



Department of Business and Management

Subject: Product & Brand Management

Are millennials swiping left on sports?

An analysis of the causes behind young people's
apparent lack of interest in sports

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Academic Year: 2018/2019

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Abstract

A rising concern in many sports markets around the world is the seeming lack of interest in sports among younger people. TV sports viewership from this demographic is frequently down, event attendance is down, even sports participation is down. Past research on sport consumer behaviour has offered valuable insights on the possible motives that can be considered predictors of sport consumption decisions. That said, most of these studies have been developed in the form of survey based descriptive research, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the possible causes of this phenomenon.

This study aims at closing a gap in the existent literature by developing an explorative study that wishes to provide an initial understanding of how different economic, behavioral and demographic factors can affect the involvement with sports of different generations of sports fans.

The results indicate that some economic and behavioral factors have a significant effect on sports fans' involvement with sports. When it comes to generational differences, however, the results do not support the idea that young sports fans have a significantly different interest in sports compared to the previous generation.

This research offers several interesting managerial insights for sponsors, media companies and sports clubs that are reliant on capturing the largest audience possible for their sports.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Same old faces; no new faces”. This sentence synthesizes the trend that has been taking shape in recent years in news articles and studies that seem to indicate a decline in interest in sports among young people compared to the previous generations (Nielsen, 2013; SFIA, 2015; football365.com; Aspen Institute, 2015).

Several empirical studies conducted in different countries provide evidence of the decrease in attendance of young people at sports events. A research in Australia explains the issue well, by showing that while the overall attendance at sport matches has remained more or less unchanged since 1995, an analysis of the data by age group showed that people aged 18 to 24 years went from being 57% in 2005-06 to 51% in 2009-10 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009-10). Italy is facing a similar situation, with data from 2016 reporting sport events participation with maximum affluence in age groups 15-17 (45,9%) and 18-19 (44,2%) but slowly declining from 25 years-olds forward, with values falling below the national average (Istat, 2016).

Past literature has suggested different explanations for sports spectator consumption behaviour (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000; Wann, 1995; Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989; Zillmann & Paulus, 1993). These studies, while helpful in defining the drivers behind sport consumption motivation, are not helpful in understanding the causes behind this recent trend among the youth. In fact, while this topic has been gaining a lot of attention recently, research in this area has been mostly limited to certain countries, like the US and the UK, where this trend seems to be more evident. In this thesis, I will address this “geographical issue”, by analysing two countries that have not been examined yet: Italy and Norway. These countries offer an interesting perspective due to their different demographic and economics environments. This will allow for an analysis of sports fans consumer behaviour in a more “international” setting and could provide some insights to confirm or contradict the existence of this trend.

The relevance of this topic is quite evident if one considers the fact that “millennials” are the more populous generation in most countries, they are engaged in social media and have resources to spend. It is the golden demographic for marketers to target (Nielsen, 2018). Sports fans in particular are an interesting subject to consider, as a study from Nielsen demonstrates. The study compared two groups expressing different levels of interest in sports. The results showed that the fans who were more involved with sports were also the ones that would favour a sponsor’s product over a non-sponsor’s one if price and quality were the same (Nielsen Sports DNA, May 2017). Sponsorships are evolving over time, they are becoming more and more a two-sided relationship, where partners need to understand the business needs of sponsors to help deliver them to the customers. Understanding and anticipating the possible evolution of sports fans’ behaviour

becomes crucial for sponsors, media companies and sports clubs that are reliant on capturing the largest audience possible for their offerings.

Past studies have been developed in the form of survey-based descriptive research, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the possible causes of this phenomenon. In addition to this, most of them only consider event attendance and TV viewership as the two determinants of the concept of interest in sports. The present research addresses the level of involvement with sports of the millennials generation by focusing on different aspects of it, like following sports news, in order to understand if young people lost interest in sports, or if they are expressing their involvement through different means compared to their parents. Sports audiences have always been an attractive world for sponsors, but this market is facing rapid changes and sports clubs need to listen and adapt to the need of their customers if they want their revenues to keep growing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Involvement with Sports

Several consumer behaviour studies have tried to identify the motives leading sports fans habits and their interest in sports (Hebb, 1955; Deci, 1971). Motivation and fan identification are usually the most commonly studied concepts in sports participation literature (Snelgrove, Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2008). Other researchers have proposed a variety of theories to explain spectator consumption behaviour, like means-end-chain theory (Gutman, 1982), attitude theory (Eagly & Chaiken 1993), or self-esteem theory (Cast and Burke, 2002). That said, none of these theories is able to explain the motives behind sports fan behaviour on its own.

The capacity to draw audiences to see matches is essential for the success of any sport organization. Thus, understanding the drivers and motivations behind fans' interest in sports has been a priority for sports clubs and sponsors alike. As a study by Olson and Thjømøe (2011) shows, sponsors that cultivate activities that increase audience involvement in an object, will also multiply the chance to be correctly recognized by sports fans. In the literature of involvement with sports, many aspects have been considered to identify this concept. Watching competitive sports is often considered one of the activities that generate most interest and involvement in terms of hedonic experiences (Pons, Mourali, & Nyeck, 2006). Gauthier and Hansen (1993), are among those that focused their analysis on demographic factors, Murrell and Dietz (1992) conducted a study on stadium attendance in relation to variables such as group identification and fan identity and Wann, 1995 considered self-esteem, escape, economic, group affiliation and entertainment as factors determining sport fans motivation. Other still focused on TV viewership, with an interest in motives,

affective involvement and behaviours associated with viewing sports on television (Gantz & Wenner, 1995). Other studies focused on commitment to sports (Scanlon, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, and Keeler, 1993) and there have even been efforts to separate sports participation from sports spectatorship (Burnett, Menon, and Smart, 1993).

The limitation of previous research mainly consists in a lack of a construct of involvement that encompasses all the above-mentioned factors, like TV viewing and event attendance, but also includes the interest in following sports news. Some authors have started to identify sports fans and their wide range of behaviours with the term “involvement” (Shank & Beasley, 1998). Laverie and Arnett (2000) also adopted this concept and considered it as a mix of arousal, motivation and interest toward an activity or product. I opted to follow Shank & Beasley (1998) definition of sports involvement as *“the perceived interest in and personal importance of sports to an individual”*. In the same study the authors find that the level of involvement is positively related to the hours spent by the individual in watching sports on TV, attending matches, following news in magazines or newspapers. Their approach is different from the rest of the literature, since they focus on a psychological involvement rather than considering a purely behavioural perspective. Peter and Olsen (1987) also identified the level of involvement as a fundamental predictor of behavior when dealing with brand, product and purchase intentions. In studies related to sponsorship it is not uncommon to find different levels of sports involvement being considered, with different concepts associated with them. Walraven et. Al (2014) considers two in the form of the individual involvement at the generic level of sports category (someone being a fan of football in general), and one in the form of the domain-specific level of the sponsored object (someone being a fan of one specific team or player). In this thesis I am investigating the former, so I will refer to the first definition of individual involvement at the generic level of sports category when developing the research questions.

2.2 Generational Differences

Many researchers tend to consider Gen Y as a homogenous group of people. This idea was made prominent by the choices of population in different studies, with a focus on certain categories, such as college students (Bakewell and Vincent-Wayne, 2003; Rich, 2008), or the use of a cohort-level comparison with other generations (Moore and Carpenter, 2008; Loro, 2006). Recent studies, however, underline the fact that millennials should be considered as a heterogenous group of people (Foscht et al, 2009) and that the discipline of Marketing should focus more on consumer behaviour to perform a more precise segmentation (Bacon, 2016).

This belief is also shared in the context of sports consumer behaviour, with authors like Robinson (2007) advocating for an extension of service quality research in the area of customer expectation of sports, with a focus on customer segmentation. This is the theory that I will follow in this thesis as well, since I believe that the possible explanation for young people apparent lack of interest with sports may lie more with their heterogeneous preferences, than with an arbitrary difference based on generations. In addition to this, most of the news articles and research on this apparent decrease in interest in sports is based on measurement of TV audience or match attendance, but young people's involvement with sports might manifest itself in different ways. Consumers nowadays have more choices than ever for TV programs and how they acquire that content. As a consequence, consumer habits are changing, with many people opting to drop their traditional programming providers to switch to streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu (Crawford, 2016). This trend is confirmed by a study in the UK, in which results seem to suggest that young adults tend not to watch TV in general, regardless of the type of program shown (Statista, 2019). Past studies have examined the reasons associated with watching TV sports programs and found motivation related to gender or general interest in sports (Gantz, 2009), but none have performed a generational segmentation to help understand the causes of this recent phenomenon.

In the following sections I will detail the factors that I think might determine the difference in involvement with sports between generations. Starting with economic ones, then behavioural preferences and finally considering the differences among millennials themselves. The purpose of these distinctions will be to be able to better dissect the elements that will compose the answer to the main research question of this thesis:

RQ1: Is there a difference in involvement with sports between young people and the previous generation?

2.3 Economic Factors

Sport marketers have often found pricing issues to be cause of a change in sport demand. Previous studies have confirmed this by analysing that a family's average household income could make tickets not affordable and thus influence stadium attendance, while some price strategies, like promotions (in the form of giveaways and events), might be influence it positively (James & Ross, 2004). For these reasons, I believe that it might be interesting to test some economic variables to understand what impact they might have in relation to the phenomenon that is the subject of this study.

2.3.1 Financial Contentment

The economic crisis of 2008 had a significant influence on consumption habits, with a definite switch from the conspicuous, hedonistic, materialistic consumption that took place before it (Hamilton & Denniss, 2005). For younger millennials, ranging from 17 to 23 years old, this crisis can only be considered as a

catastrophic event that can influence their lives for several years afterwards (Debevec et al, 2013). Some authors believe that such an important event taking place in the so-called “coming-of-age years” is bound to shape the preferences of that cohort group in the long-term, affecting their preferences, attitudes and behaviours (Meredith & Schewe, 2002). When faced with an economic turndown, consumer behaviour is affected by factors such as income, unemployment and prices (Shama, 1978). The economic environment of a country could influence the consumption habits of millennials due to the restriction it could impose on their income, their employment status and the budget constraints that they may face (Daskalopoulou & Petrou, 2006). In addition to this, several studies have shown that different generations have different emotional responses to a period of economic crisis (Urbonavicius & Pikiturniene, 2010).

Many news articles seem to imply that a difference in economic conditions might be one of the most prominent reasons for young people’s lack of involvement in sports. This might be caused by the fact that millennials have alternative options to watch the sporting events they are interested in, without worrying about the cost of TV subscriptions, thanks to sites like YouTube (Cummings, 2016).

To analyse more in detail the influence of the socio-economic context in different countries, this thesis develops a cross-country comparison between a country experiencing a great economic growth: Norway, and a country like Italy, which is facing a slow economic growth with an annual real GDP growth that is forecast to fall to 0.2% according to the European Commission (2019). To understand the difference in economic environment between these countries, it is enough to state that the GDP per capita of Norway is 82,770 US dollars while the GDP per capita of Italy is 34,780 US dollars (International Monetary Fund, October 2018). This analysis might provide an interesting insight if there are differences between countries in the involvement with sports shown in terms of buying a TV subscription or attending matches.

I believe that financial contentment may provide a good measure to understand if young sports fan believe they have enough resources to satisfy their primary needs and also spend it on something else. With these considerations, it is possible to put forward the following research questions:

RQ2: Can economic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ2.1: Does the level of financial contentment influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?

2.3.2 Price Fairness

As transaction utility theory teaches, the perceived value of a deal considers more than just the mere price of a good (Thaler, 1999). The perception of price fairness is one of the most essential elements to consider

when determining a consumer purchase decision (Darke & Dahl, 2003; Haws & Bearden, 2006). It is a construct that is closely related to the principle of distributive justice, which states that, when in an exchange relationship with a third party, a person will feel entitled to a reward that is proportional to their investment in the relationship (Homans, 1961). This is the reason why trust and loyalty in the buyer-seller relationship become crucial for the perception of price fairness (Xia, Monroe, & Cox, 2004).

In the context of sports, trust and loyalty are also essential elements of the relationship between a fan and their sports team and a high degree of connection helps not only in building and maintaining the relationship, but also in increasing the involvement toward the favourite team in the long run (Funk & James, 2006). Many articles attribute the decrease in sporting event attendance to the high price of tickets. As a poll in the UK found out, out of 1000 fans, between the age of 18 and 24, a staggering 82% stated the cost of tickets as being one of the main obstacles to a possible increase in their stadium attendance (BBC, 2017). Sponsors are interested in these statistics since in-stadium sponsorship has been a tool often employed in advertising strategies even if it has been often difficult to measure its effectiveness (O'Reilly et al., 2007). Finding out that young people are not interest in watching a sporting event live might influence their future strategies and make them move onto different horizons.

While the topic of the fairness of price tickets is more straightforward, it is more difficult to understand how much young people would be willing to pay for a TV subscription fee to watch sports when there are even possible free alternatives in the form of illegal streams or YouTube highlights. To relate this issue to sporting events, a recent study by Ampere conducted an analysis in 14 countries (Australia, Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey the UK and the US), with a sample of sports fan with ages going from 18-64 and found that viewers aged 35-54 accounted for almost half of the audience (McDonald, 2018). While this trend might tell sponsors to look for alternative media channels to reach a younger audience, it should be a source a worry for sports clubs that heavily rely on TV rights for their annual revenues. It is important to understand if the right price might influence young people to go back to a medium they are slowly leaving behind, or if it is time to offer alternatives (in the form of online streaming service for example) that might replace the current business model. With these premises, I would like to test if sports fan perceptions on the perceived fairness of the ticket of a single match and the price fairness associated to a TV subscription fee can affect their interest in sports.

RQ2.2: Does the level of price fairness of a match ticket or a sports channel subscription influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

2.4 Behavioural Factors

For the purpose of this thesis, I chose to analyse three behavioural variables to test their effect on sports fans interest in sports. Personal motives that lead sports fans to be interested in following their favourite teams or in watching sporting events in general, have often been the subject of several studies. Among the most popular variables analysed in past studies, team affiliation, entertainment, offering an “escape from day-to-day activities” are only some of the ones considered. (James and Ross, 2002). Among the possibilities considered, I chose “sport participation” as one of the most interesting variables to analyse, since past studies consider elements like aesthetics and physical skill as potential sport consumer motives (Trail and James, 2001). For the purpose of this study, I am not only interested in motives that might drive sports fans to follow their hobbies, but also in variables that might explain the difference in interest between two generations. For this reason, I chose the potential attention span deficit (Barnes, Marateo & Ferris, 2007) and the different exposure to technology (Serres, 2014) as two additional behavioral differences between generations that could explain the reason behind this trend. All these variables have been preferred to alternative ones due to the recurrence with which they appeared to be linked to the trend that I am analysing in this thesis.

2.4.1 Attention Span

“You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish” (McSpadden, 2015). With this title, an article published by the Time quickly became one of the most widely cited one in the context of the shortening attention span issue. The article referred as a source, to a report by the Consumer Insights team of Microsoft Corp. Canada that apparently found out that the average human attention span dropped from twelve seconds in 2000 to eight seconds in 2013. However, a deeper search into the subject showed that the figure in question does not come from that report, but from a source called Statistic Brain. Some authors (Maybin, 2017) tried to contact that site but with no results. Not only that, but there seems to be no evidence of Goldfishes having a short attention span either, since they have been apparently often used by scientists to study the formation of memory (BBC, 2017). Goldfishes do not have a short attention span and, as far as humans go, researchers are just now realizing that the “shortening of attention spans” might be a myth as well.

In terms of literature, cognitive capacity has been covered by several studies that tried to understand the processing capabilities of sports fans. Attention is a very important construct to consider in relation to involvement in sports. Sport marketers seem to always be searching for the latest “attention-grabbing” techniques to keep this generation engaged in their content. Attention has been often studied in relation to sponsorship stimulus (Pham, 1992), to understand how much of the focus of the spectator is put on the game instead of processing an advertisement. Bennett (1999) tackled this subject by arguing that people

tend to pay less attention to advertising messages that appear during a match whenever there are moments of the game that are less exciting. Contrasting findings from Pavelchak, Antil, and Munch (1988) found that spectators watching the Super Bowl that were supporting the winning team were less able to recall ads compared to the losing fans. Similar conclusions were reached by (Leigh & Menon 2013), which analysed the correlation between interest and cognitive attention and found that several distracting conditions and individual differences in involvement affect the level of recall and recognition. Other authors (Vooris et al, 2016) tackled the issue from a generational point of view, by underlining Millennials multi-tasking capabilities. This factor might affect young people interest in sports due to the way in which sport involvement has been measured so far. The major instrument that has been used to understand the level of interest in sports are the statistics that come from TV audiences. If millennials are not able to keep their attention on the sporting event for its full duration, that might negatively reflect on what is perceived as “interest in sports”.

In the context of this thesis, I am interested in analysing whether the “decreasing attention span” trend holds any truth and how much does it affect sports fan involvement in sports. To establish the effect of this phenomenon, I will rely on self-reporting measures, by using a scale developed by Rahinel and Ahluwalia (2015) that allows for an estimation of the degree to which a person is focused on “experiencing” the task or is having thoughts independent of the stimulus. This scale will hopefully help in providing an answer for the following research questions:

RQ3: Do certain behavioral factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ3.1: Does attention span influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?

2.4.2 Sport Participation

Conflicting information on this trend emerges when sport participation data is taken in consideration. If young people are experiencing a lack of enthusiasm towards sports, that should also be reflected in their interest in practicing it, but that is not always the case. Some studies confirm this trend, like the one conducted by Statistics Canada, that shows a decline in sports participation from 1998 to 2005 in all the top 10 sports in Canada. Other researchers, however, identify generation Y as being one with the most active lifestyles and very high sport participation (Physical Activity Council, 2018). In Italy, for example, there seems to be no problem in terms of sport participation of young children, a survey by the Italian national institute of statistics showed, with children between 11-14 years practicing sports in 70,3% of the cases (of which 9,3% only practiced some sport occasionally) (Istat, 2015).

Past studies have used different theories to understand the motivation behind people interest in sports. Some report that motivation and interest to participate in sports do not always translate in interest in sport spectatorship, since they are two sport-related types of leisure behaviour that are not necessarily correlated (Shamir & Ruskin, 1984). Other studies show that watching sports on TV could influence the willingness to participate in physical activities at least in the short term (Boardley, 2012). Sport participation might not be directly related to sponsorship, but it has been proven that sports consumers are more likely to follow sports actively, by attending events, compared to those who are less involved with sports (Stone, 1984). Sponsors heavily rely on the idea that those who “live and breathe” sports are also the ones who will be more likely to watch sports on TV and attend matches. Studies attest to the fact that many individuals that attend action sporting events tend to also be involved with action sports in general (Bennett et al., 2003). Some have hypothesized that there is a relationship between the level of involvement with sports and the tendency to spectate sporting events that increase the possibility of sports fans being exposed to a brand’s promotions (Bennett, Gregg, et al., 2009).

Due to the important role that a variable like sport participation seem to play in the implementation of a sponsorship, I developed the following research question to address it:

***RQ3.2:** Does sport participation influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?*

2.4.3 Technology and Media Usage

One key element that distinguishes this generation in almost its entirety is an early and frequent exposure to technology (Bolton, 2013). Generation Y is usually defined as the first “digital native” one (Prensky, 2001), with the other generations being “digital immigrants” in comparison. Young people grew up in a world strongly influenced by technology and are more familiar and comfortable in using it compared to any other generation (Bess & Bartolini, 2011). One of the most important question for the sports business nowadays is whether the current business model based on TV rights will remain relevant as TV is slowly being replaced by other media devices, like computers, tablets and smartphones. Young people have been the subject of several studies that want to explore this trend, since they are far more likely to use devices such as smartphones and PCs to watch different types of programs (Jensen, Walsh, Cobbs, and Turner, 2015).

In this world of multi-tasking, second screen involvement is a crucial issue for marketers and broadcaster to understand, if they wish to improve their communication and engagement levels with consumers (Cunningham & Eastin, 2015). A study by the National Football League (NFL), shows that 70% of fans use another device while watching professional football on TV (Soper, 2014). The problem with using

different devices while watching TV is that the attention of the viewer will be divided between the two screens. A study by Oviedo et al. (2015) found out that subjects found it easier to recall details of a TV show when only watching TV, than when dual tasking. This might be due to a higher cognitive load necessary for second screen viewing compared to single screen viewing (Van Cauwenberge, Schaap & Roy, 2014), which leads to lower recall capabilities and lower overall comprehension. This change in technological usage is particularly relevant for sponsors, which are required to know whether the medium they are using to send their message is providing them with substantial financial returns (Olson & Thjømøe, 2009). As young people are moving onto other platforms, like mobile screens, (Cisco, 2018) sports clubs, advertisers and sponsors will need to find different outlets to capture this young audience.

I believe that this change in consumer behavior might be one of the causes behind the apparent lack of interest in sports that millennials have been displaying. Young sports fans are expressing their passion differently, watching matches on different devices and enjoying hobbies like fantasy sports, videogames interest and even gambling that are not directly related to the viewing of a specific sporting event. But while this could be worrying for TV right holders, it should not directly translate into a general decrease in interest in sports. The following research question was developed to understand the extent of this phenomenon:

RQ3.3: Can different forms of technology and media usage influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

2.5 Demographic Factors

2.5.1 Life Stages

A recent study (Nielsen, 2016), divided people in the 18-34 age range into three different life stage groups: the ones still living with their parents or in someone's else house, those living by themselves with no children and those in the process of starting a family in their own home. This type of segmentation is essential to draw any conclusion on Gen Y since these three groups show differences in their set of beliefs, use of technologies and general consumption behaviours. This Nielsen study shows that millennials are slower to go through these life stages compared to their parents. This result is so well-known, that a common nickname for Millennials is the “*Peter Pan Generation*” since they tend to prolong the stage in which they depend on their parents and delay the stages in which they marry and decide to start a family (Bolton et al, 2013). This fact makes the segment of people living with their parents the one that saw a higher increase in population when considering a period of time going from 2005 to 2015.

Some authors, like Burnett, Menon & Smart, 1993 are advocating for a marketing-oriented mindset that sports marketers need to have to understand consumers and reach them with more accurate communication strategies. The issue they identify is the need to break an apparently homogeneous group like that of sport audiences into segments that can be better catered to. Trail and James (2011) propose the use of cultural influences to motivate sport spectator consumption, with an inclusion of shared beliefs, attitudes, rules, personality and values. In terms of viewing interests, the Nielsen study shows the people living on their own with no children are the largest consumers of sport programs (sport events but also sport news and information programs). This last statistic could indicate the possibility that more than a decrease in interest in sport, there has been a decrease in millennials in the specific life stage that have more interest in it. The study, however, is based in the United States and is not primarily focused on sports nor considers other factors such as event attendance or sports participation in its analysis. A different result could be obtained by conducting a similar study in a different country and with a specific focus on sports consumption behaviour. I believe that the economic and behavioural factors mentioned in the previous sections might be reflected into the different age cohorts that identify separate life stages for millennials. A young sports fan that is living by themselves should be more likely to express their involvement with sports through similar means to those of the previous generation, by paying for a TV subscription or going to the stadium. A millennial sports fan that is still living with their parents, on the other hand, might not have the economic benefits that come from having a job that would allow them to do so. In a similar way, someone who is starting a family might give precedence to the subscription to a kids' entertainment channel and might not have the time to attend sporting events. Two of these three life stages, if these implications are reasonable, might provide further evidence of why there is a decrease of interest in sports in young people.

The distinction of a generation into different age groups has been performed in the past and has been identified as a "cohort" (Solomon, et al., 2013). In order to understand if there is some truth to this theory, I propose the following research questions:

RQ4: Do certain demographic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ4.1: Are there differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts?

3. THEORETICAL MODEL

Figure 1 summarizes the key variables considered in the analysis in a conceptual framework that gauges how different economic, behavioural and demographic factors can affect young people involvement with sports. On the upper side are the two the economic factors of financial contentment and price fairness. On

the lower side are the behavioural factors of attention span, sport participation and technology and media usage. The demographic factors are represented by the variables of gender, age and cohorts. The dependent variable in this research, involvement with sports, includes in it the concepts of TV viewing habits, match attendance and general enjoyment and interest in sports and sports news.

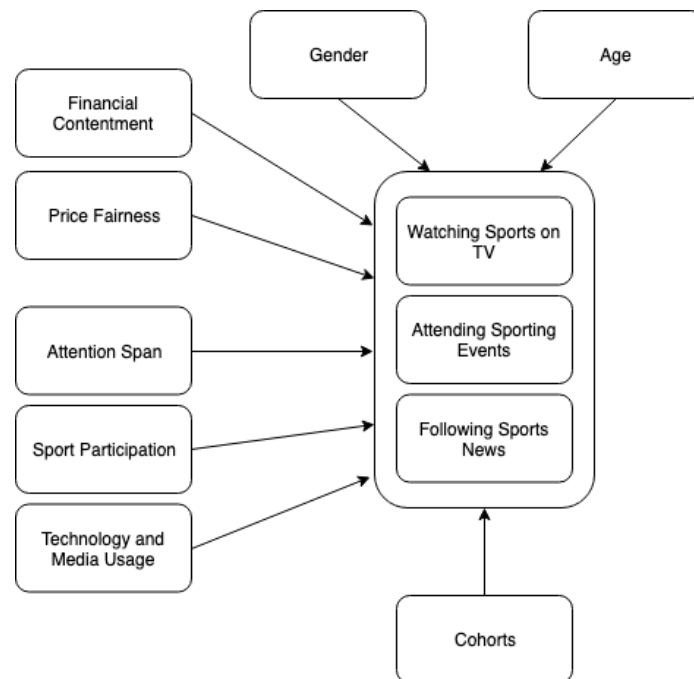


Figure 1 - Proposed Model

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Main Study

The primary goal of this study is to determine the main causes behind the apparent decreased interest in sports in younger generations. I want to know whether millennials have the same level of involvement with sports compared to previous generations and what are the causes for the eventual difference. I theorized that some variables like attention span, technology usage, financial contentment and price fairness might influence the level of millennials involvement (or lack of) with sports. In addition to this, I believe that some demographic elements might influence sports fans interest in sports, like their gender, their country of origin or a specific life stage they are in.

4.2 Population and Sample

The survey is based on a comparison of data between two sets of respondents composed of people from Italy and Norway in order to allow for an analysis of two very different cultures, both in economic terms

and with regards to the interest in sports. The sample recruited for this study includes Norwegian and Italian sports fans, divided into two age groups. The “young people” segment includes all the respondents below 36 years of age and the “adults” segment contains the remaining participants with an age going from 36 to 76, which corresponds to the age of the older respondent. In terms of sub-groups, the young Italians interviewed were N=49, young Norwegians were exactly N=30 and adult Italians N=31. However, only N=3 Norwegians were reached, thus that comparison between young and adult Norwegians could not be performed.

4.3 Procedure

4.3.1 Data Collection

In order to understand if the phenomenon explored in the US and the UK extends to other countries, a nonprobability sampling technique was utilized. I used an online survey to gather and analyse data from Italian and Norwegian social networks (mostly Reddit) where sports fans come together to share opinions. To collect a high enough number of participants, the questionnaire was also sent out to friends and family members using e-mails and social networks. This method of sample selection is called “convenience sampling” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson 2008). While I was able to reach several respondents from the “young people” sub-group, I experienced some difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of participants from the adult population. Resorting to the “snowballing sampling” allowed me to reach the minimum number (N=30) of Italian adults required answer RQ1 by performing a comparison between generations. To administer the questionnaire, Qualtrics software was used and the subsequent data analysis was performed with the help of STATA and Excel. From the total number of responses collected I removed incomplete responses, and responses influenced by acquiescence bias. Other inconsistencies problems were kept into consideration thanks to the presence of inverted items in certain scales.

4.4 Survey

4.4.1 Questionnaire Design

To ensure that the survey could be administered to a target market of Italians and Norwegian sports fans, an English version was designed and distributed together with an Italian translation. (See Appendix I for the complete questionnaire) This reduced problems related to the possible misunderstanding of terms and statements in the sub-group of adult Italians. The first page of the survey included a welcoming message, that disclosed the questionnaire’s purpose and the required time to complete it. It also ensured the anonymity of the respondents and thanked them for their participation. Since the goal of this analysis was

to delve into uncharted territory, a projective technique was used to adapt the marketing scales chosen. To avoid biased responses, I used a “third person technique” to encourage participants to comment on the behaviour of others, onto which they indirectly projected their own beliefs. In this questionnaire the statements were phrased in a way that inquired about the behaviour of young people nowadays compared to the previous generation. All the statements in the survey regarded sports in general with no reference to one specific discipline in order to take in consideration the possible differences in preferences between the sports fans of the two countries analysed. That said, a multiple-choice question on the type and number of sports they followed was included in the questionnaire to have additional information on what type of sports to consider when drawing some conclusions from the results. Finally, demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire, in order to collect descriptive information on respondents, with the inclusion of variables such as age, gender, education level and employment status. The age was measured with an open-ended response, while gender was a dichotomous variable. The following sections describe the marketing scales used in the survey to assess the effect of separate variables on the respondents’ level of involvement with sports.

4.5 Marketing Scales

4.5.1 Involvement with Sports

To date, scholars have developed several complex tools to measure the motives of individual involvement in the sports event. Many authors have focused on a specific sport, like Lascau, Giese, Toolan, Guehring and Mercer (1995) which performed a study of golf spectators and Wakefield (1995) with his analysis of baseball fans. The complexity of these instruments is meant to be a way to measure the wide variety of drivers that determine this construct. For this study a scale used by Walraven, Bijmolt, and Koning (2014) will be adapted. It was developed to measure the extent to which a person watches, attends and enjoys a particular sport. The scale is designed to be answered with a singular sport in mind but can be modified to refer to “sports” in general, by removing the items that refer to the enjoyment of sports in comparison to others and keeping the rest (see Table 1). I also applied a scoring system to the items by having the extreme responses receive the highest and lowest scoring points.

4.5.2 Financial Contentment

For this variable, my intention was not to have a measure of “richness” per se, but something that could be evaluated in a cross-country study of two completely different economies like Italy and Norway. For this reason, I chose a measure used by Etkin, Evangelidis, and Aaker (2015), which adapted it from Kasser and

Sheldon (2009). It is an eight-items scale meant to measure the belief that one person has enough money for their needs and still have additional resources left.

4.5.3 Price Fairness

Past studies have often focused on experimental designs to determine the degree of price fairness in a particular setting (Darke & Dahl, 2003; Kahneman et al., 1986a). These studies were created with the purpose to analyse price fairness without paying attention to group characteristics. In this thesis sports fans are grouped based on the generation they belong to and then an additional segmentation is performed among the millennials to test the differences between the cohorts. To test *RQ2.2: “Does the level of price fairness of a match ticket or a sports channel subscription influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”*, I used a scale developed by Haws and Bearden (2006) which is composed of unipolar items meant to measure the degree to which a person sees something as fair (acceptable and reasonable). I then adapted it to measure the perception of prices of a single game ticket and the price of the subscription fee to a TV sport channel.

4.5.4 Attention Span

The following scale was meant to test the presence of the shortening attention span phenomenon between generation and the possible effect it could have on the interest and involvement toward sports. In order to answer this question, a seven-items, seven-point rating scale developed by Rahinel and Ahluwalia (2015) was used, to examine the degree to which a person is characterized by two different attention modes. The first one focusing on experiencing (pay attention to the immediate environment) and the second one on mind wandering (thoughts not based on specific stimuli). Rahinel and Ahluwalia (2015) tested the reliability of the measure, both in terms of internal consistency (alpha ranging from .89 to .94) and in terms of temporal stability (3 week: test-retest) which was found to be high ($r=.84$). This scale was adapted in the survey by considering the activity of watching a sport’s match on TV or attending a sport’s event at the stadium as the task in question.

4.5.5 Technology and Media Usage

Different methods to measure technology usage have been employed repeatedly in very few studies, with no cohesion in finding a single tool that would allow comparison between researches. Many of these studies tend to focus on hours spent on the PC (Kraut et al., 1998; Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2000) or watching television (Stranger, 1998) or playing videogames (Phillips, Rolls, Rouse, & Griffiths, 1995). But the technological landscape changed drastically in recent years with the evolution of the mobile

phone. This is why I have decided to use Rosen et al. (2013) Media. and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale, which includes 44 items with 11 subscales. This measurement tool comprehends a wide variety of concepts, from the general Smartphone Usage and Social Media Usage, to more specific Video Gaming, TV viewing or Media Sharing. I adapted this scale to this thesis by removing some items that are less relevant for the purpose of the study.

Measures	Items
Involvement with Sports (adapted from Walraven, Bijmolt, and Koning, 2014)	<p>Young people today watch more sports on TV compared to young people in previous generations.</p> <p>Young people today enjoy attending sporting events more than what young people in previous generations did.</p> <p>Young people today enjoy following sport news more than what young people in previous generations did.</p>
Financial Contentment (adapted from Etkin, Evangelidis, and Aaker, 2015)	<p>Generally speaking, young people have enough money to attend the sporting events that are important to them.</p> <p>Young people today generally don't have as much money to follow sporting events (at the stadium or on TV) compared to previous generations. (r)</p> <p>Young people nowadays can usually afford the sports channel subscriptions they need to buy in order to watch their favorite sporting events or teams on TV.</p>
Price Fairness (adapted from Haws and Bearden, 2006)	<p>Ticket prices to sporting events are reasonably priced.</p> <p>The cost to attend sporting events is too high compared to the value received. (r)</p> <p>TV subscriptions to sports channels are reasonably priced.</p> <p>The cost of TV sports subscriptions is too high compared to the value received. (r)</p>
Attention Span (adapted from Rahinel and Ahluwalia, 2015)	<p>Young people today seem to have more trouble than previous generations in focusing their attention on a sporting event for more than a short period of time.</p> <p>Young people often seem more distracted than previous generations by things other than the sporting event they are watching.</p>
Sport Participation	<p>Young people today play sports and exercise more than previous generations did at the same age.</p> <p>Young people nowadays play sports at a competitive level more often than previous generations did at the same age.</p>
Technology and Media Usage (adapted from Rosen et al, 2013)	<p>Young people search for information with a mobile phone more often than previous generation did at the same age.</p> <p>Generally speaking, young people read and comment social media sports postings, updates and photos more often compared to previous generations.</p> <p>Many believe that young people prefer watching sporting events, news shows, etc. on a computer or a tablet instead of watching them on TV or attending a game in person.</p> <p>Young people tend to enjoy playing sports-related computer games more compared to previous generations.</p>

Table 1 – Measurement Items

5. RESULTS

In this section I will report the results by detailing the descriptive statistics of the sample, then I will consider the reliability of the scales adopted and I will finally determine if this study was able to answer some of the research questions considered.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

5.1.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The total number of respondents collected was (N=350), of which (N=199) remained after removing missing or incomplete responses and people from countries other than Norway or Italy. After this initial reduction, additional filtering was necessary to consider only sports fans. This was achieved by performing a manipulation check and considering only the respondents who answered a number higher than 3 (on a scale from 1 to 7) to the question “*do you consider yourself a big sports fan?*”. The sample was thus further trimmed down to N=113 respondents, which was the final total sample considered. The age measure was coded in a dummy variable and categorized into two groups, one “young people” segment with participants below 36 years of age and an “adult” segment with ages going from 36 to 76. Although discretizing a continuous variable like age can lead to loss of information, it makes sense to do so to allow for generational differences to emerge (Gelman and Hill, 2007). Table 2 shows the characteristics of respondents in relation to Gender, Education, Occupation and Cohort they belong to.

Age	N (%)
Young People (Age<36)	79 (69.30)
Adults (Age>35)	35 (30.70)
Gender	
Male	83 (73.45)
Female	30 (26.55)
Education	
Low. Secondary School	2 (1.77)
Upp. Secondary School	30 (26.55)
Bachelor Degree	38 (33.63)
Master Degree	39 (34.51)
PhD	4 (3.54)
Occupation	
Student	48 (42.48)
Entrepreneur	7 (6.19)
Employee	43 (38.05)
Unemployed	2 (1.77)
Other	13 (11.50)
Cohort	
Live with Parents	33 (29.20)
Live with Spouse and Kids	38 (33.63)
Live Alone or with Friends	42 (37.17)

Table 2 - Characteristics of Respondents

5.1.2 Sports Preferences

No specific sport was chosen as subject study, since the evidence of this trend in the US and UK showed that the phenomenon persisted through different disciplines, so respondents were asked to select their favourite sports. As Appendix II shows, the majority of respondents in the sample chose “Football” (N=91) as one of their preferred sports, which is reasonable considering that is one of the most followed sports in both Norway and Italy. Among the other sports that were chosen by the participants, the ones with the highest numbers were Tennis (N=34), Skiing (N=31), Basketball (N=24) and Motor Racing (N=23). To better understand how these preferences are reflected on the two generations represented in the sample I considered the sports chosen by each sub-group separately. Appendix II details this by illustrating the percentage of sports chosen by young people and adults. It is evident that “Football” is the preferred sport

for young people (N=62), selected by 31% of them, but it is also popular among the adults' segment, being favoured by 23% of that subgroup (N=29). The sport that seems more heavily skewed towards an "older" demographic is Tennis, which was selected by 17% of adults (N=21) and only 7% of millennials (N=13).

Respondents were also given the choice to select "Other" and enter a text response with sports they followed that were not included in the list. Table 3 shows the text responses that people indicated as alternative

interests other than the ones offered. An interesting statistic that emerges from this table is that young people seemed to be the ones with more alternatives in mind (N=14). The trend that surfaces from this table is that there is only one choice which was written by multiple respondents: "e-sports". This result demonstrates an interest in sports by video-gamers, an audience that is not always considered in the "sports fans" category. Additional deliberation on this topic will be addressed in the "managerial implication" section of this thesis. Since all these statistics are based on multiple choices, a final measure that was taken in consideration was the average number of sports followed by

Text Responses	N
E-sports	5
MMA	1
Badminton	1
Snowboard and UFC	1
Skateboard	1
Handball	1
OCR	1
Clay Pidgeon Shoot	1
Fencing	1
Beach Volley	1
Disc Golf	1
Bowls	1

each respondent (M=2.87). This result proves that the "sports fans" manipulation check worked and that the sample analysed follows more than one sport. This gives more validity to the research since the respondents have heterogeneous interests in different disciplines. In terms of generational differences, the sports followed by young people (M=2.5) and by adults (M=3.76) cannot be used to draw significant conclusions since 4 adults skewed the statistic with a high number of sports followed (2 respondents followed 10 different sports and 2 with 7) and thus increased what would have been a reasonable difference between the subgroups.

5.2 Regression Analysis

5.2.1 Reliability

Before proceeding with the regression analyses, it is important to assess the reliability of the items considered in the questionnaire, in order to establish what scales can be kept. Internal consistency reliability is a way to understand if the items that compose a construct are consistent in what they specify about the scale. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a value of 0.6 is usually enough to indicate internal consistency reliability (Malhotra, 2010). Table 4 presents these values.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Financial Contentment	0.6127
Price Fairness	0.7633

Attention Span	0.7526
Sport Participation	0.6771
Technology and Media	0.5181
Involvement with Sports	0.5454

Table 4 - Reliability Analysis

As can be seen, all measures present a Cronbach's Alpha value above the 0.6 threshold except for two. The first one is the scale adapted from Rosen et al, (2013) which had to do with Technology Usage and Attitudes. This scale originally included 44 items with 11 subscales, but it was drastically reduced to fit in the questionnaire I had by only considering 4 items which I considered essential. As the STATA output shows (see Appendix III), removing items from the scale only improves the alpha by little ($\alpha = 0.5654$), but it is still not enough to utilize the items together. For this reason, I opted to include to only include the item of the scale related to sports videogames usage, which was the only statistically significant one. In addition to this, it was the only one that increased the adjusted r-square value in the regressions. The second scale which did not have a Cronbach's alpha above the necessary threshold was the dependent variable about Involvement with Sports. Once again, the scale suffered from a reduction of statements since originally there were 9 items and they were divided into the concepts of "watching sports on TV", "attending a sporting event" and "following sports news". Each construct was meant to have 3 items in it, but only one was left for the purpose of this questionnaire. This separation of elements makes the dependent variable still effective in the analysis. All the remaining scales have acceptable alpha values, Financial Contentment has the lowest one ($\alpha = 0.6127$), which could have been improved with the removal of the inverse item in the scale ($\alpha = 0.7138$) but since I considered 0.6 as the threshold for this research, I opted to keep the scale with all three items in it. Price Fairness had the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.7633$), followed by Attention Span ($\alpha = 0.7526$). Sport Participation was the only scale not adapted from an existing scale, thus the reliability found ($\alpha = 0.6771$) supports the credibility and validity of the results associated to it.

5.2.2 Overall Regressions

The first three multiple regressions analysed (Appendix IV) include all the scales as predictors, with the exception of the one about Technology and Media Usage, which is represented only by the statement "Tech_Med_4". In addition to this, three demographic variables are included, Gender, Country and Adults. The latter is coded as to consider as Adults = 1 all respondents with Age above 35.

The results of the first regression on the dependent variable "*Watching Sports on TV*" (Table 5) indicate that the predictors explain 14% of the variance ($R^2=0.137$, $F(8,104) = 2.08$, $p<0.05$). Thus, it is possible to

reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in watching sports on TV and it is possible to proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2169602	1.73	0.086
Pri_Fair	-.3434771	-2.06	0.042
Att_Span	-.0080246	-0.07	0.945
Sport_Part	.2091481	1.10	0.275
Tech_Med_4	.2091481	1.91	0.059
Gender	-.1098618	-0.29	0.774
Country	-.9582483	-2.43	0.017
Adults	-.5207175	-1.38	0.171

Table 5 - Regression on "Watching Sports on TV"

As far as the economic factors are concerned, the first variable "Financial Contentment" is not statistically significant ($b=.2169$, $t(104) = 1.73$, $p > 0.05$), while the one related to Price Fairness has a negative and statistically significant effect on watching sports on TV ($b=-.3435$, $t(104) = -2.06$, $p < 0.05$). All the variables that concern behavioral factors are not statistically significant in this regression. The only one that is slightly significant is the statement of the scale on Technology and Media Usage that is statistically significant at the 10% level: ($b=-.2091$, $t(104) = 1.91$, $p < 0.10$). In the demographic variables included, the only statistically significant one is "Country": ($b=-.9582$, $t(104) = -2.43$, $p < 0.025$). This one-sided test indicates that Norwegian are less interested with watching sports on TV compared to Italian sports fans. The results of the second regression on the dependent variable "Attending Sporting Events" (Table 6) indicate that the predictors explain 33% of the variance ($R^2=0.330$, $F(8,104) = 6.42$, $p<0.05$). It is then possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in attending sporting events and it is possible to proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.322213	3.32	0.001
Pri_Fair	-.3200799	-2.48	0.015
Att_Span	-.0611648	-0.68	0.496
Sport_Part	.3026948	3.36	0.001
Tech_Med_4	.1702756	2.01	0.047
Gender	.9937599	3.36	0.001
Country	-.7098944	-2.32	0.022
Adults	-.3188057	-1.09	0.279

Table 6 - Regression on "Attending Sporting Events"

Contrary to the results of the first regression, in the second one all the economic factors appear to be statistically significant. With Financial Contentment having a positive effect on attending sporting events ($b=.3222$, $t(104) = 3.32$, $p < 0.01$) and Price Fairness having a significant but negative effect on the dependent variable ($b=-.3200$, $t(104) = -2.48$, $p < 0.05$). Among the behavioral scales considered, “Attention Span” is once again not statistically significant, while the other two, Sport Participation: ($b=.3027$, $t(104) = 3.36$, $p < 0.01$) and Tech_Med_4: ($b=.1703$, $t(104) = 2.01$, $p < 0.05$), both have a positive and statistically significant effect on the interest of the respondents in attending sporting events. In terms of demographic variables, there is still no statistically significant difference in the “Adults” variable. The other two are statistically significant but with an opposite effect. Gender ($b=.9938$, $t(104) = 3.36$, $p < 0.025$), and Country ($b=-.7099$, $t(104) = -2.32$, $p < 0.025$). These results respectively indicate that the female population and the Italian one, are more interested in attending sporting events than their male and Norwegian counterparts.

The results of the third regression of the dependent variable “*Following Sports News*” (Table 7) indicate that the predictors explain 16% of the variance ($R^2=0.164$, $F(8,104) = 2.55$, $p<0.05$). Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in following sports news and it is possible to proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.1167587	0.99	0.324
Pri_Fair	-.3218986	-2.05	0.043
Att_Span	.1310457	1.21	0.230
Sport_Part	.2779037	2.54	0.013
Tech_Med_4	-.1634954	-1.59	0.115
Gender	-.4472117	-1.25	0.215
Country	-.5920964	-1.59	0.114
Adults	-1.014431	-2.85	0.005

Table 7 - Regression on “*Following Sports News*”

As in the first regression, Financial Contentment is not statistically significant, but the other economic construct considered, Price Fairness, is. Specifically, Price Fairness ($b=-.3219$, $t(104) = -2.05$, $p < 0.05$) has a negative and significative effect on following sports news. In the behavioral factors, Sport Participation ($b=.2779$, $t(104) = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$) has a positive and statistically significant effect on the dependent variables, while Attention Span and Technology and Media Usage do not. Finally, the demographic variables present a statistically significant difference only in the variable “Adults” ($b=-1.014$,

$t(104) = -2.85, p < 0.025$), which indicates that young people are more interested in following sports news compared to the previous generation.

5.2.3 Regressions on the subgroups “Adults” and “Young People”

While the first set of regressions already give significant results to consider, an additional group of regressions (Appendix V) were run without including the “Adults” predictor and splitting the sample in over 35 years old (Young People=0) and under 35 years old (Young People=1).

The results of the first regressions on the dependent variable “*Watching Sports on TV*” (Table 8) indicate that the predictors explain 39% of the variance ($R^2=0.390$, $F(7,26) = 2.38$, $p < 0.05$) for the Adults population and 22% of the variance ($R^2=0.215$, $F(7,71) = 2.79$, $p < 0.05$) for young people (Table 9). Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in watching sports on TV and it is possible to proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.0524295	0.25	0.806
Pri_Fair	-.8007389	-2.60	0.015
Att_Span	-.438274	-2.13	0.043
Sport_Part	.173872	0.99	0.331
Tech_Med_4	.0119693	0.06	0.956
Gender	.7921445	1.03	0.312
Country	-1.080961	-0.77	0.449

Table 8 - Regression of Adults on “*Watching Sports on TV*”

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.3503821	2.27	0.027
Pri_Fair	-.1694048	-0.87	0.388
Att_Span	.1424018	1.04	0.301
Sport_Part	.1225966	0.73	0.468
Tech_Med_4	.3310679	2.64	0.010
Gender	-.1805936	-0.41	0.681
Country	-.9321216	-2.33	0.023

Table 9 - Regression of Young People on “*Watching Sports on TV*”

In terms of economic factors, the two regression have opposite results. The Financial Contentment variable is positive and statistically significant for young people ($b=.3504$, $t(71) = 2.27$, $p < 0.05$) but not for adults. The variable regarding Price Fairness is negative and statistically significant for adults ($b=-.8007$, $t(26) = -2.60$, $p < 0.05$) but not for young people. In the behavioral elements there is also a difference in results

between the two sub-groups considered. In the adults, Attention Span ($b=-.4383$, $t(26) = -2.13$, $p < 0.05$) is the only statistically significant regressor. Meanwhile, in the young people segment, the variable related to sports videogames (Tech_Med_4) is the only positive and statistically significant one: ($b=.3310679$, $t(71) = 2.64$, $p < 0.01$). The demographic variable which is statistically significant is the “Country” one: ($b=-.9321$, $t(71) = -2.33$, $p < 0.025$), its one-sided significance indicates that young Italians have a higher interest in watching sports on TV compared to their Norwegian peers.

The results of the second regressions on the dependent variable “*Attending Sporting Events*” indicate that the predictors explain 68% of the variance ($R^2=0.678$, $F(7,26) = 7.85$, $p<0.05$) for the Adults population (Table 10) and 21% of the variance ($R^2=0.207$, $F(7,71) = 2.65$, $p<0.05$) for young people (Table 11). Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in attending sporting events and it is possible to proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2401581	1.48	0.151
Pri_Fair	-.1506886	-0.64	0.531
Att_Span	-.3420244	-2.16	0.040
Sport_Part	.3921123	2.91	0.007
Tech_Med_4	.2305442	1.39	0.176
Gender	2.789157	4.73	0.000
Country	-.7102386	-0.66	0.516

Table 10 - Regression of Adults on “Attending Sporting Events”

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2273556	1.93	0.058
Pri_Fair	-.3328487	-2.24	0.028
Att_Span	.0804602	0.77	0.443
Sport_Part	.2923359	2.28	0.025
Tech_Med_4	.0848596	0.89	0.377
Gender	.4437681	1.33	0.187
Country	-.6015725	-1.97	0.052

Table 11 - Regression of Young People on “Attending Sporting Events”

Once again there is a difference in economic factors, with the adults’ population having no significant effects determined by the two scales considered, while the “young people” segment presenting some significant results. Financial Contentment is positive and significant at the 10% level ($b=.2274$, $t(71) = 1.93$, $p < 0.10$) while Price Fairness is negatively correlated to attending sporting events ($b=-.3328$, $t(71)$

= -2.24, $p < 0.05$). Like in the previous set of regressions, Attention Span has a negative and statistically significant effect only for adults ($b = -.3420$, $t(26) = -2.16$, $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, with this dependent variable, Sport Participation has a statistically significant and positive effect for both adults: ($b = .3921$, $t(26) = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$) and young people: ($b = .2923$, $t(71) = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$). In the “demographic variables” analysis, there is a highly significant effect of Gender in the adults’ population ($b = 2.7892$, $t(26) = 4.73$, $p < 0.01$). In the regression of “young people”, however, the only slightly significant effect is given by the variable Country ($b = -.6016$, $t(71) = -1.97$, $p < 0.10$), which indicates that Italians are negatively correlated with attending sporting events.

The results of the third set of regressions on the dependent variable “*Following Sports News*” indicate that the predictors explain 31% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.312$, $F(7,26) = 1.69$, $p = 0.16 > 0.10$) for the Adults population and 16% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.157$, $F(7,71) = 1.89$, $p < 0.10$) for young people (Table 12). The overall F-test in the regression for adults shows that this regression does not provide a better fit than an intercept-only model, since it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in following sports news. Thus, I will only proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients of the regression for young people.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.0193058	0.14	0.887
Pri_Fair	-.2118749	-1.24	0.218
Att_Span	.1538259	1.29	0.203
Sport_Part	.1964732	1.34	0.185
Tech_Med_4	-.0420727	-0.38	0.702
Gender	-.8395063	-2.20	0.031
Country	-.6227132	-1.78	0.079

Table 12 - Regression of Young People on “*Following Sports News*”

The only significant variables in the regression are the demographic factors of Gender ($b = -.8395$, $t(71) = -2.20$, $p < 0.05$) and Country ($b = -.6227$, $t(71) = -1.78$, $p < 0.10$). The respectively indicate that young males and young Italians are positively correlated with the interest in following sports news.

5.2.4 Multicollinearity

An important assumption to consider when performing regression analysis is the lack of multicollinearity (Janssens et al. 2008). When there is multicollinearity, there is a shared variance in the variables considered

in the analysis, which could reduce the predicting capabilities of the independent variables (Hair et al. 2010).

STATA allows to check for it by providing the values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance (Appendix VI). In all the regressions considered in this analysis, all values are below the cut-off of 10 (Malhotra, 2010). This number is considered to be the minimum reasonable threshold in order to avoid multicollinearity problems with the dataset. At the same time, the tolerance values are above 0.10, confirming the absence of any multicollinearity in the data analysed.

6. DISCUSSION

I will analyze all the results from the previous regressions by distinguishing between the elements considered in the theoretical framework to answer the research questions developed.

6.1 Economic Factors

The influence of the economic factors in this analysis is reasonably evident already from the first set of regressions that do not differentiate between generations. In all of them, the variable “financial contentment” is positively correlated to interest in sports and “price fairness” is negatively correlated to it. This outcome provides an affirmative answer to *RQ2.1: “Does the level of financial contentment influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”* and *RQ2.2 “Does the level of price fairness of a match ticket or a sports channel subscription influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”*

The results from the subsequent set of regressions help better understand how these elements can affect the two generations differently. In the regression on the interest of *watching sports on TV*, Financial Contentment is not significant for adults, but it is for young people and the opposite is true for Price Fairness. This can be explained by the change in consumer habits that is making millennials experience sports differently. TV is not the main source of entertainment for millennials thanks to the development of streaming services and the advent of the internet in general (Crawford, 2016). The possibility to spend money on hobbies (*Financial Contentment*) becomes relevant for people that feel like they might have different and possibly cheaper alternatives to watching a match on TV. Following the same logic, Price Fairness is a significant factor only for Adults, since they are more sensitive to the price of a TV subscription since it is their principal source of sports entertainment.

The regressions related to the *attendance of sporting events* bring additional insight into the topic, by showing that the two variables are both statistically significant for young people. This supports the multiple articles that identify in ticket prices the main cause for the difference in age in stadium spectatorship (BBC,

2017). Young people in the sample seem to be more influenced by these elements in their decision to attend sporting events, while the adults are not. This conclusion provides an answer for *RQ2.2* as it is possible to state that price fairness is indeed a factor that influences sports fans level of involvement with sports.

The last regression on young people *following sports news* finds no statistical significance for the economic factors. This make sense, since following news does not necessarily require an economic investment compared to buying a TV sports subscription or buying tickets to a match.

After these results, it is possible to answer *RQ2*: “*Can economic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?*” with an affirmative response. More precisely, economic factors affect sports fans involvement with sports, with financial contentment and price fairness both being more important requirements for young people overall, giving support to the idea that the economic crisis might have affected millennials’ preferences, attitudes and consumer behaviours (Meredith & Schewe, 2002).

6.2 Behavioural Factors

RQ3 asked the question: “*Do certain behavioral factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?*” and the regressions seem to indicate that the most appropriate answer is: “it depends”. The following discussion details the results for each behavioral factor considered.

RQ3.1 asked the question: “*Does attention span influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?*” The possibility of a “shortening attention span” is often considered as one of the main differences between millennials and their parents (Papp & Matulich, 2011). The results of this analysis, however, seem to support some of the findings reported in the theoretical framework, that consider this phenomenon nothing more than a glorified myth (Maybin, 2017). The first set of regressions find no statistically significant effect of this variable on any of the dependent variables considered. The surprising result is that, in the regressions about the subgroups, instead of being significant for young people, it appears to be affecting the adults’ population. In fact, in the regressions on “*watching sports on TV*” and “*attending sports events*” people from the previous generations seems to be negatively affected by the possibility of their mind wandering while watching a match while the younger segment is not. This result provides interesting implications that should be further analysed in future research to help settle the “attention span” issue once and for all.

The second variable considered as a behavioural element was “*Sport Participation*”, which asked respondents about exercising or playing sports and about playing them at a competitive level. *RQ3.2* asked: “*Does sport participation influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?*” Overall *RQ3.2* can be answered by stating that sport participation does affect sports fans involvement with sports. In the first three regression, Sport Participation is statistically relevant in terms of “*attending sporting events*” and “*follow*

sports news”, while in the following set of regressions it is only statistically significant in the “*attending sporting events*” one. The significance in this second regression is really strong compared to the other variables and could be explained by the fact that direct involvement in a sports environment more easily translates into the activity of going to the stadium, which is the one that requires more effort out of the three dependent variables options. This possibility is also supported by the fact that one item of this scale included playing sports at a competitive level, which usually implies a major emotional investment from a young age and is one of the activities that generate most interest and involvement in terms of hedonic experiences (Pons, Mourali, & Nyeck, 2006).

The third and final variable considered among the behavioural elements was the one concerning the Technology and Media Usage and it was addressed by the following question. *RQ3.3: “Can different forms of technology and media usage influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”* As previously mentioned, this scale suffered a reliability problem which allowed for the use of only one element in the regression. This fact makes it difficult to provide a complete answer to *RQ3.3* but some considerations on the topic can still be made. The element that was kept from the original scale was related to the use of sports videogames. It was found to be significant and positively correlated to young people in their interest of watching sports on TV and significant but negatively correlated for adults in their interest in following sports news. These results seem to confirm what was found in the literature review, which implied that young people are interested in aspects of sports, like videogames or fantasy sports. The fact that the effect is significant in the regression that concerns “*watching sports on TV*” could suggest a correlation between being a sports fan and being videogame enthusiast that opens up several marketing opportunities for sponsors and advertisers. The significance of this result should be reinforced by future researches that could replicate this study with a complete and reliable scale (see Further Research).

6.3 Demographic Factors

RQ4 asked the question: “*Do certain demographic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?*” which was answered in the regression by several elements.

The first variable considered was the one related to the Gender of respondents. This variable is in the first set of regressions suggested lower female interest in sports, with the few answers showing an abnormally high interest compared to the female average values. The results among young people show a significant difference between male and female young sports fans only in relation to “*following sports news*”. The possible conclusion might be that women are becoming more interested in sports. This is shown by their means being close to those of men even in some aspects of sport interest that require active participation like going to the stadium. When it comes to “*following sports news*” the difference in gender might be

attributable to the fact that women might just be interested in watching the games, while their male peers might also be interested in following sports news thanks to other related hobbies like fantasy sports or videogames.

The second demographic variable, Country, is strictly related to the results obtained from the economic factors, since the two countries considered have a very different economic setting. In the first set of regressions, there seems to be a statistically significant difference between Italians and Norwegian in terms of “watching sports on TV” and “attending sporting events”. In both situations Italians seem to be more interested in those activities compared to Scandinavian sports fans. The regressions on young people seem to confirm this trend, making these results consistent with those of the economic factors. This is particularly true for the variable of Financial Contentment. In fact, where this variable is statistically significant, it is also where there is the most significant difference in interest in sports between countries. This seems to imply that when respondents feel they have money they can spend on their hobbies, Italian millennials might be the more dedicated sports fans in the sample.

RQ4.1 asked: “Are there differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts?” The variable “cohort” was developed to measure the possible differences present between young people in different life stages. I performed a segmentation in this research by dividing the sample into people living their parents, those living with their spouse and kids and those living alone or with friends. This variable was originally considered in the regressions on the “young people” segment, but it was never statistically significant. In addition to that, in two out of three regressions it decreased the adjusted r-square value, thus I decided to analyze the regressions without it. These results however can answer *RQ4.1*, by indicating that there are no significant differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts.

6.4 Generational Differences

I have kept *RQ1*, which asked “Is there a difference in involvement with sports between young people and the previous generation?” for last only in mention, since the results related to it were dissected into various elements of the analysis already.

Aside from the conclusions already commented from of the economic and behavioural variables considered in the regressions that kept the two subgroups separately, a more direct answer to the question might be provided by the simple interpretation of the variable “Adults” in the first set of regressions. This variable showed a significant difference in interest in sports between generations only in the aspect related to following sports news. This indicates that when it comes to general interest in watching sports there is no

difference between adults and young people. That said, while adults are mostly interested in watching games, young people might be more interest in following sports news thanks to hobbies like gambling, fantasy football or videogames.

The answer to *RQ1* can thus be that there is no difference in overall interest in sports, but young people are finding alternative outlets to express their interest that are more difficult to be included in the traditional measurement methods used in the past, like TV viewership. This result is important in relation to the future of spectator sports. An example of how this result could be exploited is the recent partnership between Riot Games (a famous videogame developer and esports tournament organizer) and Nielsen in order to measure esports competitions so that sponsors may know the impact of their advertising expenditures (Takahshi, 2019). Many studies have already examined the effectiveness of sponsorship efforts in different contexts (Olson, 2010), but further research should focus on this effort to standardize metrics for esports viewership to better understand how to engage these new types of fans.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is always important to pay attention to new consumer trends that emerge even “beyond our borders”. The phenomenon analysed in this research has only started to make an appearance in the United States and to some extent in Great Britain, but failing to acknowledge the potential impact of it, might lead to a failure in acting on time. The aim of this research was to find out if there is a decrease in interest in sports between young people compared to the previous generation. The results showed that while there seem to be some differences in involvement with sports between generations, they are not caused by a lack of interest from millennials, but more by a change in their consumer habits. The findings of this research have clear implications for sponsors, sports club and TV service providers.

First of all, sponsors can still consider young people to be their customers for the foreseeable future, but they might need to adjust the service they offer to the needs of their audience. For example, the results seemed to suggest that adults are more interested in watching the games on TV compared to young people, but the latter are more interested in following sports news thanks to other associated hobbies like videogames, gambling or fantasy sports. Data show that more than 29 million North Americans participate in fantasy sports leagues (Fantasy Sports Trade Association, 2008), with an annual economic impact estimated to be as high as \$4.48 billion in the sports industry (Drayer, Joris, et al., 2010). This alternative sources of “sport entertainment” might open different sponsorship opportunities that go beyond the traditional sponsor on the jersey or the advertisement on TV during the match. Different studies have proved that match attendance does not necessarily equate to sponsor recognition. A study by Johar et al. (2006) interviewed amateur baseball and asked them to identify the sponsors of the team from a list that contained some real ones and some foils. The result showed that only 23 per cent of participants remembered the

sponsor correctly. A sponsor might find out that putting an ad on a mobile app for a fantasy sports game with multiple exposure opportunities throughout the day might increase the rate at which their target recalls them compared to the old-fashioned method of sponsoring a sports team on their jersey.

The descriptive analysis of the sample also provided some insights that might be relevant for commercial purposes. The most interesting outcome was related to the choice of esports given by different respondents in the open text question. The discipline of esports has gained the interest of researchers that are trying to categorize it in the context of sport studies. Some authors believe that while the definition of esports as sports is still not definitive, they should still be regarded in sport management since they are non-sport activity organized and regulated in a way that resembles a sport and allows for a fair and safe place to compete or cooperate with others (Heere, 2018). Regardless of their official definition, esports are becoming increasingly popular, with streaming platforms like Twitch or even TV channels like ESPN frequently hosting tournaments for various games. Many sponsors have already sensed the possibility behind this lucrative business, like it is the case with names like Intel, Coca-Cola, Mercedes, Red Bull and even Tinder (Medium, 2018). The type of audience interested in esports is more engaged, follows news daily compared to the traditional sports fan. This leaves a lot of space for sponsors to promote their brands with higher frequency and more interaction possibilities. To reinforce this thesis, the only variable of Technology and Media Usage that could be used in the regression analysis was the one related to use of sports videogames, which further suggest a possible cross-over between the traditional millennial sport fan and the videogame enthusiast. That indicates that this market could be a more profitable one to address compared to the one currently dominated by TV rights holders.

Another interesting result that emerged from the analysis is the fact that young women seem to be as interested in sports as their males' peer in terms of watching it on TV or even attending a match at the stadium. This should not come as a surprise, especially considering that recent events in women's sports have gathered attention from sports fans all over the world. An example of this is the FIFA Women's World Cup that is taking place in France that is setting records in both TV viewership (Bloomberg, 2019; CNN, 2019) and match attendance, with nearly 1 million tickets sold before the tournament started (BBC, 2019). This recent interest could open new opportunities for TV services, sponsors and sports club to target a large and still relatively unexplored demographic. The role of sports in society has been recently dissected and studied due to the increased sense of ethics and the possibility to develop women's sports. Maintaining a certain level of ethics and engaging in positive initiatives on social issues is becoming increasingly relevant to be able to secure long-standing relationships with sponsors and fans. This trend seems to have already caught the attention of FIFA president Gianni Infantino, which has started to promote initiatives to invest

in football development and increase sport participation by aiming to double the number of female players in the world to reach 60 million in 2026 (Nielsen, 2018).

Sports clubs should consider the outcome of this thesis especially with regards to the economic elements of it. While it is true that there is a lot more competition in the industry entertainment that might have driven young people away from watching sports on TV, the fact that price fairness has a strong influence on their willingness to see a sporting event at the stadium should not be understated. Many football clubs in Italy are starting the process to build a club-owned stadium to increase their match attendance statistics by offering better infrastructure and environment for their fans to experience the game in. An example of this is the new Juventus football stadium, which was built six years ago. In the 2010-2011 season, while still playing in the old stadium, Juventus only collected €10m in tickets revenues, while the average revenue over the last five years increased to €41m on average per season (Calcioefinanza, 2017). This success story proves that sports fans are still interested in attending sporting events if they feel that the value they receive from it is equivalent or superior to the price they paid for the ticket. In addition to this, the stadium was named “Allianz Stadium”, after the club sold the naming rights to Allianz. This union underlies one of the possible opportunities that can emerge between sponsorships and sports clubs which might help the latter improve their brand equity and corporate value (Becker-Olsen, 2003).

The results about sports participation and increased female interest in sports can both be used by sports clubs as well. Recently more teams and leagues in general are creating female squads and promoting awareness for this new side of sports. Since sports participation influences respondents’ interest in sports, an obvious opportunity might be to increase the visibility of the female academies that are on the rise. This could work well with the concept of cultural sponsorship which has seen an increase in interest in recent years (Irwin et al., 2003; Rifon et al., 2004), which would help them receive good publicity for their effort today while fostering their future audience at the same time.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis presents several limitations and possibilities for further research. First of all, the study focuses on two countries (Italy and Norway) that are different enough in terms of economic and social settings to allow for an interesting comparison for the purpose of this study. That said, as seen from the descriptive statistics, by focusing on Italy, a large sample of the respondents considered themselves to be a big fan of “football”, since it is the most popular in the country (Calcioefinanza, 2017). The problem with this preference lies in the fact that this sport was shown to be the one “resisting” the trend in some US studies that analysed the phenomenon (Nielsen, 2013), since it is able to capture a younger demographic than other

disciplines. Further research should study these effects in other settings and countries in order to enhance the external validity of the findings and confirm that the conclusions drawn can be considered universal in nature.

Another issue with this analysis was the impossibility to have previous data available on what "adults" were like when they were younger. An ideal comparison between generations would have required the use of historical data on the "Adults" segment when they were younger to better understand the motivations and changes in consumer behaviour. In addition to this, the sample lacked the necessary number of Norwegian above 35 years of age to allow for a comparison between adults in terms of possible country differences.

There were also a couple of technical problems related to the internal consistency of two scales. These issues did not invalidate the results of this study but could be improved in further research. The first one was the Cronbach's alpha of the dependent variable "Involvement with Sports" which was slightly lower than the 0.6 threshold that is considered acceptable in exploratory research (Hair et al. 2010). Considering the items separately still proved to be useful in the interpretation of the results, thanks to the "triadic" nature of the scale chosen, but further studies could either re-test the scale in its full form or choose to utilize only one of the three aspects examined in this research to see if it is possible to replicate some results. The second scale that could not be used in its full form was the one related to Technological and Media Usage. As examined in the theoretical framework, many studies have confirmed a change in consumer habits based on the evolution of the technological landscape. The results of the economic factors in this research also seemed to indicate a switch in habits of younger people from watching sports on TV to other sources of entertainment. For future studies on the subject I would recommend researchers to target technological and media usage in a study focused only on these variables, to be able to fully encompass all the elements that an analysis of that type would require.

An additional, if relatively common issue in survey studies was due to the measurement of the variable "Attention Span". This scale, due to its format, relies on self-reporting statements. Further studies on that variable could be performed with the help of an experimental design setting.

A final consideration must be made for the subject of the research: sports fans, which, according to the results, might not be the problem in terms of being young followers of sport, and therefore future research might look at the degree to which the wider population may have reduced interest in sports.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I – English Questionnaire

Q1

This survey is aimed at collecting data for a Master's thesis in Marketing at BI Norwegian Business School.

This study's aim is to explore the interest young people have in sports compared to previous generations. Do not worry, this questionnaire is completely anonymous and it will require only five minutes of your time.

Thank you in advance for your help!

Q2 How much do you agree with the following statements?

Fin_Cont_1 Generally speaking, young people have enough money to attend the sporting events that are important to them.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree7 (7)

Fin_Cont_2 Young people today generally don't have enough money to follow sporting events (at the stadium or on TV) compared to previous generations.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Fin_Cont_3 Young people nowadays can usually afford the sports channel subscriptions they need to buy in order to watch their favorite sporting events or teams on TV.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Pri_Fair_1 Ticket prices to sporting events are reasonably priced.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Pri_Fair_2 The cost to attend sporting events is too high compared to the value received.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Pri_Fair_3 TV subscriptions to sports channels are reasonably priced.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Pri_Fair_4 The cost of TV sports subscriptions is too high compared to the value received.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Att_Span_1 Young people today seems to have more trouble than previous generations in focusing their attention on a sporting event for more than a short period of time.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Att_Span_2 Young people often seem more distracted than previous generations by things other than the sporting event they are watching.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Spo_Part_1 Young people today play sports and exercise more than previous generations did at the same age.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Spo_Part_2 Young people nowadays play sports at a competitive level more often than previous generations did at the same age.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Tech_Med_1 Young people search for information with a mobile phone more often than previous generations did at the same age.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Tech_Med_2 Generally speaking, young people read and comment social media sports postings, updates and photos more often compared to previous generations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Tech_Med_3 Many believe that young people prefer watching sporting events, news shows, etc. on a computer or a tablet instead of watching them on TV or attending a game in person.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Tech_Med_4 Young people tend to enjoy playing sports-related computer games more compared to previous generations.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Inv_Spor_1 Young people today watch more sports on TV compared to young people in previous generations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Inv_Spor_2 Young people today enjoy attending sporting events more than young people in previous generations did.

- ☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Inv_Spo_3 Young people today enjoy following sports news more than what young people in previous generations did.

☐ Strongly disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Strongly agree 7 (7)

Sport_Int You will now be asked some final questions about yourself.

	None (1)	1 - 2 (2)	3 - 5 (3)	6 or more (4)
How many live sporting events have you attended in person in the past month? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times have you watched a sporting event on TV in the past week? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times did you log onto a social media page or an Internet sports related site in the past week? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times have you played a sports computer game in the past week? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times do you exercise or play sports in a week? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Spor_Fan_1 I consider myself a big sports fan.

☐ Disagree 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Agree 7 (7)

Spor_Fan_2 I consider myself a big fan of (you can choose more than one):

☐

Football (1)

☐

Skiing (Cross Country, Ski Jumping, etc.) (2)

☐

Tennis (3)

☐

Volleyball (4)

☐

Basketball (5)

☐

Water Polo (6)

☐

Other (please specify) (7) _____

☐

Sailing (8)

☐

Rugby (9)

☐

Cycling (10)

☐

Golf (11)

☐

Athletics (Track and Field, etc.) (12)

☐

Hockey (Field or Ice) (13)

☐

Motor Racing (Formula 1, Moto GP, etc.) (14)

☐

Handball (15)

☐

American Football (16)

☐

Baseball (17)

☐

Boxing (18)

☐

Equestrian Sports (19)

☐

Cricket (20)

☐

Bowling (21)

☐

Shooting (22)

☐

Bodybuilding (23)

☐

Swimming (24)

☐

Nothing, I do not follow sports (25)

Gender Which is your gender?

☐

Male (1)

☐

Female (2)

Age How old are you?

Education What is your education level?

- ☐ Primary school (1)
- ☐ Lower Secondary School (2)
- ☐ Upper Secondary School (6)
- ☐ Bachelor degree (3)
- ☐ Master degree (4)
- ☐ PhD (5)

Occupation What is your current occupation?

- ☐ Student (1)
- ☐ Entrepreneur (2)
- ☐ Employee (3)
- ☐ Unemployed (4)
- ☐ Other (5) _____

Cohort Choose one or more of the following:

- ☐ I am living with my parents (1)
- ☐ I am living with my spouse (2)
- ☐ I am living with my kids (5)
- ☐ I am living by myself or with friends (3)

Country Where are you from?

☐ Italy (1)

☐ Norway (2)

☐ Other (3)

Country_1 Which country?

Thanks Thank you for helping out!

Appendix II – Sport Preferences

SPORTS	Total Pop.	Perc. %	Young People	Perc. %	Adults	Perc. %
Football	91	28.1%	62	31.5%	29	22.8%
Skiing	31	9.6%	19	9.6%	12	9.4%
Tennis	34	10.5%	13	6.6%	21	16.5%
Volleyball	20	6.2%	10	5.1%	10	7.9%
Basketball	24	7.4%	17	8.6%	7	5.5%
Water Polo	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sailing	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	1	0.8%
Rugby	7	2.2%	2	1.0%	5	3.9%
Cycling	13	4.0%	6	3.0%	7	5.5%
Golf	7	2.2%	2	1.0%	5	3.9%
Athletics	11	3.4%	6	3.0%	5	3.9%
Hockey	6	1.9%	4	2.0%	2	1.6%
Motor Racing	23	7.1%	15	7.6%	8	6.3%
Handball	7	2.2%	7	3.6%	0	0.0%
American Football	4	1.2%	2	1.0%	2	1.6%
Baseball	4	1.2%	4	2.0%	0	0.0%
Boxing	10	3.1%	7	3.6%	3	2.4%
Equestrian Sports	2	0.6%	0	0.0%	2	1.6%

Cricket	1	0.3%	0	0.0%	1	0.8%
Bowling	1	0.3%	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Shooting	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Bodybuilding	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Swimming	10	3.1%	5	2.5%	5	3.9%
Nothing	1	0.3%	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Other	16	4.9%	14	7.1%	2	1.6%
TOT.	324	100%	197	100%	127	100%

Appendix III – Cronbach Alphas

Financial Contentment

Item	Sign	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Fin_Cont_1	+	0.7809	0.4661	.9212231	0.4456
Fin_Cont_2	-	0.6469	0.2687	1.855405	0.7138
Fin_Cont_3	+	0.8213	0.5495	.6109355	0.3160
Test scale				1.129188	0.6127

Price Fairness

Item	Sign	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Pri_Fair_1	+	0.7919	0.6064	1.064844	0.6832
Pri_Fair_2	-	0.7298	0.5087	1.225453	0.7356
Pri_Fair_3	+	0.7435	0.5397	1.199299	0.7192
Pri_Fair_4	-	0.7927	0.5959	1.048541	0.6887
Test scale				1.129188	0.7633

Attention Span

Item	Sign	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Att_Span_1	+		
Att_Span_2	+		
Test scale		1.660714	0.7526

Sport Participation

Item	Sign	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Spo_Part_1	+		
Spo_Part_2	+		
Test scale		1.449352	0.6771

Technology and Media Usage

Item	Sign	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Tech_Med_1	+	0.6309	0.4344	0.4177992	0.3972
Tech_Med_2	+	0.6235	0.3704	0.4129003	0.4111
Tech_Med_3	+	0.6899	0.2338	0.4443215	0.5654
Tech_Med_4	+	0.6741	0.3173	0.3774758	0.4389
Test scale				0.4131242	0.5181

Involvement with Sports

Item	Sign	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Avg. interitem covariance	Alpha
Inv_Spor_1	+	0.7267	0.3297	0.8306732	0.4911
Inv_Spor_2	+	0.7140	0.3781	0.7590866	0.4155
Inv_Spor_3	+	0.7326	0.3658	0.7332491	0.4291
Test scale				0.7743363	0.5454

Appendix IV – Overall Regressions

Overall Regression on “Watching Sports on TV”

Inv_Spor_1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.2169602	.12529	1.73	0.086	.2010386
Pri_Fair	-.3434771	.1667003	-2.06	0.042	-.2406764
Att_Span	-.0080246	.1154862	-0.07	0.945	-.0068513
Spor_Part	.1277068	.1163504	1.10	0.275	.1073831
Tech_Med_4	.2091481	.1094205	1.91	0.059	.1833344
Gender	-.1098618	.381282	-0.29	0.774	-.0280071
Country	-.9582483	.3948271	-2.43	0.017	-.2515366
Adults	-.5207175	.3778741	-1.38	0.171	-.1378721
_cons	4.047725	1.21142	3.34	0.001	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (8,104)	2.08

Model	46.7019516	8	5.83774395	R ²	0.1377
Residual	292.359995	104	2.8111538	Adj. R ²	0.0714
Total	339.061947	112	3.02733881	Prob>F	0.0446

Overall Regression on “Attending Sporting Events”

Inv_Spor_2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.322213	.097091	3.32	0.001	.3394893
Pri_Fair	-.3200799	.1291812	-2.48	0.015	-.2550221
Att_Span	-.0611648	.0894938	-0.68	0.496	-.0593792
Spor_Part	.3026948	.0901635	3.36	0.001	.2894078
Tech_Med_4	.1702756	.0847933	2.01	0.047	.1697173
Gender	.9937599	.2954671	3.36	0.001	.288062
Country	-.7098944	.3059636	-2.32	0.022	-.2118852
Adults	-.3188057	.2928262	-1.09	0.279	-.0959807
_cons	-.16553	.9387666	-0.18	0.860	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (8,104)	6.42
Model	86.6804969	8	10.8350621	R ²	0.3305
Residual	175.567291	104	1.68814703	Adj. R ²	0.2790
Total	262.247788	112	2.3414981	Prob>F	0.0000

Overall Regression on “Following Sports News”

Inv_Spo_3	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.1167587	.1178538	0.99	0.324	.1132516
Pri_Fair	-.3218986	.1568064	-2.05	0.043	-.236108
Att_Span	.1310457	.1086319	1.21	0.230	.1171191
Spor_Part	.2779037	.1094449	2.54	0.013	.2446086
Tech_Med_4	-.1634954	.1029262	-1.59	0.115	-.1500208
Gender	-.4472117	.3586523	-1.25	0.215	-.1193411
Country	-.5920964	.3713935	-1.59	0.114	-.162694
Adults	-1.014431	.3554467	-2.85	0.005	-.2811594
_cons	4.142431	1.13952	3.64	0.000	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (8,104)	2.55
Model	50.747795	8	6.34347438	R ²	0.1640
Residual	258.685833	104	2.48736378	Adj. R ²	0.0997
Total	309.433628	112	2.76280025	Prob>F	0.0141

Appendix V – Regressions on Adults and Young People**Regression of Adults on “Watching Sports on TV”**

Inv_Spor_1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.0524295	.211345	0.25	0.806	.0516753
Pri_Fair	-.8007389	.308532	-2.60	0.015	-.5409549
Att_Span	-.438274	.2059784	-2.13	0.043	-.3789234
Spor_Part	.173872	.1754312	0.99	0.331	.1762561
Tech_Med_4	.0119693	.2155162	0.06	0.956	.0098759
Gender	.7921445	.7681834	1.03	0.312	.1680192
Country	-1.080961	1.404982	-0.77	0.449	-.160833
_cons	5.936346	2.714252	2.19	0.038	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,26)	2.38
Model	48.2340239	7	6.89057484	R ²	0.3904
Residual	75.3247996	26	2.89710768	Adj. R ²	0.2262
Total	123.558824	33	3.74420677	Prob>F	0.0508

Regression of Young People on “Watching Sports on TV”

Inv_Spor_1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.3503821	.1546853	2.27	0.027	.3122451
Pri_Fair	-.1694048	.1949391	-0.87	0.388	-.120553
Att_Span	.1424018	.1367787	1.04	0.301	.1164225
Spor_Part	.1225966	.1679895	0.73	0.468	.0841007
Tech_Med_4	.3310679	.1252253	2.64	0.010	.2993135
Gender	-.1805936	.4371245	-0.41	0.681	-.0496828
Country	-.9321216	.3997793	-2.33	0.023	-.2739536
_cons	2.376504	1.439219	1.65	0.103	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,71)	2.79
Model	46.453741	7	6.63624871	R ²	0.2156
Residual	168.963981	71	2.37977437	Adj. R ²	0.1383
Total	215.417722	78	2.76176566	Prob>F	0.0127

Regression of Adults on “Attending Sporting Events”

Inv_Spor_2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.2401581	.1623708	1.48	0.151	.2235951
Pri_Fair	-.1506886	.237037	-0.64	0.531	-.0961631
Att_Span	-.3420244	.1582478	-2.16	0.040	-.2793322
Spor_Part	.3921123	.1347792	2.91	0.007	.375477

Tech_Med_4	.2305442	.1655754	1.39	0.176	.179688
Gender	2.789157	.5901751	4.73	0.000	.5588376
Country	-.7102386	1.079411	-0.66	0.516	-.0998223
_cons	-1.561039	2.085288	-0.75	0.461	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,26)	7.85
Model	94.0105445	7	13.4300778	R ²	0.6789
Residual	44.4600437	26	1.71000168	Adj. R ²	0.5925
Total	138.470588	33	4.19607843	Prob>F	0.0000

Regression of Young People on “Attending Sporting Events”

Inv_Spor_2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.2273556	.117862	1.93	0.058	.2673484
Pri_Fair	-.3328487	.1485333	-2.24	0.028	-.3125482
Att_Span	.0804602	.1042181	0.77	0.443	.0868002
Spor_Part	.2923359	.1279991	2.28	0.025	.2646194
Tech_Med_4	.0848596	.095415	0.89	0.377	.1012345
Gender	.4437681	.3330658	1.33	0.187	.1610934
Country	-.6015725	.3046107	-1.97	0.052	-.2332977
_cons	.6245259	1.096609	0.57	0.571	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,71)	2.65
Model	25.6272282	7	3.6610326	R ²	0.2071
Residual	98.0942908	71	1.38160973	Adj. R ²	0.1290
Total	123.721519	78	1.58617332	Prob>F	0.0171

Regression of Adults on “Following Sports News”

Inv_Spo_3	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.2442717	.247812	0.99	0.333	.2180615
Pri_Fair	-.3354556	.3617684	-0.93	0.362	-.2052599
Att_Span	.0378124	.2415195	0.16	0.877	.02961
Spor_Part	.378579	.2057014	1.84	0.077	.3475923
Tech_Med_4	-.5458952	.252703	-2.16	0.040	-.4079575
Gender	.7242098	.9007315	0.80	0.429	.1391291
Country	-1.420027	1.647408	-0.86	0.397	-.1913642
_cons	4.329679	3.182589	1.36	0.185	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,26)	1.69
Model	47.056031	7	6.72229015	R ²	0.3124

Residual	103.561616	26	3.98313908	Adj. R ²	0.1273
Total	150.617647	33	4.56417112	Prob>F	0.1560

Regression of Young People on “*Following Sports News*”

Inv_Spo_3	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	Beta
Fin_Cont	.0193058	.1352998	0.14	0.887	.0203916
Pri_Fair	-.2118749	.170509	-1.24	0.218	-.1787072
Att_Span	.1538259	.1196373	1.29	0.203	.1490601
Spor_Part	.1964732	.1469368	1.34	0.185	.1597479
Tech_Med_4	-.0420727	.1095318	-0.38	0.702	-.0450838
Gender	-.8395063	.3823432	-2.20	0.031	-.2737399
Country	-.6227132	.3496782	-1.78	0.079	-.2169217
_cons	4.671193	1.258853	3.71	0.000	.
Source	SS	df	MS	F (7,71)	1.89
Model	24.0739235	7	3.43913193	R ²	0.1570
Residual	129.267849	71	1.82067392	Adj. R ²	0.0739
Total	153.341772	78	1.96592016	Prob>F	0.0841

Appendix VI – Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity Check of Overall Regressions

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Pri_Fair	1.65	0.607660
Fin_Cont	1.63	0.615140
Country	1.30	0.771872
Adults	1.21	0.828253
Att_Span	1.17	0.852800
Spor_Part	1.15	0.866216
Gender	1.14	0.877549
Tech_Med_4	1.11	0.901214
Mean VIF	1.29	

Multicollinearity Check of Adults and Young People Regressions

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Pri_Fair	1.74	0.574053
Fin_Cont	1.72	0.581365
Gender	1.31	0.763900

Country	1.25	0.800212
Spor_Part	1.20	0.831854
Tech_Med_4	1.16	0.861890
Att_Span	1.13	0.883435
Mean VIF	1.36	

SUMMARY

Are millennials swiping left on sports?

An analysis of the causes behind young people's apparent lack of interest in sports

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INTRODUCTION

“Same old faces; no new faces”. A rising concern in many sports markets around the world is the seeming lack of interest in sports among younger people compared to the previous generations (Nielsen, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2015). Statistics show TV sports viewership from this demographic being frequently down, together with event attendance and even sports participation.

Millennials are the more populous generation in most countries, they are engaged in social media and have resources to spend. They are the golden demographic for marketers to target (Nielsen, 2018). Sports audiences in particular, have always been an attractive world for sponsors, but this market is facing rapid changes. Understanding and anticipating the possible evolution of sports fans’ behaviour becomes crucial for sponsors, media companies and sports clubs that are reliant on capturing the largest audience possible for their offerings.

Past research on sport consumer behaviour has offered valuable insights on the possible motives that can be considered predictors of sport consumption decisions. That said, most of these studies have been developed in the form of survey based descriptive research, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the possible causes of this phenomenon. In addition to this, most of them only consider event attendance and TV viewership as the two determinants of the concept of interest in sports. The present research addresses the level of involvement with sports of the millennials generation by focusing on different aspects of it, like following sports news, in order to understand if young people lost interest in sports, or if they are expressing their involvement through different means when compared to their parents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INVOLVEMENT WITH SPORTS

The capacity to draw audiences to see matches is essential for the success of any sport organization. Thus, understanding the drivers and motivations behind fans’ interest in sports has been a priority for sports clubs and sponsors alike. Some authors have started to identify sports fans and their wide range of behaviours with the term “involvement”. The limitation of previous research mainly consists in a lack of a construct of involvement that encompasses factors like TV viewing and event attendance, but also includes the interest in following sports news. For the purpose of this thesis, I opted to follow Shank & Beasley (1998) definition of sports involvement as “the perceived interest in and personal importance of sports to an individual”. In the same study the authors find that the level of involvement is positively related to the hours spent by the individual in watching sports on TV, attending matches and following news in magazines or newspapers.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Most of the news articles and research on this apparent decrease in interest in sports are based on measurement of TV audience or match attendance, but young people’s involvement with sports might

manifest itself in different ways. Consumers nowadays have more choices than ever for TV programs and how they acquire that content. As a consequence, consumer habits are changing, with many people opting to drop their traditional programming providers to switch to streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu (Crawford, 2016). Past studies have examined the reasons associated with watching TV sports programs, but none have performed a generational segmentation to help understand the causes of this recent phenomenon. In the following sections I will detail the factors that I think might determine the difference in involvement with sports between generations.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Financial Contentment

The economic environment of a country could influence the consumption habits of millennials due to the restriction it could impose on their income, their employment status and the budget constraints that they may face (Daskalopoulou & Petrou, 2006). Many news articles seem to imply that a difference in economic conditions might be one of the most prominent reasons for young people's lack of involvement in sports. Millennials have alternative options to watch the highlights of the sporting events they are interested in, without worrying about the cost of TV subscriptions. To analyse more in detail the influence of the socio-economic context in different countries, this thesis develops a cross-country comparison between a country experiencing a great economic growth: Norway, and a country like Italy, which is facing a slow economic growth with an annual real GDP growth that is forecast to fall to 0.2% according to the European Commission (2019). I believe that financial contentment may provide a good measure to understand if young sports fan believe they have enough resources to satisfy their primary needs and also spend it on something else. With these considerations, it is possible to put forward the following research questions:

RQ2: Can economic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ2.1: Does the level of financial contentment influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

Price Fairness

The perception of price fairness is one of the most essential elements to consider when determining a consumer purchase decision (Haws & Bearden, 2006). Trust and loyalty in the buyer-seller relationship become crucial for the perception of price fairness (Xia, Monroe, & Cox, 2004). In the context of sports, trust and loyalty are also essential elements of the relationship between a fan and their sports team and a high degree of connection helps not only in building and maintaining the relationship, but also in increasing the involvement toward the favourite team in the long run (Funk & James, 2006).

Many articles attribute the decrease event attendance to the high price of tickets. Sponsors are interested in these statistics since in-stadium sponsorship has been a tool often employed in advertising strategies even if it has been often difficult to measure its effectiveness (O'Reilly et al., 2007).

While the topic of the fairness of price tickets is more straightforward, it is more difficult to understand how much young people would be willing to pay for a TV subscription fee to watch sports when there are even possible free alternatives in the form of illegal streams or YouTube highlights. Different studies suggest that sponsors should look for alternative media channels to reach a younger audience, which might become a source a worry for sports clubs that heavily rely on TV rights for their annual revenues. It is important to understand if the right price might influence young people to go back to a medium they are slowly leaving behind, or if it is time to offer alternatives (in the form of online streaming service for example) that might replace the current business model. With these premises, I would like to test if sports fan perceptions on the perceived fairness of the ticket of a single match and the price fairness associated to a TV subscription fee can affect their interest in sports.

RQ2.2: Does the level of price fairness of a match ticket or a sports channel subscription influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

BEHAVIORAL FACTORS

Attention Span

Attention is a very important construct to consider in relation to involvement in sports. Sport marketers seem to always be searching for the latest “attention-grabbing” techniques to keep this generation engaged in their content. Attention has been often studied in relation to sponsorship stimulus to understand how much of the focus of the spectator is put on the game instead of processing an advertisement. Bennett (1999) argued that people tend to pay less attention to advertising messages that appear during a match whenever there are moments of the game that are less exciting. Other authors (Vooris et al, 2016) tackled the issue from a generational point of view, by underlining Millennials multi-tasking capabilities. This factor might affect young people interest in sports due to the most common way to measure interest in sports: TV viewership. If millennials are not able to keep their attention on the sporting event for its full duration, that might negatively reflect on what is perceived as their “interest in sports”. I mean to understand the effect of this phenomenon in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ3: Do certain behavioral factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ3.1: Does attention span influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

Sport Participation

Past studies have used different theories to understand the motivation behind people interest in sports. Sport participation might not be directly related to sponsorship, but it has been proven that sports consumers are more likely to follow sports actively, by attending events, compared to those who are less involved with sports (Stone, 1984). Sponsors heavily rely on the idea that those who “live and breathe” sports are also the ones who will be more likely to watch sports on TV and attend matches. Studies attest to the fact that many

individuals that attend action sporting events tend to also be involved with action sports in general (Bennett et al., 2003). Due to the important role that a variable like sport participation seem to play in the implementation of a sponsorship, I developed the following research question to address it:

RQ3.2: Does sport participation influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

Technology and Media Usage

Generation Y is usually defined as the first “digital native” one (Prensky, 2001), with the other generations being “digital immigrants” in comparison. Young people have been the subject of several studies that want to explore this trend, since they are far more likely to use devices such as smartphones and PCs to watch different types of programs (Jensen, Walsh, Cobbs, and Turner, 2015). As young people are moving onto other platforms, like mobile screens, sports clubs, advertisers and sponsors will need to find different outlets to capture this young audience. I believe that young sports fans might be expressing their passion differently, watching matches on different devices and enjoying hobbies like fantasy sports, videogames interest and even gambling that are not directly related to the viewing of a specific sporting event. The following research question was developed to understand the extent of this phenomenon:

RQ3.3: Can different forms of technology and media usage influence sports fans' level of involvement with sports?

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Life Stages

A recent study (Nielsen, 2016), divided people in the 18-34 age range into three different life stage groups: the ones still living with their parents or in someone's else house, those living by themselves with no children and those in the process of starting a family in their own home. This type of segmentation is essential to draw any conclusion on Gen Y since these three groups show differences in their set of beliefs, use of technologies and general consumption behaviours. In terms of viewing interests, the Nielsen study shows the people living on their own with no children are the largest consumers of sport programs (sport events but also sport news and information programs). This last statistic could indicate the possibility that more than a decrease in interest in sport, there has been a decrease in millennials in the specific life stage that have more interest in it. In order to understand if there is some truth to this theory, I propose the following research questions:

RQ4: Do certain demographic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?

RQ4.1: Are there differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts?

THEORETICAL MODEL

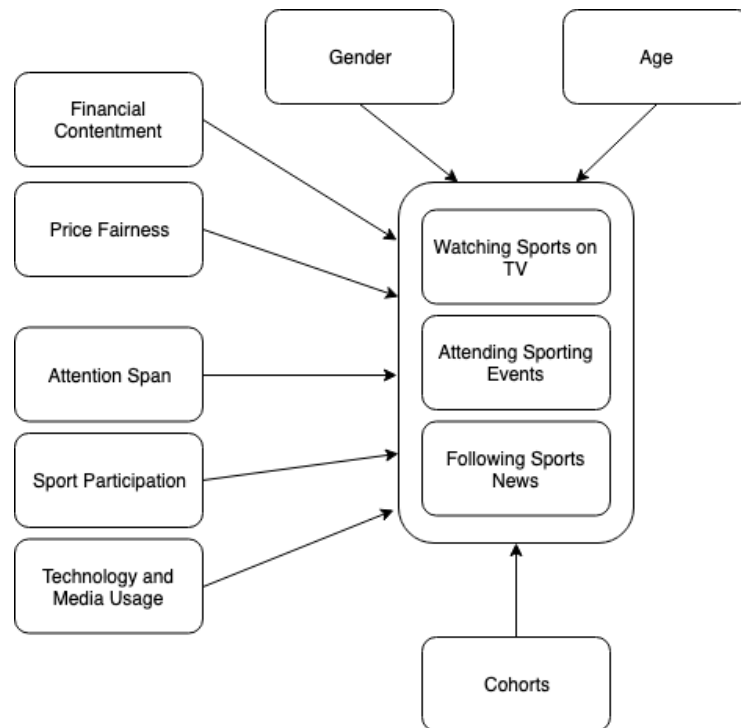


Figure 2 - Proposed Model

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was used to gather and analyse data from Italian and Norwegian social networks (mostly Reddit) where sports fans come together to share opinions. To administer the questionnaire, Qualtrics software was used and the subsequent data analysis was performed with the help of STATA and Excel. From the total number of responses collected I removed incomplete responses, and responses influenced by acquiescence bias. Other inconsistencies problems were kept into consideration thanks to the presence of inverted items in certain scales. The sample recruited for this study includes Norwegian and Italian sports fans, divided into two age groups. The “young people” segment includes all the respondents below 36 years of age and the “adults” segment contains the remaining participants with an age going from 36 to 76, which corresponds to the age of the older respondent. To avoid biased responses, I used a “third person technique” to encourage participants to comment on the behaviour of others, onto which they indirectly projected their own beliefs. In this questionnaire the statements were phrased in a way that inquired about the behaviour of young people nowadays compared to the previous generation. All the statements in the survey regarded sports in general with no reference to one specific discipline in order to take in consideration the possible differences in preferences between the sports fans of the two countries analysed. Finally, demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire, in order to collect descriptive information on respondents, with the inclusion of variables such as age, gender, education level and employment status.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The total number of responded considered for the purpose of the following analyses was N=113. This number was obtained after removing missing or incomplete responses and people from countries other than Norway or Italy and filtering to consider only sport fans. *Table 1* shows the characteristics of respondents in relation to Gender, Education, Occupation and Cohort they belong to. An interesting statistic emerged when respondents were asked to choose their preferred sport. The trend that surfaces from this table is that there is only one choice which was written by multiple respondents: “e-sports”. This result demonstrates an interest in sports by video-gamers, an audience that is not always considered in the “sports fans” category.

Age	N (%)
Young People (Age<36)	79 (69.30)
Adults (Age>35)	35 (30.70)
Gender	
Male	83 (73.45)
Female	30 (26.55)
Education	
Low. Secondary School	2 (1.77)
Upp. Secondary School	30 (26.55)
Bachelor Degree	38 (33.63)
Master Degree	39 (34.51)
PhD	4 (3.54)
Occupation	
Student	48 (42.48)
Entrepreneur	7 (6.19)
Employee	43 (38.05)
Unemployed	2 (1.77)
Other	13 (11.50)
Cohort	
Live with Parents	33 (29.20)
Live with Spouse and Kids	38 (33.63)
Live Alone or with Friends	42 (37.17)

Table 1 - Characteristics of Respondents

Overall Regressions

The first three multiple regressions analysed include all the scales as predictors, with the exception of the one about Technology and Media Usage, which is represented only by the statement “Tech_Med_4”. In addition to this, three demographic variables are included, Gender, Country and Adults. The latter is coded as to consider as Adults = 1 all respondents with Age above 35.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2169602	1.73	0.086
Pri_Fair	-.3434771	-2.06	0.042
Att_Span	-.0080246	-0.07	0.945
Sport_Part	.2091481	1.10	0.275
Tech_Med_4	.2091481	1.91	0.059
Gender	-.1098618	-0.29	0.774
Country	-.9582483	-2.43	0.017
Adults	-.5207175	-1.38	0.171

Table 2 - Regression on “Watching Sports on TV”

The first regression is on the dependent variable “Watching Sports on TV”. As far as the economic factors are concerned, the first variable “Financial Contentment” is not statistically significant ($b=.2169$, $t(104) = 1.73$, $p > 0.05$), while the one related to Price Fairness has a negative and statistically significant effect on watching sports on TV ($b=-.3435$, $t(104) = -2.06$, $p < 0.05$). All the variables that concern behavioral factors are not statistically significant in this regression. The only one that is slightly significant is the statement of the scale on Technology and Media Usage that is statistically significant at the 10% level: ($b=-.2091$, $t(104) = 1.91$, $p < 0.10$). In the demographic variables included, the only statistically significant one is “Country”: ($b=-.9582$, $t(104) = -2.43$, $p < 0.025$).

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.322213	3.32	0.001
Pri_Fair	-.3200799	-2.48	0.015
Att_Span	-.0611648	-0.68	0.496
Sport_Part	.3026948	3.36	0.001
Tech_Med_4	.1702756	2.01	0.047
Gender	.9937599	3.36	0.001
Country	-.7098944	-2.32	0.022
Adults	-.3188057	-1.09	0.279

Table 3 - Regression on "Attending Sporting Events"

In the results of the second regression on the dependent variable "Attending Sporting Events", contrary to the results of the first regression, all the economic factors appear to be statistically significant. Financial Contentment has a positive effect on attending sporting events ($b=.3222$, $t(104) = 3.32$, $p < 0.01$) and Price Fairness has a significant but negative effect on the dependent variable ($b=-.3200$, $t(104) = -2.48$, $p < 0.05$). Among the behavioral scales considered, "Attention Span" is once again not statistically significant, while the other two, Sport Participation: ($b=.3027$, $t(104) = 3.36$, $p < 0.01$) and Tech_Med_4: ($b=.1703$, $t(104) = 2.01$, $p < 0.05$), both have a positive and statistically significant effect on the interest of the respondents in attending sporting events. In terms of demographic variables, there is still no statistically significant difference in the "Adults" variable. The other two are statistically significant but with an opposite effect. Gender ($b=.9938$, $t(104) = 3.36$, $p < 0.025$), and Country ($b=-.7099$, $t(104) = -2.32$, $p < 0.025$).

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.1167587	0.99	0.324
Pri_Fair	-.3218986	-2.05	0.043
Att_Span	.1310457	1.21	0.230
Sport_Part	.2779037	2.54	0.013
Tech_Med_4	-.1634954	-1.59	0.115
Gender	-.4472117	-1.25	0.215
Country	-.5920964	-1.59	0.114
Adults	-1.014431	-2.85	0.005

Table 4 - Regression on "Following Sports News"

In the results of the third regression of the dependent variable "Following Sports News", Financial Contentment is not statistically significant, but the other economic construct considered, Price Fairness, is. Specifically, Price Fairness ($b=-.3219$, $t(104) = -2.05$, $p < 0.05$) has a negative and significant effect on following sports news. In the behavioral factors, Sport Participation ($b=.2779$, $t(104) = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$) has a positive and statistically significant effect on the dependent variables, while Attention Span and Technology and Media Usage do not. Finally, the demographic variables present a statistically significant difference only in the variable "Adults" ($b=-1.014$, $t(104) = -2.85$, $p < 0.025$), which indicates that young people are more interested in following sports news compared to the previous generation.

“Age-based” regressions

While the first set of regressions already give significant results to consider, an additional group of regressions (Appendix V) were run without including the “Adults” predictor and splitting the sample in over 35 years old (Young People=0) and under 35 years old (Young People=1).

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.0524295	0.25	0.806
Pri_Fair	-.8007389	-2.60	0.015
Att_Span	-.438274	-2.13	0.043
Sport_Part	.173872	0.99	0.331
Tech_Med_4	.0119693	0.06	0.956
Gender	.7921445	1.03	0.312
Country	-1.080961	-0.77	0.449

Table 8 - Regression of Adults on “Watching Sports on TV”

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.3503821	2.27	0.027
Pri_Fair	-.1694048	-0.87	0.388
Att_Span	.1424018	1.04	0.301
Sport_Part	.1225966	0.73	0.468
Tech_Med_4	.3310679	2.64	0.010
Gender	-.1805936	-0.41	0.681
Country	-.9321216	-2.33	0.023

Table 5 - Regression of Adults on “Watching Sports on TV”

The results of the first regressions on the dependent variable “*Watching Sports on TV*” are as follows. In terms of economic factors, the two regression have opposite results. The Financial Contentment variable is positive and statistically significant for young people ($b=.3504$, $t(71) = 2.27$, $p < 0.05$) but not for adults. The variable regarding Price Fairness is negative and statistically significant for adults ($b=-.8007$, $t(26) = -2.60$, $p < 0.05$) but not for young people. In the behavioral elements there is also a difference in results between the two sub-groups considered. In the adults, Attention Span ($b=-.4383$, $t(26) = -2.13$, $p < 0.05$) is the only statistically significant regressor. Meanwhile, in the young people segment, the variable related to sports videogames (Tech_Med_4) is the only positive and statistically significant one: ($b=.3310679$, $t(71) = 2.64$, $p < 0.01$). The demographic variable which is statistically significant is the “Country” one: ($b=-.9321$, $t(71) = -2.33$, $p < 0.025$), its one-sided significance indicates that young Italians have a higher interest in watching sports on TV compared to their Norwegian peers.

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2401581	1.48	0.151
Pri_Fair	-.1506886	-0.64	0.531
Att_Span	-.3420244	-2.16	0.040
Sport_Part	.3921123	2.91	0.007
Tech_Med_4	.2305442	1.39	0.176
Gender	2.789157	4.73	0.000
Country	-.7102386	-0.66	0.516

Table 6 - Regression of Adults on “Attending Sporting Events”

Model	Coef.	T-Value	Sig.
Fin_Cont	.2273556	1.93	0.058
Pri_Fair	-.3328487	-2.24	0.028
Att_Span	.0804602	0.77	0.443
Sport_Part	.2923359	2.28	0.025
Tech_Med_4	.0848596	0.89	0.377
Gender	.4437681	1.33	0.187
Country	-.6015725	-1.97	0.052

Table 7 - Regression of Young People on “Attending Sporting Events”

The results of the second regressions on the dependent variable “Attending Sporting Events” indicate that once again there is a difference in economic factors, with the adults’ population having no significant effects determined by the two scales considered, while the “young people” segment presenting some significant results. Financial Contentment is positive and significant at the 10% level ($b=.2274$, $t(71) = 1.93$, $p < 0.10$) while Price Fairness is negatively correlated to attending sporting events ($b=-.3328$, $t(71) = -2.24$, $p < 0.05$). Like in the previous set of regressions, Attention Span has a negative and statistically significant effect only for adults ($b=-.3420$, $t(26) = -2.16$, $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, with this dependent variable, Sport Participation has a statistically significant and positive effect for both adults: ($b=.3921$, $t(26) = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$) and young people: ($b=.2923$, $t(71) = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$). In the “demographic variables” analysis, there is a highly significant effect of Gender in the adults’ population ($b=2.7892$, $t(26) = 4.73$, $p < 0.01$). In the regression of “young people”, however, the only slightly significant effect is given by the variable Country ($b=-.6016$, $t(71) = -1.97$, $p < 0.10$), which indicates that Italians are negatively correlated with attending sporting events.

In the third set of regressions on the dependent variable “Following Sports News”, the overall F-test in the regression for adults showed that it was not possible to reject the null hypothesis that none of the variables considered have an effect on the interest in following sports news. Thus, I will only proceed with the analysis of the single coefficients of the regression for young people, where the only significant variables in the regression are the demographic factors of Gender ($b=-.8395$, $t(71) = -2.20$, $p < 0.05$) and Country ($b=-.6227$, $t(71) = -1.78$, $p < 0.10$). The respectively indicate that young males and young Italians are positively correlated with the interest in following sports news.

DISCUSSION

Economic Factors

The influence of the economic factors in this analysis is evident from both the first set of regressions and the consequent ones that differentiate between generations. These results provide an affirmative answer to *RQ2.1: “Does the level of financial contentment influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”* and *RQ2.2 “Does the level of price fairness of a match ticket or a sports channel subscription influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”*

In the regression on the interest of watching sports on TV, Financial Contentment is not significant for adults, but it is for young people and the opposite is true for Price Fairness. This can be explained by the change in consumer habits that is making millennials experience sports differently. TV is not the main source of entertainment for millennials thanks to the development of streaming services and the advent of the internet in general (Crawford, 2016). The possibility to spend money on hobbies (Financial Contentment) becomes relevant for people that feel like they might have different and possibly cheaper alternatives to watching a match on TV.

Following the same logic, Price Fairness is a significant factor only for Adults, since they are more sensitive to the price of a TV subscription since it is their principal source of sports entertainment. The regressions related to the attendance of sporting events bring additional insight into the topic, by showing that the two variables are both statistically significant for young people. This supports the multiple articles that identify in ticket prices the main cause for the difference in age in stadium spectatorship. Young people in the sample seem to be more influenced by these elements in their decision to attend sporting events, while the adults are not. The last regression on young people following sports news finds no statistical significance for the economic factors. This make sense, since following news does not necessarily require an economic investment compared to buying a TV sports subscription or buying tickets to a match. After these results, it is possible to answer RQ2: *“Can economic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?”* with an affirmative response. More precisely, economic factors affect sports fans involvement with sports, with financial contentment and price fairness both being more important requirements for young people overall, giving support to the idea that the economic crisis might have affected millennials’ preferences, attitudes and consumer behaviours (Meredith & Schewe, 2002).

Behavioral Factors

RQ3 asked the question: *“Do certain behavioral factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?”* and the regressions seem to indicate that the most appropriate answer is: “it depends”.

RQ3.1 asked the question: *“Does attention span influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”*

The results of this analysis, however, seem to support some of the findings reported in the theoretical framework, that consider this phenomenon nothing more than a glorified myth. The first set of regressions find no statistically significant effect of this variable on any of the dependent variables considered while in the regressions on “watching sports on TV” and “attending sports events” people from the previous generations seems to be negatively affected by the possibility of their mind wandering while watching a match while the younger segment is not.

RQ3.2 asked: *“Does sport participation influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”* Overall RQ3.2 can be answered by stating that sport participation does affect sports fans involvement with sports. In the first three regression, Sport Participation is statistically relevant in terms of “attending sporting

events” and “follow sports news”, while in the following set of regressions it is only statistically significant in the “attending sporting events” one. The significance in this second regression is really strong compared to the other variables and could be explained by the fact that direct involvement in a sports environment more easily translates into the activity of going to the stadium, which is the one that requires more effort out of the three dependent variables options.

The third and final variable was meant to answer RQ3.3: *“Can different forms of technology and media usage influence sports fans’ level of involvement with sports?”* The element that was kept from the original scale was related to the use of sports videogames. The results seem to confirm what was found in the literature review, which implied that young people are interested in aspects of sports, like videogames or fantasy sports. The fact that the effect is significant in the regression that concerns “watching sports on TV” could suggest a correlation between being a sports fan and being videogame enthusiast that opens up several marketing opportunities for sponsors and advertisers.

Demographic Factors

RQ4 asked the question: *“Do certain demographic factors have a significant effect on involvement with sports?”* which was answered in the regression by several elements.

The first variable considered was the one related to the Gender of respondents. The results among young people show that women are becoming more interested in sports. Even in relation to activities that require active participation like going to the stadium. When it comes to “following sports news”, on the other hand, the difference in gender might be attributable to the fact that women might just be interested in watching the games, while their male peers might also be interested in following sports news thanks to other related hobbies like fantasy sports or videogames.

The second demographic variable, Country, is strictly related to the results obtained from the economic factors, since the two countries considered have a very different economic setting. In the first set of regressions, there seems to be a statistically significant difference between Italians and Norwegian in terms of “watching sports on TV” and “attending sporting events”. In both situations Italians seem to be more interested in those activities compared to Scandinavian sports fans.

RQ4.1 asked: *“Are there differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts?”* The variable “cohort” was developed to measure the possible differences present between young people in different life stages. I performed a segmentation in this research by dividing the sample into people living with their parents, those living with their spouse and kids and those living alone or with friends. These results indicate that there are no significant differences in level of involvement with sports between young people belonging to different cohorts.

Generational Differences

I have kept RQ1, which asked “*Is there a difference in involvement with sports between young people and the previous generation?*” for last only in mention, since the results related to it were dissected into various elements of the analysis already. The results seem to indicate that when it comes to general interest in watching sports there is no difference between adults and young people. That said, while adults are mostly interested in watching games, young people might be more interest in following sports news thanks to hobbies like gambling, fantasy football or videogames. The answer to RQ1 can thus be that there is no difference in overall interest in sports, but young people are finding alternative outlets to express their interest that are more difficult to be included in the traditional measurement methods used in the past, like TV viewership.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research have clear implications for sponsors, sports club and TV service providers. First of all, sponsors can still consider young people to be their customers for the foreseeable future, but they might need to adjust the service they offer to the needs of their audience. For example, the results seemed to suggest that adults are more interested in watching the games on TV compared to young people, but the latter are more interested in following sports news thanks to other associated hobbies like videogames, gambling or fantasy sports. This alternative sources of “sport entertainment” might open different sponsorship opportunities that go beyond the traditional sponsor on the jersey or the advertisement on TV during the match. Different studies have proved that match attendance does not necessarily equate to sponsor recognition. A sponsor might find out that putting an ad on a mobile app for a fantasy sports game with multiple exposure opportunities throughout the day might increase the rate at which their target recalls them compared to the old-fashioned method of sponsoring a sports team on their jersey.

The descriptive analysis also offered some insights related to the choice of esports given by different respondents in the open text question. The discipline of esports has gained the interest of researchers that are trying to categorize it in the context of sport studies. Regardless of their official definition, esports are becoming increasingly popular, with streaming platforms like Twitch or even TV channels like ESPN frequently hosting tournaments for various games. Many sponsors have already sensed the possibility behind this lucrative business, like it is the case with names like Intel, Coca-Cola, Mercedes, Red Bull and even Tinder. The type of audience interested in esports is more engaged, follows news daily compared to the traditional sports fan. This leaves a lot of space for sponsors to promote their brands with higher frequency and more interaction possibilities. That indicates that this market could be a more profitable one to address compared to the one currently dominated by TV rights holders.

Another interesting result that emerged from the analysis is the fact that young women seem to be as interested in sports as their males’ peer in terms of watching it on TV or even attending a match at the

stadium. This should not come as a surprise, especially considering that recent events in women's sports have gathered attention from sports fans all over the world. An example of this is the FIFA Women's World Cup that is taking place in France that is setting records in both TV viewership and match attendance, with nearly 1 million tickets sold before the tournament started (BBC, 2019). This recent interest could open new opportunities for TV services, sponsors and sports club to target a large and still relatively unexplored demographic. The role of sports in society has been recently dissected and studied due to the increased sense of ethics and the possibility to develop women's sports. Maintaining a certain level of ethics and engaging in positive initiatives on social issues is becoming increasingly relevant to be able to secure long-standing relationships with sponsors and fans. This could work well with the concept of cultural sponsorship which has seen an increase in interest in recent years (Irwin et al., 2003), which would help them receive good publicity for their effort today while fostering their future audience at the same time.

Sports clubs should consider the outcome of this thesis especially with regards to the economic elements of it. While it is true that there is a lot more competition in the industry entertainment that might have driven young people away from watching sports on TV, the fact that price fairness has a strong influence on their willingness to see a sporting event at the stadium should not be understated. Many football clubs in Italy are starting the process to build a club-owned stadium to increase their match attendance statistics by offering better infrastructure and environment for their fans to experience the game in. This could translate into opportunities between sponsorships and sports clubs which might help the latter improve their brand equity and corporate value (Becker-Olsen, 2003).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis presents several limitations and possibilities for further research. First of all, the study focuses on two countries: Italy and Norway. As seen from the descriptive statistics, by focusing on Italy, a large sample of the respondents considered themselves to be a big fan of "football". The problem with this preference lies in the fact that this sport was shown to be the one "resisting" the trend in some US studies that analysed the phenomenon (Nielsen, 2013), since it is able to capture a younger demographic than other disciplines. Further research should study these effects in other settings and countries in order to enhance the external validity of the findings and confirm that the conclusions drawn can be considered universal in nature. Another issue with this analysis was that the sample lacked the necessary number of Norwegian above 35 years of age to allow for a comparison between adults in terms of possible country differences. There were also a couple of technical problems related to the internal consistency of two scales. These issues did not invalidate the results of this study but could be improved in further research. A final, if relatively common issue in survey studies was due to the measurement of the variable "Attention Span". This scale, due to its format, relies on self-reporting statements. Further studies on that variable could be performed with the help of an experimental design setting.

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