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**Research Report for the Nashville Predators**

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**Group 2:**

**Julia Aminzadeh, Nicole Anderson, Jordan Barish,  
Florescia Loncán, Sarah Padyk and Nicole Zack**



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## **Executive Summary**

The Nashville Predators, a team in the National Hockey League (NHL), have recognized that its current fanbase is aging, and it must attract a younger demographic to sustain the longevity of its team. Connecting with Generation Z (Gen Z) is an avenue that the Predators could take to grow awareness and have long-lasting support. Our group decided to target college-aged students because this sample could provide insights into Gen Z. We wanted to investigate the power of social media, the effects of the gameday atmosphere and the factors that influence Gen Z to attend games and engage with teams.

Our team conducted a survey, a focus group, and 15 interviews to gather data. The survey was distributed through text, GroupMe, and social media stories, accumulating 338 responses. The focus group consisted of seven UNC students. From the input gathered in the focus group and survey, our group decided to investigate what Gen Z values and looks forward to in a sports franchise, as well as the game-day experience and atmosphere. The students interviewed were majority male and general sports fans.

### ***Key Findings:***

1. The atmosphere of a game is just as, or even more important than, the game itself.
2. Many members of Gen Z become fans of sports teams when they have a memorable first-time experience or family ties with a team.
3. Convenience is a significant factor when deciding to attend live sporting events.
4. Generation Z turns to social media for updates, highlights and entertaining content of players and teams.
5. Authenticity and community involvement are vital traits that Generation Z values in a sports franchise.

Our team plans to focus on how the Predators can utilize social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and especially TikTok to engage with a younger audience. Our research suggests that members of Gen Z frequently use social media to consume sports-related content. Our team is interested in the use of TikTok, though not the primary platform for sports consumption currently, because of its growing popularity and usage by Gen Z. Our team will further investigate methods to create the perfect game-day experience for a younger audience. Many of our participants valued the atmosphere at the stadium or arena. Because our research shows that convenience is a deciding factor in whether fans will attend a live game, we will incorporate ways to make game-day experiences more accessible and convenient for younger fans. Lastly, our group hopes to develop strategies for the Predators related to community involvement with Gen Z, emphasizing the aspect of authenticity.



## **Background and Secondary Research**

### **Opportunity Statement**

The Nashville Predators is an NHL team in Tennessee that centers its values around its community, providing a family atmosphere and ideally winning a Stanley Cup. Founded in 1998, the Nashville Predators is a younger NHL team now facing the issue of attracting new consumers as its current fan demographic is aging. This team and its world-class customer service are facing the task of remedying the ever-changing demographics of ticket members. The sales team wants to engage with those local to Nashville and maintain consistent structural efforts in ticket sales without compromising the fan experiences offered. The Predators wish to connect with and authentically engage younger generations across social media efforts, community events, and ticket sales while growing and retaining new fans.

### **SWOT Analysis**

#### ***Strengths***

In 2017, ESPN ranked the Nashville Predators the #1 franchise in all sports. According to ESPN's Ultimate Standings, the franchise's "customer service, ticket prices, social media engagement, website and app accessibility" landed Nashville in the top spot (Bratten, 2017). The team has a large social media following with 447K Instagram followers, 406K likes on Facebook and 645K followers on Twitter. The Bridgestone Arena also won the Pollstar Arena of the Year award in 2014 and 2017. The arena ranks first in the world for concert ticket sales, ahead of Madison Square Gardens (NHL, 2021). The Bridgestone Arena also has an incredible game attendance record, with a 192-game sell-out streak from 2015 to 2021 (Gallagher, 2021). Ultimately, the Predators have built a strong franchise very quickly.

#### ***Weaknesses***

The Nashville Predators lack outreach efforts that interact with its Gen Z audience. For example, the team does not have a presence on TikTok. TikTok is the most popular platform for Gen Z, with 37.3 million Gen Z users, surpassing Instagram by 4 million (Wise, 2022). If the Predators want to increase interactions with Gen Z, the franchise must have a TikTok presence. While the Predators have a significant presence on other social media platforms, content does not explicitly target Gen Z audiences. The team's social media lacks short-form video content. According to a study by Smartly.io, "40% of Gen Z users prefer Reels, Stories, or TikTok videos when seeing brand ads on social media" (Kashyap, 2022).

#### ***Opportunities***

Nashville, nicknamed the Music City, is a prime tourist destination for music and entertainment. Tourism is the city's second largest industry, bringing "a record-high amount of \$23 billion in travel spending and \$1.92 billion in state and local revenue tax," (Smith, 2021). Nashville natives like Dolly Parton, Kesha, and Tim McGraw could perform during intermission



breaks. The arena is also near the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the National Museum of African American Music. The Predators could partner with other entertainment venues in Nashville to create an entertainment package that combines sports with music. Ultimately, the prime location is the Predator's most significant advantage.

### ***Threats***

The prime location can also pose competitive threats to the Nashville Predators. Fans may opt to watch the game at the various bars in Nashville. Hockey games also compete with the concert venues near the stadium. With so many things to do in Nashville, other events may overshadow hockey games. The Predators have a few games a year called GOLD games. Tickets are sold exclusively to Nashville residents to ensure the arena is full of Predators fans. However, this discourages any Predators fans that live in bordering states from attending games. Both the GOLD games and the location could hinder game attendance.

## **PEST Analysis**

### ***Political***

The National Hockey League's sentiment on political expression has changed in recent years, significantly impacted by increased awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement (CBS New York, 2021). The NHL made social media posts about the movement and began to engage with social justice issues as a result (NHL Public Relations, 2021). It is also important to note that as of 2020, 32% of Nashville Predators fans identify as Democrats, 31% as Independents, and 37% as Republicans (Gough, 2021b). As the Predator franchise engages its stakeholders, particularly through its nonprofit, it must keep in mind the varying beliefs and values of the fanbase, especially as trends expect U.S. partisan divides to increase (Doherty, 2017).

### ***Economic***

With Nashville's heavy reliance on in-person experiences to sustain its economy, COVID-19 severely impacted the city. However, Nashville's recovery process has been rapid, and 70% of jobs lost due to the pandemic have been recovered, with growth expected to continue consistently (Oxford Economics, 2021). Among NHL teams, the Nashville Predators potentially had the second-highest loss of revenue in 2020 (Gough, 2020). However, the Predator's average home-game ticket prices are less than many other teams at \$78.40, which could combat pricing barriers for some fans (Gough, 2021a). Despite the pandemic, the Predator's franchise value continues to grow, increasing from \$435 million in 2020 to \$600 million in 2021 (Gough, 2022).

### ***Social***

One significant trend emerging from NHL research is the immense growth in the number of young female hockey fans in the last six years. The NHL reported that 37% of hockey fans are now female, with most female fans under 50 years old (Reedy, 2022). Currently, these younger audiences are also the generations most willing to attend sporting events, with 66% of



millennials saying they would feel comfortable attending a sporting event as of June 2022 (Burns, 2022). With over 31 colleges, universities, and community colleges in the Nashville area, the city has a large pool of young people for the franchise to connect with (Nashville Area Chamber of Congress, n.d.).

### ***Technological***

Media and TV deals could influence rising fan engagement, recently ensured by the league's contracts with Walt Disney Company and Turner Sports. These 2021 deals expand the NHL's reach to audiences across several streaming platforms, including ESPN and HBO Max. TNT, a Turner network in 90 million homes, will host three final games, breaking the trend of larger games appearing on traditional networks like NBC or FOX (Knoll, 2021). These multimedia packages, paired with a new 2022 partnership between the NHL and TikTok, will significantly increase NHL interactions with young audiences (Williams, 2022).

### **Relevant Research**

Research shows that Gen Z is hyperconnected. Because of this, social media strongly influences Gen Z's overall happiness and self-esteem. Reports show that 37% of Gen Z said social media directly impacts their happiness, and 39% said it affects their self-esteem. Platforms have become the primary source for sharing personal views and opinions, staying connected with peers, interacting with educational content, and even keeping up with sports and news. These trends have impacted content formatting as well. Visual content is now one of the most popular forms of media consumed by Gen Z (Becerra, 2018). The NHL is now beginning to engage with visual content as it launched a TikTok campaign this year, partnering with country artist Walker Hayes to generate buzz on the platform about a series of upcoming games (Merola, 2022).

Gen Z is also changing the market as they now make up roughly 40% of all consumers (Alldredge et al., 2022; Mighton, 2020). These consumers spend money cautiously, keeping quality, price and accessibility at the forefront of their decisions (Becerra). Authenticity is replacing traditional brand name value. Gen Z identifies with organizations that value diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental initiatives in their business models (Alldredge et al., 2022; Becerra, 2018; Mighton, 2020). One effective way to capture Gen Z's attention is by developing connections with them as consumers through more niche and direct efforts. It can have a chain reaction in brand adoption, as "61% of Gen Z surveyed said that friends have the greatest influence over their purchases," (Becerra, 2018, p. 37).

When it comes to attending sporting events, considerations for Gen Z include the ability to socialize, the status and aesthetic of the event and the added benefits of new experiences (Mighton, 2020). When looking at the inhibitors of Gen Z attendance, these included affordability, team history and geography. Additionally, research trends show that Gen Z sees less value in attending games, which could be a threat, as 52% of 18-34-year-olds already do not consider themselves hockey fans (Mighton, 2020, p. 3; Statista, 2021, p. 20). These impacts are



potentially reflected in the NHL, as there has been a drop in average attendance at regular season NHL games and an even more significant drop in home game attendance (Statista, 2021).

Common trends in the NHL that have led to the loss of fans included individual team players and the characteristics of the team, which management and the franchise's social image impact (Mighton, 2020, p. 11). There are also current fan retention gaps with 18-25-year-olds and a lack of research on effective methods to increase engagement and attendance. Based on these sources, our primary research must determine how to foster a stronger sense of involvement and connection between Gen Z and the sport to incentivize greater levels of engagement and for the Predators, consistent game attendance.

### **Ideas to be Pretested**

We predicted that members of Gen Z, even if they were interested in attending live sporting events, would have several barriers that would inhibit them from doing so. The main barriers we predicted were the price of attending, a lack of awareness about the sport, or being unaware of local NHL teams. We also predicted that the Predators' lack of social media presence would be detrimental to connecting with Gen Z fans. To test these predictions, we sought out college-aged members of Gen Z to discover which barriers prevent them from attending live NHL games. We aimed to gauge interest in a campaign incorporating participants' universities, outreach events and social media strategies. Our focus group and interviews aimed to gather insight into which methods would best increase engagement from Gen Z hockey fans and improve their live sporting event experience.

### **Research Questions and Goals**

Our group focused on two broad research questions for the Nashville Predators. First, we want to determine what factors influence Generation Z to attend live sporting events. Generation Z includes people born between 1997 and 2010. Most of our research in this report focuses on college-aged students aged 18-24. To find out what makes this group attend live sporting events, we intend to conduct interviews and a survey with questions that emphasize a broad range of topics, from spending habits to past experiences with sporting events. For our second research question, we will use a survey and focus groups to address how professional sports teams can engage with younger demographics. To answer this research question, we will ask about social media usage, engagement and in-person event preferences to see how teams can interact better with younger audiences.

### **Target Publics**

To increase season ticket purchases from younger audiences, the Nashville Predators should target Generation Z for its campaign. While Gen Z encompasses individuals ages 10 to 25, this campaign will specifically target those with disposable income, which we have determined to be those from 18 to 25 years old (Dimock, 2019). With over 20 colleges in the Nashville area, including public, private and community colleges, there are many opportunities



to engage with our target audience via universities (“How many,” n.d.). However, we want to note that not all individuals 18 to 25 years old are pursuing a degree, so we will also explore other avenues to engage with our target audience.

## **Methods**

### **Interviews**

Our group conducted 15 interviews with 10 males and five females to investigate what factors influence Gen Z to attend live sporting events and their relationships with their favorite sports teams. All interviews were conducted over Zoom or in person. Our group recruited the interviewees from personal connections, and all participants were 18 to 25-years-olds. The interviews began with broad questions addressing memorable and ideal sporting events, interacting with sports on digital platforms and game-day experiences. The questions then shifted to investigate what the interviewees value in a sports franchise, how to keep fans engaged and how teams can engage a younger demographic. The same question guide was used for all interviews, but there were some slight variations based on the responses given by the participants. Sarah Padyk, Florencia Loncán and Nicole Anderson completed three interviews each, while Julia Aminzadeh, Nicole Zack and Jordan Barish completed two interviews each.

### **Focus Groups**

Our team conducted one focus group with six participants. Participants were majority female and with only one male present. The target audience for this group was college students at UNC-Chapel Hill. The focus group aimed to find out how professional sports teams can attract and engage a younger demographic, particularly Gen Z. The focus group was conducted on September 19 at 3:30 p.m. in a research room at Carroll Hall and moderated by Florencia Loncán. The key topics of the questions ranged from general sports-based interest, hockey-based interest and interactions and attitudes and ideas towards new ways of attracting a younger demographic.

### **Survey**

Using Qualtrics, our team designed a survey made available from September 13-27. The survey was distributed by text, GroupMe, Instagram or Snapchat stories to gain responses. By the end of the two weeks, our survey gained over 300 responses, totaling 338. The survey aimed to find quantitative data on factors influencing Gen Z in attending live games and their general attitudes to sports. The sections in the survey included: general entertainment and media consumption habits, general sports affiliation and habits, NHL interests and general demographics. Seventy-five percent of survey participants were ages 18 to 25. The participants were 68.33% female, 29.33% male and 2.34% identified as non-binary or other genders. Specific survey questions are in the appendix.



## Results

### Interviews

**An Electric Game-Day Experience.** Out of the 15 interviews, attending games in person defined most participants' ideal sporting event participation. Several noted that either first-time experiences at games or attending a high-stakes game left lasting memories of the experience and felt like a special occasion. Being a part of a lively atmosphere in the stands was also a vital part of a positive experience. One person described the ideal atmosphere for fans as electric, and another interviewee stated he wanted to “be on the edge of the seat” during the game. Interviewees want to participate because of their desire to feel surrounded by a like-minded community.

**Entertainment Meets Connection in the Digital World.** Interview participants engage with sports content on a variety of digital platforms. Those interviewed interact with sports content on traditional sports media platforms, social media and podcasts. Interviewees who engage with this content on social media primarily use Twitter and Instagram. Several felt that these platforms allow them to form a more authentic connection with individual players, teams and franchises. These social media users are drawn to sports teams with strong personalities online. One person said, “I would say social media constitutes my entire relationship with sports teams. I mainly have some sort of relationship with them because of social media.” None of those interviewed mentioned TikTok. Most interviewees communicate about sports through DMS, text and in person. Many felt that sports are an excuse to reconnect with family and keep up with long-distance loved ones.

**Strong Team Values Keep Gen Z Involved.** Beyond personality online, interviewees emphasized the importance of a franchise's values and involvement with the community. Many noted that they do not want to spend money on a team that does not align with their values because they want to feel good about where their money goes. Family interest and childhood sports heavily influenced most participants' initial interest in particular sports teams. Several of those interviewed noted that when rooting for a professional team, there is a more substantial interest in individual players, while rooting for college teams is influenced more by the team's relation to the participant's home state and family.

**Hesitant About Hockey.** Interviewees had mixed feelings about the sport of hockey. Most of those interviewed are unfamiliar with the nearest NHL franchise, but many also noted a general lack of awareness about hockey. Some presented negative perceptions of the sport, with one person saying, “Hockey is one of those sports that comes across as inaccessible to the world, so I don’t care about it.” However, several people noted that outreach from NHL teams could increase their interest in the sport. To combat issues of location and price barriers, interviewees suggested that themed games, student ticket discounts and “College Nights” would make them more likely to attend an NHL game. One participant mentioned Pride-themed games, stating that “being part of a group and having or having a sporting event that is explicitly welcoming to me



as a queer person is important.” Many said these events are important because they create a closer fanbase and community.

## Focus Groups

One focus group was conducted with six participants ages 19-23. The main takeaways observed during the hour-long facilitated discussion could be summarized into four categories: convenience, socialization, authenticity and exclusivity.

**Convenience is Key.** The most significant factor driving whether focus group participants would attend a sporting event in person was convenience. This broader umbrella included the location of the game, the price of tickets and the time dedicated to the event. Participants emphasized that many of their preferred sports teams are not close to where they live, making it difficult to justify attending a game. One participant stated, “If you’re really busy one day and you’d be rushing to get to the stadium, that’s just going to make you less likely to want to go if I can just stream it online.” When asked, others said that the price of the tickets was the biggest impediment to them attending a live sporting event, stating, “I can’t pay like \$200 to go to a game like willy nilly. Even if I really cared about it, I feel like it would take a lot for me to do that.” All participants collectively agreed that unless it were significantly cheaper to purchase a season ticket package, they would be much more likely to purchase game tickets individually and only attend one or two games a year. When asked what incentives would tempt participants to become season ticket holders, there was a consensus that packages that offered efficiencies such as a parking pass and fast pass into the stadium would be enticing.

**A Social Affair.** The most appealing factor of watching sporting events for participants, whether in person or in the comfort of their own homes, was the social aspect of experiencing a game with close friends and family. When asked about barriers that prevented participants from attending live events, not having anyone to go with was mentioned by multiple individuals. “I wouldn’t go anywhere without people around me,” shared one participant. “I’m, like, incredibly codependent.” Additionally, many shared that attending a game in person can diminish the potential social atmosphere of gameday. One participant shared, “It’s also kind of nice to have a viewing party where all your friends can be there, and sometimes it’s not realistic for everybody to get a ticket to an event. So, it’s easier to all get together and watch on screen.”

**Authenticity Matters.** Brand loyalty among focus group participants links to whether participants found companies authentic. When looking at how a brand or company engages with topics outside its direct services, our focus group participants want to see them involved with issues that align with their values. For example, a participant brought up Patagonia, an outdoor apparel company, saying, “I was seeing Patagonia just gave away their business towards climate change, so like that’s a brand I love.” This company actively speaks on environmental issues, and its recent action to sell the company and direct profits to environmental organizations aligns with its expressed values. Participants also mentioned that Gen Z tends to value corporate social responsibility when they look at brands. In describing Gen Z, one participant revealed that “[Gen Z] is clearly passionate about social justice. I just like using social media in order to convey

social conversations and instigate conversations politically." Partnering with the correct influencers for sponsored content also affects how a brand is perceived. "Even when it is a sponsored media, knowing that it's coming from people who use it constantly makes me more likely to want to use that," shared one participant.

**Exclusivity Sells.** When asked about the characteristics of their favorite brands, focus group participants all collectively began to discuss Apple products. All seven participants were owners of an iPhone and collectively agreed that one key factor of the brand they enjoyed was the exclusivity that having an Apple product provided. "I feel like it is kind of like the Apple club because not only do your personal devices connect, but it connects to other people with Apple products," shared one participant. Another chimed in, "Right, but if you take someone who has Android, you're like, gross." Exclusivity was brought up again when the moderator presented potential ticket packages. As a group, participants agreed that if a ticket package included special perks for a relatively affordable price, they'd appreciate the opportunity to show off. "If you get to bring friends with your season ticket and like you have the nice boxes with the free food, like all those little perks and you kind of get to show off to your friends. I think that's really fun," said one participant. Another shared her experience at an Atlanta Braves game, saying, "I went to a game at Fenway, and we were in a box, and they had like literally a toilet and a TV in the bathroom so that you could watch the game at all times and not miss anything happening. Which, like, I don't need that to happen, but when there are little things like that, you're, just, like, wow, they really thought about these things that make it feel more special."

## Survey

When designing the survey, question themes were general entertainment and consumption, sports and NHL specifics. Our main takeaways included: (1) Spending habits varied among respondents, with the only strong commonality being going out to eat across potential segments. (2) There is strong interest in sports among survey participants, and social media is the preferred platform to stay up to date on sports news and information. (3) In-person attendance at sports events was most preferred; however, there is a gap in awareness and interest in hockey.

The survey received 338 responses, with an average response rate of 92.3% to key questions. It is a high response rate, considering 24.54% of participants said they did not enjoy watching sports and 10.36% were not interested in sports news. The lack of sports interest among some participants could be reflective of the missing 7.7% of responses among sport-specific questions. Overall, there were high consumption and interest rates among survey participants with sports content. Seventy-eight-point forty-six percent said they enjoy watching sports and 95.45% of survey goers engage with sports information on online platforms. When accessing sports information, 26.06% said they get their sports information from Instagram, followed by Twitter at 20.25% and the ESPN app at 15.7%. Additional platforms included local news, traditional TV, specific team and sports news apps, streaming services and rising sources



such as Twitch and Reddit. Overall, there was a strong preference among social media platforms used for sports news (Figure 1).

When looking at general entertainment and spending habits, there was statistical significance surrounding going out to eat, having one of the highest means of 4.55, meaning more people preferred to spend money on food. The slightly lower standard deviation of 0.79 could reflect many different segments who prefer to go out to eat. When looking at other trends, there were similar means and standard deviations, resulting in no one category as a strong preference over another (Figure 3).

The survey included questions surrounding sporting events and game-day experiences. Participants showed a strong preference for live sporting events, with 48.88% selecting in person, 32.27% selecting at home and 9.9% selecting at bars (Figure 2). The survey showed that 59.43% of participants either somewhat or strongly agreed with being aware of games happening in their area. The awareness of respective local NHL teams is slightly lower, with 46.3% of participants stating that they somewhat or strongly agreed with being aware of local teams. Additionally, 51.29% somewhat or strongly agreed that they regularly keep up with their local sports team. When questioning the types of sporting events participants attended, there were higher preferences towards football and basketball, tying in preference at 27.2%. Hockey and soccer also tied in preference at 13.36%. When attending live events, participants are most drawn to an event because of the teams playing (28.72%) and social aspects (27.96%).

When analyzing respondents' connection to hockey, there were a few common barriers. Twenty-two-point forty-seven percent of respondents said ticket costs were a barrier, 23.86% said they lacked awareness of games in their respective area, 18.89% said they lacked time, and 8.35% wrote in saying they were disinterested in hockey. When asked to rate how connected they felt to their local team on a scale of 1 to 5, 29.96% selected 1 showing a low connection. Meanwhile, 23.97% selected a 4, showing somewhat of a higher connection. The survey asked a couple of questions about the Nashville Predators specifically. There was a low connection to the team, with 65.75% of participants stating they did not feel connected to the team. The lack of connection could be closely related to the lack of money participants would be willing to spend on a Nashville Predators game. Thirty-seven percent of participants said they would not spend any money and only 2.67% said they would pay \$75 or more.

## **Discussion**

We started this research with three goals to help us understand Gen Z's relationship with sports. First, we wanted to understand social media's role in that relationship. Specifically, what social media platforms does Gen Z use to interact with their favorite teams? According to our survey and interviews, the most used social media platforms were Instagram and Twitter. We were shocked to see how few participants mentioned TikTok. The interviews helped us understand what social media content Gen Z is drawn to. Then, our team explored which aspects of sports franchises Gen Z resonates with the most. The interviews and focus groups revealed



that community involvement and corporate social responsibility are important to Gen Z. Lastly, and most importantly, we needed to examine what factors influence Gen Z to attend sporting events. Just because someone is a team fan or follows a team on socials does not mean they will feel inclined to attend games. We saw this emphasized in our focus group. However, common themes of convenience and price echoed in each research method.

Our research yielded several key takeaways that will be considered when planning our campaign. The first finding is that Gen Z needs an incentive to attend NHL games. Many of our research methods revealed that NHL games are either too expensive or too far away for our respondents to attend, which was mirrored in our pretested ideas. The Predators could adjust accordingly by either lowering ticket prices or incorporating discounts for specific groups, such as students.

Our research also showed that games are widely for the social aspect and lively atmosphere. Members of our focus group expressed that a barrier to attending NHL games was not having anyone to go with. The Predators will need to find creative ways to incentivize Gen Z to attend games with their friends, such as special group ticket deals. The Predators should also consider avenues that add to the experience/atmosphere of a game, such as theme nights or intermission performances.

Our final key takeaway is that authenticity and community immersion resonate with Gen Z audiences. Our focus groups revealed the importance of a brand's authenticity. They mentioned brands should be civically engaged, but towards causes that reflect their values. The same concept should be applied to partnerships with influencers. Several interviewees mentioned that franchises should be involved and give back to their community. The Predators are already very engaged in its community, which is a positive route to get Gen Z's attention.

During our research, one limitation that stood out was geography. The Nashville Predators value having a local fanbase, but most of our participants in the focus group and interviews are based elsewhere, primarily in North Carolina. Although we gathered opinions and insights about the local NHL team – the Carolina Hurricanes – these are not seamlessly applicable to the Predators. Another limitation was that our survey respondents and focus group participants were predominantly female. While our interviews were split between male and female interviewees, six out of seven participants in the focus group and more than two-thirds of our survey respondents were female. Almost all of our focus group and interview participants are college students, aged 18-25. In sum, each method was based on convenience sampling, which created a lack of geographic and gender representation of our target demographic.

As we continue with our campaign development, some key takeaways to keep in mind are the importance of a game-day atmosphere, a franchise's community involvement and an authentic presence on social media. In our interviews, none of the participants brought up TikTok as a way they engage with sports content. Our team sees the potential in utilizing that platform based on secondary research. By focusing our campaign on perfecting the game-day experience, the Predators will see increased engagement both online and at the stadium from members of Gen Z.



## Appendix

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## Referenced Figures and Graphs

Figure 1: Q4 - What online platforms do you get your information on sports from (select all that apply)?

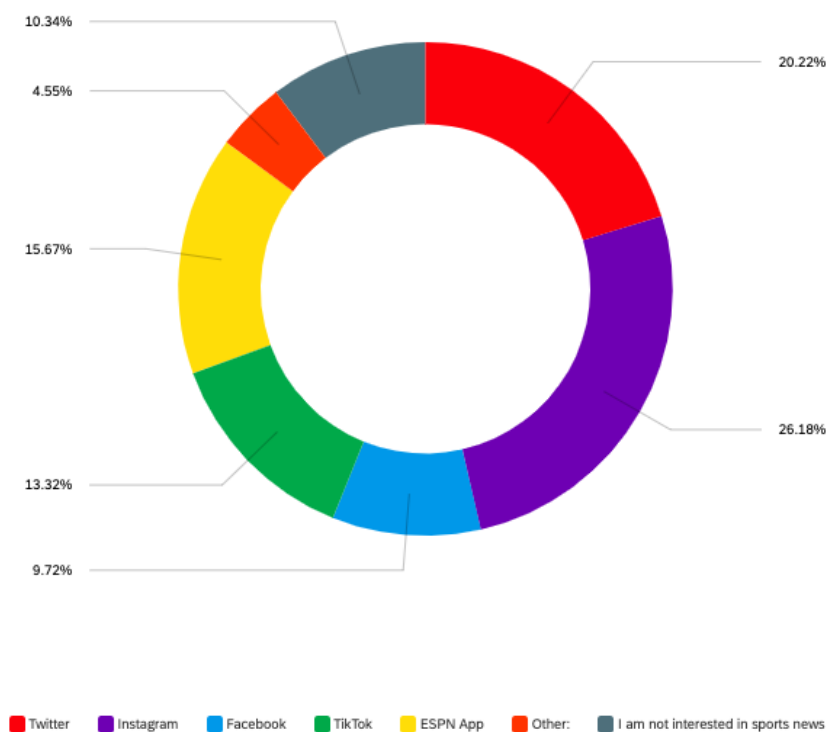


Figure 2: Q6 - Where do you prefer to watch games?

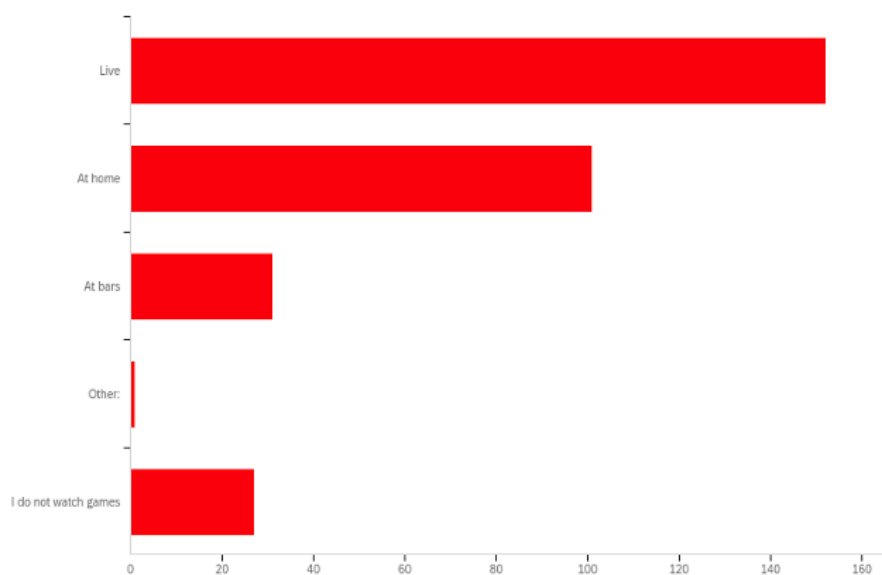


Figure 3: Q2 - Please select how likely you are to spend your leisure/spending money on the following activities (Very unlikely → Very likely)

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Going out to eat	1.00	5.00	4.55	0.79	0.63	322
2	Shopping	1.00	5.00	3.78	1.09	1.18	322
3	Travel	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.23	1.51	322
4	Seeing a sporting event	1.00	5.00	2.98	1.41	1.98	321
5	Going to a concert	1.00	5.00	3.36	1.32	1.73	322
6	Watching a movie in theaters	1.00	5.00	2.90	1.27	1.62	320

## Survey Instruments

### *Interview Questions*

1. Tell me about the most memorable sporting event you have ever attended. What made that event so memorable?
  - a. Who attended the event with you?
  - b. What made you want to go?
  - c. How did that experience make you feel?
    - i. Why did that experience make you feel that way?
2. How do you interact with sports news and events in your day-to-day life?
  - a. What college and/or professional sports teams do you root for?
    - i. Why do you feel connected to these teams?
    - ii. How do you interact with other fans from these teams?
      1. Why do you choose these avenues to have these interactions?
      2. How do these interactions make you feel?
        - a. Why do they make you feel that way?
  - b. How do you typically see news or updates from professional sports teams that you aren't familiar with?
    1. Do you enjoy the way that information is presented to you?
      - a. Why do you feel that way?
  - c. How does social media impact your connection with your favorite sports team?



- i. What platforms and types of content do you interact with your favorite teams on the most?
    1. Why are you drawn to those types of content?
3. Describe your perfect game-day experience. What does it look like from start to finish?
  - a. How are you experiencing the game?
    - i. Why do you prefer to experience the game this way?
  - b. Who is with you?
    - i. Why do you want to attend the game with this person or these people?
  - c. What does the atmosphere around you feel like while watching or experiencing the game?
    - i. Why is this your ideal atmosphere?
  - d. Have you ever had a negative experience at a sporting event?
    - i. (If yes,) What factors made the event a negative experience for you?
4. What do you value in a sports franchise?
  - a. Why do you value those things?
  - b. What factors, if any, would make you invested in a team you previously weren't familiar with?
  - c. What is your family's relationship like with sports?
    - i. How has that relationship impacted your relationship?
5. How familiar are you with the NHL and your local hockey team?
  - i. If you are currently not invested how could the nearest NHL franchise capture your attention as a fan? If you are currently invested, what could the franchise do to keep you invested in the team?
    1. Why would these actions from the franchise pique your interest?

### ***Focus Group Questions***

#### **General.**

1. How would you describe your generation?
2. What are some characteristics of your favorite brands?
3. Is there a certain type of engagement from brands that feels most authentic to you/your generation?
4. Is social media presence an important factor when choosing a brand to follow/support?
5. What areas are you/your generation most likely to spend disposable income on? (Food, travel, sports, clothes, concerts, etc.)
6. What is a common misconception about your generation that people make?



### **General Sports-Based.**

1. How closely do you follow sports/your favorite sports teams?
2. What are the most common ways you interact with your favorite sports teams (watching them on television, attending games live, keeping up online, following the players, etc.)
3. How often do you attend live sporting events?
4. What was the last sporting event you went to and why did you go?
5. What are the most prominent factors that draw you to attend live sporting events? How important is the social aspect of live sporting events when considering these factors?
6. What makes an in-person sporting event enjoyable?
7. What reasons would you have for choosing to stream/watch a game as opposed to seeing it in person?
8. Think back to any live sporting event you have been to throughout your life. Is there any particular game that stands out to you? Why?
9. Would you consider getting season tickets to your favorite sports team(s)? (This could also go under the hockey section)

### **Hockey-Based.**

1. Do you follow professional hockey? How closely?
2. What makes hockey an enjoyable sport to watch? What would make hockey more enjoyable to watch (for those that don't follow as closely)
3. Do you think a strong understanding of the rules of hockey is necessary to enjoy watching it?
4. Has anyone been to a hockey game in person? (If yes) what were the best parts about that experience?
5. What would make you attend an NHL game in your area? Why?
6. What are the greatest barriers that prevent you from attending live hockey games?

### **Pretesting Ideas.**

1. If a local professional sports team offered group season ticket plans (explain this), would you consider becoming a season ticket holder?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. What incentives would make you want to become a season ticket holder?
  - c. How many games would you likely attend if there were ticket packages?
  - d. What games are most important to you?
    - i. Can you share any details?
  - e. Do the teams playing influence your choice to attend/watch a game?
    - i. Why or why not?
  - f. What factors in a ticket page would be most important to you?
    - i. Would this include food/drinks?
      1. Why or why not?



- ii. Would this include special access?
  1. Have participants elaborate as to why/why not.
2. Does having a themed sporting event make you any more likely to attend a game in person?
  - a. What themes or events are most appealing to you/your generation?
    - i. Why is that so?
  - b. What other events would you like to see from local stadiums?
  - c. Would you be interested in ticket packages that go beyond sports games?
    - i. What would you like it to include?
    - ii. Do music and other forms of entertainment interest you?
      1. Why or why not?

### ***Survey Questions***

#### **Description when sharing.**

Are you a sports fan? We'd love to hear about your experiences with sports and events. Please take our short survey to share your thoughts on sports, the NHL, and the Nashville Predators. It should only take about 5 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary and all responses are anonymous.

Survey link - [https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_aVjtvTj18uZ9cvY](https://unc.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aVjtvTj18uZ9cvY)

#### **Introduction page.**

We are a group of students conducting a survey for a Public Relations Campaigns course (MEJO 634) at UNC-Chapel Hill's Hussman School of Journalism and Media. We are gathering information for a research study on public perceptions and experiences with sporting events, specifically concerning the Nashville Predators hockey team. We do NOT work for the Nashville Predators or the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

This survey should take approximately 5 minutes. This survey will end on September 27 at 11:59 pm. We really appreciate your time and effort to help us.

Once all questions are completed, please be sure to **'submit.'**

Please select the box below acknowledging your participation in this anonymous survey.

- I confirm my participation.

#### **General Entertainment/Media Consumption.**

1. Please select how likely you are to spend your leisure/spending money on the following activities (Very unlikely → Very likely)



- a. Going out to eat
- b. Shopping
- c. Travel
- d. Seeing a sporting event
- e. Going to a concert
- f. Watching a movie in theaters

**General Sports.**

- 2. Do you enjoy watching sports?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
- 3. What online platforms do you get your information on sports from (select all that apply)?
  - a. Twitter
  - b. Instagram
  - c. Facebook
  - d. TikTok
  - e. ESPN App
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. I am not interested in sports news
  
- 4. What was the last sporting event you went to?
  - a. College
  - b. Professional
  - c. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. I have never been to a sporting event
  
- 5. Where do you prefer to watch games?
  - a. Live
  - b. At home
  - c. At bars
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. I do not watch games
  
- 6. Which type of sporting event do you prefer to attend (select all that apply)?
  - a. Football
  - b. Hockey
  - c. Soccer
  - d. Baseball
  - e. Basketball



- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. I do not attend sporting events
7. Please state your level of agreement with the following statements: (strongly disagree → strongly agree)
- a. I prefer to attend games in person
  - b. I regularly keep up with my local sports teams
  - c. I am aware of games happening in my area
  - d. I am aware of my local NHL team
8. What draws you to attend a sporting event? (Please select all that apply).
- a. Team ranking
  - b. The teams playing
  - c. Intermission entertainment
  - d. Ticket price
  - e. Location of seat
  - f. Social aspect
  - g. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**NHL/Hockey.**

9. What is the first word you think of when you think of hockey? (open-ended)
10. What barriers, if any, have prevented you from attending an NHL game in your area? (Please select all that apply).
- a. Travel costs
  - b. Ticket costs
  - c. Unaware that a game is occurring in my area
  - d. Unaware of a local NHL team
  - e. Lack of time
  - f. I don't like crowds
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
11. How connected do you feel with your favorite NHL Hockey team? Please drag the bar to rate your expression.
- a. (Smiley face interactive bar).
12. Have you ever been to a Nashville Predators home game?
- a. Yes
  - b. No



*\*\*If no, skip; if yes, continue*

13. Rate your overall experience on a scale from 1 (very bad) to 10 (very good).
  - a. Scale: 1-10
  
14. What makes you feel connected with the Nashville Predators? (You may select all that apply).
  - a. Attending live games
  - b. Following the team on social media
  - c. Following players on social media
  - d. Wearing team merchandise
  - e. Receiving special promotions for ticket prices
  - f. Attending events with the team outside traditional games
  - g. I do not feel connected to the Nashville Predators
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_
  
15. How much money would you be willing to spend on home game tickets to a Nashville Predators hockey game?
  - a. None at all
  - b. 0-24
  - c. 25-49
  - d. 50-74
  - e. 75+
  
16. How much money would you be willing to spend on food and beverage at a Nashville Predators hockey game?
  - a. 0-4
  - b. 5-9
  - c. 10-19
  - d. 20-29
  - e. 30-49
  - f. 50+

**Demographics.**

17. Select which age group you fall under:
  - a. Younger than 18
  - b. 18-25
  - c. 26-35
  - d. 36-45
  - e. 46-55





- f. 56+
  - g. Prefer not to answer
18. Are you currently a student?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
19. To which gender identity do you most identify?
- a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Nonbinary / third gender
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Prefer not to answer
20. What is your average annual income?
- a. <\$25,000
  - b. \$25,000 - \$45,000
  - c. \$46,000 - \$65,000
  - d. \$66,000 - \$85,000
  - e. \$86,000 - \$100,000
  - f. \$100,000 +
  - g. Prefer not to answer
21. How did you find out about this survey (please be specific as to who sent it to you or who posted it on social media and which platform)? Select student name and platform.
- a. Nicole Anderson
  - b. Julia Aminzadeh
  - c. Jordan Barish
  - d. Florencia Loncán
  - e. Sarah Padyk
  - f. Nicole Zack
  - g. Instagram
  - h. Twitter
  - i. Facebook
  - j. Snapchat
  - k. LinkedIn
  - l. Other social media: \_\_\_\_\_

**Relevant Data**

***Interview Data***



This data was synthesized from all 15 interviews. It includes the most important moments, themes and trends mentioned in each central question.

1. Tell me about the most memorable sporting event you have ever attended. What made that event so memorable?
  - People vividly remember their first time experiencing a game in the stands.
  - Rivalry and playoff games were memorable to participants because the stakes feel higher.
  - Most interviewees considered their most memorable game a special event in their life, often surrounded by their friends and families.
  - Elated, ecstatic and euphoric were words used to describe these memories.
2. How do you interact with sports news and events in your day-to-day life?
  - Twitter, Instagram, ESPN, Bleacher Report, The Athletic and podcasts are all avenues participants mentioned getting sports information from.
  - Interviewees feel more intimately connected to players and teams on social media platforms compared to traditional sports media.
  - Participants wanted to interact with franchises and players that have charisma and a strong personality online.
  - College sports loyalties were based on childhood, alma mater, location and family, while loyalties to professional sports teams were often centered around individual players.
  - Interviewees typically interact with other people about sports through DMs, texting or word-of-mouth.
3. Describe your perfect game-day experience. What does it look like from start to finish?
  - An ideal game day consists of being around family and friends and attending an entertaining game for most people interviewed.
  - Interviewees desire to feel connected and a part of the game as a fan.
  - Having fans from both teams present at the game is important to creating a lively game atmosphere.
  - Negative game day experiences stemmed from logistical and management failures, being surrounded by only fans of the opposing team and excessive intoxication from those nearby.
4. What do you value in a sports franchise?

- Owners and team leadership must be honest and engaged with the local community around the team. Participants expect to feel cared about by the franchise in order to root for the team.
- Family, especially fathers, influence what teams participants rooted for in childhood.
- Location, ticket deals, special events and rivalry games were all brought up by participants as potential avenues to spike their interest in the NHL.

5. How familiar are you with the NHL and your local hockey team?

- Six participants have attended at least one NHL game, but several other interviewees were not familiar with the NHL at all.
- There are negative impressions about hockey due to perceptions of elitism and a lack of diversity.
- Teams must do well in order to keep Gen Z engaged and a part of the fanbase.
- College themes were mentioned as a recruiting method by multiple participants.
- Some interviewees felt that they didn't know enough about the sport to care about the NHL.

### ***Focus Group Data***

One hour-long focus group was moderated by Florencia Loncán. The focus group consisted of six participants ages 19-23, five females and one male, all were current students of UNC-Chapel Hill.

#### **General Thoughts on Gen Z\*:**

\*All participants identified as members of Gen Z

1. How would you describe your generation?
  - The generation that grew up with the internet and social media
    - “I think the connection with the internet that I mentioned is really huge and something that I relate to a lot.”
    - “I also feel like this is the age of technology and you won't really find anybody in Gen Z without certain social media apps, without an iPhone, without a laptop, you know?”
  - A progressive generation passionate about social injustice and inciting change
    - “[Gen Z] is clearly passionate about social justice. I just like using social media in order to convey social conversations and instigate conversations politically.”

2. What do you find are some common misconceptions about your generation that people make?
  - Gen Z is lazy.
    - “One of my professors always used to call us the microwave generation because we weren’t willing to put things in the oven and we just microwave things that sacrificed taste a little bit. And in a way, it’s true because I’d rather get things done faster than go through all the hassle.”
  - Feel as though the older generations find Gen Z to be flaky and unable to follow through on things
    - “But I think that our generation as a whole is aware of what we want, probably because of that internet connection. I think the best example is how our parents were prepared to go work at a 9 to 5 corporation for 30 years to try and get that promotion. Versus we're going to like jump around and find whatever we're passionate about, which is something that our parents weren't like necessarily thinking about.”
  - Armchair liberal - someone that sits there and complains without ever really doing anything
3. What are some characteristics of your favorite brands?
  - Patagonia: corporate social responsibility, environmentally cautious
  - Redbull: a cool brand
  - Apple: sleek, boujee, multiple types of technology that allows you to connect with yourself and other people
    - “I don't know if I think that a club is the right word, but I feel like it is kind of like the Apple Club because like, not only do your personal devices connect, but it connects to other people with Apple products. So, it kind of makes like you have that instant connection when you feel like someone else who's having an iPhone, even though it's like a very widespread club at this point.”
4. Is there a certain type of engagement from brands that feels most authentic to you/your generation?
  - Sponsorships that are authentic (from people that regularly use this brand before the brand deal)
    - One participant referred to a ski apparel brand he enjoys saying, “the people that they're sponsoring are those who are like actively using this gear every single day whenever they're doing their sport. So, like even when it is a sponsored media, knowing that it's coming from people who use it constantly is like makes me more likely to want to use that.”
  - Being true to your brand, Redbull ads don't advertise on taste but on the energy aspect
5. Is social media presence an important factor when choosing a brand to follow/support?

- Instagram and Tik Tok are the best outlets for advertising
  - Social media is a method by which you can grab new supporters
  - Infographics are important
  - More inclined to go to places you have heard good things about online from influencers or social media users
  - Loving the brand leads people to follow its social media
    - “I am definitely a customer first before I follow. It’s never sponsored content that makes me want to follow a brand”
  - I don't want sponsored content to be flooding my page, so I don't follow brands on Instagram
    - “I don’t think I really follow brands that I like on social media just because my social media is more of a platform for me to engage my friends.”
6. What areas are you/your generation most likely to spend disposable income on? (Food, travel, sports, clothes, concerts, etc.)
- Experiences which include concerts, sporting events and traveling
    - “It’s an opportunity to spend time with people and enjoy something”
  - Food brings people together
  - Many participants shared that they preferred to spend more on material goods than entertainment because you can enjoy it past just the day you spend money on it
    - “I’m going to one game a year, maybe two, so that’s neat, but I can enjoy a new pair of shoes all year”

### **General sports-based questions:**

1. How closely do you follow sports/your favorite sports teams?
  - Football is a culture - many participants don't watch a specific team
  - Some participants follow sports based on allegiance
    - “I don’t necessarily care about the sport itself, but I care about the team and where they’re from”
  - Uses sports to bond with family
  - Mostly follow their own college sports (UNC-Chapel Hill)
  - Cultural aspect to sports, different cultures follow different sports (cricket is super popular in India)
2. What are the most common ways you interact with your favorite sports teams (watching them on television, attending games live, keeping up online, following the players, etc.)
  - Sports betting
    - “I’m watching because I want to see if I’m about to lose money.”
  - Attending games live

- “I’m very much someone who wants an in-person experience. Like I won’t really watch a game on TV, but if I have tickets to it, I will go in person, and I always enjoy that.”
  - Good sports memes on social media
    - “I like the jokes that come out of it. I feel like Twitter and TikTok are really funny, especially after, like, the UNC-Duke game.”
  - Allegiance ties make them follow only one specific team on socials
  - If their team is doing well, gen Z will tune in
    - “When the Braves were in the World Series, I was watching every single game. Did I watch any of the regular season games? Probably not unless I was in person.”
3. How often do you attend live sporting events?
- Professional: once or twice a year
  - Every UNC football and basketball home game
  - Proximity helps people get to games, it's about convenience
    - UNC student tickets are free and on campus
    - “It’s about convenience, and there’s not that money sports teams close by”
4. What was the last sporting event you went to and why did you go?
- Durham Bulls game as a date
  - Women's Lacrosse game because a friend was on the team
  - Women's Soccer game at Duke because she knew people going
  - UNC Vs. Duke Final Four game
  - All participants mentioned other people, whether they were friends, significant others, or family, in their descriptions of the last sporting event they attended
5. What are the most prominent factors that draw you to attend live sporting events? How important is the social aspect of live sporting events when considering these factors?
- Social aspect and community get Gen Z to attend games in person
  - Go for the experience and energy of a game (cheering, intermission games, marching band, and music)
    - “I like the experience of being at a stadium, whatever it might be. Each sport has a very particular experience that you get to be a part of.”
    - “I always enjoy the atmosphere. I feel like all the cheering and the band music and, especially for football, the nice autumn air, you can really feel like a big part of the experience”
  - Special guests (Michael Jordan came to the last game she went to)
  - Importance of ticket prices
    - “Price is huge for me... If it’s free, we’re going to it”
6. What reasons would you have for choosing to stream/watch a game as opposed to seeing it in person?
- Price and distance

- “Just a practicality. Like I can't pay like \$200 to go to a game like willy nilly. Also, like even like if I really cared about it, I feel like it'd take like a lot for me to do that.”
  - “I'd say kind of with distance, like just how doable it is. Like if you're really busy one day and you'd be like rushing to get to the stadium or whatever, that's just going to make you less likely to want to go. If I can just stream it online.”
  - Viewing parties are fun ways to stream sports
    - “It's also kind of nice to like have like say like a viewing party where like all your friends can be there and like sometimes it's not like realistic for everybody to get a ticket to an event. So, it's easier to just like all get together and watch out on screen and then.”
  - So, time consuming, can't dedicate that amount of time
    - “You know, just feel like it's a matter of like whether or not you can dedicate that entire time because like when you watch a game, at least for me, like I don't necessarily just watch the game. Like, I like always like doing like useless homework, you know, like, while, like watching this game online games I've done like a while doing so you're able to concentrate on.”
7. Think back to any live sporting event you have been to throughout your life. Is there any particular game that stands out to you? Why?
- General patterns:
    - Exciting game matchups. Especially if there were high stakes for the game
      - Duke V. UNC was used as an example
    - Games that were “dramatic”
      - Players got hurt
    - Halftime performances
    - The first sporting event they attended
8. Would you consider getting season tickets to your favorite sports team(s)? (this could also go under the hockey section)
- **General consensus is that none of the focus group participants would be willing to purchase season tickets at this point in their lives.**
    - “I would say it's a lot of money. I think anything that repetitive gets boring anyway”
    - “If I had enough money to where I could, I definitely would”
    - “I agree, maybe when I'm retired and have a lot of money and not really anything else to do. I could just go every week to a game”
    - “Buying a season ticket makes me feel like I need to go to every game to get, like, your money's worth, but that I can't really plan to do that realistically with being a student”



- Some only care about the iconic games
  - “For me personally, even though I might like a team, I only really care about like those big or iconic games. I don’t really care unless it gets like playoffs.”

### **Hockey-based Questions:**

- Only two participants watch hockey semi-regularly
1. What makes hockey an enjoyable sport to watch? What would make hockey more enjoyable to watch (for those that don't follow as closely)
    - Super-fast and fun, tons of fighting, THE DRAMA
      - “Even if the teams suck, you’re still going to see somebody pressed up against the glass.”
      - Somebody is going to lose a tooth
    - Drinking event
    - The game itself is entertainment
    - Even if you don’t know the rules of hockey, it'll still be entertaining to watch
  2. Do you think a strong understanding of the rules of hockey is necessary to enjoy watching it?
    - “No. There’s some stuff you might be like, I don’t know what just happened, but it doesn’t really matter. You can just watch the most handsome guy out there”
    - Hockey teams on TikTok advertise how hot their players are and many participants love it
    - TikTok Thirst Traps
      - “If a player is very attractive, and they advertise on their TikTok or social media, all of a sudden I’m a hockey fan”
  3. Has anyone been to a hockey game in person? (If yes) what were the best parts about that experience?
    - It looks totally different on TV, sitting behind the net at the game, you see stuff you would never see on TV
      - “You get a different perspective. Like they only have cameras on certain angles. You get a better understanding of what is happening and a closer look. If you’re there in person, it’s easier.”
    - The noise is crazy, the siren for goals is loud, the sound of puck hitting the glass is shocking
  4. What would make you attend an NHL game in your area? Why?
    - Free beer deals
    - “If all my friends are going, and tickets are relatively cheap”
  5. What are the greatest barriers that prevent you from attending live hockey games?
    - “If my friends are going, that's cause, like, I wouldn't go anywhere without people around me. I'm, like, incredibly codependent.”





### **Ideas to be Pretested:**

- Participants were interested in college night games, back your college colors, rival nights
- 1. If a local professional sports team offered group season ticket plans, would you consider becoming a season ticket holder?
  - “I feel like that would be so stressful and also like it’d be like who gets what game?”
  - Too big of a commitment
  - Going to the game isn't necessary to have a good time, tailgates
    - “Like even if I don't have tickets to a specific game, but I know the tailgate is going to be crazy. Like I'm still going to go and be invested in and have a good time without physically being in the stadium.”
  - a. What incentives would make you want to become a season ticket holder?
    - Free alcohol and food
    - Faster way to get into the stadium or a parking pass
    - Box seats (Fun way to show off to your friends)
      - “If you get to bring friends with your season ticket and like you have the nice boxes with the free food, like all those little perks and you kind of get to show off to your friends. I think that’s really fun,”
    - Significant discount
  - b. What games are most important to you?
    - Rivalry games
    - High stakes, playoffs, and tournaments
  - c. Do the teams playing influence your choice to attend/watch a game?
    - Yes
      - “If I know they're either going to get destroyed or they're going to destroy the team. There's no real point in me going because I know the outcome, and I don't need to waste money on seeing what I already know what's going to happen.”
  - d. What factors in a ticket page would be most important to you?
    - i. Would this include food/drinks?
      - Everyone collectively agreed that discounted or free food and drinks would be a must in a season ticket pass
      - Buffet style
    - ii. Would this include special access?
      - “When I was younger, I went to a game at Fenway, and we were in a box and they had like literally a toilet and a TV in

the bathroom so that you could watch the game at all times and not miss anything happening. Which like, I don't need that to happen, but like when there's little things like that that you're just like, wow, they really thought about these things that just, like, makes it feel more special.”

- Meet and greet with players
- Interest in free merchandize. Could be a t-shirt or something as small as a pom pom
- Little things that make people feel important (lanyards)
  - “This is also, like, very insignificant, but like kind of back to the showing off thing. Like if you have a more fancy ticket and you get to have a lanyard and you have their lanyard on like that makes you feel more important, which is so small. It obviously doesn't really cost the team much to do that, but it makes you feel more important.”

2. Does having a themed sporting event make you any more likely to attend a game in-person?

- College Night: Duke, UNC, NC state all wear college gear, discounted tickets for students
  - “If free things come along with it, then yeah, I'm more likely to go to theme nights”
- Unaware of theme nights
  - “But I think a lot of the professional sporting events that I've gone to like end up being a themed night that I have no idea that it's a theme night until I'm like, already there. Like it's just not documented or like I wasn't aware of it ahead of time”
- “I think that really excites me just because it, like, really shows the school spirit and brings everyone together”

a. What themes or events are most appealing to you/your generation?

- Easy themes that don't require buying anything, America Out/White Out
  - “I don't have to go buy something for a White Out. I already have that kind of stuff. So, anything that's, like, really easy that I don't have to put a lot of effort.”
- Love dressing up, Halloween theme
  - Makes its more than a hockey game, its an event
  - “I think that, like, makes it an event and not just like a game. And it also, like, attracts people who are not necessarily going just for

like just to watch the players. They created some other environment”

- b. What other events would you like to see from local stadiums?
  - Arena package is HUGE
    - A package that encompasses various events hosted at an arena beyond hockey. Including concerts, Disney on Ice, sporting events etc.
    - If they purchased this package, even if it was mainly for the concert aspect, they would be more inclined to go to the sports games because they already paid for the tickets
  - As a collective this group enjoys concerts
    - “Having access to concerts, which is something that I do really enjoy, would make me much more likely to buy tickets”
  - Participant Suggestions:
    - The idea of bundles
      - “I love things that are bundled. Like if there is a bundle of tickets to this Kings game and the state fair and this offers one easy price. Then like I'll pay it and I'll end up going because I already bought the tickets.”
    - If you go see the team play, you can get discounted concert tickets
    - Subscription model instead of season tickets, pay a monthly fee to get all arena access
    - Watch parties at arenas for away games
- c. What do you want to see on social media?
  - Behind-the-scenes stuff and things that interacts with the players daily
  - Mic'd up players
  - Locker room dances
  - Create relationships with players
  - Videos more than graphics, fun quick video
  - Multimedia elements, cinematic videos

### *Survey Data*

Figure 4: Q7 - Which type of sporting event do you prefer to attend (select all that apply)?

#	Answer	%	Count
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1	Football	27.22%	172
2	Hockey	13.29%	84
3	Soccer	13.29%	84
4	Baseball	12.03%	76
5	Basketball	27.22%	172
6	Other:	4.43%	28
7	I do not attend sporting events	2.53%	16
	Total	100%	632

Figure 5: Q9 - What draws you to attend a sporting event? (Please select all that apply).

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Team ranking	7.50%	49
2	The teams playing	28.79%	188
3	Intermission entertainment	3.06%	20
4	Ticket price	22.21%	145
5	Location of seat	8.58%	56

[illegible]

36

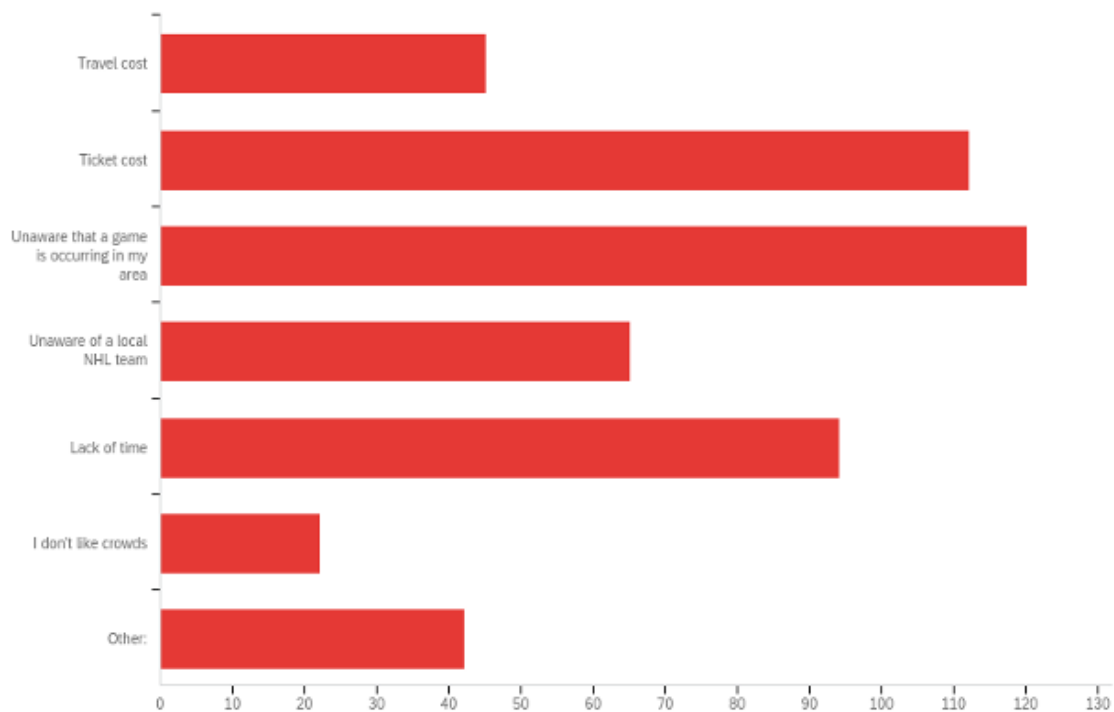


Figure 8: Q12 - How connected do you feel with your favorite NHL Hockey team? Please drag the bar to rate your expression.

