leafs have such a strong market where people are paying whatever it is, like a thousand dollars to go to the game. They don’t ever have to put on half-price anything for people like us [Gen Z] with their Bay Street [business] clients. They’re going to sell out and people are going to go no matter what (Thomas).
Many participants built on these observations by pointing out that there was a strong corporate presence that had a hand in influencing the spectator sport ticket market, which further served to inhibit their consumption. “You get a lot of people who go just because they have the money – they’re not even that passionate, but they’re able to go because they have the money. Which is unfortunate…” (William). Emily reiterated this view, arguing that wealthy corporations have preferential access to tickets, thereby alienating her from the spectator sport experiences she desired: “Even if you try to buy tickets to Leafs and Raptors games, the lower bowl is usually always sold out because it’s a lot of client tickets and businesses with their season tickets.”

It was clear that prices were alienating participants from the market and being able to attend live spectator sports. Seemingly, the presence of corporate clients was outpricing Gen Z from being able to afford spectator sports, as businesses dominated demand and therefore the supply of tickets. Moreover, participants perceived sport properties to be extending preferential treatment to corporate clients at the expense of younger consumers which led to a scarcity of tickets in the market and, ultimately, the opportunities to physically attend traditional spectator sports were minimal. The concerns with prices were tempered somewhat, however, by the recognition of Gen Z’s general life stage. As Roald noted, “I’m a little biased because I’m a student, so I think the prices are expensive… so, I mean, personally, for me it’s too expensive and I don’t go because of that.” Similarly, Walt shared the following, “I’m not sure what your guys’ financial situations are, but… I had to quit my job and I’m a student. I can’t really do anything. I can’t go to a Leafs game or do any of that stuff.”

Thus, with a majority of participants characterizing traditional spectator sports as expensive and unaffordable, price was determined to be a major inhibitor to consumption. The high costs associated with attending a live spectator sporting event pushed participants away and
significantly reduced their interest in pursuing matches as a form of entertainment. Indeed, participants argued that the expensive admission prices made it unrealistic and unjustifiable that they would even consider including spectator sports as part of their budgets. Much of the participants’ budgets were comprised of the ‘essentials,’ however participants differed in their assessment of what should be classed as “essential.”

When it came to traditional spectator sports, most of the participants agreed that they did not set a budget for attending sport and that, ultimately, spectator sports were categorized as non-essential. Dante’s classification of spectator sports as a ‘non-essential’ was most revealing to its place in the participants’ budgets:

So, there were the essentials like… car insurance, gas, phone bill, rent, groceries, tuition… [bars] would kind of be in the same budget as sports would be because that’s a non-essential… I’d have to worry about the essentials first and… Unfortunately, due to the nature of life, sports have to kind of fall into that non-essential category.

Echoing this, Charlotte classified spectator sports as a luxury that was simply not a necessity when she said, “Because sport isn’t something that you have to go and see. It’s not like it’s a need – it’s a want.” It was clear that the participants’ budgets largely excluded spectator sport and were instead focused on the essentials like rent and food.

Along the same lines, the data revealed participants’ frugality as a prominent subtheme. Many of the participants valued saving money and being fiscally responsible which became allied to the unaffordability of traditional spectator sports. As part of a larger discussion about saving money, the researcher probed into why exactly the ability to save money was so highly sought after in the following exchange:

Researcher: …what type of feelings do you get when you see that ten dollars off?
Virginia: Excitement. Happiness. WOO!

Researcher: That contains a lot of emotions!

Virginia: I’m just happy. I just love… the feeling of saving money is so awesome.

Emily: …yes, I agree – I feel happy when I save money.

These positive emotional responses to saving money were felt strongly by several participants and became important in each of the focus group sessions.

The desire to save money extended significantly into discussions around spectator sport. When participants were asked about what they would change about traditional spectator sports to make them more exciting and appealing for Gen Z, Maya offered the following response, “I would like them to be cheaper because that would mean I’d get to enjoy more experiences there. If they were cheaper, I’d obviously go a lot more.” Like Maya, many participants valued saving money and it became clear that the propensity to save money outweighed the desire to attend spectator sport events.

Overall, participants were hesitant to spend money and avoided consuming products with high costs. In several instances, participants noted that the only time they had attended a spectator sporting event was if they had received the tickets for free. For instance, during a discussion about physically attending live spectator sporting events, the following exchange took place between Virginia and Sylvia:

Virginia: I’ve only ever gone to games when I’ve gotten tickets for free.

Sylvia: I definitely agree. I only go if my dad gets tickets from his clients and then he gives them to me.

That multiple participants claimed to have only attended spectator sports when they received tickets for free, emphasizes the importance of saving money in the context of spectator sport
events. The participants’ propensity to save money came into direct conflict with the high prices of attending live spectator sports. Moreover, for some participants, attending live traditional spectator sports was only feasible if they received the experience for free and, ultimately, did not have to spend their money.

Taken together, the adverse effects of price disenfranchised participants and left many feeling as though they were alienated from traditional spectator sports. Across all three focus group discussions, the high prices created an overall feeling of hopelessness. In fact, Thomas was unsure where people even obtained tickets from, let alone who could afford them: “I think most people that I know who go to Leafs games get their tickets from just people… I don’t know anyone who pays for Leafs tickets they’re so expensive.” The implications of being disenfranchised from attending local spectator sports were significant as several participants noted their exasperation, which would later manifest itself in participants deferring to hopelessness in the pursuit of attending matches.

With several factors driving local ticket prices up, participants shared a grim outlook on their prospective spectator sport attendance. Although Sappho expressed a desire to attend spectator sport events, she noted that expensive ticket prices were barring her from attending, “with just the ticket prices I guess, for them to be cheaper so I could go more. Because of prices, I haven’t been to many games at all.” In the most revealing confession, Walt exclaimed that the costly nature of local sport tickets had discouraged him from even considering tickets altogether, “they’ve gotten so expensive that I don’t even know the prices, because I’m not even looking at this point.” During these responses, the researcher observed a display of body language, gesturing, and tone that indicated a grand sense of hopelessness instilled within the participants. It was this overarching posture that led to hopelessness becoming an important subtheme. It was
as if participants had given up and had simply accepted their fate; with defeated tones and exaggerative gestures, participants seemed to accept the unaffordability of spectator sports as an inevitability. The hopeless attitudes of participants began to paint a very bleak picture for Gen Z and traditional spectator sports. These frustrations only grew stronger as participants began to link their despondency to a detachment from sport and, ultimately, a waning interest in attending spectator sports altogether.

**Unrest**

This concern regarding spectator sport’s perceived affordability amongst Gen Zers was compounded by a prevailing sense of unrest amongst respondents regarding traditional spectator sports offerings. The concept of unrest arose organically throughout the focus group sessions when several participants began to indicate that they had become bored with experiences – including traditional spectator sports – that offered a repetitive product, given the wide array of entertainment options available to them. Participants shared an overall perception that certain traditional spectator sports were boring and that a lack of innovation and new ideas were a direct inhibitor to participants’ consumption. As a self-identified fan of professional hockey, Ernest explained why the sport had become boring – even for a fan like himself: “As a fan, hockey – especially in the NHL – is becoming boring because it’s predictable… there’s no variety in style.” Dante shared similar feelings, asserting that spectator sports run the risk of becoming boring, if they don’t offer consumers something new: “it’s just kind of the same game over and over… you always need something new… Sports can’t be getting in that routine or it becomes really boring for people.” Thomas likewise outlined how intra-sport characteristics can influence its level of appeal by arguing, “Watching an MLB [Major League Baseball] game at the start of the season is pretty boring, whereas watching a playoff MLB game is the exact opposite of that.”
The perception that a spectator sport experience would be the same as before was clearly an inhibitor to participants’ consumption. Ultimately, traditional spectator sports were viewed as boring by several participants; part of a routine that was neither exciting nor preferable to other entertainment options. As Dante succinctly described, “the same game over and over,” made participants’ aversion to routine or boredom a significant inhibitor. This rejection of the routine was further magnified by participants’ perception of consumption alternatives, and the plethora of entertainment vehicles and choices available to them. The sheer vastness of entertainment options was seen as a hurdle and was generally viewed as a discouraging reality by participants, who shared rather bleak outlooks on how it affected them. Presented with so many options, participants acknowledged the value of their time; something which they were not easily willing to lend. Participants identified a multitude of options to keep them entertained, and only so much time to do them. Participants in turn acknowledged the ease with which entertainment could be accessed:

Generational-wise, my parents didn’t have as many options for things to be entertained by. Now, I can go to Snapchat, I can go to Instagram, I can go to TikTok, I can do all the social medias, or I could go watch a movie, or I could watch any show I want at any instant, or I could talk to my friends – and this is all from just being in my room. So, there’s so many different options that I could do to be entertained. (Charlotte)

The participants who commented on the availability of such widespread entertainment did so in a rather bleak tone. For instance, in attempting to describe his own generation, Pablo noted that the overabundance of options has made Gen Z feel lost:
I would just say a little bit lost. I think, you know, we suddenly have more options of what we can do in school and more options of what we can do in terms of life choices… There are millions of things we can choose to do throughout our day.

For many of the participants, the fact that there are so many options available to them coupled with a limited amount of time to consume them was overwhelming and presented their inherent impatience as a significant barrier to traditional spectator sport. There was such a surplus of entertainment options available to participants that spectator sport events were perceived as a mere wave amongst an ocean of choices. Participants struggled in deciding which entertainment outlet to choose, and certain elements of traditional spectator sport seemed to steer them away from choosing to attend matches. For instance, in a clear contradiction to an earlier motive of attending matches with friends, Walt was frank about how time may infringe on his desire to socialize during these events when he said, “as I get older, the less free time I have to be hanging out with buddies.” Meanwhile, for Oscar, impatience was an issue as the length of time it could take for certain sports to unfold was a reason why he did not consume them, noting that “the pace of baseball and football is a little bit slower, so that’s kind of why I don’t watch those sports.” Thus, timing played a crucial role in some participants’ decisions not to consume or attend a spectator sporting event.

The aversion to spectator sport events that took too long or were too slow indicated that participants had an inherent appreciation for the value of their time. As this subtheme developed, the researcher probed into how and why (Yin, 2008) this awareness was so important. Several participants were so critical of their time that they would not even consider an entertainment option if it did not immediately capture their attention. In discussing why Gen Z did not enjoy
attending spectator sport matches as much as previous generations, Lewis argued that Gen Z was
easily distracted and could not therefore consume a live sporting event with unilateral attention:

I find older people have a longer attention span at a game compared to younger
generations, who will go… and all of a sudden they’ve got to go do this and they’ve got
to [talk] with this person and I think that plays a huge factor in advertising and in any
kind of entertainment. How to engage those different kinds of attention spans.

The observation that Gen Z is easily distracted, impatient, and has a short attention span, further
reinforced unrest as an inhibitor of consumption. “Younger demographics want more interactive
experiences… [because of] the attention span. And the constant need I think for young people to
be entertained” (Roald). Similarly, Virginia commented on her generation’s constant need for
entertainment or gratification, albeit from a more critical perspective, in saying, “I think our
generation is so ‘we need it, and we need it now’… that’s the best way to describe it. We’re very
impatient.” Thus, the inability of some spectator sports to immediately and consistently grab
participants’ attention proved to be a significant inhibiting factor to their consumption.

With so many ways to be entertained – even from the comfort of their own homes – and
with certain sports being labeled as boring, slow-paced or tiresome, boredom and impatience
were certainly significant inhibitors to consuming traditional spectator sports. Participants were
also critically aware of the value of their time and with a wide variety of entertainment options
available, were unwilling to forfeit that time to an experience that might not provide instant and
constant gratification. Thus, unrest manifested in three ways: first, it was identified that
participants viewed spectator sport as having become stale and routinized; second, participants
were overwhelmed by the myriad entertainment options available to them and considered
spectator sport lost within the chaos of choices; and third, short attention spans – a characteristic
of Gen Z, according to participants – led to participants avoiding the lengthy and drawn out developments of traditional spectator sports.

That spectator sports were classified as boring and part of an unappealing routine, prompted participants to elaborate further on their restless behaviour. It was identified that a synthesis between spectator sports’ costliness, participants’ boredom, and a constant need to be entertained fed into a prevailing pessimism. Although many participants indicated an initial interest in traditional spectator sports, it became clear that an important barrier to their consumption was the risk of the hometown team losing. In fact, Virginia commented on how a hometown team losing was the worst possible outcome for a spectator sporting experience: “I think any sports game, if… the team you’re rooting for loses, I think that defines the whole experience and the whole vibe of it. There’s nothing worse than going to a game and the team that you’re rooting for loses.” Pablo agreed with this notion, arguing that the emotional investment as a fan can be counterproductive for consumption: “When you’re so invested sometimes as a fan, you kind of take the entire experience out. It’s all about the win or the loss and so you are so focused on that… it’s that or nothing.”

The possibility that the hometown team would lose had significant implications for the participants’ desire to attend matches. The fear of losing was so great, that many participants claimed they would not spend their money because of it. “It kind of sucks if you drop three hundred dollars to go to a Leafs game and then they get blown out like six-nothing. So that’s obviously not going to be a good experience” (Emily). Even for someone who loves sports, such as herself, Emily argued that the risk of the hometown team losing is too high to justify paying to attend the event, “like everyone else has said, I love sports, but I would not pay three hundred dollars to potentially watch the Leafs lose.”
Beyond just the risk of a hometown team losing, several participants noted their pessimistic attitudes and hesitations to consume an unskilled team. If a team was perceived as being subpar, some participants were resolute in that they would not spend their money to attend a game to see that particular team. For instance, Pablo expressed frustration at an organization charging expensive ticket prices for an untalented team: “Certain games are listed more expensive at the box office because of who they’re playing… a lot of people were really upset about that because the team’s horrible, so why is [the front office] going to charge more to see a horrible team?” Similarly, when prompted to consider the admission prices to attend spectator sporting events, Ernest was most concerned with how talented the team was: “For me, it’s all dependant on how the team’s performing… if they’re losing, if they have a ninety or eighty percent chance of losing that night, why am I paying a hundred dollars to go watch them lose?” The unpredictability of spectator sports and the doubts about the home team losing were a major concern for the participants of the present study. The negative connotations surrounding losing and the uncertainty about the outcome and whether they would have to endure a loss, was a significant inhibitor of consuming traditional spectator sport.

Overall, participants exhibited a general impatience and, more specifically, an unrest toward the topic of traditional spectator sport and attending live matches. What began as an opinion that spectator sports were stale and boring quickly grew into the realization that these events were simply one choice out of “millions of things we can choose to do throughout our day” (Pablo). From there, participants expressed a deep appreciation for their time and that the slow development of a traditional spectator sport experience was not only boring, but also counterproductive to their need for constant gratification. This need for immediate entertainment was further magnified by participants’ reluctance to attend a match due to the potential for a
hometown team to lose and ruin the entire experience. In summation, participants were fundamentally restless and unable to find an equilibrium; while being bored by the old, they were overwhelmed by the new. This paradox alluded to an inherent impatience within Gen Z and it appeared as though traditional spectator sports – as they currently are – could not mitigate or appease these agitations. Ultimately, the unrest shown by participants towards traditional spectator sports was found to be a severe inhibitor to their consumption.
Chapter 5 – Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand Gen Z’s consumption behaviours expressed toward traditional spectator sports. By exploring both the antecedents and the inhibitors for nominal sport consumption, the study’s results provided insight into the habits and interests of Gen Z consumers. In so doing, the findings presented here addressed a gap in the literature regarding the scarcity of *a priori* sport consumer typologies to effectively account for differences within subtypes of consumers. To date, a lack of literature on specific consumer segments and target markets, and an absence of research into Gen Z as a distinct and unique cohort for sport marketing has created limited scholarly understandings of generational segmentation. Gen Z represents a quickly growing and critically important cohort of consumers, yet it has been shown that it is difficult to win the attention and loyalty of these consumers (Gutfreund, 2016; Southgate, 2017). Moreover, Gen Z’s interest in traditional spectator sports has been shown to be waning (Kuchefski, 2018; Whistle, 2018; Evans, 2019; Lefton, 2019), illustrating the need to better understand these consumers from a sport marketing perspective. The present study’s findings thus provided new insight into participants’ perspectives of belonging to Gen Z as well as their shared perceptions and experiences regarding their consumption behaviours, answering the two central research questions.

**RQ1: What are the antecedents that motivate Generation Z toward nominal sport consumption?**

There were three central themes that were discovered from the participants’ contributions that assisted in answering the first research question. These three themes detailed significant motives for Gen Z to consume traditional spectator sports and enlightened the first research question by uncovering important drivers for Gen Z to attend live spectator sport events.
The first theme to emerge from the data was socialization due to the importance placed on social interaction by participants. For many of the participants, the desirable part of a spectator sport event was not the game or team itself; rather, it was the opportunity to be with friends and to enjoy their company while consuming the event. Across each focus group participants recounted experiences of attending traditional spectator sporting events with friends and acknowledged socialization as a major driver in their interest of consuming spectator sport. Participants were particularly enamoured by the social features of attending a live spectator sporting event, such as drinking beers with friends, which enabled them to create memorable experiences and destress from the pressures of life by becoming social beings (Melnick, 1993). By attending spectator sport, participants gained valuable connections to those around them and cited increased levels of psychological well-being and happiness as reasons why socializing was such a significant driver to consume (Wann & James, 2018).

These findings reaffirmed previous examinations of socialization’s importance in attending spectator sports (Bednall et al., 2012; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Wann & James, 2018; Wann et al., 2008) and provided evidence of Gen Z’s fit within the existing knowledge. In this respect, the theme of socialization provided preliminary knowledge on how this generation’s socializing habits are influenced or driven by traditional spectator sports. Moreover, these findings advanced the existing theory and knowledge of socialization as a motive by providing contrary evidence to Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) findings on the ‘Experiential Fan’. Whereas the Experiential Fan was found to be the youngest on average age, their desire to seek out socialization from spectator sports was low – ranked third least out of four types of fans – and well below the global sample (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). However, the participants of the current study, who were nearly identical in average age to the Experiential Fan (Richelieu & Pons,
identified socialization as an imperative and inherent driver to attend live spectator sport matches.

Central to this drive for socialization was that participants prioritized using traditional spectator sports as a social calendar, often leveraging sporting events for the purposes of social engagement and interaction. Several participants stated that although they did not necessarily care about the event itself, they consumed it anyways simply because they wanted to bask in the company of their friends. Although the social process of spectator sports enhancing and creating relationships has been studied (Doyle et al., 2016; Trail & James, 2001; Wann, 2006), there is scant literature that specifically discusses the purposeful leveraging of sporting events as a social calendar or tool. This provides initial indications that Gen Z prioritizes social interaction above traditional spectator sport and will simply use the sporting event as a vehicle to provide socializing experiences. Spectator sports can be instrumental in developing interpersonal relationships (Doyle et al., 2016) and the findings from the current study shed light on how and why Gen Z, specifically, sees the value in this. Interestingly, the participants’ desire to socialize with friends is consistent with past research on traditional spectator sport consumption amongst Generation Y, who were also found to harbour intrinsic value in friends (Bednall et al., 2012).

Moreover, these findings suggested that Gen Zers are not fans of spectator sports as they are usually conceptualized by exhibiting affinity to a team, but rather fit the ‘social’ fan mold (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). In other words, rather than expressing an allegiance to a sport or a particular team, participants valued spectator sports’ social benefits including for the purposes of socializing with friends. By desiring a spectacle in which to socialize and share with friends, family, and groups, the participants placed their value in spectator sports on socialization, far beyond any sort of affinity or allegiance to the team (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). This is an
important finding as it suggests that Gen Z will not respond to marketing which features sport or team-related information in the same way that a ‘super’ fan would (Richelieu & Pons, 2005). Instead, based on these findings, it is much more likely that Gen Z would be influenced to attend a live spectator sporting match by marketing materials that strictly emphasized the socialization opportunities available to attendees.

In another interesting subtheme, a consistent FOMO on the part of participants was ultimately identified as a significant driver to attend a live spectator sport match. FOMO is defined as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having a rewarding experience from which one is absent and is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). In this sense, FOMO was linked to socializing with friends in that participants noted a ubiquitous worry that if they chose not to attend a sporting event, their friends might end up going and having a good time without them. This worry manifested itself in participants’ willingness to neglect responsibilities and spend money to attend a spectator sporting event simply because their friends were going and they feared missing out on a potentially rewarding experience (Przybylski et al., 2013). If a participant knew that their friends were attending a certain sporting event, the subsequent feelings of angst and dismay drove them to want to attend that same event. Indeed, several participants mentioned that they would drop whatever they were doing, if it meant being able to attend a sporting event with friends who had already planned on attending.

The present findings on FOMO are consistent with Yim et al.’s (2020) research on Millennial sport consumption which found an inherent trait of Gen Y sport fans to be peer pressure and the fear of missing out. In the current study, Gen Z participants were eager to share entertainment experiences with their friends and a pervasive FOMO drove them to want to
consume more. FOMO seemed to drive participants’ desire to be included and achieve a shared sense of belonging from consuming sport experiences or, as Przybylski et al. (2013) outlined, a need to stay continually connected with what others are doing.

Participants were also markedly concerned with their own self-image and how they were perceived, leading to the emergence of status as the second theme. As a concept, social status is how an individual recognizes one’s own status and the status of others within a group; the status can be of higher or lower rank, born from factors such as wealth, and the interplay between ranks is a critical part of successful social interaction (Chiao et al., 2004). Across all three focus group sessions, participants significantly valued the idea of their own personal image – often referring to the concepts of cool, trendy, and clout – and having themselves accepted by their peers. It was also evident that participants recognized that attending spectator sports could potentially enhance their status and acceptance amongst their peers. This theme closely aligns with findings from Yoshida et al.’s (2013) research on the relationship between quality, value consumption, and behavioural intentions at sporting events. Yoshida et al. (2013) discovered that consumers’ behavioural intentions were positively influenced when there were increased levels of community prestige associated with a sporting event; in other words, when the event provides a symbolic value or prestige that enhances the recognition of a consumer amongst a community.

Furthermore, participants of the current study feared being considered ‘uncool.’ It was evident that the main vehicle in which participants used to foster an identity of coolness and reap the subsequent prestige was through social media. Although the participants’ familiarity and confidence in using social media is consistent with previous findings concerning Gen Z’s digital prowess (Fromm & Read, 2018; Mullin et al., 2014), it is important to note how significantly social media was as a driver for spectator sport consumption. Using Instagram, Snapchat, and
various other social media platforms, participants admitted that they posted pictures to their followers whenever they attended a spectator sporting event. The instantaneous and interconnected nature of social media allowed participants to seek validation from their peers and to increase their status from the perceived symbolic value of the spectator sport experiences they shared. This motivator drove participants to seek out spectator sporting events that are considered cool and which they could gain community prestige from attending.

By synthesizing the first two themes, it became clear that there was an inherent relationship between the desire to socialize with friends and status: the influence of social media in shaping these themes as drivers. The interplay between socialization and status elicited important ties between the projection of image through the Instagrammability of an event and the perception of others. Although both themes have important implications, the correlation between the two highlights how (Yin, 2008) Gen Z views socialization and why (Yin, 2008) status is so critically important. With respect to socialization, when participants witnessed friends posting about a spectator sporting match on their social media account, it generated a FOMO and motivated them to attend that event. Likewise, with status, participants were motivated to attend spectator sporting matches so that they could post about it on their social media to augment their image amongst peers.

Universally, across each focus group session, participants identified social media as a central component of Gen Z’s culture. In fact, the usage of social media platforms was referenced as an accepted and necessary part of life; from the moment participants awoke in the morning, it was expected that friends would begin communicating through text and social media. The centrality of social media in the lives of the present study’s participants led them to observe that their culture was largely characterized by and through social media. Inferentially, this has
developed a culture of Instagrammification; Gen Z has a pressing need to showcase their lives on social media.

Being ‘obsessed with social media,’ as Emily described, or ‘consumed by social media,’ as Maya argued, has significantly influenced the consumption behaviours of Gen Z. With socialization being viewed as a desirable aspect of a spectator sporting event, social media has dictated specifically how these social pursuits should look and how they should be conducted. In the context of traditional spectator sports, what socialization looks like to participants of the present study is sharing photos across social media of drinking beers with friends at a spectator sporting event. So, rather than simply enjoying the company of friends, an ulterior motive is that socializing at a sporting event will look good on social media. As the uploaded images of attending an event are judged by peers and are deemed either ‘cool’ or ‘uncool’, the perception of others begins to create a sense of validation and belonging. Social media therefore becomes critically important for participants’ status, as it is used to generate self-worth and prestige amongst a community of peers. Inherently then, social media plays an integral role in the decision-making process; the Instagrammability of a spectator sporting event will sway whether an individual sees value in attending.

Based on social media’s pervasive cultural importance, Gen Z is mirroring their lives through social media in order to fit in and gain community acceptance. In other words, they are creating personas and personal brands through their social media accounts and are using experiences, such as spending time with friends and going to sporting events, as a means to enhance their lives. Thus, the drive to attend a spectator sporting event game is rooted in wanting to portray a certain persona on social media and, in the eyes of participants, being social and hanging out with friends at a sport event that’s considered “cool” is an ideal experience to project
a desirable image. In several instances, participants were so eager to leverage spectator sporting events for the preservation of their own image, that the event itself became pointless should they be unable to share the experience with their social media followers and friends. Rather than simply increasing consumption behaviour, as was found in Yoshida et al.’s (2013) research, the social prestige gained from attending a spectator sporting event seemed to be a crucial component in the decision-making process; Gen Z would not consume a spectator sporting event if it were not possible to derive an augmentation of self-worth by doing so. To paraphrase Sappho, if a Gen Z individual attends a live spectator sporting event and doesn’t post about it on social media, have they even gone to that game?

The third and final theme to emerge as a motivator was critically important to understanding the intimate nature of Gen Z’s consumption behaviours. Across each focus group, a common desire shared by nearly all participants was to seek out entertainment that provided new or innovative experiences. This ‘experimental’ behaviour gave rise to this theme’s label and addressed a significant concern about Gen Z’s interest in spectator sport. It has been shown that the interest level in traditional spectator sports is waning amongst younger consumers (Richelieu & Pons, 2005; 2009) and, most recently, Gen Z (Kuchefski, 2018; Whistle, 2018). It is interesting then that the present study’s findings suggest that Gen Z is driven to attend traditional spectator sport experiences that offer something innovative and new. This is an important finding not only because it reveals a novel characteristic of Gen Z’s consumption behaviours, but also because it directly addresses one of the main challenges facing sport organizations trying to win the attention of increasingly apathetic consumers.

What these findings indicate is that the apathy shown by Gen Z toward sport is susceptible to change and can perhaps be coaxed into a more favourable outlook. As many of the
participants explained, they were more inclined and willing to consume traditional spectator sports if there were constant innovations being made to the events to create new atmospheres and excitement. The prevailing opinions from participants that spectator sports needed to be improved, was consistent with the concerns that Gen Z found spectator sport experiences to have remained stagnant (Lefton, 2019). However, it is encouraging that these sentiments were not a complete catchall; rather, participants openly admitted to wanting to consume spectator sports that offered new experiences. This was an unexpected finding, given the dire diagnosis of Gen Z’s interest in traditional spectator sports (Evans, 2019; Kuchefski, 2018; Lefton, 2019; Whistle, 2018), but an important one that provided novel information on Gen Z’s consumption behaviours and insight into how to strengthen the interest in spectator sport from young consumers.

One particularly interesting subtheme that allied itself to participants’ experimentalism, was a set of philanthropic beliefs and a penchant for altruistic causes. The findings revealed that environmental and charitable initiatives held intrinsic value to participants and motivated them to want to engage with and attend the matches of sport teams who addressed these movements. The findings associated with this theme are consistent with Fromm and Read’s (2018) research that discovered the intrinsic philanthropic values of Gen Z. For many participants, organizations that participated in sustainable and charitable initiatives were easier to relate to, elicited positive emotional responses, and significantly increased their engagement with a product (Yoshida et al., 2013). In particular, these beliefs in saving the world were intrinsically attached to the participants’ expressed willingness to consume a product; they were much more positively inclined to consider organizations that had adopted philanthropic philosophies. Altruism and sustainability were therefore key components of the participants’ experimental drive and were found to increase the motive to attend spectator sport matches.
When taken together, the trust and reciprocity felt by participants towards philanthropically inclined organizations significantly increased their sport consumption behaviour, specifically in terms of attendance and purchase intention (Kim et al., 2011). This directly addressed Gutfreund’s (2016) concern that the loyalty of Gen Z is difficult to retain as they do not easily trust brands. These findings suggested that the trust and loyalty of Gen Z could be attained by sport entities who internalized altruistic values and contributed in sustainability projects. Moreover, it provides contradictory evidence to Ariker and Toksoy’s (2017) findings that Gen Z’s understanding of CSR may negatively influence their purchasing intention. The participants in the current study positively identified with companies who pursued CSR initiatives and were more likely to consume their product by attending matches.

**RQ2: What are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Generation Z consumers?**

There were two additional themes that the data revealed from within the contributions of participants that assisted in answering the second research question. These two themes each contained several important subthemes that helped to detail the major inhibitors to traditional spectator sport consumption amongst participants. While it is true that focus group discussions revealed encouraging motivators for nominal sport consumption, the data also uncovered several significant inhibitors which were seen as major barriers to Gen Z’s sport consumption.

The first theme to emerge under inhibitors was affordability and involved several subthemes relating to money including cost, budgeting, and saving. Nearly universally, participants noted that the price of attending many spectator sports had become unaffordable for them and that sports weren’t included in their daily budget because they were viewed as non-essential. When participants had attended a spectator sporting event and were forced to pay a price that exceeded their expectations, their entire perception of the experience and the sport
property were negatively influenced. Interestingly, Lewis’ observation about the current imbalance between sport organizations and Gen Z consumers is consistent with Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) findings that when sport organizations fail to understand the profile of their fanbase, it ultimately creates a division between consumer and team.

However, these findings did contradict Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) conclusions about budgeting for sport. Whereas Richelieu and Pons (2005) found that younger fans – on average, 22 years old – had a high discretionary budget for sport, the findings from the current research suggested otherwise; participants of the current study, who were also an average age of 22 years old, did not factor spectator sports into their budget very much, if at all. It could be that the participants of the current study, who lived in Toronto and its surrounding suburbs and towns, came from a different background and were thus susceptible to different interests or financial concerns than, say the participants from Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) study. It is also possible that because the majority of participants in the current study resided in an urban area, they felt prices more dearly because the cost of living is higher and therefore the percentage of disposable income is lower to spend on extracurriculars such as sporting events. It should be noted that the younger cohort studied by Richelieu and Pons were likely Millennials – having been about 22 years old in 2005 – and were therefore subject to different environmental realities. For instance, in the last fifteen years market and environmental conditions, such as the rising cost of living (CBS, 2018; Investopedia, 2019), may have changed between generations thus impacting upon things like discretionary income and levels of spending.

That price was found to be a significantly negative influence on participants’ decisions whether to attend a spectator sport match was not a totally surprising response, given that previous research had found the perceived utilitarian value offered by a sport entity to be an
important aspect in consumers’ decision-making processes (Blank et al., 2014; McDonald & Rascher, 2000; Yoshida et al., 2013). It was perhaps more jarring then when, in several instances, participants expressed a sincere hopelessness about spectator sports’ unaffordability. Although these statements were heightened by the nature in which they were expressed, it does not make them any less relevant. The participants’ attitudes and thoughts were drawn directly from their shared experiences and are therefore true and trusted observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For several participants of the current study, they truly felt as though they simply could not afford to attend traditional spectator sport.

A large part of the overall hopelessness was the shared feeling that the participants were being alienated by a corporate presence because of the perceived influence from corporations in the local spectator sport market. This provided context into the participants’ environment and revealed a particularly perverse inhibitor that they faced living in Toronto and its surrounding suburbs and towns. Many participants commented on the corporate monopolization of the local spectator sport market which ultimately influenced the price of sport tickets and prevented participants from accessing the market altogether. Participants argued that the local market was itself an inhibitor to their consumption as they believed there was a preferential treatment of corporate clients at the expense of younger, more casual consumers. This difference in treatment left the latter feeling unhappy and led to feelings of powerless and resentment that forcibly shifted participants’ attention towards other entertainment options.

Perhaps more importantly, these findings also suggest that, at least in the participants’ local market, spectator sports have become classicized to a degree so that only the rich and powerful were perceived to be empowered, while younger consumers who have less disposable income were seen to be marginalized. It was clear that many participants felt confined to the
sidelines and were often quick to note that a common aspect of their alienation was the fact that they perceived the Toronto spectator sport market as elitist and expensive. In hailing from this market, participants were drawing directly from their own lives and how their environment had influenced their experiences. Clearly, participants were aware of how the economic realities of their surroundings were detrimental to their pursuit of enjoying traditional spectator sports.

Even when participants expressed a desire to consume a traditional spectator sporting event, corporate presence acted as an inhibitor. On the one hand, demand from businesses for tickets and the subsequent increases in price posed as a deterrent for participants who were searching for tickets, but who harboured an adverse attitude towards expensive admission prices. On the other hand, because corporate clients were viewed as having preferential access to buying tickets, participants felt as though they weren’t given a fair chance to purchase them. In fact, several participants argued that they had given up searching for tickets altogether because they knew that the supply would be scarce and those that were left would be out of their price range. This could be a microcosm of a larger barrier to sport consumption – in a saturated spectator sport market like Toronto, casual consumers may entirely disregard sporting events because they are conditioned to think that they will not have the opportunity to purchase tickets.

The disenfranchisement and prevailing hopelessness instilled by being out-priced and potentially even outclassed from spectator sport led to a disconnect between consumer and sport organization. This was troublesome as it fed into a growing unrest shown by participants toward traditional spectator sport. It became evident within the discussions that participants were expressing generally restless commentary and did not want to consume spectator sports that they viewed as having become routinized and boring. Over the course of each focus group session, this theme was found as a barrier to consumption. According to participants, the repetition of
traditional spectator sports led to a reproduction of the same game and experience over and over. This sentiment was corroborated by multiple to participants who claimed that the repetition of spectator sports made them predictable and boring. Consequentially, the boredom felt by participants resulted in spectator sports becoming undesirable and led to a growing sense of unrest towards consuming these types of events.

Interestingly, amongst the participants, even self-identified passionate fans claimed to have lost interest in the spectator sports that they followed due to them becoming boring. It should be a massive concern to sport organizations that the participants – in this case, young fans – who identified as ‘Super Fans’ (Richelieu & Pons, 2005) are beginning to lose interest. If Gen Z super fans – those who are more likely to be loyal to a team and consume their product (Richelieu & Pons, 2005) – are becoming apathetic, what implications could this have on the rest of the generation’s consumer base? It could very well lead to an increase in the already high 65% of Gen Z fans who reported spectator sport events as joyless (Lefton, 2019).

Moreover, spectator sport events were merely one of myriad entertainment options that had become overwhelming for participants. That a variety of entertainment options seemed to be drawing participants away from traditional spectator sports was found to be consistent with Whistle’s (2018) report on Gen Z sport preferences. However, although participants acknowledged the convenience of having so many entertainment options available to them, many noted this as a negative. In fact, Gen Z was described by participants as being lost amongst an ocean of entertainment options and that the ease of access to these options was creating a culture of instant gratification and impatience. Accordingly, if Gen Z is not captured by one particular experience, they will automatically look to the next option to seek out that entertainment. That a flexibility in choice drew interest away from spectator sport relates to the findings of Pilgaard
(2013) who argued that the flexible lives of Gen Zers would lead them away from routine participation in sport. The ability for participants to select from a menu of options and multitask their entertainment cultivates a change-oriented everyday life (Pilgaard, 2013) which is not conducive for stable consumption of traditional spectator sports.

Furthering participants’ unrest was a prevailing pessimism shown by many participants towards the unpredictability of a spectator sporting event’s outcome. In many instances, participants blamed the risk of the hometown team losing as a justification not to spend their money on attending the event. In discussing whether or not to attend a spectator sporting event, participants were wary of team performance; if they believed the team they’d be rooting for would lose, they would not spend their money to go to the game. In this respect, participants could be said to be ‘committed casuals’ who were casual consumers in that they considered attending a sporting event as one of a range of things to do, but considered team winning more important than an entertaining game (Tapp & Clowes, 2002). The fluidity with which participants seemed to use team performance in their decision to consume is also consistent with the PCM, which shows that movement between different stages of sport fandom is possible and is driven by internal decision-making mechanisms (Funk & James, 2016). Specifically, it can be inferred that participants hesitantly occupied the ‘awareness’ stage only until they thought that the hometown team would provide a winning experience, at which point they moved up to the ‘attraction’ stage (Funk & James, 2016). In other words, they were peripherally aware of the sport and team’s existence, but only became interested in consuming their product if they perceived that the team would produce a win.

More likely, however, is that participants were exhibiting characteristics consistent with Smith and Stewart’s (1999) ‘champ followers’ who only committed to a team when it performed
well and won. Champ followers would not be interested in consuming spectator sports if the team was untalented or had low prospects of winning. However, throughout the focus groups, a few participants mentioned that as long as they were with friends or the atmosphere was enjoyable, they did not care if the hometown team lost. Thus, it can be said that participants exhibited a ‘medium identification’ as ‘focused fans’ (Sutton et al., 1997). Focused fans have an association with a sport or team based on attractive attributes, such as social factors or team performance, and will often be attracted to the achievement-seeking aspect of sport wherein they gain self-confidence and improved perceived social prestige from a winning team (Sutton et al., 1997).

A prevailing pessimism over the outcome of a spectator sporting event is difficult to manage due to the inherent nature of sport’s unpredictability (Mullin et al., 2014). The outcome of a match is not something that can be controlled; if it were, it would be considered match fixing and reprimanded as an illegal intervention (Lamberti & Hyatt, 2018). However, a sport organization does have control over certain factors that can lead to team success, such as drafting talented players, spending money in a free agency market, and committing more money to overall team development via better quality coaches and training facilities. Although winning can never be guaranteed in sport, organizations are certainly free to pursue it. According to the participants of this study, a team that is perceived to have a high likelihood of winning will draw more interest and, ultimately, encourage increased attendance from Gen Z consumers.

**Intragroup Differences**

In seeking to understand how and why (Yin, 2008) participants behaved in a certain manner, data analysis revealed that there were distinct differences between participants based on a number of factors. Although these findings do not directly answer the central research
questions, they should address a gap in the literature by providing initial insight into the benefits of intimately examining specific subtypes of consumers. Moreover, intragroup differences could prove to be vitally important to marketers and sport organizations who are hoping to target Gen Z consumers more efficiently.

The first major difference between the participants was based on gender. In several areas, male and female participants responded in distinct ways that warranted attention. For instance, when asked to describe Gen Z, male participants used positive and endearing terms, while the female participants used negative and condemnatory terms. Perhaps this means that the male participants were more accepting of their peers and shared stronger connections with each other. This is likely not the case however, as both male and female participants expressed a strong connection with friends and a value for their ideas and opinions. Based on the specific words used, it is more likely that female participants were more aware of the issues facing their generation and were more willing than male participants to be critical. In other words, female participants were searching for ways in which to improve their generation, while it seemed as though male participants were content with how things were. Although there may not be any practical implications that stem from this, it is an important distinction as it highlights that there are, in fact, inherent differences expressed within a subtype of consumer. In this case, male and female participants perceived and evaluated their own generation in different ways.

More practically, there was also a difference in how participants were influenced by CSR based on their gender. Females were far more inclined to discuss issues relating to ethics, the environment, and sustainability and identify with companies who pursued these types of causes. Males, meanwhile, only mentioned these issues in passing and did not exhibit the same level of awareness for these concerns. Importantly, several female participants alluded to an increased
motive to attend a match should there be charitable or environmental initiatives in place. The discrepancy here suggests that female participants were more community-oriented and aware of their external environment compared to male participants who were more concerned with individual needs. This could indicate that Gen Z females are more sympathetic to communal issues like environmental sustainability and are therefore more likely to become involved with sport organizations who adopt similar values. What these differences show is that, based on gender, Gen Z consumption behaviours can be influenced in different ways, which is consistent with the findings of Stevens et al. (2005) on gendered Gen Y sport consumption. This is particularly useful information for sport marketers who will need to be aware of these gendered differences when crafting marketing campaigns aimed at Gen Z.

The second major intragroup difference was between the participants’ various life stages. For one, participants responded differently based on their employment status. Participants who were actively employed sought out spectator sport for its agents of distraction from everyday life such as beer and friends, compared to their unemployed counterparts who were much more likely to seek out sport to pass the time. It can be interpreted that the participants who were employed, were actively seeking distractions from their professional lives and were enticed by the potential that spectator sports could provide that outlet; a finding consistent with Wann’s (1995) research on spectator sport consumption motives showing that escapism was, in fact, a driver. Meanwhile, based on their presumably less stressful days, unemployed participants did not need to use spectator sport as a psychologically therapeutic outlet. Likewise, when asked what change would make traditional spectator sports more enticing to Gen Z, the majority of unemployed participants noted cheaper prices and making them more affordable, whereas
employed participants did not share this view as entirely. Again, sport marketers will need to be aware of these differences in hedonistic and utilitarian sensibilities.

Secondly, based on the participants’ status as a student, answers were tilted in certain ways. Those who were currently enrolled as post-secondary students had more difficulty including spectator sports into their budgets due to student-related costs such as tuition. Meanwhile, participants who had graduated were more willing to discuss their purchasing habits and were less constrained by their budget to consider spectator sports. This is another important distinction because it documents the financial discrepancies that exist within this subtype of consumer. Due to differences in life stage, certain participants were less able to afford spectator sport; in this case, students immediately precluded themselves from attending matches because of the associated financial concerns. Thus, it is important to consider this in future marketing toward Gen Z and successive young generations that attend college, as they are often overlooked in marketing campaigns (Johnson & Lee, 2011).

A further important intragroup difference that was discovered within the data was the presence of several interesting contradictions between motivators and inhibitors. It was evident that within and across focus group discussions, participants shared thoughts and ideas on inhibitors that were occasionally contradictory to motivators, and vice versa. Although these contradictions initially seemed like they diluted the importance of the central themes, their presence allowed for important cross analyses which further served to highlight their importance as themes. On their own, the central motivators and inhibitors were important findings, but when examined in a comparative and critical capacity, their significance was enhanced.

For example, a clear contradiction arose between the participants’ experimental drive to consume spectator sporting events that implemented new experiences and their shared feelings of
unrest and boredom towards traditional spectator sports. Although these findings seemed to
diminish the importance of one another, upon consideration of the inferences made from their
correlation, it was determined that these contradictions strengthened the themes. That
participants claimed they were bored of spectator sports emphasized their desire for innovations
and increased drive to consume sporting events that introduced new elements into the
experience. In other words, the shared feeling of unrest and, in particular boredom, confirmed the
participants’ sentiments that they desired exciting experiences and that changing particular
aspects to spectator sport would increase their consumption. This cross analysis revealed certain
nuances present in participants’ experiences regarding their boredom of traditional spectator
sports, including that they viewed these events as having become routinized and were in need of
change. Interestingly, this unrest aligned itself with the participants’ experimental nature,
reaffirming one another as important and, through a cross analysis, explained certain things
about the other. So, although participants had become bored, their desire for innovative change
showed ways in which the inhibitor of unrest could be mitigated. Furthermore, in analyzing
participants’ thoughts on why spectator sports had become boring for them, it enabled a clearer
understanding as to why they desired new experiences and confirmed the experimental desire as
an important driver to consume.

Even across subthemes, there were compelling contradictions found within the data. For
example, the theme of status in which participants were found to care deeply about their social
status and how their own self-worth was perceived by others drew interesting differences to the
subtheme of feeling outpriced and outclassed. While it was clear that participants exhibited an
inherent desire to showcase their prestige, status, and overall clout, it was significant that in
moments of candid vulnerability – often observed within discussions around price and disposable
income – participants were willing to admit in front of peers that they were not of high enough status to be able to afford certain spectator sporting events. So, although status itself was an extremely important driver for the participants of this study, it was perhaps the recognition of status’ worth which led participants to feel exposed or inadequate when discussing that they could not afford certain spectator sport events. In turn, this may have developed feelings of resentment due to not being able to leverage certain events to augment one’s status thereby creating the overarching subtheme of being outpriced and outclassed.

**Discussion Summary**

From this analysis of the data, it can be interpreted that, although sport organizations are faced with several challenges in attracting Gen Z towards nominal spectator sport consumption, there are reasons to be optimistic. Not only were there motivators extrapolated from within the data, but in finding the inhibitors of consumption, the data offered insight into how to work towards resolving these issues. Participants were exceptionally keen on consuming traditional spectator sport if it provided an outlet to be social with friends or enhance their own self-image. They were also motivated to consume if sport entities were actively and transparently pursuing sustainable environmental initiatives or they were providing new experiences through innovative changes to their product. Lastly, the intra-group differences shown between participants, both in gender and in general life stage, can be interpreted as emphasizing the need for sport consumer typologies to consider the intimate desires and needs of subtypes of consumers. The cross-sectional analysis of participants at a given time in their lives and at a certain age provided important insight into contemporary sport consumption behaviours which was beneficial for enlightening current understandings. This cross-sectional analysis also provided a foundation from which to build future knowledge of Gen Z sport consumption behaviour as they age, and
their tastes develop. This should contribute to the continuous pursuit of deepening the understanding of Gen Z’s sport consumption behaviours (Stevens et al., 2005).
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

As the importance of understanding consumption behaviours has grown in sport market research, so too has the recent need to understand Gen Z. It has been shown that Gen Z’s interest in traditional spectator sports is waning (Evans, 2019; Kuchefski, 2018; Lefton, 2019; Whistle, 2018) and thus, a greater understanding of their consumption behaviours is required. As Gen Z continues to emerge as an influential set of consumers, they will put stress on sport organizations to effectively cater to their desires and needs (Funk, 2017; Mullin et al., 2014). The need to generate a deeper understanding of Gen Z is underscored by the fact that sport organizations must generate marketing campaigns that more efficiently target the different types of consumers in their market (Richelieu & Pons, 2009). To date, however, there is scant literature that has thoroughly examined Gen Z in a traditional spectator sport context and, unfortunately, there is still much to be discovered about Gen Z and their sport consumption behaviours.

Furthermore, there is limited literature that has thoroughly examined one specific type of consumer or fan from within an existing typology. Rather, there has been a focus on creating segmentation models and typologies of sport consumption that encompass large populations to create broad and wide-ranging comparisons between consumers. There has been limited analysis to date which has identified and broken down a specific subtype of fan to examine the characteristics which broad typologies may have missed. This is a significant gap given the need to intimately understand different types of sport consumers (Richelieu & Pons, 2009). It is particularly important for sport organizations to consider these segmentation approaches moving forward as Gen Z exhibits an increasing apathy toward traditional spectator sports (Kuchefski, 2018; Whistle, 2018; Evans, 2019; Lefton, 2019).
Therefore, this study was designed to generate a greater knowledge of Gen Z and address two gaps in the literature and its purpose was to better understand the sport consumption behaviours of Gen Z, addressing the dearth of research into this new wave of consumers. Employing a constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm, this study sought to understand and create more informed and sophisticated knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) of Gen Z’s sport consumption behaviour by understanding the meanings inherent in their experiences and perceptions (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009). Drawing on the contributions of participants and the data collected through the focus groups, the following research questions were answered:

1. What are the antecedents that motivate Generation Z toward nominal sport consumption?
2. What are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Generation Z consumers?

The data revealed a variety of complex behaviours that, once coded, revealed participants shared three central drivers for the nominal consumption of traditional spectator sports. First, for the socializing benefits offered by the event; using the match as a calendar, participants organized a social gathering by attending with friends. Second, participants were driven to attend a match in order to leverage the coolness of the event to project an image and enhance their own status. Third, if the match offered an innovative opportunity to engage in an experimental experience or there were ethical and charitable initiatives implemented into the event, participants were more driven to attend. The findings also indicated that there were two central inhibitors of motivation to consume spectator sport that painted a very bleak and hopeless outlook for participants. For one, there were major concerns over the affordability of spectator sports which included an intervening corporate presence that influenced the local ticket market and alienated participants from attending. Lastly, participants shared a sense of unrest both in their apathetic disposition toward the entertainment value of attending a match – given the
number of options available to them – and a prevailing wave of pessimism about the outcome of
the event.

Lastly, upon careful consideration of the findings and a thorough analysis, it was found that there were intragroup differences between participants. By addressing a gap in the literature, these findings highlight the inherent need to isolate and thoroughly examine specific subtypes of consumers from large spectrum typologies. Although the central themes identified from the refining of data are excellent indicators of general consumption behaviour, the intragroup differences between the participants tell us that blanketeted marketing campaigns would be unsuccessful. For example, although participants generally agreed that socializing with friends was a driver to attend a spectator sporting event, this does not necessarily mean that each participant would decisively respond to a campaign whose message is about going to a game with friends. Moreover, as the analysis was cross-sectional, given that Gen Z was examined through participants of a certain age and life stage, important comparisons can be made between the current study’s findings and previous studies which documented the sport consumption behaviours of previous generations at a similar age.

The significance of this research and its findings should not be understated. In succeeding to generate novel knowledge regarding Gen Z sport consumption behaviours, this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of an extremely important and emerging cohort of consumers. Additionally, the study’s findings have given preliminary insight to marketers and sport properties on how to effectively target Gen Z using marketing campaigns. Lastly, in discovering intragroup differences amongst participants, this research has given further emphasis within market segmentation strategies to isolate specific subtypes of consumers in order to conduct truly thorough examinations of their behaviours.
Limitations and Future Research

Although this study makes a number of important contributions, there are several limitations which must be acknowledged. As with any other research method, semi-structured interviews have their drawbacks which, in this study, included interview format inconsistencies. At times, the researcher’s novice experience level was evident as particular questions felt as though they were asked with preconceived notions in mind (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In these cases, the researcher used reflexivity to reposition himself into the study and took caution in removing any biases from subsequent questioning. By journaling and recording observations during and immediately following each focus group, this became less of an issue with successive focus groups as the quality improved with each passing discussion. This could potentially have led to the third and final focus group being “better” than the first, as the researcher’s skills in knowing when to probe and pick up on emerging themes improved. These inconsistencies may have led to subtle differences between focus groups and the quality of data collected. However, in an interpretive-constructivist paradigm, these differences should be embraced because they are consistent with the assumption that multiple realities exist and that meaning can be learned from deep reflection (Ponterotto, 2005).

More specifically, the study was delimited by the study’s methods and the inherent characteristics of focus groups. First, because of the collaborative nature of focus group discussions, there were instances when it took several moments before anyone responded to a question. It seemed that participants were hesitant to interrupt one another and were afraid that they may cut someone off if they began to answer. Indeed, in several cases, two people would begin speaking at the same time, only to have each person apologize and offer to give the floor to the other. Thus, there were instances when it took a while for conversation to begin flowing
naturally, which could have led to a deterioration in the quality of data. Moreover, because focus groups are inherently dependent on the interaction of individuals within a group, there were times when a clear power dynamic took shape and certain participants began to dominate the discussion, while others shied away. These limitations were combatted by the integration of humour and the use of probing questions by the researcher. By including humorous remarks, the researcher lightened the mood and made participants feel more comfortable, thereby improving the rapport amongst the group (Patton, 2015). Additionally, the use of specific probing questions such as “I want each of you to explain your answer” encouraged those who shied away to contribute and abated disproportionate input from others.

A stated goal of the methodology was to collect a diverse sample. Unfortunately, another limitation to consider was a lack of diversity amongst participants, specifically in terms of ethnic and geographic representation. Although there was a fairly equal representation of gender, the final sample was comprised of a majority of Caucasian individuals who lived in Toronto and its surrounding suburbs and who were either enrolled in post-secondary education or had received a college degree (refer to Appendix H). Thus, the data is skewed towards this demographic and is certainly not representative of the consumption behaviours of different ethnic groups, those who live outside of Toronto or individuals without post-secondary educational experience. For instance, a Gen Z individual living in Red Deer, Alberta may not share the same consumption behaviours, values, and ideals that a Gen Z individual living in Mississauga, Ontario may hold. Moreover, Canadian Gen Zers from different ethnic backgrounds may not necessarily share the same sport consumption behaviours as Caucasian Canadian Gen Zers. Thus, a lack of diverse representation poses as a limitation to the current study.
Another limitation was that the current study collected data on Gen Z consumers during a specific timeframe. The focus groups were completed between March and April, coinciding with the end of a semester for the participants who were currently enrolled as college students. As with any semester’s conclusion, these participants would have been concerned with upcoming examinations and year-end projects; some may have even been preparing to graduate. With these external stressors, participants may have responded to certain questions differently than if the focus groups had been completed in say July, when school is not an immediate concern and many students have a source of income from summer jobs.

A final limitation to consider is that the focus of participants seemed to be geared toward prominent professional sport franchises. As a result, there was an unintended focus on major league professional sports; participants discussed almost exclusively their experiences with and perceptions of the NHL, MLB, and National Basketball Association (NBA). Due to this narrowed focus, there was a lack of commentary made regarding other professional and semi-professional sport teams and leagues, in particular the Ontario Hockey League (OHL), Canadian Football League (CFL), American Hockey League (AHL), and East Coast Hockey League (ECHL). This is a limitation because the findings do not speak to the motives or constraints on Gen Z’s nominal sport consumption of these smaller, yet equally important sport teams and leagues.

With these limitations in mind, future research should look to build upon the knowledge of Gen Z sport consumption generated from this study. Sport consumption behaviours of Gen X (Kennett et al., 1998; Shoham et al., 1997; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2011; Turco, 1996) and Gen Y (Bednall et al., 2012; Bush et al., 2004; Stevens et al., 2005) have been studied extensively. However, Gen Z sport consumption has not yet received such substantial examination. Thus,
more sport consumption behaviour research from a qualitative methodology that explores the perceptions and experiences of Gen Z is needed.

One area that requires attention is capturing a more truly representative sample of Gen Z. Future research on Gen Z sport consumption behaviour should strive for diverse samples that include a variety of ethnic backgrounds and a wider geographical lens to capture a deeper understanding of Gen Z as a whole. Researchers from across North America should conduct qualitative research of Gen Z individuals so that a more accurate and holistic knowledge about their sport consumption behaviours can be deduced. Perhaps the reason for why affordability was such a major inhibitor in the context of this study was that participants lived in an area with an expensive cost of living and a perceived corporate influence – that may not exist elsewhere. To account for this, recreating this study in a different geographical location, where the cost of living is not as high should be pursued. The location may not be as urban but finding a sufficient sample of Gen Z individuals should create the conditions to recreate the study. Moreover, this study should be replicated during the summer months, when school-related stressors aren’t as relevant and don’t hold the potential to sway participants’ contributions.

There were several findings that were extrapolated from the data which were very interesting and are worth pursuing in future research. Future research can look to build upon several of the current study’s findings to build out a deeper knowledge and discover whether there are further important marketing implications. For instance, the novel finding that participants actively leveraged spectator sports as a social calendar serves as an area that should be looked at in more depth. The implications of this could prove substantial if fleshed out in a more thorough study. Another potential direction for future research includes studying the experimental characteristics of Gen Z outlined by participants of the current study. It would be
worth exploring consumers’ responsiveness to specific innovations introduced into various spectator sports; this would inform sport properties which innovations attracted Gen Z to attend and were thus worthwhile.

An area that should be pursued is in studying Gen Z’s experiences with and perceptions of smaller professional and semi-professional sport teams and leagues such as the OHL, CFL, AHL, and ECHL. As smaller leagues and teams, these leagues perhaps rely more heavily on gate receipts for organizational success and would stand to benefit greatly from a deeper knowledge on Gen Z’s spectator sport consumption. The current study established a methodology and framework that produced relevant and interesting findings that, based on the contributions of participants, were geared toward major professional sport teams and leagues such as the NHL, MLB, and NBA. Future research should look to adopt the current study’s methodology and established framework but with a greater focus on smaller spectator sporting teams and leagues.

Future studies should also look to draw from *a priori* research documenting sport consumer typologies so that each individual subtype of consumer/fan can be analyzed in more depth. The typology of Richelieu and Pons (2005) provided the current study with a strong framework from which to approach the study of Gen Z as a distinct segment of sport consumers. Specifically, researchers should apply the findings and discourse from earlier sport consumption models to sample individuals who fall within the bucket of a certain segment; from there, future studies can collect data through interviews, observations, and other qualitative means so that a deeper and truer understanding of a segment’s consumption behaviours can be developed.

**Implications and Recommendations**
The findings from the data analysis highlight the motivators and inhibitors to Gen Z’s nominal spectator sport consumption and will allow the researcher to provide sport marketing implications and recommendations in the following section. A number of implications and recommendations can be derived from the findings of the current study. That the findings revealed numerous drivers of nominal sport consumption, perhaps indicates that Gen Z is not as apathetic toward spectator sport as originally thought (Kuchefski, 2018; Whistle, 2018; Evans, 2019; Lefton, 2019). Additionally, although the contributions of participants led to several clear inhibitors, it does not appear as though these barriers are indestructible. All of this is encouraging for sport organizations. By understanding the experiences of Gen Z and the antecedents which drive them toward nominal consumption behaviour, brand managers are better equipped to attract them through targeted marketing campaigns. In exploring the antecedents to nominal sport consumption of Gen Z consumers, the current study’s findings provide a framework for organizations to better market to these consumers.

First, it is recommended that sport teams and properties could implement a significant focus on the social aspects of their matches within their marketing campaigns and communications. It was found that participants were extremely eager to socialize and viewed spectator sport events as potential grounds to organize social events; marketing communications could therefore include a heavy focus on friends. One way to do this may be through enticing group deals on tickets that allow groups of friends to attend games together. Participants also mentioned that, in many cases, they did not care for the team or game itself but simply enjoyed the setting for its socializing purposes. Organizations could then also market the social benefits of the stadium or venue where the team plays; for instance, showcasing the venue’s bars, restaurants, and public spaces outside of stadium seats, where fans can gather. Furthermore,
organizations could look to capitalize on the sweeping FOMO that participants felt when they were not included in one of these social outings. Using messaging such as “don’t miss out” or “don’t be the only one of your friends not here tonight” or “don’t want to miss out? We’ve got you covered” could prove beneficial. Alternatively, organizations could implement a referral program that rewards young consumers for buying tickets for their friends and coming to the game together.

Organizations could also look to incorporate Gen Z’s fixation on status, using the fascination on coolness and social prestige to their advantage. The idea of projecting one’s personal brand to collect the social rewards of validation and acceptance was often referenced by participants as an important part of Gen Z’s culture. Inherent to this notion, was the usage of social media – in particular, Instagram – to project one’s self-image. Importantly, the use of these social media platforms at sporting events was cited as an important part of the spectator sport experience – so much so, that there would almost be no point of attending if there wasn’t the opportunity to showcase that you had attended these events. Thus, the Instagrammification of Gen Z’s culture could be a focus of sport marketers. The centrality of social media in the lives of Gen Zers presents as a large opportunity to engage with and attract these consumers to attend live matches. It is strongly recommended that organizations look to emphasize and market the ‘coolness’ of attending one of their games, while incorporating social media elements into the delivery of that experience. For example: several participants mentioned that they had recently budgeted for travel, so perhaps a team could run a contest on Instagram to see which fan posted the ‘coolest’ photo while at the game and the winner would receive airfare as their prize.

It is also recommended that sport organizations capitalize on the experimental characteristics of Gen Z that were outlined by participants. In wanting to experiment with new
experiences, Gen Z consumers are not going to be satisfied by spectator sport experiences that offer, as one participant put it, the same game over and over. Thus, teams could market each game as something new; rather than using the same messaging and graphics for different games, teams could implement creative and dynamic marketing that highlights the unique features of specific matches. Additionally, sport organizations may want to continuously update their in-game presentation. As one participant claimed, the on-field product can’t be modified much, but the in-stadium experience can be changed. Participants were keen on the sensational elements of the experience, such as fireworks, music, and dancing. Teams could therefore refrain from repeating the same elements of their in-game presentation and instead, look to continuously add new and innovative ideas into the experience.

Importantly, one ‘experimental’ area which participants identified as a major concern for their generation was the sustainability of the environment and companies who prioritized giving back to the community. It is recommended then, that sport properties become more involved in environmentally friendly and community-based projects that seek to give back to the public. Several participants discussed how sport organizations who donated part of their profit to environmental causes and the less fortunate would inspire them to consume more from that particular company. So, organizations could seek to actively involve Gen Z in these innovations by asking for input and advice from these consumers on which initiatives to become involved in. Not only does this make the company’s altruistic values more transparent to consumers, but it speaks directly to Gen Z’s beliefs. This type of relationship building with Gen Z will create a familiarity and openness between the consumer and team that encourages them to engage more with the organization and should ultimately lead to increased consumption (Kim et al., 2011).
Although the data did reveal several strong inhibitors to nominal sport consumption, these findings can be used to make further recommendations for sport organizations to better attract Gen Z consumers. A major concern for participants was the unaffordability of attending a live spectator sporting event. The expensive admission prices were viewed as significant barriers to consumption. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations implement special pricing of their tickets geared toward Gen Z. For one, organizations could offer student pricing, given that so many participants felt that their student budgets precluded them from being able to afford attending spectator sport events. Several participants even suggested that a sport team who introduced special student pricing would see an increase in interest from Gen Z. A more direct approach, however, could include the implementation of ‘Gen Z Discount Days’ in which tickets to specific games were marked down specifically for Gen Z consumers. It is anticipated that Gen Z consumers would respond very favourably to these easies in affordability.

It was evident from the findings that participants felt disenfranchised by a corporate presence that had monopolized the ticket market. Although this is a localized example, and not every sport market will share these same characteristics, there are important lessons that should be learned from this. First, organizations may want to avoid, as much as they can, the preferential treatment of wealthy businesses and corporate clients. Of course, corporate clients are an important part of any sport organization’s consumer base and bottom line, however, sport properties need to be careful in how these relationships are perceived by individual fans and consumers. Second, organizations must be cognisant that any preferential treatment – perceived or factual – of one particular set of consumers, is likely to alienate other segments. In the case of this study, it seemed as though Gen Z felt alienated from attending the spectator sport events
which they desired to consume. To paraphrase one participant, sport organizations must do a better job of focusing on casual consumers.

To combat the unrest expressed by participants, sport organizations can also avoid overwhelming consumers with too many choices. Participants were quite bleak when they summarized the availability of entertainment options and its effects on their peers. It is recommended then that sport properties present their messaging as concisely and directly as possible and emphasize that they are the simple and obvious option among the clutter of other offers. Furthermore, organizational marketing should include messaging that depicts the team as atypical and extraordinary. In other words, the product will be different from anything else that a consumer might choose to do, and that the experience will be the opposite of a stale routine.

Additionally, although a prevailing pessimism about the outcome of a match is difficult to mitigate, due to the unpredictability of sport (Mullin et al., 2014), organizations can combat this inhibitor indirectly. By making an effort to improve your on-field product and chances of winning matches through a variety of means, consumers will feel more confident about the outcome and should be less pessimistic about the team losing. Teams could be more transparent with their efforts to improve their on-field quality and the actions they undertake to achieve a winning team. Thus, it is recommended that teams communicate more with fans about operational decisions and commitments such as drafting players, free agency spending, and overall team development by paying for better quality coaches and training facilities.

Finally, there are several recommendations that can be made based on the intragroup differences that were revealed in the data. When crafting marketing campaigns targeted toward Gen Z, sport organizations must consider the inherent differences in gender, employment, and education that likely exist between individuals. It was discovered that, in general, females seek
changes to the fan experience, while males seek changes to the sport or game more generally. Therefore, any marketing tailored specifically for Gen Z women could include information on how the fan experience has been improved, such as the implementation of a 90’s hip-hop night during Friday night home games, for example. Alternatively, marketing targeted towards Gen Z men could speak to how the game or the sport has changed, including new rule changes, burgeoning rivalries or key player trades. The data also revealed that females were more influenced by CSR initiatives that contributed to environmental sustainability or charitable causes. Thus, it is likely to be more effective to include information on a team’s philanthropic endeavors within marketing campaigns aimed at Gen Z women. One recommendation that is anticipated to generate a favourable response is donating part of the revenue from ticket sales during a specific game to a charity that has been identified as important to Gen Z.

Furthermore, based on the differences found between participants who were employed versus unemployed, it is recommended that sport organizations target young professionals by marketing the features of ‘escape’ that are present at a live match, such as drinking beers and enjoying entertainment with friends. Additionally, with it being found that enrolled post-secondary students differed from their peers who had graduated, sport organizations could offer student-friendly pricing with student deals on tickets and seek to advertise these deals in and around college towns and campuses.

This study revealed a number of findings that hold important implications for spectator sport organizations. Several recommendations were introduced on synthesizing the motivators and inhibitors of Gen Z sport consumption into more effective marketing campaigns that better target Gen Z consumers. A summary of the recommendations is presented below.
Table 2: Summary of Recommendations for Sport Organizations and Marketers

| Social (Motive) | • Bringing together friends with group ticket deals and marketing that plays into Gen Z’s inherent FOMO  
|                | • Emphasize social features of the stadium or arena, such as bars |
| Status (Motive) | • Emphasize the prestige of your brand, team, and product  
|                | • Capitalize on the Instagrammification of Gen Z culture by increasing social media activity and engagement  
|                | • Rewarding the use of Instagram at live games to promote attendance at the event; run social media contests |
| Experimental (Motive) | • Creative and dynamic marketing that highlights the unique features of each specific match  
|                | • Continuously introduce new elements into game-day presentation, such as fireworks, music, and celebrity activation  
|                | • Increase organizational philanthropy by participating in more Green initiatives and donation programmes  
|                | • Involve Gen Z consumers in decisions about which philanthropic causes to become involved in; seek their input and advice |
| Affordability (Inhibitor) | • Address affordability, by implementing special ticket prices and introducing ‘Gen Z’ discount days for specified matches  
|                | • Introduce student discounts on both ticket and concession sales  
|                | • Avoid alienating young consumers with preferential treatment of corporate clients; place a higher value on young, casual fans |
**Unrest (Inhibitor)**

- Don’t overwhelm with too many choices; be concise and market the product as the obvious option amongst the clutter of others
- Market the team as atypical and extraordinary, so that matches are not viewed as boring or stale – “Anything but Routine”
- Be more transparent with consumers about how the team is actively pursuing winning by communicating operational decisions (like drafting) as the means to achieving victory

**Intragroup Differences**

- Consider differences in gender, employment, and education
- **Gender:** in general, females seek changes to the fan experience, while males seek changes to the sport or game more generally; females are also more influenced by CSR initiatives
- **Employment:** market the features of ‘escape’ such as drinking beers and entertainment with friends to young professionals
- **Students:** offer student-friendly pricing and seek to advertise these deals in and around college towns and campuses

**Theoretical Contribution**

Within this study, several theoretical contributions have been made. These contributions include: being one of the first studies to discover novel information about Gen Z’s sport consumption behaviours in a traditional spectator sport setting; exploring the importance of isolating a subtype of consumer within market segmentation strategies, lending further
substantiation to its necessity; and building upon the research of Richelieu and Pons (2005) as a framework for further generational study into sport consumers.

With regards to Gen Z, the current study contributed to a significant gap in the literature; namely, that the existing literature on Gen Z’s sport consumption behaviours is limited. By studying Gen Z consumers and presenting several important findings, this research has contributed to a deeper knowledge of Gen Z consumers and a new lens from which to view their spectator sport consumption. *A priori* research on sport consumption has called for a greater focus on studying specific types of consumers and fans (Richelieu & Pons, 2005) and generational segmentation (Teed et al., 2008) in order to generate deeper understandings of consumption behaviours and to bridge the growing divide between sport organizations and young consumers. Meanwhile, Trail and Kim (2010) concluded that “future research on constraints and motivators should incorporate additional spectator characteristics and situational factors, which play critical roles in sport consumption decisions” (p.208).

In this respect, the current study has addressed the propositions set out by past research. First, this study succeeded in its purpose of isolating a specific type of generational consumer and generating a greater knowledge of their consumption behaviours. Whereas the extant literature about Gen Z’s spectator sport consumption was sparse, this study has added new knowledge into the subject and provides a preliminary foundation from which to build from. Second, in deriving several important findings from the data, this study was able to put forth recommendations for sport organizations on how to curtail the apathy shown towards traditional spectator sport by Gen Z consumers. In so doing, these recommendations should enable sport marketers and practitioners to craft more effective marketing campaigns targeted to Gen Z and, hopefully, reconcile the organizations’ strategic vision with the consumers’ expectations.
(Richelieu & Pons, 2005). At the very least, the constraints and motivators revealed through the study’s findings have contributed to the theoretical knowledge on spectator sport consumption and should lead to more informed inferences about the decision-making processes of Gen Z (Trail & Kim, 2010).

This study also explored the importance of thoroughly examining specific subtypes of consumers. Theoretically, this contributed important implications for the literature on market segmentation. By isolating Gen Z and conducting an interpretive, qualitative study on their consumption behaviours, the findings revealed important intragroup distinctions between the participants. This addresses the gap in the literature concerning previous typologies and sport consumer segmentation models not scrupulously accounting for the differences present within each subtype of consumer. Although participants of the current study were all a part of Gen Z and are therefore catalogued as the same subtype of consumer, the findings indicated that there are important intragroup differences that could have serious marketing implications. Thus, it is important to consider this approach moving forward in future market segmentation research.

Lastly, this study incorporated certain variables from the work done by Richelieu and Pons (2005) as a framework from which to build further generational knowledge on sport consumers. The application of Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology in research exploring generational segmentation was successful in the current study, which is important for two reasons. First, the current study showed that it was possible to draw from Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) research to conduct a successful study into generational segmentation. Second, the synthesis of elements from Richelieu and Pons’ (2005) typology into the current study’s methodology allowed for sport consumption data to be collected while maintaining a consistency
with previous knowledge. This should provide confidence that their findings may be used as a framework in future studies that examine generational spectator sport consumption.
References


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Appendix A
Public Recruitment Poster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Wanted: Gen Z

TITLE: MARKETING TRADITIONAL SPORTS TO GENERATION Z: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY SPORT SPECTATORSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Who: Must be born in 1996 or later and at least 18 years old

What: Participants will take part in a focus group interview for approximately one hour in downtown Hamilton

Purpose: To better understand the behaviours of Generation Z as they relate to the consumption of spectator sports

Your participation will be kept strictly confidential. As a participant, you will be entered in a draw to win 1 of 5 $50 Amazon gift cards!

PLEASE CONTACT STEPHEN at sm17we@brocku.ca by March 30th
Supervisor: Dr. Nicholas Burton - nburton@brocku.ca

This study has received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board of Brock University (REB # 19-193 - BURTON)
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Wanted: Gen Z

TITLE: MARKETING TRADITIONAL SPORTS TO GENERATION Z: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY SPORT SPECTATORSHIP BEHAVIOUR

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Your participation will be kept strictly confidential. As a participant, you will be entered in a draw to win 1 of 5 $50 Amazon gift cards!

PLEASE CONTACT STEPHEN at sm17we@brocku.ca by March 16th

This study has received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board of Brock University (REB # 19-193 - BURTON)

Research Study
Stephen Mighton, Grad Student
Supervisor Dr. Nicholas Burton - nburton@brocku.ca
Brock University - Department of Sport Management
Interaction with this ad (i.e. liking, sharing) will impact your privacy as a participant in this study
Appendix C

Email Invitation for Focus Group Interview Participation

Title of study: *Generation Z and Attending Traditional Spectator Sports: a Study of Contemporary Sport Consumer Behaviour*

Principal Investigator: Stephen Mighton, Graduate Student, Department of Sport Management, Brock University

Co-investigators: Dr. Nicholas Burton, Assistant Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University; Dr. Craig Hyatt, Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management; and Dr. Olan Scott, Assistant Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University

I, Stephen Mighton, invite you to participate in a research project entitled, “Generation Z and Attending Traditional Spectator Sports: a Study of Contemporary Sport Consumer Behaviour.” In this study, I aim to answer the following research questions: (RQ1) what are the antecedents that motivate Generation Z toward nominal sport consumption? (RQ2) what are the inhibitors of motivation to consume sport for Generation Z consumers? The principal investigator is seeking individuals who identify as Gen Z (born in 1995 or later) and, ideally, those with travel access to downtown Hamilton. Study participants will be asked to partake in a focus group interview with the principal investigator, assistant moderator, and fellow participants, which should take approximately one hour to complete. The principal investigator requires each participant be a minimum of 18 years of age in addition to filling out informed consent and demographic information forms before the beginning of the interview. *As a participant in this study, you will be automatically entered in a draw for your chance to win 1 of 5 $50 Amazon gift cards upon completion of the interview.*

The purpose of this research is to develop a greater understanding of Generation Z’s consumer behaviours and what motivates them to consume sport. The study should contribute value to sport marketers and the existing literature by generating new, in-depth insight into an underexplored aspect of sport marketing and consumer segmentation. Your participation will be kept completely confidential and at no point will your identity be revealed.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any questions about the study and/or certain components of the interview process, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905-688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Stephen Mighton
Graduate Student, Department of Sport Management
Brock University
St. Catharines, ON, Canada
sm17we@brocku.ca
Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire for Participants in the research study “Generation Z and Attending Traditional Spectator Sports: a Study of Contemporary Sport Consumer Behaviour”

Reminder: Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

1. What is your gender?
   Male [  ]  Female [  ]  Prefer not to answer [  ]

2. Which is your age?
   [  ] 18
   [  ] 19
   [  ] 20
   [  ] 21
   [  ] 22
   [  ] 23

3. Which of the following best describes your current level of education?
   [  ] Some high school
   [  ] High school graduate
   [  ] Some college/university
   [  ] College or university graduate
   [  ] Advanced degree holder (Master’s/PhD)
   Currently enrolled? [  ] yes  [  ] no

4. What is your current occupation?

________________________________________________________________________

5. Are you…
   [  ] Single (never married)  [  ] Widowed
   [  ] Married or Cohabitating  [  ] Other
   [  ] Separated  [  ] Prefer not to say

6. What is your ethnicity?
   [  ] Caucasian
   [  ] Hispanic
   [  ] African
   [  ] Other – please specify: ___________
   [  ] Asian
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Generation Z and Attending Traditional Spectator Sports: a Study of Contemporary Sport Consumer Behaviour

This study examines Generation Z consumers’ interest, motivation, and behaviour concerning different forms of entertainment, seeking to understand how they perceive sport.

Principal Investigator: Stephen Mighton
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sm17we@brocku.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Nicholas Burton
Assistant Professor
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way
St. Catharines, ON
Canada, L2S 3A1
nburton@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to take part in an ongoing study into the motivations and antecedents of sport consumption of Generation Z consumers. The aim of the research is to explore the perceptions and behavioural habits of Generation Z, in an effort to better understand how segmented marketing strategies used by sport organizations can be improved.

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview. You will be expected to respond to questions posed by the researcher as well as interactively contribute to the discussion. The interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can transcribe the data collected from the interviews at a later date. Participation will take approximately one hour of your time.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may withdraw from this study at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Given the nature of the study, and the data collected, all information gathered will be kept in strict confidentiality. The information collected will be stored securely and anonymously using pseudonyms in favour of your name and password protected computers. Throughout the study, and any subsequent publications, all information will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential.

Shortly after the interview, I will send you a copy of your interview transcript for you to look over and confirm the accuracy of its content. You will receive only your own personal contributions to the interview to review. No one else will receive a copy of the transcript containing your contributions.

Access to the data will be restricted to myself, Stephen Mighton, and my faculty research supervisor, Dr. Nicholas Burton.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Should you wish to know more about the study, its results, or any subsequent publications, please indicate so below. Please feel free to contact either member of the research team at any time, should you have questions or concerns regarding the nature of the study, its results, or any future publications.

INFORMED CONSENT

By completing this survey, you agree to participate in this study as described, and have made the decision based on the information contained herein. You may ask questions at any time while completing this survey, or in the future, and may withdraw this consent at any time.

YES, I agree to participate in this study [_____]

NO, I do not agree to participate in this study [_____]

Name: _______________________________________

Signature: _______________________________________

I would like to know more about future publications and results:  YES [___]  NO [___]
Appendix F
Interview Guide

Once again, thank you for your time and willingness to take part in this study and allowing me to interview you. Before we begin, I would like to remind you that nothing included in the final project will reveal your identity or compromise your confidentiality. Also, your participation is completely voluntary, and we can stop this interview at any time should we need to.

I am genuinely interested in your experiences and perspectives, so please feel free to contribute as much as you can to the discussion. As this is a focus group setting, please do not feel as though you need to wait for me to ask questions. In fact, I encourage interaction amongst the group. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers, so anything you wish to tell me, or the group, is important. Let’s start by introducing ourselves to the group.

1. How would you describe your level of interest and/or engagement with spectator sports?
   1a. how would you describe sport’s place in your life?

2. Describe to me your favourite sports memory?
   2a. can you describe why it was special to you?

3. How do you feel about advertisements?
   3a. how do you feel when you hear or see an ad for live sporting events?
   3b. what makes an advertisement effective, in your opinion?
   3c. what would an advertisement have to do to grab your attention?

4. What do you think about the current admission prices to various spectator sport entertainment?
   4a. how do prices affect your decision to attend an event?
   4a. what kinds of things do you budget for in your daily life?

5. How often do you purchase merchandise because of a promotion?
   5a. what would you consider to be an appealing promotion for a spectator sporting event?

6. As a consumer, what concerns you the most about a product you might consider buying?
   6a. how do the opinions of others influence your decisions to buy something?

7. Can you describe to me what you value most from entertainment?
7a. what aspect of an entertainment experience is the most important?

8. If you yourself were trying to appeal to your peers, what would you change about spectator sport experiences to make them more exciting or appealing?

8a. what do you think Gen Z consumers care about?
8b. tell me the types of things that would entice you to go to a sporting event?

9. Is there anything else anyone would like to discuss about being a Gen Z consumer?
Appendix G
Thank You Letter and Member Check

Hello [Name]:

I would like to say thank you once again for participating in my study! I have transcribed the interview that I conducted with you and have attached the file here. You will notice that your real name has been omitted in favour of a pseudonym which is [pseudonym]. You will also notice that I have removed the other participants’ contributions from this transcript to further protect their confidentiality. Please read through the interview file to ensure that the information is accurate. Please do not feel the need to edit the file for grammar or transition words such as ‘like’ or ‘um,’ as conversations are naturally inconsistent. I need you to check for factual inaccuracies (for example, I may have interpreted a 15 as a 50, or a ‘me’ as a ‘we’). If you find any inaccuracies in the transcription, please note them and let me know. If everything looks good, let me know that as well. Please return your comments to me within two weeks. If I have not heard from you after two weeks, I will assume that you have found the data to be accurate.

Have a wonderful day,

Stephen
## Appendix H

### Participant Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some College/University</td>
<td>Millbrook, ON</td>
<td>Part-Time Retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some College/University</td>
<td>Ancaster, ON</td>
<td>Intern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Security Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Sr. Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Other (Greek Orthodox)</td>
<td>Some College/University</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
<td>Call Campaign Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON</td>
<td>Events Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Newmarket, ON</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Office Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Event Staff Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sappho</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Advanced Degree Holder</td>
<td>Pickering, ON</td>
<td>Disability Case Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Vaughan, ON</td>
<td>Chiropractic Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Structural Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>College/University Graduate</td>
<td>Scarborough, ON</td>
<td>PR Account Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some College/University</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Some College/University</td>
<td>Toronto, ON</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Detailed Breakdown:**
• Female-to-male ratio – 7:10 (41.2% female, 58.8% male)
• Average age – 22.06 years
• Relationship status: Single (never married) 17 (100%)
• Ethnic representation – Caucasian 14 (82%), Asian 2 (12%), Other – Greek Orthodox 1 (6%)
• Education – High school graduate 1 (5.85%), Some college/university 5 (29.5%), College/university graduate 10 (58.8%), Advanced degree holder 1 (5.85%)
• Residence: Toronto 7 (41.18%), Mississauga 2 (11.76%), Millbrook 1 (5.85%), Ancaster 1 (5.85%), Newmarket 1 (5.85%), Pickering 1 (5.85%), Scarborough 1 (5.85%), Vaughan 1 (5.85%), Not Available 2 (11.76%)
• Occupation – Unemployed 5 (29.5%), Employed 10 (58.8%), Internship 1 (5.85%), Volunteer 1 (5.85%)
## Appendix I
### Participant Contribution Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Recruited Through</th>
<th>One Word to Describe Gen Z?</th>
<th>Level of Interest in Spectator Sports</th>
<th>What Would You Change About Spectator Sport to make it appealing to Gen Z?</th>
<th>What Would Entice You to Attend a Sporting Event?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Referral – LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>I have a low interest. I don’t often seek out those sports. (Very Low)</td>
<td>More involvement; use promotions and relevant trends.</td>
<td>Good time with friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Recruitment Poster (Physical)</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Sport is more than just a hobby at this point. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Introduce unprecedented change; introduce the atypical and new.</td>
<td>Drinks with friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Outspoken</td>
<td>I follow hockey more than anything. Maybe on Instagram for highlights. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Increasing fan safety and interaction.</td>
<td>Storyline. Food and beer deals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Obsessive</td>
<td>A 10/10 for certain sports. If it’s on TV, I’ll watch. (High)</td>
<td>More interactive and intimate experience.</td>
<td>Who I’m going with; my friends. Cheap beer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>Twitter (Social Media)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>I like Sports a lot. I follow everything. (Very High)</td>
<td>Incorporate variety of style and introduce new ideas.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper</td>
<td>LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>My passion for sport started as a kid. From a ground roots level is how I started to love sport. (High)</td>
<td>Increase hype and awareness; use celebrities, trends, social media.</td>
<td>Beers with friends. An escape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>I would say I have a pretty high level. (High)</td>
<td>Greater availability of Wi-Fi, online engagement.</td>
<td>Sex Appeal, Cheerleaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Referral – Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Consumed</td>
<td>The sports I watch are the big ones. I’d say moderate. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Cheaper prices.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>I’m definitely a big hockey guy. I like to look on Twitter too. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Incorporating more theatrics; extra entertainment for fans.</td>
<td>A good storyline, like a rivalry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Lost</td>
<td>Now that I’m older, I maybe only watch hockey, but the NBA’s Twitter and Instagram have looped me in as a fan. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Greater focus on casual fans; cheaper prices, music, etc.</td>
<td>Something new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Platform</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Consistent innovation and introducing new ideas.</td>
<td>Something new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald</td>
<td>LinkedIn (Social Media)</td>
<td>Clout</td>
<td>I went to Jurassic Park for the Raptors’ playoffs. (High)</td>
<td>Consistent innovation and introducing new ideas.</td>
<td>Something new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapho</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Materialistic</td>
<td>I never really used to watch sports. (Low)</td>
<td>Cheaper prices.</td>
<td>Excitement; if it were playoffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>Referral – Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Evolving</td>
<td>Hockey and basketball. I feel like I would be moderate. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Enhancing the atmosphere with music, etc.</td>
<td>If friends are going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>I mainly follow hockey but with regards to other sports, I just see highlights on Instagram and Twitter – I don’t follow them too much. (Moderate)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Good time with friends. Affordable. Promotional discounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Needy</td>
<td>I’m not a die-hard sports fan but will follow up with the Leafs and Raptors or who’s winning. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Enhance the ambiance with music, dancing, fireworks, etc.</td>
<td>Entertainment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt</td>
<td>Facebook (Social Media)</td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>I like to watch the home teams, but other than that I don’t follow it too much. (Moderate)</td>
<td>Cheaper prices.</td>
<td>Affordable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Twitter (Social Media)</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>It’s the only thing I really watch on television. I keep up with fantasy teams and watch with my family. (Very High)</td>
<td>A more unique experience including the use of humour.</td>
<td>New atmosphere. A rivalry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>