
Evolving Sports Viewership: Social Media Influence on Viewing Behaviour

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Cindy Bui

University of Canterbury

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Abstract

Social media can act as a catalyst for shifting the way that consumers view and consume sports games and content. Social media is quickly becoming a popular method for doing so, due to its accessibility and engaging content. This research is important, because with both social media evolving and the sporting industry changing, the viewership patterns for consumers have also changed. In addition, there is a research gap in the New Zealand context, with limited research conducted on sports viewership patterns on social media, along with the types of social media platforms used by consumers. To fulfil the research gap, the method of exploratory research will be applied. Using a qualitative, interpretivist approach, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was used to interpret consumer behaviour and experiences. The goal of this thesis is to better understand why consumers use social media to view sports games and to explore viewership changes through social media. The key findings from this research are a change in social media content consumers use to view sports games, especially highlights, resulting in snack-sized sports video clips being viewed instead of the full-length sports game. The social media algorithms also influence the type of sporting content consumers view, by providing recommendations on their social media feeds. The implications from this research contribute to sports marketing and social media literature, along with implications for the sporting industry to generate favourable sporting content for fans and consumers.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Abstract..... | II |
| Acknowledgements | III |
| List of Figures..... | VII |
| List of Tables..... | VIII |
| Chapter 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Sport, Fandom and Viewership..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Research so far..... | 3 |
| 1.3 Research Objectives..... | 6 |
| 1.4 Research Approach | 6 |
| 1.5 Theoretical Implications | 7 |
| 1.6 Practical Implications | 7 |
| 1.7 Thesis Outline..... | 8 |
| Chapter 2. Literature Review | 8 |
| 2.1 Literature Review Outline..... | 8 |
| 2.1.2 Key Constructs..... | 9 |
| 2.2 Social Media Marketing in Sports..... | 10 |
| 2.3 Connectivity with Others Online | 12 |
| 2.4 Social Media and Identity | 14 |
| 2.5 Connectivity with Others Offline | 14 |
| 2.6 Segmentation of Fans and Sports Consumers..... | 16 |
| 2.6.1 Tiers of Sports Fans | 16 |
| 2.6.2 The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM)..... | 16 |
| 2.6.3 Ages and Generational Differences | 16 |
| 2.7 Methods of Viewing Sports Games..... | 18 |
| 2.7.1 In-person..... | 18 |
| 2.7.2 Television | 19 |
| 2.7.3 Digital Devices..... | 20 |
| 2.8. Social Media Habits | 23 |
| 2.9 Social Media Platforms..... | 25 |
| 2.9.1 Facebook..... | 25 |
| 2.9.2 Twitter | 25 |
| 2.9.3 Instagram..... | 26 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.9.4 <i>Snapchat</i> | 26 |
| 2.10 Chapter Summary..... | 27 |
| Chapter 3. Methodology | 28 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 28 |
| 3.2 Methodological Approach | 28 |
| 3.3 Research Design | 30 |
| 3.4 Ethics..... | 31 |
| 3.5 Sampling | 32 |
| 3.6 Recruiting Participants | 33 |
| 3.7 Development of Questions..... | 33 |
| 3.8 Data Collection - Semi-Structured Interviews | 33 |
| 3.9 Data Analysis - Thematic Analysis | 34 |
| 3.10 Chapter Summary..... | 35 |
| Chapter 4. Findings | 35 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 35 |
| 4.2 Participant's Demographics and Background | 36 |
| 4.3 Key Themes | 37 |
| 4.3.1 Social Media Usage | 37 |
| 4.3.1.1 <i>Viewership on Instagram</i> | 38 |
| 4.3.1.2 <i>Viewership on YouTube</i> | 39 |
| 4.3.1.3 <i>Viewership on Tik Tok</i> | 42 |
| 4.3.1.4 <i>Viewership on Facebook</i> | 43 |
| 4.3.2 Active and Passive Searches | 43 |
| 4.3.3 Algorithm Recommendations | 44 |
| 4.3.4 Methods of Viewing Sports Games..... | 45 |
| 4.3.4.1 <i>Mobile Phones</i> | 46 |
| 4.3.4.2 <i>Laptop</i> | 47 |
| 4.3.4.3 <i>Television</i> | 47 |
| 4.3.4.4 <i>In-person</i> | 48 |
| 4.3.5 Peaks for Sports Games Views..... | 49 |
| 4.4 Reasons and Motivations for Viewing Sports Games on Social Media..... | 51 |
| 4.4.1 Time..... | 51 |
| 4.4.2 Types of Sports Watched | 52 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.4.3 Occupation..... | 53 |
| 4.4.4 Convenience and Accessibility | 54 |
| 4.4.5 Gaining Skills and Knowledge..... | 56 |
| 4.4.6 Socialising | 57 |
| 4.4.7 Entertainment | 60 |
| 4.5 Chapter Summary..... | 60 |
| Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion..... | 61 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 61 |
| 5.2 Overview of Findings..... | 61 |
| 5.3 How has social media influenced sports viewership patterns to change for consumers? | 63 |
| 5.3.1 Social Media Usage..... | 64 |
| 5.3.2. Active and Passive Searches | 66 |
| 5.3.3 Algorithm Recommendations..... | 67 |
| 5.3.4 Methods of Viewing Sports Games | 67 |
| 5.3.5 Peaks for Sports Games Views..... | 69 |
| 5.4 What motivates consumers to view sports games on social media? | 70 |
| 5.4.1 Time..... | 70 |
| 5.4.2 Occupation..... | 71 |
| 5.4.3 Types of Sports Watched..... | 71 |
| 5.4.4 Socialising..... | 72 |
| 5.4.5 Entertainment..... | 73 |
| 5.5 What benefits do consumers gain by viewing sports games on social media? | 73 |
| 5.5.1 Convenience and Accessibility..... | 74 |
| 5.5.2 Gaining Skills and Knowledge..... | 74 |
| 5.6 Theoretical Implications | 75 |
| 5.7 Managerial Implications | 77 |
| 5.8 Limitations..... | 78 |
| 5.9 Future Research | 79 |
| 5.10 Conclusion | 80 |
| References..... | 82 |
| Appendices..... | 96 |

List of Figures

Figure 1: Consumer's Motivations and Benefits Gained from Viewing Sports on Social Media63

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Methods for Viewing Sports Games | 22 |
| Table 2: Six Phases of Thematic Analysis | 35 |
| Table 3: Demographics of Participants | 36 |

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Sport, Fandom and Viewership

The sports industry is one of the largest and most successful in the world and is worth USD\$512.14 billion in 2023 (The Business Research Company, 2023). It is also expected to increase in the future. International sports outside of their base country are rapidly growing and fast moving internationally, particularly with the likes of social media and digital technologies (Kim & Kim, 2020). Sports such as Ultimate Fighting Champion (UFC), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL), and Formula 1 (F1) are based overseas to their majority fans, but social media has provided accessibility for fans outside of their base countries to view and be engaged with the content globally. Particularly in New Zealand, these four sports have a growing fan base (NFL, 2022), increased in viewership (Sky, 2022; “UFC: Fight phenomenon to hit NZ”, n.d.), and more athletes from New Zealand joining these sports at a professional level overseas (de Silva, 2023).

Sports is a popular form of entertainment, generating much excitement, happiness, sadness and anger amongst fans and sports consumers when viewing sports games. Sports teams around the world have their own fanbase, ranging from devoted and loyal fans to casual and seasonal fans (Feng et al., 2020; Doyle et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2003; Funk & James, 2001). The relationship between sports teams and their fans is important for both parties in terms of identity with the team for fans (Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019; Wang, 2013) and for teams to increase brand awareness (Lee & Kahle, 2016; Filo et al., 2016). Sports teams and organisations leverage home games at their local stadium to increase attendance to maximise ticket sales, because home stadiums are a great pride for fans to show their support for their team by attending (Fenton et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018; Nathan, 2013).

Professional athletes, sports teams and leagues, along with their fans are crucial for the success of the industry. The athletes contribute to the sport itself with their talents and the fans contribute through supporting the team and generating direct revenue through tickets and merchandise sales (Trivedi et al., 2020) as well as indirect revenue being the audience for television rights and sponsorship. Popular sports for spectating, such as football (soccer), basketball, American football, and tennis, attract fans and sports consumers to attend live in-person events to see their favourite athletes and teams compete and increase views online. In addition to athletes and fans, there are many other stakeholders involved with the sports industry, including owners, franchisers, coaches, sponsors, broadcasters, journalists and so on. They are part of the sporting industry ecosystem/network

(Trivedi et al., 2020; Holland, 2015; Haugh & Watkins, 2016), where these stakeholders are integral in order for the sporting industry's operations. These stakeholders' actions shape how fans and sports consumers view their favourite athletes and sports teams, such as through training to reach peak performance and through commentary and interviews. They are also essential for the sports industry, as they contribute towards organising these live in-person sporting events, media coverage of sports games, merchandising for sporting goods and apparel and sponsorship deals. Thus, these stakeholders are key to making sporting events possible for consumers to view, whether it is for an overseas tournament or making sports content available online.

Additionally, the sports industry also contributes to tourism (Jiang & Chen, 2019) for host countries and cities when organising global events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA (International Federation of Football Association) World Cup. Furthermore, modern technology and social media have enhanced how sports games are viewed, such as higher definition broadcasting (Jang et al., 2021) and easier access to sports viewership.

There are many different channels for viewing sports games, traditional methods include attending live in-person games and watching live on television. These two methods are popular ways to view sports games (Lewis et al., 2021; Koronios et al., 2020), with older audiences more likely to attend live in-person and view sports games on television (Gilal et al., 2021). These two methods have its advantages, where in-person attendance provides a lively and wholesome experience being amongst other fans for consumers, with the television providing close camerawork that consumers can clearly view from the comfort of their home, compared to at a distance at the live venue. Modern methods include viewing sports games on social media, such as Facebook and YouTube and through live stream services (Feng et al., 2020) on handheld devices, such as laptops and smart mobile phones. Sports viewership is advantageous on mobile phones because they are portable, and consumers can easily receive sports news and share content with others (Tuten, 2021). Social media provides endless sporting content that is accessible and free, where younger audiences are more likely own a mobile phone and be present on social media (Yan et al., 2020). The introduction of handheld devices, especially smart mobile phones, has potentially caused a change in consumer behaviour for viewing sports on social media (Lee & Kim, 2022; Kim & Kim, 2020). The change in consumer's sports viewership behaviour has therefore changed their sports viewership patterns, from attending live in-person and television views, to now on digital devices and on social media (Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019). This shift in behaviour provides a research opportunity to further understand fans and sports consumer's social media habits and usage and their sports viewership patterns. This research

opportunity is important for the sporting industry, social media marketing and consumer behaviour because with the growth in younger audiences viewing sports games on social media, there is an increase in shortened video clips of sports games viewed, compared to the full-length game (Filo et al., 2015). Hence, social media is now an influential method to view sports games, with limited research on the shift from traditional sports viewership methods to modern methods and concrete motivations to why consumers view sports on social media. Therefore, it would be beneficial to further research younger consumer's social media habits and usage, as this demographic continues to use social media to consume sporting content.

1.2 Research so far

Existing literature has researched fan and sports consumer's behaviour and attitudes regarding their sports viewership and fandom for the sports teams they support. The literature also has researched social media usage for a variety of demographics and consumer age groups, along with fans and sports consumer's identity and connection to the team. However, more in-depth research is needed on consumer's sports viewership patterns being influenced by social media and their motivations for doing so to gain a better understanding of the shift in sports viewership. This is so that sports teams and organisations can create content that is suited to what fans and sports consumers want to view and engage in on social media, to have a beneficial experience and relationship with the team or organisation. In addition, the research questions of this thesis will be discussed further in the research objectives.

As mentioned, an integral part of the sports industry and this research are the fans, because their support and dedication to sports teams and organisations is vital for building brand relationships and generating revenue. There is a wide variety of loyalty amongst fans, whether they are strongly devoted or casually interested in sports, with a diverse mix in demographics. Research by Eastman and Land (1997) and Jiang and Chen (2019) indicate that males and females will have different experiences when viewing sports games. Males are more committed and loyal fans compared to females and are likely to attend and participate in sports spectatorship to socialise with others. Females also enjoy attending sports spectatorship, but more for the socialisation than for the sport itself. Additionally, middle aged and older fans make up a large demographic and target market of sports fans (Gantz & Lewis, 2021; Yan et al., 2020; Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018; Naranine & Parent, 2017). However, there is also a growing market in popularity for female athletes (Beissel et al., 2022; Lloyd, 2022) in sports such as football, gaining sizeable viewership numbers for the FIFA

Women's World Cup ("FIFA Women's World Cup Ticket Sales Hit Record 1 Million Mark," 2022) and F1 (Lawrence, 2021) with more females spectating sports in general (Beissel et al., 2022; Wakefield, 2016). Older fans are generally part of a larger segment for sport's fanbases, because they have been fans since they were young, staying loyal with the team through victory and defeat (Gantz & Lewis, 2020; Todor-Alon et al., 2019). There is also an emergence of younger fans in sports fandoms, particularly Generation Z and Generation Y (Millennials), who have been influenced by social media and streaming services (e.g., Netflix) to view sports games (Yan et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2017). For example, social media can provide trending videos of quick highlights, while documentary shows such as *Drive to Survive* on Netflix influence younger consumers to be interested in F1, leading to more viewers (Richards, 2022; Lawrence, 2021).

Fans and sports consumers can view sports games live in-person at the event's venue, on television at home or in a sports bar/restaurant, or on digital devices, such as on a computer or laptop, tablet or mobile phone. Fans and sports consumers can also view sports games on social media through digital devices, causing a shift in methods chosen for sports viewership. Although attending live in-person has its value with attendees, because the experience of attending a live sports game cannot be replicated through a screen (Lewis et al., 2021; Tamir, 2020; Chang 2018; Boyle & Whannel, 2010). However, it can be costly and not always accessible, thus resulting in fans and sports consumers viewing games on television and on digital devices instead. Viewing sports games on television is popular amongst consumers (Koronios et al., 2020), because they can view the game from a closer perspective, in terms of the camera angles and shots. Another advantage is that the screen is large and ideal for social gatherings for collective consumption of the game (Weed, 2006). Social media is accessed on digital devices, which provides sports games and content for fans and sports consumers, which is generally free to access and is convenient. The result of this is that there are approximately 4.9 billion active social media users in the world, with 2.9 million monthly active Facebook users (Wong, 2023), illustrating that social media is a popular and emerging marketing method.

Facebook (Annamalai et al., 2021; Ahuja & Alavi, 2018; Westberg et al., 2018; Haugh & Watkins, 2016) Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat are popular social media platforms to view sports games and sporting content (Haugh & Watkins, 2016) by consumers. These four social media platforms provide fans and sports consumers 'snack sized' portions of sports games, such as a quick video of a goal, highlight, controversial plays and other relevant moments during a game. The intention of social media providing these shorter video clips is so that fans and sports consumers can view parts of a sports game, rather than watch the full-length of a game (Tamir, 2019). In addition to viewing sports

games on social media, fans and sports consumers also use social media to connect with others, to express their emotions online by reacting to news or outcomes regarding sports games or athletes (Chang, 2018). Connecting with others provides consumers with a sense of belonging, especially with those who have a mutual interest, such as supporting the same sports team (Gantz, 2012). This group of consumers can also be members of a brand community, which is important for fans because sports is an essential part of their identity (Fenton et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2015).

The main users of social media are younger audiences, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, because they grew up when digital technologies were being developed, therefore are more likely to own a mobile phone and be an active social media user (Gilal et al., 2021). According to Wong (2023), approximately 84% of consumers between the ages of 18-29 are active users of at least one social media platform, where social media influencers drive Millennial's purchase decisions. 78% of the younger generation access social media through a mobile phone (Wong, 2023; Kim & Kim, 2022), illustrating that the future of sports viewership is strongly on smaller devices, driving a change in sports viewership patterns.

Since social media provides endless sporting content for consumers to view, such as quick highlights and reels, consumers can select which highlight or moment of the sports game they wish to view that is of relevance to them (Fan et al., 2015), without having to view the full-length sports game. Consumers also receive timely updates about events, athletes and teams (Tuten, 2021) on social media, which is convenient because the information is already available online for when they wish to view sports content. As mentioned earlier, the increase in younger audiences using mobile phones to access social media to view and consume sporting content contributes to the sport's teams and organisation's fanbase, creating and growing a new segment of the target market. With this growth in younger audiences comes with an increase in the engagement of online sporting content, specifically user generated content of comments (Sulianta, 2021; Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2020), views and likes. Therefore, consumers are now shifting away from viewing sports games live in-person and on television, to now on social media and digital devices (Kim & Kim, 2020; Tang & Cooper, 2017; Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019; Tamir, 2019). As a result of this change in sports viewership patterns, it provides an opportunity to conduct further research on the use of digital devices and social media by fans and sports consumers, because there is limited research on the topic. To address the research gaps, the research objectives will be discussed next.

1.3 Research Objectives

The overall goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of how social media has influenced a change in sports viewership patterns for consumers. Social media provides endless sporting content for users to interact with, therefore analysing this behaviour will help to better understand the shift in traditional sports viewership methods, to now on social media. This research also aims to fulfil research gaps, by identifying clear motivations that drive consumers to view sports games on social media. The result of this will contribute to existing literature in research areas such as sport marketing, social media marketing and consumer behaviour. Therefore, the main research question was developed, along with the two sub questions:

How has social media influenced sports viewership patterns to change for consumers?

- **What motivates consumers to view sports games on social media?**
- **What benefits do consumers gain by viewing sports games on social media?**

These research questions aim to provide an insight into changes in consumer behaviour regarding social media usage and sports viewership patterns. This research is applicable and relevant for the sporting industries, organisations and teams, along with social media platforms, because it is useful to gain an understanding of these changes, to provide sporting content that consumers wish to engage in.

1.4 Research Approach

To achieve the research questions, the methodology for this research was a qualitative, exploratory, interpretivist approach (Angen, 2000). This research approach was selected because it is suitable for gaining new data and knowledge to further understand a phenomenon (Chowdhury, 2014), because there is limited research on the topic. This phenomenon being a shift in sports viewership patterns caused by the influence of social media. To further support this approach, semi-structured interviews (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015) from 11 participants were conducted, through convenience and snowball sampling. The goal of these interviews was to explore and interpret new findings in the shift in consumer behaviour for sports viewership patterns. The questions asked were about participant's sporting interests, experiences when viewing sports games, their social media habits

and benefits gained from viewing sports games. The data collected from the participants was analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), to find emerging themes, patterns and insights that help to achieve the research questions.

1.5 Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to existing literature, particularly on sports marketing, social media marketing and consumer behaviour. Regarding sports marketing, the implications of this research explored and analysed how mobile phones and the use of social media is beneficial for the growth of sports views and online engagement. The findings illustrate a shift in consumer's sports viewership patterns from traditional methods of attending live in-person and television views to modern methods of digital devices and social media. The addition of this research also provides insights to fans and sports consumers within the younger generation in terms of how they are a target market that frequently uses social media to view sports games. For social media marketing, this research analysed different social media platforms and how consumers utilise and associate each social media with their sports viewership needs. This is beneficial for fans and sports consumers to maximise their viewing experience and to gain satisfaction from the entertainment they receive through sports online. In terms of consumer behaviour, this research contributes to existing literature through exploring consumer's motivators to view sports games on social media, further understanding the change in behaviour in sports viewership patterns. This research is also useful to further understand general psychological and consumer's behaviour changes in terms of their social media habits.

1.6 Practical Implications

The findings from this research will help social media marketers and sports teams and organisations to better understand the type of content that their fans and consumers view on social media, to create content to their preferences. The factors of time availability, convenience and accessibility, socialising and entertainment discussed illustrate that these factors are the key reasons and motivations for why consumers view sports games on social media. This is important for the sporting and marketing industries as this shows a change in consumer behaviour for sports viewership patterns, shifting away from traditional viewership methods to now digital methods. It is also important for sports organisations, teams and social media marketers to target all fans and sports consumers in their target market and fanbase. Establishing a presence on social media platforms that they are not already a part of will allow them to build relationships and increase awareness about the

sport team or organisation to fans and sports consumers. Lastly, to increase the value of attending live sports games, sports teams and organisations can implement ticket bundles with food and beverages for consumers. Sports teams and organisations can increase their live game attendance by strategising ticket bundles to target different segments of their fanbase.

1.7 Thesis Outline

There are five chapters that outline this thesis. Chapter one has provided the *introduction*, providing a background of the topic and relevance of this research, research objectives, research approach, and theoretical and practical implications. Chapter two discusses the *literature review*, with the main themes discussed being the key constructs, sports fans/consumer behaviour, methods of viewing sports games and social media platforms. Chapter three outlines the *methodology* used in this research, explaining the approach of a qualitative, exploratory and interpretive method used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from participants, with thematic analysis used to analyse and interpret emerging trends and patterns. Chapter four analyses the key *findings*, with the five main themes being explored are consumer's social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendations, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for viewing sports games. Consumer's motivations for viewing sports on social media and the benefits they gain from it are also explored in this chapter. Chapter five analyses the *discussion* from the findings, interpreting the importance of the findings to answer the research questions. This chapter also discusses the theoretical and practical implications, research limitations and future research opportunities. Additionally, this chapter also provides a *conclusion* to this thesis, summarising the key points of relevance from the research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review Outline

The literature review first covers the key constructs that will be referred to throughout this research. Secondly, sports organisations usage of social media to create a communication bond with fans will be discussed. The next part is about motivations of sports fans, followed by the segmentation of sports fans, as it is one of main focuses of this research topic, being the consumer. Following this, the methods of viewing sports games will be reviewed and evaluated. The last focus of the research topic is the viewership patterns of sports games on social media. This section is towards the end, because it

builds on from how consumers are changing their viewership patterns that are now being influenced by social media. This literature review highlights the shift in sports viewership patterns, along with identifying the research gaps.

2.1.2 Key Constructs

Three constructs that will be used throughout this thesis are ‘sports fans’, ‘social media’ and ‘digital devices’, which are fundamental for the purpose of this research, as they strongly relate to the topic.

Sports Fans

Sports fans are those who view, support and follow or/and play, compete or participate in sport. They are interested in the sport through a team, athlete or organisation and vary in commitment due to their emotional attachment to the team or organisation (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2020; Gantz, 2013). Stewart et al (2003) discusses that there are also varying levels of loyalty amongst sports fans, such as fans who are strongly devoted and committed compared to fans who are just casually interested in the sport. Sports fans and sports consumers are also significant (Nisar et al., 2018) for sports organisation, because they are an integral part of ticket sales for in-person sports games (Trivedi et al., 2020) and are at the core of supporting the teams and athletes in the sporting ecosystem.

Social Media

Social media is platforms that are based online as websites or/and apps, where users engage and interact with others by sharing and creating content through social networking (Phonthanakitithaworn & Sellitto, 2017). A similar definition according to Filo et al. (2015), of social media is technologies that include interactivity, development of co-creation and user-generated content between organisations and individuals.

Different social media platforms have characteristics that separate and make them unique from other platforms, but the most shared characteristic between them is they allow information sharing (Tuten, 2021). For example, Instagram has photo sharing and videos as their main type of content feed. Snapchat has photos, videos and quick text messages as forms of communication. Both platforms

attract a young age group of users averaging between 18-29 years old (Tuten, 2021). Facebook has a mixture of photos and videos being popular posts for users (demographic age of 25-54 years old), along with being the most engaging and popular social media platform for brands and organisations to connect with their consumers (Tuten, 2021). YouTube focuses on videos as their main type of content (Tuten, 2021), which allows for sports teams to post videos of sports games and upcoming information for a wide range of users, as their demographic age for audiences is all ages.

According to Lim et al. (2015), social media platforms have three dimensions common between them, which are likeability (e.g., favourites, likes and reposts), communicability (e.g., frequency of posts, hashtags and mentioning other accounts/users) and recognition within the online community (e.g., followers and having online friends). These dimensions are common functions and behaviours that occur on social media. In the sporting industry, these features can help to keep sports fans engaged and interacted with sports teams, athletes and news about games and events.

Digital Devices

Digital devices like tablets and smart mobile phones are a tangible electronic device that can store and save memory, process and share information and send and receive information (Baltzan & Phillips, 2020). They are used globally, and many social media platforms and applications are downloaded and saved on these digital devices (Hutchins et al., 2013).

2.2 Social Media Marketing in Sports

Social media platforms and media channels along with digital technologies make sports content more accessible for fans and sports consumers, such as sports games. Social media is utilised widely by sports teams and their organisations as a marketing channel (Ioakimidis, 2010; Filo et al., 2015; Naranine & Parent, 2017; Marčinko Trkulja et al., 2022). Nisar et al. (2018) recognise social media as part of the 'promotion' concept from the 4P's of marketing. Social media influences how fans and sports consumers view sports games, interact with athletes and teams, while also interacting with fans and other social media users online. It is also expected that sports teams and organisations have a social media presence now, as it is essential for building relationships between sports teams and fans, as it is constantly active and accessible to users (Naranine & Parent, 2017). In addition, there has been a shift from the traditional methods of viewing sports games, from in-person attendance or on television, to viewing on smaller digital devices or/and on social media, (Kim & Kim, 2020; Tang

& Cooper, 2017; Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019; Tamir, 2019). This shift to online viewing and interacting with sports will be the key focus of this research.

The sporting industry is like an ecosystem/network which also has a hierarchy. The ecosystem involves many stakeholders, such as fans, league marketers, athletes/players, broadcasters, sponsors, team owners, governing authorities and so on (Trivedi et al., 2020; Holland, 2015; Haugh & Watkins, 2016). The ecosystem is able to continue operating and growing because of the communication that is shared amongst these stakeholders, such as news about a game/event, changes made to teams and players and so on. In order to communicate to different stakeholders in the sporting ecosystem, one channel for doing so is social media. The stakeholders benefit from social media because it helps spread sporting content globally to be readily accessible and can be updated with real time. This is important for the stakeholders because social media is crucial for sports marketing and is an element of change for the way that the stakeholders produce and consume sporting content.

Many sports organisations use social media to connect with their fans and supporters to build their sporting brand and to reach a wider audience (Filo et al., 2015; Naranine & Parent, 2017; Marčinko Trkulja et al., 2022). Connecting with fans is achieved through social media being interactive (Nisar et al., 2018), such as initiating conversation through comments on a post, and through engagement, which is crucial for maintaining relationships (Filo et al., 2015). Social media provides an advantage (Naranine & Parent., 2017) to both the sports organisations and their fans through these interactions. This is beneficial for creating a bond and loyalty between fans and the sports team, credibility and trust for fans and sports consumers because it is the official team providing any news and updates online in real time, along with social media potentially growing new and smaller sports team's presence online for stakeholders in the sporting industry. This helps to improve the sports team's online presence so that they can further increase their brand awareness and target market and audience online.

Fan/team identification with the sports team contributes to the engagement and interactivity on the organisation's social media channels (Marčinko Trkulja et al., 2022; Annamalai et al., 2021). Fan's identification towards sports teams is important for the success regarding the operations for the sports team, such as higher attendance at sports games, increased online activity and engagement and overall, more consumption from the organisation (such as purchasing merchandise and being part of the brand community) (Lee & Kahle, 2016). The result of the sport team's success is that the sports

organisations have provided a service (Lee & Kahle, 2016; Filo et al., 2015) and experience for their fans, maintaining to build the relationship between team and customer.

Social media is also helpful for gaining support, to have a more inclusive and engaging sporting culture, which can also help to achieve goals and movements in society. An example with research conducted by Beissel et al. (2022) saw more inclusivity and recognition for girls and women in football and sport overall, leveraging the 2022 Australia and New Zealand hosted FIFA Women's World Cup as the event to lead by. On Twitter, the main hashtag #GetOnside saw lots of engagement, tweeting, sharing and mentioning, in order to gather signatures for the event to be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand. These two countries are good for (and still in progress) for supporting women's equality in sport (Beissel et al., 2022).

Naranine and Parent (2017) discuss that there are some challenges for sports organisations on social media. These challenges include language and translation accuracy, being consistent for the same content posted on different social media platforms, and being able to reach older generations of fans, as they are hesitant to use social media, but make up a very large percentage of a fan base (Naranine and Parent, 2017).

2.3 Connectivity with Others Online

Four consumer needs are expressed when consumers utilise social media when interacting as an online community. The theoretical framework by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) explains that the four needs are functional, hedonic, psychological, and social needs. Functional needs refer to how users communicate (Lim et al., 2015) with others on social media platforms, such as using text, images, videos and so on. Hedonic needs are about users fulfilling their happiness through excitement and enjoyment of online content. Psychological needs are users feeling a sense of belonging with others that share similar characteristics within an online community, whilst building their online community. Social needs connect with psychological needs, where users interact and communicate with others in a safe online space. This framework can be used to understand why sports fans use social media.

Sports fans express their emotions online regarding sports (Gong & Wang, 2021; Lim et al., 2015). This could be either due to the outcome of a sport game (e.g., a win or loss for a team), regarding athletes or upcoming events and games. These emotions turn into comments that are then posted

online, which other social media users and fans can reply and interact with (Kim & Kim, 2020). The interaction and engagement between social media users make fans feel a sense of connectivity that they share with others with similar characteristics and interests as them (Chang, 2018), utilizing the psychological need (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). The more committed, devoted, and loyal the fan/sports consumer is, the more likely they are to engage and create sports content on social media (Ha et al., 2017), such as texting/communicating with others or replying to comments online. When fans and sports consumer's express their emotions online, all four consumer needs are met (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004), because being part of the online environment fulfils their online identity of being a sports fan.

Depending on the level of devotion a fan has towards their favourite team/sport, they may express their emotions online, such as commenting on the game or on important announcements regarding players/team (Chang, 2018; Filo et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014; Kim & Kim, 2020; Gantz et al., 2013; Stavros et al., 2013; Gong & Wang, 2021; Lee & Kim, 2022; MacIntosh et al., 2017; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Researchers have analysed and conducted research to evaluate that sports fans and consumers may express their emotions online as they would in-person. When being active online, they also extend their identity and personality of being a sports fan (Haugh & Watkins, 2016). This idea of consumer's extended online identity also connects to the four consumer needs being met (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004), further illustrating that online communities are important for consumers to feel part of a group.

Consumers identify themselves as fans, feel connected and have a sense of belonging (Gantz, 2012) as part of a community (Lim et al., 2015) when engaging and viewing games with other fans when they support the same team, athlete or country (as a competitor in a sporting tournament). They feel satisfaction, happiness and have a friend-like connection with others, even though they are physically far apart, but share similar characteristics with strangers online (Lim et al., 2015). This is significant because it reinforces the idea that viewing and interacting with others during sports games benefits consumers to feel more interconnected with each other and more likely to view a sports game in a social context.

Sports community engagement is also important to sports organisations because it is directly associated with channel loyalty, with online functional engagement leading to an increased perception of social presence (Annamalai et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2015). The loyalty of fans being involved through online communities on social media is crucial for the success of sporting events,

which leads to more attendance for events and helps to maintain a good relationship between fans and the organisation (Trivedi et al., 2020). Online communities are also profitable and useful from a business perspective (Trivedi et al., 2020), which further incentivises sports organisations to use social media to boost fan's experiences of being involved and engaged with the team.

2.4 Social Media and Identity

According to Kim and Kim (2020), live streaming services appeal to a range of sports fans and consumers, such as for fans who may usually view games alone, can view it with others online and engage in a social context. They explore the theme that being active on social media allows users to 'escape' (Stavros et al., 2017) everyday life and enter a virtual reality. Belk (2013) also agrees that being online in a digital world provides users an escape as a third 'world' in an individual's life. For example, they argue that the first 'world' is home and that the second 'world' is work. Hence social media users can escape their responsibilities and explore their identity on social media. This is important because this online third 'world' allows consumers to be themselves, where a safe online place is where they may feel a sense of belonging and acceptance that they might not have in the real world (Belk, 2013).

Being a fan/supporter of a particular sport or/and sports team can be a significant aspect of an individual's life, as it is a part of their identity both in-person and online (Wang, 2013; Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019). They may post on social media (Lee & Kahle, 2016) that they support the team, or of them attending sports games. To illustrate that sports fans support a team or country and how the team becomes part of their identity, they may wear the country's or team colours, wear face paint, hold a flag, have accessories that show the team logo, clothing/merchandise and so on (Bouchet et al, 2011). Through this, they may post pictures of themselves online on social media, to show their identity, further extending themselves and their identity (Bouchet et al, 2011; Belk, 2013).

This process is called fan identification (Hu & Tang, 2017; Lee & Kahle, 2016), where consumers have a psychological connection with their favourite sports team (Funk & James, 2000; MacIntosh et al., 2017; Kim & Kim, 2020; Tamir, 2022). Hence, fans who are more committed, devoted and loyal are more likely to show fan identification, be active and engaging with others online (Wakefield, 2016), compared to those whose are less devoted or casually interested.

2.5 Connectivity with Others Offline

Sports fans can also connect with others in-person, which can be achieved through in-person attendance of games. This allows sports fans to build a relationship with those that share a mutual interest towards a sport and the sports team, providing a lively and wholesome experience through socialising (Chang, 2018). This interaction with other fans supports being part of brand communities (Fenton et al., 2021, Lim et al., 2015) where it is beneficial that other fans support the same team as them, because it allows sports fans to feel belongingness. These positive feelings and experiences of viewing games in-person and socialising with others helps to support the four consumer needs (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004), because sports is a part of fan's identity.

In addition to connecting with others at live in-person sports games and events, consumers can also achieve these benefits when viewing games on television with friends and family at home, or with others at a bar/pub. According to Weed (2006), sports fans and consumers view games at a bar on television due to the experience being 'collective enjoyment' or a 'shared communal experience'. Viewing the games with those who support the same team, even though they are strangers, allows fans to mutually interact with each other to show support. The lively atmosphere of the bar provides a fun and memorable viewing experience for fans (Weed, 2006). This is important because it reflects the theoretical framework by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) that even though the framework's four needs are met in an online community, the needs can also be met in-person. This illustrates that sports fans and consumers can be online or/and offline to have their hedonic and psychological needs met, through interacting with others. Like in an online context, the social and functional needs can be achieved by physically communicating with other sports fans and consumers at a bar, such as talking or through body language (for example, clapping and cheering), where consumers may feel comfortable doing so with fellow sports fans. Therefore, Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) theoretical framework of the four consumer needs, functional, hedonic, psychological and social needs can be met online and in-person, with the key difference and barrier being a screen and not being face to face when interacting with others.

When sports fan's favourite team or athlete lose, they share and embrace the emotions that come with the loss together with fellow fans and the team or athlete (Jang et al., 2021). These emotions will influence whether fans have the intention to re-visit any consumption from that team, such as repurchasing tickets to or attending a game. This also helps with relationship building between fans and the sports organisation, so that it is supported and continued for future games and events. Therefore, cognitive and emotional trust will be developed by fans, which leads into their loyalty to the team or athlete (Jang et al., 2021).

2.6 Segmentation of Fans and Sports Consumers

2.6.1 Tiers of Sports Fans

Sports fans and consumers are one of the core components for a sports team's support and their revenue. Within that, there are also segments and groups of different types of sports fans. According to Stewart et al. (2003) and Feng et al. (2020), there are three main tiers of sports fans that have different focuses. The first tier being fans that have an emotional connection to the team and are more committed and loyal. They are most likely to be ticket season holders (Wakefield, 2016) and attend most/all games in-person. The second tier of fans focus on the excitement and entertainment aspects of a sports game, engaging with sports in a social context. The third tier of sports fans follows from the second tier, where their focus is about the socialising and entertainment that comes from a sports game. However, they are only casually interested and may view the sports game in a social context for a game of importance, such as the final or playoff.

2.6.2 The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM)

According to Funk and James (2001) and Doyle et al. (2017), the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) shows four floors that a sports fan/consumer goes through vertically when they become engaged in sports. The first floor on the continuum is called *awareness*, where consumers have knowledge about a sport, team or athlete, but do not commit themselves to it. The second floor is *attraction*, meaning that consumers start to show a liking for a sport or/and team, which can be influenced by their surroundings, such as family, friends, community, or the media for example. The third floor is *attachment*, where consumers begin to build a connection towards the sport/team, which can strengthen over time. The last floor at the top of the continuum is *allegiance*, where consumers have now become loyal and devoted fans and the team has become a part of their identity. This model illustrates a more detailed explanation of the segmentation of sports fans, compared to Stewart et al. (2003) three tiers of sports fans, particularly with how each floor is its own stage, but still connects with the stage before or after it. Funk and James (2001) also illustrate that consumers can move up, down or stay at the same floor on the continuum and be at different floors for different sports.

2.6.3 Ages and Generational Differences

A method for segmenting sports fans could be through age and generational differences among these groups (Abdourazakou et al., 2020; Holt et al., 2013). Gilal et al. (2021) use the generation cohort theory (GCT) to illustrate consumer's upbringings and their surrounding environment, which influences their motivations for viewing sport and how they perceive things. 92% of the younger audience, such as Millennials, grew up with digital technology and are more likely to own a smartphone and be active users on social media (Gilal et al., 2021) and use social media during sports games. Millennials also show a strong sense of fan engagement, are community oriented, emotional and peer pressured influenced (Yim & Byon, 2020). They spend more time on digital devices, particularly on social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat (Gilal et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2020). This is because these platforms are engaging for social reasons, along with athletes and sports teams being active on these platforms (Abdourazakou et al., 2020). Furthermore, they actively engage with sports, teams, and athletes that they are interested in online, increasing their desire to consume content online (Yim & Byon, 2020).

Another reason that younger audiences engage with sports on social media, could be due to an increase in popularity of action sports. Some examples are snowboarding, surfing, skateboarding, mountain biking and so on, which have been introduced to the Olympic games in recent years (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). Hence, these sports are considered “digital natives” because of their wide utility and engagement on social media (Williams et al., 2012). The majority of the younger audience fall into the second and third tier of fans and on the attraction and attachment floors.

Older audiences, such as those born in Generation X and Baby Boomers are less likely to spend time on social media for sports compared to younger audiences, because they did not grow up with digital technologies (Holt et al., 2013). For example, the average age for NFL fans is 47 years old (Yan et al., 2020) and the median age of viewers for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics was 53 years old (Wheaton & Thorpe, 2018). Older fans have also been committed and loyal for longer, having a stronger emotional connection with the team (Todor-Alon et al., 2019) and are more likely to be ticket season holders (Abdourazakou et al., 2020). Older sports fans and consumers are more likely to attend sports games in-person and view on television (Gilal et al., 2021), falling into the first tier of sports fans and in the allegiance floor of the PCM. They are also less likely to engage in social media during the sports game, focusing their attention to the game that they are viewing. Approximately 22.2% of those aged 60 years and older had the lowest frequent use of the social media apps mentioned (Abdourazakou et al. 2020). According to Gantz and Lewis (2020), sports fans make time to view sports games when they are older, as during childhood they grew up with and

played sports games. Then when becoming an adult, they are busy with their lives and with family and employment commitments (Tamir, 2022) that they do not have as much time to engage with sports.

2.7 Methods of Viewing Sports Games

The existing research and literature on the viewership of sports is extensive, with many researchers studying a shift from different viewing methods to another, or consumer's using two methods simultaneously. There is research on consumer's viewing behaviour shifting away from in-person attendance to viewing on television, to now viewing on digital devices on social media (Kim & Kim, 2020; Tang & Cooper, 2017; Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019; Tamir, 2019). Consumer's may also view sports games on television, while also using their mobile phone as a "second screen". This corresponds with the sporting industry's perspective, because they maximise utilising each method to have the most engagement from sports fans and consumers. Therefore, the target market of sports fans and consumers can enjoy viewing the sporting content on their preferred viewing method. The methods for viewing sports games that will be discussed in order are, in-person, on television and on digital devices, due to viewing sporting content being evolved and introduced to the consumer this way.

2.7.1 In-person

Viewing sports games in-person provides value for both fans and sports consumers and the sports team's organisations. For the sports team's organisations, it provides revenue through ticket sales (Trivedi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018; Holland, 2015), season ticket holders and other seating packages in the stadium/venue (Popp et al., 2017; Trivedi et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2018). For fans and sports consumers, in-person attendance provides the most lively and wholesome experience (Chang, 2018), because they are being involved with the experience itself, they can view the game in real time, along with viewing the game with the physical presence of others in a social context (Lewis et al., 2021). In-person attendance also provides lots of support and cheering (Stavros et al., 2017) towards the teams or/and athletes playing and enthusiasm towards the cameras and broadcasters (Rowe, 2000).

Home stadiums and venues allows local fans to attend and support their favourite team in-person, making it more affordable, accessible, and easier to travel to, compared to attending a live game

outside of their home town (Wakefield, 2016). Home stadiums are also the pride for a team and the local community, where lots of history and memories are made (Nathan, 2013). This provides a home field advantage (Humphreys & Perez, 2019) for the team, making them feel more comfortable on their home turf, surrounded by local fans and supporters. From this, they may feel that a positive outcome, such as winning the game, may be the result of this (Tamir, 2019). Conversely, attending a game to support the team at an away game means going onto the rival team's turf, along with less accessibility and increases in transport costs for fans.

However, reasons for fans and sports consumers not attending in-person games include the weather (e.g., heavy rain), availability of tickets (selling out), number of carparks, distance from home and the venue, safety, and service and catering available at the venue (Wang et al., 2018). This affects the attendance outcome of the game, so managers have the opportunity to improve or make strategic decisions to make any alterations for the venue choice. Other reasons include when the game is on (such as time of the day or/and which month) and who the opponent is (Wang et al., 2018). Fans and sports consumers will attend a game that fits into their schedule, while the organisation takes this into consideration, as they want as many attendees as possible in the stadium (Wang et al., 2018).

Fans feel that there is importance to attending a sports game in-person, as they believe that it can determine the outcome of a game, such as a win or lose scenario (Tamir, 2019). Therefore, fans that are more devoted, committed and loyal are more likely to attend the game in-person (Stewart et al., 2003) to show support and cheer on their favourite team. However, in-person attendance has been affected by COVID-19 (Mujumdar, 2021), so fans and sports consumers are not able to attend games in-person to prevent the spread of the virus. According to Tamir (2020), a fan's statement, "it feels as if the most important thing is simply not there", illustrating the feeling that they are missing out on the experience along with feeling that the spectatorship, noise and fans is missing from the in-person attendance of games. Hence fans and sports consumers are having to shift to alternative methods of viewing a sports game, such as on television and on digital devices.

2.7.2 Television

Television viewership of sports games is a popular alternative to viewing sports games in-person, because of its convenience of being at home (Funk et al., 2009; Koronios et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2020), or at another local location (such as a bar or family and friends' home), and accessibility and affordability of a television (Koronios et al., 2020). It also provides a social and interactive

experience for fans and sports consumers, as they can cheer and support their favourite team or/and athlete with family and friends, or with mutual fans/supporters at a bar (Weed, 2006) that may play the game live on television.

Viewing sports on television is also perceived as an equaliser (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2020) for those not viewing in-person, as viewers are likely to view the same content, regardless of class and socio-economic backgrounds (Rowe, 2000). This shows the comparison of the segregated seats for in-person attendance games that are differentiated by price and location of the seats in proximity to the field, court, or track to where the athletes are playing for example. According to Jang et al. (2021), the camerawork during sports games can provide an advantage, especially during situations during the game where it is not clear for fans and sports consumers to see what is going on (Feng et al., 2020). The closeness of the camera angles allows the viewer to see and understand what is happening, which is an advantage for those viewing the game on television, digital devices, or if a screen is provided in the sporting venue.

However, the number of television viewers watching sports games have been decreasing, due to the influence of social media, its accessibility and easy usage of digital devices. Social media has therefore caused a shift in consumer's sports viewership methods (Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019). According to Chang (2018), approximately 20% of Americans in 2013 have decreased the number of hours they view sports games on television. The trend from this connects to accessibility of sporting content that is available on social media, particularly from the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, being called the most "social games" (Tang & Cooper, 2017). This is illustrated by Evens (2017), by stating that there is a decrease in sports views on television, due to consumers shifting their behaviour to consumer media and sports content through smaller screens on digital devices. Holland's (2015) research further discusses that internet distribution of sports games threatens the value of live broadcasting, but it is still a very profitable and successful industry.

2.7.3 Digital Devices

Building from the viewership methods of in-person attendance and on television, digital devices are smaller and more portable, such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. According to Kim and Kim (2020), their research of 137 participants that view sports on digital devices saw 59.3% use computers, 5.6% use tablets and 35.1% use smartphones. Smartphones however are particularly relevant for marketers to create content for consumers to be exposed to sports content, because of its

convenience and low switching costs (Yan et al., 2020; Ha et al., 2017; Feng et al., 2020). This is important as it shows that consumers are moving towards viewing sports on smaller digital devices, shifting away from television. Fans and sports consumers view games on social media, because they can select parts of a game to view that is of relevance to them. They can pause, fast forward or replay highlights, compilations or view the full-length of a sports game (Tamir, 2019; Fan et al., 2015), reinforcing the idea that smartphones are beneficial and have impacted the way that consumers view sports (Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2019).

While viewing a sports game in-person or on television, consumers may use their digital device, particularly smartphones simultaneously as a “second screen” (Billings et al., 2015; Weimann-Saks et al., 2019; Phonthanakitithaworn & Sellitto, 2017; Lim et al., 2015), with more than 50% of fans and sports consumers doing so (Ha et al., 2017). By doing this, these researchers show that consumers can view more than one sport game and switch between the two screens, connect with others socially online, view a replay or highlight of a game, check the statistics of a game, or engage with social media posts. These motivations and reasons are important for the sports team organisation to understand, as it illustrates that there is an increased engagement between consumers and social media. Hence, influencing a change in sports consumption and viewership patterns (Holland, 2015).

Digital devices also provide a convenient method for consumers to view sports games, particularly on social media. Some examples of apps where sports games are viewed and where users engage with the most include Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube and Twitter (Billings et al., 2015; Thorpe, 2017; Trivedi et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2012), which are designed for the convenience and usage on smaller devices. Sports teams and organisations will post information on these social media apps for their fans about upcoming and current games and events, such as quick videos of exciting plays, updates on scores and how the athletes are performing (Feng et al., 2020). In addition to this, social media also allows fans and sports consumers the opportunity to connect directly with other fans, athletes and the team, exchanging communication and information (Stavros et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2014; Witkemper et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2017).

According to Feng et al. (2020), streaming is also another popular method for viewing sports games on digital devices. Fans and sports consumers have similar benefits to users that view games on social media but can watch the full-length game live. Some further benefits that online sports games viewers have is that it costs less to view a sports game, (compared to attending in-person),

accessibility, time convenience and purchasing products and services from their favourite team. Streaming sports games also peaks during working hours for the consumer, further illustrating the convenience and accessibility of viewing this way (Feng et al., 2020).

Streaming sports games and online views on social media is not only very beneficial for fans and sports consumers, but also for the sports organisations and the channels that provide the game for viewership. Online views can create good and successful business opportunities for the higher level management of the sport organisation, such as deals and partnerships with the channels (Feng et al., 2020). For example, the Entertainment Sports Programming Network (ESPN) has made a deal with the NFL for US\$1.96 billion per year for Monday night football broadcasting rights on television (Holland, 2015). To summarise the methods of viewing sports, Table 1 shows the advantages and disadvantages of these three methods for consumers.

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Methods for Viewing Sports Games

| | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|----------------|---|---|
| Live in-person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wholesome and lively experience for fans and sports consumers - Celebrating and cheering in the moment during goals and victories - Collective/shared consumption of viewing the sports games | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be costly in terms of purchasing tickets and travelling to venues outside of the consumer's hometown - The game is viewed from a distance at the stadium, where it is difficult to view what is going on |
| Television | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumers can view sports games at the comfort of their own home - Clearer viewpoint of the game and camera angles played - Less costly than attending live in-person - Collective/shared consumption of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes will need to pay for a subscription to access full-length games and sports content |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| | viewing the sports games | |
| Digital Devices and Social Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devices are portable - Convenient to use, especially mobile phones - Clearer viewpoint of the game and camera angles played - Sports content on social media is free to view - Endless and a wide variety of sporting content is available on social media - Can watch multiple sports videos in a short amount of time, because the content is just quick highlights and reels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smaller devices like mobile phones have a very small screen, therefore, the viewership experience is not as ideal as a larger screen - Social media does not provide the full-length version on sports games, just quick highlights and snippet videos |

2.8. Social Media Habits

Younger sports fans and consumers spend more time on digital devices, therefore spending more time on social media (Yan et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2017), which connects to the idea that they are more likely to own a smartphone, due to growing up in a time generation where modern digital technologies are introduced to them (Gilal et al., 2021). According to Lee and Kim (2022), in 2020, 78% of social media users accessed social media platforms through smartphones. Not only does this illustrate increases in social media and smartphone usage, but also an increased engagement and demand (Feng et al., 2020) for consuming online content and sports media through smartphones (Annamalai et al., 2021).

According to Kim et al. (2017), college students in North America have a strong association and culture with their college sports teams. A study conducted with undergraduate students found that social media is very popular amongst these college students, who particularly use Facebook and

Twitter to communicate with their peers and to share news about sports games. Their use of social media affects their psychological wellbeing, with the outcome that using social media to increase their sports participation and consumption strengthens their sense of college attachment (Kim et al., 2017).

Research by Braumuller (2020) shows that too much time spent looking at a screen is linked to fatigue and psychological issues, especially for adolescents. The research involved participants who were 19-26 years old and saw that the more time they spent online, the less time they spent playing sports. However, when social media was used for sports related purposes, the time spent playing sports increased. This is shown when the participants would use Facebook to find like-minded people and organising fitness events together and to find tutorial videos that showed tips for techniques, movements and tactics to improve performances.

In New Zealand, there are approximately 4.35 million users on social media as of January 2022 (Kemp, 2022). New Zealander's are very active on social media, using a wide variety of platforms to consume social media content for many reasons. According to Kemp (2022), the main social media platforms that New Zealander's use are YouTube, with 4.19 million users, Facebook with 3.05 million, Messenger with 2.7 million, Instagram with 2.4 million, LinkedIn with 2.3 million, Snapchat with 1.4 million and Tik Tok with 1.46 million. Both Pinterest and Twitter have under 1 million users in New Zealand, with some platforms having an age restriction. Facebook, Messenger and Instagram have an age restriction of 13, whereas LinkedIn has an age restriction of 16. Therefore, younger people use many of these platforms to connect, engage and be active with others online.

A study with 1,001 teenagers in New Zealand conducted by Pacheco and Neil (2017) showed the amount of time they spent on social media every day. Of these participants, 33% spent more than four hours, 38% spend two to four hours, 20% spend one to two hours and 9% spend one hour or less, or do not know how long they are active on social media for. They also engaged and are active on platforms of Facebook, Messenger, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Their reasons for using social media are to socialise with others, to consume entertainment, for educational purposes, searching their interests and to create content (such as text messages and posting on their social media accounts). This is important because it shows that there is a segment for younger audiences on social media that have the opportunity to consume and engage in sports content in a New Zealand context.

2.9 Social Media Platforms

Fans, sports consumers, teams and athletes mostly use the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat (Haugh & Watkins, 2016), where fans visit these platforms for gaining information and entertainment purposes. Some other reasons fans use these social medias is for interpersonal communication, an escape, as a pass time, fanship, team support, fan expression, economic reasons and for technical knowledge (Haugh & Watkins, 2016). The next few sections will further explain each of these social media platforms in more depth.

2.9.1 Facebook

Sports viewership and consumption is the most popular on Facebook (Haugh & Watkins, 2016; Westberg et al., 2018), due to the increased exposure to products (Trivedi et al., 2020; Phonthanukitithaworn & Sellitto, 2017), content (Naranine & Parent, 2017), engagement (Toth-Kiraly et al., 2019) and interaction between other users (Abdourazakou et al., 2020; Stavros et al., 2017) and the sports team. It also allows others to exchange in communication (Vale & Fernandes, 2018) and share knowledge about sports content, which is favoured and preferred by the sports team organisation to reach the consumer (Trivedi et al., 2020; Phonthanukitithaworn & Sellitto, 2017), due to it being of the most used and popular social media platforms in the world (Nisar et al., 2018; Ahuja & Alavi, 2018). Therefore, Facebook is advantageous for enriching the user's experience for consuming sports content (Filo et al., 2015). This is important for sport marketers and those within the management for sports teams' organisations in New Zealand to utilise Facebook, since it is the second most used social media platform in the country (Kemp, 2022). Using Facebook can further increase engagement with sports consumers, particularly with sports content views (Annamalai et al., 2021).

2.9.2 Twitter

Twitter is also another very popular social media platform (Filo et al., 2015; Nisar et al., 2018; Trivedi et al., 2020; Haugh & Watkins, 2016; Westberg et al., 2018), providing smaller sized stories, articles and posts than other social medias. Twitter posts can be texts, images and videos, with its main benefit for users being commentary, breaking news, self-promotion and sharing opinions. It also has constant live updates for what is currently 'trending' in the world and the user's country they are in. Twitter is useful for fans and sports consumers to gain information (Naranine & Parent, 2017;

Haugh & Watkins, 2016), connect with their favourite athletes (Filo et al., 2015) and sports teams, and for sports organisations to share news about upcoming games and events.

2.9.3 Instagram

According to Thorpe (2017), Haugh and Watkins (2016) and Trivedi et al. (2020), Instagram is another popular social media platform, its features are creating and sharing photos and videos with others, where communication and interaction is shared amongst users. Cao et al. (2021) states that users engage with Instagram content more intensely than Facebook and Twitter because of its main feature of visual material. This is particularly useful for athletes and sports teams, as they can post and share sporting content with fans and sports consumers. For example, many athletes utilise Instagram to share their lifestyle as a personal blog, showing their personal identity outside of sports. Through this, fans can quickly consume content from their favourite sports stars directly through them, building a connection and relationship between consumer and athlete (Thorpe, 2017).

2.9.4 Snapchat

Snapchat is also a very popular platform for fans and sports consumers to view sports content (Haugh & Watkins, 2016), which was widely utilised by the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic games (Hutchins & Sanderson, 2017). According to Billings et al. (2015), Snapchat differentiates itself from other platforms, due to the very short life of posts, such as videos and photos, ranging from a life of one second to 24 hours. This is important because it is particularly favoured by the younger segment of sports consumers who like the ephemeral aspect of Snapchat and is a very accessible way for them to socialise and connect with others (Abdourazakou et al., 2020; Stavros et al., 2017). Tang and Cooper (2017) states that a strong indicator for consumers viewing the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic games was due to smartphones, where Snapchat is a platform designed and available specifically for this. This is important for both sports consumers and sports team's managers/organisation, showing that consumers are shifting their viewership patterns of sports to view shorter length videos of games, implying that this is one preferred method to consume sports content.

To summarise the social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat all have different features and functions that appeal to a wide variety of users for different purposes, for both sports teams and organisations and fans and consumers. As mentioned in Table 1, the advantages of social media are, it is free to use and that there is endless sporting content available for consumers to

view. However, some disadvantages are that with the sports videos provided, they are not the full-length version of the game, but rather a quick highlight video of important moments during the game.

2.10 Chapter Summary

To highlight and conclude the literature review, the relevant topics reviewed were motivations for consumers to view sports games, the segmentations of sports consumers, the methods of viewing sports games and the viewership patterns on social media. These topics have resulted in consumers shifting their viewership patterns from in-person attendance and television views to digital devices and on social media (Kim & Kim, 2020; Chang, 2018; Chan-Olmstead & Xiao, 2019; Tamir, 2019). They have also illustrated how social media can have an influential impact for consumers to view sports games this way, due to its accessibility and connectivity with others.

The main gaps found in the literature were research being limited in a New Zealand context, a clear shift for viewing sports games on social media due to an increase in usage of digital devices and social media, not all social medias being researched in-depth and the motivations for why consumers view sports games on social media. Much of the literature reviewed was in an overseas content, dominantly in North America, then followed by in Europe, Australia and Asia. Although Pachecho and Neil (2017) acknowledge social media habits and usage of teenagers in New Zealand, there is still specifically limited research on sports consumer's social media habits and usage. Therefore, this research is important to be conducted in a New Zealand context, to help fill the research gap of consumers viewing sports games.

The literature review covered social medias of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter being very popular with sports views. However, YouTube is also other social media platform that is very popular for sports engagement (Trivedi et al., 2020) that has limited research, which has the potential to have more research conducted regarding sports viewership. There is also a research gap for the motivations to why consumers use social media to view sports games and the benefits they may receive from it. Although many reasons were acknowledged, there is limited research for concrete motivations for using social media as a method to view sports games for social media. These literature gaps have resulted in the aim and purpose of this research proposal and thesis, with the method to fill these research gaps discussed next.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research uses an interpretivist approach because this will allow participants to share their experiences about their sports viewership on social media, along with their motivations and benefits they receive for doing so in their own words. Therefore, this will help to better understand the shift in sports viewership patterns and to fulfil the research objectives. Hence semi-structured interviews will be conducted first, followed by conducting thematic analysis to analyse and interpret the transcripts from participants to answer the overall research question and sub-questions.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The approach for the research will be a qualitative, interpretivist approach (Angen, 2000), utilising semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, as this will be exploratory research. Qualitative research involves studying a phenomenon (Sandberg, 2005; Chowdhury, 2014; Angen, 2000; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017), in this case being the viewership patterns of sports games consumers on social media and their motivations and benefits behind this behaviour. The methods of data collection for qualitative research are non-statistical and not measured in a numerical amount or quantity (Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), but rather based on gathering information to further understand a specific phenomenon through the participant's responses and avoiding generalisation (Williams, 2000). This research is exploratory, because it will help answer the research questions to the problems identified in the gaps of the literature review, where this prompts participants to undergo a certain psychological process (Ruiz et al., 2012) of semi-structured interviews.

According to Dean (2018) the reality of an interpretivist is that it is subjective (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020), multiple and socially constructed (Prasad & Prasad, 2002), where Angen (2000) discusses that for interpretivists, there is no understanding knowledge without interpreting it first. The interpretivist approach and goal is to gain an understanding of a behaviour and actions done by people (Chowdhury, 2014; Angen, 2000; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017), in order to interpret potential future behaviours and actions. This leads to the axiological assumption, or Verstehen (Martin, 2000; Chowdhury, 2014) where shared meanings, understandings and perceptions

is applied in order to understand and interpret the participants' responses (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988) for viewing sports games on social media.

There is currently limited research on the changes in sports viewership patterns for consumers, especially in an online and social media context, hence there is a limited understanding on the phenomenon. To further gain new meanings and understandings of the phenomenon from social media sports viewers, the qualitative and interpretivist approach are useful for exploring the phenomenon more in-depth (Park & Park, 2016). This is beneficial for gaining new insights on consumer's behaviours and decision making as to why they choose to view sports games on social media, shifting away from attending live in-person and viewing on television. Verstehen is for the purpose of explanation (Crotty, 1998), which will be useful to apply for this research, because the researcher can interpret the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. As a result, this will help the researcher in gaining new knowledge and understanding of consumer's shift in sports viewership patterns, helping to answer the research questions.

The participants are also considered part of the research process, since they are involved with providing information on their viewership patterns and social media behaviours. For the interpretivist, this is important because social reality is based on the participants' lived experiences and perspective (Angen, 2000), which can cause the research process to evolve and change (Chowdhury, 2014) since new meanings and findings have been gained (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Sandberg, 2005). The new information and knowledge gained by the researcher provides the opportunity to form a new understanding by building on existing knowledge about the topic. Angen (2000) and Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) discusses that the combined lived experiences and perceptions of participants' and the researcher opens up new interpretations, questions and discussions about the topic, while also leaving room for further research in the future.

However, with these new findings and meanings comes with some caution, such as conflicts with the researcher's reality in terms of the topic, reliability, truthfulness and ethics (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Hudson and Ozanne (1988) and Sandberg (2005) discuss that the interpretivist researcher will have some prior knowledge or understanding about a topic. However, this prior knowledge and understanding will change as the research process continues, because the participants will provide new meanings, findings and ideas. The researcher will also analyse the data and transcripts (more than once) from the participants to gain a clearer and deeper understanding (Angen, 2000) of the lived experiences, since there is a possibility for inconsistencies with interpreting the data (Sandberg,

2005). In order to achieve truthfulness, intentional fulfilment can be applied between the participant and researcher.

Intentional fulfilment is when the researcher has an initial understanding of a topic or phenomenon that is being researched, with lived experiences as evidence that has provided meaning by the participants (Sandberg, 2005). To practice intentional fulfilment, during interviews, the researcher can ask the participant follow up questions about their lived experiences. This allows the researcher to understand answers in more depth with insight, as it allows the participant to provide a detailed encounter of their lived experiences. Questions such as “can you please give an example?” and “can you explain that a bit further?” asked by the researcher initiates answers to be more open towards the research topic (Sandberg, 2005).

Reliability of truths and validity are also another important aspect of research for interpretive approaches. Researchers must ensure that they are thorough, comprehensive and have control over the interpretations, such as formulating questions, selecting participants that match the criteria to ensure potential robust data and responses, analysing the data and recording and interpreting the results (Sandberg, 2005; Angen, 2000). This is important because interpretive awareness can come about in the research process where the researcher will address any subjectivity (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017), whether it be biased subjectivity (supporting one’s own opinions) or perspectival subjectivity (aware of own interpretations). To further verify the responses from participants, it is important for interpretivist researchers to adopt subtle realism throughout their research process (Angen, 2000), as the knowledge gained from reality is through an individual’s own understanding and perception of it. Therefore, subtle realism will help qualitative researchers to filter out information and knowledge of relevance to their research. The result of this will lead to more reliable results in the data (Sandberg, 2005) because the application of these theories and steps will show transparency for each stage in the research process conducted by the researcher (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017).

3.3 Research Design

In order to answer the research questions and fulfil the research gaps identified in the literature review, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, with the help of the participants’ responses by sharing their experiences of watching sports games online and in-person and their experiences and behaviour on social media. The semi-structured interviews being a method of gaining more depth in qualitative research makes this approach appropriate for this research, as both

participants and the researcher can be adaptable to the questions asked and topics approached. In other words, unlike a structured interview, the interviewer can adapt the questions as more is learned about the participant and potentially gain richer insight.

The interviews took place in-person in booked quiet rooms/areas on campus at the University of Canterbury. These locations were appropriate for the interviews, since it had minimal disruptions and was in a comfortable, relaxed and public place. Before starting the interview, the participant was asked to check and sign the information sheet and ethics form, to ensure that they understood the research process and to ask and answer questions they had beforehand. The participants were also asked to consent to being audio recorded, along with informing them that any parts of the audio recording they wish to be excluded from the transcript is allowed. The participants were also informed that they were allowed to decline answering any questions if they did not wish to and that they could stop the interview at any time. Demographic information was also collected from the participants, such as gender, age and occupation, which can be useful for data analysis to establish and patterns or trends. A \$20 gift voucher was provided for each participant to show thanks for their contribution, where the participants had to sign a declaration form that they had received the voucher. It was explained to the participants that if they wished to stop the interview at any time, the voucher is still theirs to keep.

Next, introductions were started between the researcher and the participant, to know each other a little bit as an icebreaker. The interviews were roughly 40-60 minutes, depending on how long answers took and if the interview went in a different direction with topics discussed, away from the interview questions. The interviews started with general and broad questions about the participants' background with sport, then later moving on to more narrow and specific questions about their viewership behaviour on social media and social media habits.

3.4 Ethics

Ethical consideration is important for participants, because it provides a sense of morals and guidelines for the researcher to follow and practice (Prasad & Prasad, 2002). Since the researcher will be studying the participant's responses, respect and care must be implemented so that the participants feel safe and protected about the information they are providing (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). This is important for the researcher because the participants will feel more comfortable sharing information without being taken advantage of. Before conducting the interviews, the University of

Canterbury's Human Research Ethics Committee had to approve of the research. This meant ensuring that ethics were applied during the interviews towards participants, by following the Human Research Ethics Committee's guidelines for the research process.

To ensure confidentiality and privacy of the participants' identities and their responses, pseudonyms are used in this thesis for showing the list of participants and when illustrating direct quotes. Physical notes were also taken during the interview, which is stored in locked drawers along with each participant's consent form. The audio recordings and transcripts from the interviews are password protected, where participants are provided a copy of their transcript if they wish, to check and make any edits if they wish before data analysis began.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is important in qualitative research because the researcher is recruiting participants that are best suited to participate in the research, so that they can provide rich data to help answer the overall research question. These participants are therefore able to provide detailed and thorough experiences on the specific phenomenon being researched (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). The initial approach for gathering participants will be a convenience sampling as the researcher already knew people that view sports games on social media. To follow the guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Committee and the requirements for gathering suitable and relevant data for this research, criteria was set for the participants. The target sample and criteria for recruiting participants was that they must be 18 years old or older and must watch sports games on social media and be an active social media user in New Zealand. Therefore, through the criteria, a deeper understanding will be achieved through a diverse range of voluntary responses to analyse how the participants' viewership patterns have changed due to social media. Snowball sampling was another method for recruiting more participants, which was done through the convenience sample participants. Once the semi-structure interview concluded with participants from the convenience sample, the researcher asked each participant if they could share information or recommend potential participants that would be interested in participating in the research. From there, the researcher reached out to the potential participant through contact details provided from the convenient sample participant. Or the convenient sample participant provided the snowball sample participant with the researcher's contact details. This was particularly useful for gathering more participants that the researcher did not know, in order to gather more data and information for this research. The sample consisted of a mixture of

11 participants, ranging from 21-34 years old, with a mix of males and females, occupations, mix of social media usage and interests in different sports and sporting backgrounds.

3.6 Recruiting Participants

To recruit the participants through the convenience sampling, a poster was made digitally, which was then posted on the researcher's personal Facebook profile page. This poster advertised a brief summary of the research, participant criteria and an incentive of a \$20 Westfield gift voucher as a thank you gift. Through this method, some voluntary participants were recruited for the semi-structured interviews. To further recruit more participants through the snowball sampling method, the poster would be shared through word of mouth, along with the researcher asking participants at the end of interviews to pass on details about the research to others who may be interested. To set up the interviews, contacting the participants through email was the communication channel, where the researcher also asked each participant if they met the criteria to participate in the interviews. The participants were emailed the information sheet and consent form to read beforehand, along with when best to set up an interview time that suited them.

3.7 Development of Questions

The types of questions that was asked during the semi-structured interviews included their sporting background, sports they enjoyed watching, method and frequency of viewership, social media use and habits, length of viewership, benefits gained from viewing sports on social media and motivations influencing them to viewing sports on social media. These questions were asked because they help to answer the research questions, to gain information about the participants' lived experiences on viewing sports games on social media and their social media habits. Since the interviews had a semi-structured approach, follow-up questions and questions that were not necessarily prepared by the researcher were also asked. This is because the participants' responses were related to the topic and purpose of study, which allowed for new themes to be explored and for the participants to freely express their experiences.

3.8 Data Collection - Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are an appropriate tool (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015) in qualitative research to generate primary data from the consumer's perspective. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, because

it links with the interpretivist approach that participants are able to share their experiences and knowledge in their own words, providing flexibility for responses and questions asked by the researcher (Abedin, et al., 2021). The goal was to complete 12 interviews, as this is an appropriate quantity to gain as much data as possible from the participants, or until data saturation is reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Overall, 11 interviews were conducted as data saturation had been reached, with themes and topics reoccurring in the data.

To collect the data, the app Temi was used as a recording device on the researcher's personal mobile phone, where the app transcribed and recorded the audio of the interview. The researcher also took physical notes during the interview as an alternative for recording and for backup purposes if the audio recording were to malfunction. The software, Otter.AI was also used to transcribe the audio recordings, pointing out key and repeated words for each transcript. The researcher listened to the audio recordings again to clean the transcripts, comparing the audio recording and transcript to ensure that they matched. Doing this will enhance the accuracy of each participant's response (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017) by correcting inaccuracies in the speech to ensure reliability of the data.

Using the data from the participants, it will intend to have beneficial implications towards stakeholders such as sports teams and their higher management and broadcasting firms. This data will be transferrable and can be applied (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017) to understand the types of social media functions to use in order to improve the delivery of sports games towards consumers. The questions asked will address the research aims and objectives, with response transcripts to be analysed and interpreted by thematic analysis to fulfil the research and literature gap identified previously.

3.9 Data Analysis - Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative method for analysing written data and texts, which will help to understand and analyse the consumer's behaviour (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022) when viewing sports games (a phenomenon). The benefits of thematic analysis is that it can look at consumer's experiences and be utilised as reflexive thematic analysis (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2021) to identify themes, which will be recognised as research progresses with the data. This method is appropriate for the research, because it will help to answer the research questions, to potentially establish a relationship between the influence of social media and changes in sports viewership patterns.

Thematic analysis will be conducted on the interview transcripts, to interpret and analyse the data and results from the participants, to identify any themes, motivations, benefits, patterns and trends (Braun & Clarke, 2006), regarding their viewership patterns of sports games on social media. To utilise the benefits of thematic analysis for the interpretation of themes, Braun and Clarke (2006) show the importance of creating a thematic map for themes that emerge from the data, which are then narrowed down to the main themes identified with sub-themes within them. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), they also show six phases (Table 2) of thematic analysis, where the researcher will follow these phases to identify and analyse themes, along with going backwards on phases if needed to revise to ensure that they are relevant towards the research question and its purpose.

Table 2: Six Phases of Thematic Analysis

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Familiarising yourself with the data |
| 2 | Generating initial codes |
| 3 | Searching for themes |
| 4 | Reviewing themes |
| 5 | Defining and naming themes |
| 6 | Producing the report |

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

3.10 Chapter Summary

Therefore, the methods of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, using an interpretivist approach are appropriate for this research, as it is suitable to be achieved in the timeframe available, along with answering the research question and sub-questions. To understand the consumer behaviour and changes in viewership patterns influenced by social media, it is considered best to communicate through interviews, because that is the overall goal of the thesis research question, along with conducting qualitative thematic analysis for the transcripts.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the semi-structured interviews will be presented. From the participants' sports viewership behaviour, thematic analysis was used to determine five key themes, especially exploring participant's social media usage and what motivates the participants to view sports games on social media. The five key themes are *social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendations, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for sports games views*. There are sub-themes explored, which overall help to form the five key themes. The motivations that drive participants to view sports games on social media include, *time, types of sports watched, occupation, socialising and entertainment*. These motivations provide insights to better understand why participants view sports games on social media. The benefits that participant's gain from viewing sports games include *convenience and accessibility and gaining new skills and knowledge*. The themes, motivations and benefits gained explore a shift in consumer behaviour for sports viewership patterns. Quotations from participants are included to support the findings.

4.2 Participant's Demographics and Background

Table 3 shows the demographics and characteristics from the sample. The age range of participants is between 21-34 years old. Seven participants are students, two also have part-time employment, and the remaining four participants are full time workers. 64% of participants are males and 36% of participants are females. The age range of participants indicate a younger generation of sports viewers, or the Millennial and Generation X cohorts. The occupations of the participants indicate how much spare time they have available to view sports games. Their time availability results in a pattern being developed for their sports viewership, such as a certain time of day that the participants will view sports games on social media.

Table 3: Demographics of Participants

| Name | Age | Occupation | Gender |
|--------|-----|---------------------------------|--------|
| Josh | 21 | Warehouse worker | Male |
| Travis | 22 | Student | Male |
| Drake | 21 | Banker | Male |
| Brady | 22 | Student | Male |
| Ethan | 22 | Consulting assistant/Student | Male |
| Violet | 34 | Pharmacy technician | Female |

| | | | |
|----------|----|-----------------------------|--------|
| Edward | 21 | Student | Male |
| Brittany | 25 | Pre-school teacher | Female |
| Tiana | 24 | Sales assistant/Student | Female |
| Brooke | 22 | Research manager/Student | Female |
| Jackson | 24 | Student | Male |

All participants are interested in a variety of different sports, either competing or viewing them for personal enjoyment, entertainment and as discussion topics with their friends and family. The types of sports that the participants enjoy playing and watching is influenced by their parents when growing up, as their parents will pass on the sports they are interested in, to them. When the participants attended primary school and high school, the availability of sports that the schools offer, along with what sports their friends are interested in, will also influence what sports they are interested in. These interests may change once the participants have left high school and are progressing with life, such as attending university and working full time. These life changes can influence their availability to play and watch sports, as they will now have different priorities that affect how much time availability they can commit to playing or watching sports. Many of the participants view their favourite athletes as inspirations and role models, who they are motivated by to improve themselves and admire their sportsmanship and performance.

4.3 Key Themes

Organising, coding, and searching through the data to define the themes followed the six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From this process, five key themes emerged, they are *social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendations, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for sports games views*. The five key themes have sub-themes within them, to help build and support the overall theme.

4.3.1 Social Media Usage

The social media usage for viewing sports games varies between each participant, such as the types of social media platforms they use and reasons for using a particular social media and not another.

The four social media platforms that will be discussed regarding sports viewership are Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Tik Tok.

4.3.1.1 Viewership on Instagram

Instagram is the most popular social media platform used by the participants to view sports games. Instagram is convenient for participants to use and provides an endless amount of sporting content (and content in general) for viewing. The main type of sporting content consumed on Instagram is reels, which are video clips ranging from a few seconds to approximately 10 minutes, with 45% of participants reported consuming reels for sports games. These reels include highlights of sports games, races and events, commentary and compilations of plays and highlights of an athlete or sport team. Participants enjoy watching reels on Instagram because they can view lots of sporting content in a short amount of time. Edward says:

...If I've got like a five minute break, I'll go on to reels and look, because I will get a lot of different kinds of videos...

The participants 'follow' accounts on Instagram to have sporting content provided on their individual feed. Some example accounts include the sports team, athlete, broadcasting networks and the account of the league that their favourite sports team is in. These accounts will post short highlights as video posts or reels for users to view, ranging from a few seconds to over one minute. The participants view sports games on Instagram on a daily basis, with the frequency and length of viewing varying, depending on the length of the video and their time availability. Most participants have formed a routine for viewing sports games on social media, spending around 15 minutes on Instagram during their downtime right before sleeping.

Instagram provides an 'explore' or 'search' page where participants are provided recommendations of posts, reels and videos based on their search and viewing history, accounts that they follow and past 'likes' on posts. On this explore page, the participants are passively recommended short video reels of sporting content by the algorithm. These reels and recommendations allow the participants to consume a large amount of sporting content in a short amount of time. For example, instead of the participants watching a full-length sport game that would normally be around 80 minutes, they can watch the highlights in about five minutes. This is the key benefit for participants using Instagram.

The participants discussed that their use for Instagram is to view short and quick highlights, so that they can have a 'snack size' portion of a sport game that is happening or has already happened.

Participants also send short video clips and reels of sports content to their friends and family, through the Instagram function of direct messages. Through these messages, they socialise and communicate with their friends and family, which allows the participants to initiate conversation and to form a connection through the mutual interest they share for sports. The direct messages are a benefit for participants viewing sports games on social media. The aspect of instant sharing is a means of easier communication with friends and family, to stay up to date with the latest news and information about sports games. Participants also receive short video clips and reels from their friends and family, so that they can discuss and engage in conversation with the game or sporting event that they watched. This is also another form of passive consumption for viewing sports games, where the participants' friends and family have selected a particular video clip for them to watch.

Some participants also participate in 'fantasy' league competitions with their friends, such as the NFL. The fantasy league competitions are separate from Instagram and other social media platforms, so is its own app. Fantasy league sports are when users join a 'league' with other users online and select real athletes as part of their 'fantasy team'. Depending on the athlete's performance during a real-life game, the user will receive points, with the goal of having the most points by the end of the regular season. On Instagram, the NFL will regularly promote the fantasy league during football season and how well players have performed after each game, to show their fanbase and fantasy league players top scoring athletes for the week. The participants will keep up to date with this news on Instagram and share it with their friends through direct messaging. The participants engage in NFL fantasy for enjoyment and entertainment and engage in banter and have bragging rights with their friends. Josh says:

It's just sort of like a pastime that you do with your mates, like, they all have a yarn, bit of banter that connects you week on week. So you'll all have a little laugh about, like, how rubbish your mate went that week, because there's poor selections and how like, it'd look good at the start of the week, but then it really fizzled out. And the players got injured and he just got absolutely annihilated. It was good fun.

4.3.1.2 Viewership on YouTube

YouTube is the second most popular social media platform that participants use to watch sports games and to consume sporting content. YouTube benefits participants as a method for viewing sports games, because it provides official highlights of sporting events from the sporting organisation or team that they are interested in. Drake says:

...So for Formula One to watch the highlights, because you won't be able to watch it, if you don't want to get up at two o'clock in the morning. Watching the YouTube highlights is a huge, huge thing. Lots of people do it, so YouTube's a good one...

Josh says:

... I also watch highlights commentary on YouTube... but YouTube for specific sort of commentary and like longer form highlights...

The main type of sporting content consumed by participants on YouTube is highlights, followed by commentary, compilations and sports streams. A key difference between Instagram and YouTube is that participants view content generally by themselves and is not necessarily shared with friends and family. Brady says:

...If it's on my phone it's by myself. So that's all the social media stuff...

Thus, participants do not frequently socialise or have direct messages with their friends and family when using YouTube. The participants would have to leave YouTube and go onto another social media platform with direct messaging features to share sports content.

The content participants watch on YouTube are longer in length and are of higher video quality compared to Instagram. The higher quality of videos increases engagement (Jiang et al., 2021) for participants, enhancing the fact that their mobile screens are small. Drake can customise the quality of the sports content on YouTube and says:

...And it's just like, better viewer quality for me. If I'm on Instagram, it's on my phone. So it's like a smaller screen. So that's why I generally just prefer the quality of YouTube. And it also gives you the ability to like, change the quality as well. So with YouTube, I can set it to only want 1080p 60 frames

per second. And so it's like really good. But for Instagram, it's you know, what you see is what you get. So the quality is just not as good.

The highlight videos can range from approximately 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the sport and the length of the race or game. For example, in F1 motor racing, the highlight videos will be closer to 10 minutes and American football in the NFL will be closer to 20 minutes in length. The participants benefit from watching the highlights on YouTube compared to Instagram because it is the most complete version of highlights of a race or game, where they receive the full content of what happened. Edward illustrates this by saying:

Sometimes like you're just not in the mood for sitting down or watching a long video, you just want to see the big plays, that's kind of better. And then sometimes the opposite. You don't really just want to see a highlight, you're like, oh, I want to see the whole game. So that's kind of good. Switching over to YouTube. I know YouTube does do the shorter highlights, but it's just, I kind of just associate the different platforms with that.

Another benefit of YouTube is that the participants actively search for specific sporting video clips that they want to view, compared to Instagram where they are passively viewing content that is recommended on their feed. Jackson says:

... it does include adverts but you know, you're able to kind of move through the video and actively search, but on Instagram, you can't actively search for videos...

This is also convenient and accessible as searching for videos on YouTube is fast. Therefore, the participants have some control with what they view on YouTube. While viewing the highlights, participants also listen to the commentary that is provided during the highlight's videos. For example, some participants watch the English Premier League (EPL) for football, where the commentator will explain a play or rule during an important highlight. The participants gain information from this, such as how their favourite team is performing. They also gain knowledge from the commentary, such as a better understanding of a technique for a play or how the rules have been applied to the situation. This benefits participants because they learn more about the sport that they are interested in, which increases their enjoyment as they understand what is happening. Another benefit they gain from commentary is receiving in-depth opinions from the commentators, along with the analysis on

the athletes and plays explained. This means that participants gain more interest in their favourite sport, as they discuss and share these opinions with their friends, particularly for fantasy sports to keep things competitive in the league. Josh says:

... I'll have Skip Bayless and I'll have other players talking about each other on the I am athlete and that sort of thing. So they'll give a different opinion so that I can chat about it to my other mates and be like, this is what they're saying. This is what I think as well. So it gives me like an informed opinion almost more like a more educated opinion.

Streaming sports on YouTube can take a few hours, depending on the sport. Some examples of sports that are streamed by participants are golf, skiing and surfing. The participants will watch each tournament when it is held during the season, such as every three weeks. The participants may watch the whole stream or leave it on in the background on television, or computer and may engage with the content when it gets interesting. Jackson discusses watching the Around the World surfing tour that has the best surfing athletes. He says:

And that's the whole event from start to finish, you know, 6, 7, 8 hours a day. And that occurs when it's in season, like once a month at least. And I'll sit and watch that, you know, with the laptop open in front of me and then have that in the background.

4.3.1.3 Viewership on Tik Tok

Three participants view sports content on Tik Tok. Although this is not a lot of participants, this illustrates a change in viewership patterns and methods of viewing sports content. The sports content that these participants view are videos, which is the Tik Tok version of Instagram reels. These videos, of sports highlights and plays, can range from a few seconds to a few minutes. This makes the content convenient for participants so that they can consume more sporting content in a shorter amount of time. This illustrates that sports fans and consumers are watching and consuming 'snack-sized' portions of sporting content, to help them keep updated with their favourite sports. These smaller video clips and reels are beneficial for participants, because it also helps them to be engaged with the sport. Participants discussed that if they come across a Tik Tok sports video clip and are interested in it, they will research it further on YouTube to watch the longer and fuller version of that particular sporting event. One participant, Edward, was a Tik Tok user, but deleted the social media app as he was addicted to spending time consuming content. Participant's addiction to social media

supports research by Kim et al. (2017), where the excess use of social media negatively effects adolescences wellbeing. Therefore, having to resort to deleting certain social media platforms to improve their psychological wellbeing.

4.3.1.4 Viewership on Facebook

Three participants view sports content on Facebook. Facebook is the least popular social media platform to view sports games, as there are not many sports video clips uploaded. The three other social media platforms, Instagram, YouTube and Tik Tok are preferred over Facebook, because there are more sporting videos uploaded, along with content being generated on the participants' feed. The participants also discuss that Facebook is more useful for messaging and staying in touch with people and they use Facebook for this key purpose. The participants' use of Facebook contradicts the literature as the most used social media platform (Cao et al., 2021) for sporting content views and engagement. Thus, resulting in younger consumers shifting away from Facebook, and moving onto viewing sports games on more video based social media platforms, like Instagram and YouTube.

4.3.2 Active and Passive Searches

The searches that participants conduct can either be active or passive, depending on the social media that they are using. On YouTube, participants mostly search actively for sporting content, as the 'search' bar allows participants to easily search for the specific sports video clip they want to view. The participants can search and view any sport and any specific part of the sports game, such as for certain plays and highlights, viewing only what is relevant to them. For example, participants may passively view a short sports game highlight video on Instagram, then choose to actively search further for a longer version of the highlights on YouTube. This benefits the participants because they will have a fuller version and a breakdown explanation of a specific highlight and the moments before and after the play happened. Another benefit of YouTube videos is that while watching the video, the participants can also skip and fast forward to the play that they want to view and replay the moment again or pause the video. After viewing these video clips, recommendations may pop up that are similar to the video that was just viewed, and the search for these videos now becomes passive for the participant. This is due to the algorithm recommendations on YouTube, feeding and pushing more content to view, which will be discussed later in this research.

On Instagram and Tik Tok, the participants are passively searching and viewing sports video clips and content. The video clips that pop up on the participants' feed is generally by accounts that they 'follow' without having to actively search for these videos. When participants are on the 'search' or 'explore' page of Instagram, as previously discussed, they are also passively provided more video clips and content that is recommended to them by the social media algorithm. Ethan says:

...you've got Instagram Explore, and it will come up on like, I'll see a fishing video and then I'll like, click on to that video. And then I'll be interested in the page that it came from. And then I'd go to the page and then watch videos from that page...

The participants will view these video clips because it is of interest to them and because these videos are conveniently placed on the search page ready for the participant to click and view. The search bar on Instagram is not as specific as YouTube, as the video posts and reels do not have titles like on YouTube. Therefore, when participants do search for a sport or particular sporting moment, the 'top' results will show up, such as the sporting organisation and sports team's accounts and reels of the sport. The results may not necessarily be a close match to the search but will result in posts and videos that relate to the search topic. Similarly, Tik Tok searches function in a similar way, with the search bar not as accurate for producing specific sporting video moments. The majority of Tik Tok videos and reels will continuously pop up on the participant's feed, creating an endless scroll of content for the participant's viewership and entertainment.

4.3.3 Algorithm Recommendations

The algorithm on social media, especially on Instagram, is a motivator for participants to continue watching sports games video clips and to consume more sporting content. Since the participant is already active on Instagram and passively scrolling through their feed, reels and the search page, they will continue to keep watching sports video clips that are similar to what they have viewed or searched for previously. The participants do not mind the algorithm providing them recommendations, as it provides content that they would be interested in and are likely to view. Some participants discuss that they would only find the algorithm invading their privacy if they started to receive targeted advertisements on social media based on their mobile phones listening to their conversations. Overall, the participants view the algorithm as a positivity in terms of providing sporting content for them to view.

When viewing the video clips and reels on social media that is recommended by the algorithm, it has formed a viewership pattern for the participants. Due to the algorithm curating specific posts and content that is unique to each participant, the participants will continue to view and engage in these posts. They will also share the sports video clips with their friends. Doing so will provide the algorithm a confirmation that the participants do indeed like and engage in this content, therefore allowing the algorithm to push more content onto the participant's feed, encouraging them to view more and continuing the cycle.

However, there is also a negativity associated with the algorithm as discussed by the participants, where they will see repetition of the same content, but with slight variations. Ethan says:

...Sometimes I get irritated when, like, I'll be going through Instagram explore. And I'll find, like, videos that it's just it's not like my content. Or like, I've seen that goal. So many times. Like, why is it keep popping up on my feed? So you know, the whole, like, there's a high supply of something, then it loses its appeal. Sometimes I get that I get irritated. But because I can't really do much about it, because it's Instagram, explore I'll end up refreshing it. And then if I'm not happy with what's there I'll refresh it again, but then when I'm watching specific videos, it really depends on the moment. So it's, it's like a moment that's been rehashed...

The repeated videos have different quality levels, angles of a play, level of camera closeness and time length. Although the repeated videos are slightly different, the participants do not wish to view the same posts, video clips and reels again on social media. For example, when viewing a controversial play or decision by the referee during a sports game, the participants will form their own opinion on what happened, so do not need to view the content again. The algorithm is encountered mostly on Instagram and Tik Tok, where these two social media platforms generate endless content on the participant's feed.

4.3.4 Methods of Viewing Sports Games

The most used methods for viewing sports games by participants are mobile phone, laptop, television and in-person. These methods provide different viewing experiences for participants, with each method having advantages and disadvantages that will be discussed later. All participants use a personal mobile phone to view sports games on social media, followed by eight participants using a laptop to view sports games on social media, eight participants viewing sports games on television,

particularly through live streaming services (such as Sky Sport or Spark Sport), and seven participants viewing sports games in-person or live at a venue.

4.3.4.1 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are the most convenient and popular method for participants to view sports games. This is reflected in the literature, especially for this sample, as the participants are younger, being in the Millennial and Generation X cohorts (Yan et al., 2020). Although phones have the smallest screen size out of these methods, it is still very accessible and requires very little effort from the participants to consume sports content. This is because mobile phones are small and portable making it convenient for participants to carry and have on their person.

Therefore, at a time of convenience, such as during a break from work or studying or waiting for something, participants will access social media, particularly Instagram and Tik Tok to view sports games and quick highlight video clips and reels. There is also a viewership pattern formed for viewing sports games on social media like Instagram and Tik Tok, as these social media platforms are designed and compatible on phones, compared to other methods such as a laptop and television (Billings et al., 2015; Thorpe, 2017; Trivedi et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2012). Some participants have formed a routine of viewing sports content on social media before going to sleep at night and when they wake up in the morning. This allows them to catch up on results and what is happening in the sporting world during this downtime. Although Sky Go is not a social media, but a streaming service, some participants have the Sky Go app on their phone. Sky Go provides the full-length of sports games for their subscribers, so the participants may view parts of a sports game or race on their phone for convenience, but not the full-length version.

The participants' viewing of sports games and content on their phone is mostly conducted individually, as their phone is a close personal belonging to them. Since the screen is smaller, the viewership is more individualised to the participant, rather than for shared viewership with friends and family. A few participants discuss that the screen for a mobile phone is too small, so prefer to watch sports games on a larger screen, such as a laptop or television. This shows that the participants adjust and change their methods of viewing sports games on social media that best suit them. As discussed previously, participants will use their phone to share short video clips of sports highlights with their friends and family through direct messaging on Instagram, as communicating is easier and convenient on a phone compared to a laptop. The length of sports games viewed on phones is very

short, as the participants have a preference for viewing highlights, quick plays and reels, instead of full-length sports games, which is preferred on a larger screen, such as on television. Josh says:

The phone watching sort of is like to absorb information, whereas the game sort of to absorb, like the TV, and that sort of atmosphere is to absorb the experience with your friends.

Some participants discuss that they are addicted to viewing social media content on their phones, given the ease of using their phones. Like Edwards's addiction of consuming content on Tik Tok, other participants also discuss being addicted to viewing content on social media using their phone. As already discussed, the algorithm has some influence on their behaviour, as it provides an endless variety of content that the participants can mindlessly consume with very little effort. Jackson says:

I do find the phone is a little bit of an addiction, at certain times of the day, especially like in the evening. I don't think there's any lack of content out there. And the proof in that is the fact that you can sit and scroll for hours upon hours, and seemingly not get too bored of it. So there is a lot. There's a lot out there.

4.3.4.2 Laptop

Viewing sports games on laptops is another popular method for the participants. Since Instagram and Tik Tok are not designed for bigger screens and do not have a suitable desktop version, YouTube and streaming services like Sky Sport and Spark Sport are used to watch the sports games. YouTube and streaming services provide longer video clips and the full version of a sport game, so participants are more likely to use their laptop over phones. A key benefit of laptops is that the screen is bigger than a phone and has more features to enhance the viewing experience for participants. Such as a greater volume and a socket to connect a high definition multimedia interface (HDMI) cable to connect it to a television. Some participants will do this when viewing a sports game in a social setting with their friends and family, especially live and full-length games. This makes viewing easier during a shared consumption setting, making the atmosphere more comfortable and less crowded than if the game was shown on a smaller screen.

4.3.4.3 Television

The shared consumption of viewing a sports game live together on television with friends and family for participants provides an exciting and fun experience. They can view the sports game in real time at the comfort of their own home, where the participants discuss cheering and talking about plays and controversial referee calls with their friends and family when watching. When watching live sports games at home on television, the screen is much bigger compared to a mobile phone or laptop, making it easier to see close-up camera angles and shots. The participants can also listen to the commentary on television, along with the commentators explaining and re-playing plays that would have been missed in real time at the live in-person game. This is an advantage for when the participants view sports games at home on their television, compared to watching the players from a distance at a live in-person game. The participants also discuss having their own food and meals at home, making the experience more personalised in the home environment. Being at home to watch sports games is a key benefit for the participants, because the location and food aspects are convenient and does not require a lot of effort or monetary expenses to enjoy the game. To illustrate this, Brooke says:

When I was younger we used to do like every Friday night my neighbours would come around and we'd, we'd have like fish and chips and like a cheese board just sit down and watch the rugby. It was, it's definitely a way that my family socialises and so then I've sort of taken that into my life as well. And now sit down with my flatmates and watch the rugby and stuff like that.

For some participants, viewing sports games on television is for having it in the background, where the participants will engage and disengage themselves with the full-length game or if streaming a non-live sporting event. The participants will take breaks or procrastinate from what they are doing, such as studying, to watch parts of the game. If the participants are watching a sports game on television by themselves, they may also communicate with their friends and family the scores and interesting plays by updating them on social media.

4.3.4.4 In-person

The participants enjoy watching and attending live in-person sports games with their friends and family. It is a good opportunity for them to socialise with their friends and family and to get amongst the lively atmosphere with fellow fans and spectators at the game. They enjoy the different emotions associated with a live in-person game, such as feeling excited, anticipation, upset and so on. They appreciate that the experience of a live in-person game is different and has its advantageous points,

compared to watching the game on a smaller screen, such as on television or on a mobile phone.

Drake says:

Every now and then I go to like a Crusaders game. And I think the cool thing about that is the atmosphere. You can't get that through a TV screen.

Some advantages to viewing sports games in-person is that it is a more lively and memorable experience for participants. The participants discuss feeling very excited before, during and after the game, along with acknowledging that other fans in the stadium are also very excited, making the environment at the venue very enjoyable. They discuss that going to live sports games in-person is a good opportunity and motivator to see their friends and family, who they often attend with. However, there are disadvantages to in-person viewership. The athletes playing are viewed from a further distance, compared to viewing the game live at home on television. With that being said, the large screen displayed at the venue will show the players more close-up, so that it is easier for the spectators to view the game and understand what is happening.

Some other disadvantages for attending live in-person games include monetary expenses, such as purchasing tickets, travelling costs (particularly if the game is outside of the participants' hometown), parking expenses and purchasing food and drinks at the venue. Due to many of the participants being students, they cannot always afford to attend live games due to these expenses. But when an opportunity comes across, such as having the time available or attending with friends and family, they will enjoy themselves and go to the live game.

4.3.5 Peaks for Sports Games Views

Many sports, tournaments, championships and sporting events occur at certain times of the year, or have routines where they play every four years, such as the Olympics for example. The timing of these sporting events and when they occur during the year and what time of the day will influence the participant's viewership and consumption pattern. The main sports discussed by participants that have a seasonal element are F1, NFL, rugby, golf, and skiing.

F1 races occur during most of the year, with a race held every few weeks apart from each other. These races are usually held early Monday morning after midnight in New Zealand. However, the participants cannot always view the race live, which will be discussed later on. The peaks for

viewing F1 race content will be central around race day for participants, being Monday. Therefore, over the weekend, the participants will view the build-up that the F1 organisation creates, to get fans and spectators excited and anticipated for the upcoming race. After the race on Monday, the participants will view the race at a time suited to them, such as during their down time. They will either watch the full-length race if they have access to it, watch the full-length highlights on YouTube, or watch quick highlights and important moments as video clips and reels on Instagram or Tik Tok. When a race does occur at a reasonable time, the participants may watch parts of the race or the full-length live, depending on their time availability and situation they are in.

The NFL regular season games occur a few times a week, with many games being played simultaneously. The games occur on Monday, Tuesday and Friday in New Zealand, with some participants viewing the full-length of a NFL game to support their favourite team. These participants invest and commit themselves to watching the full-length game because they are fans of the team and so that they can watch for personal enjoyment and entertainment. They also watch the full-length game to see how their favourite athletes are performing, to engage in fantasy NFL football with their friends, along with engaging in conversation with their friends and family about the games. Other times they may not watch the full-length game, so will watch parts of it, the full-length highlights on YouTube, and short plays and highlight videos and reels on Instagram. This is because a NFL game is usually three hours long and during times that the participants are working or studying.

The participants discussed that there is a peak for viewing NFL games and consuming NFL related content for each week of the regular season, due to the games being held on particular days of the week, to keep discussions and news circulating on social media. In between each game day or when the next time a game is held, the participants will view announcement posts, news and information regarding players and teams, video clips, reels, highlights and memes about the NFL. This pattern for viewing sports content is similar for rugby, where rugby is seasonal in New Zealand during winter. During the regular rugby season, the games are weekly, either on a Friday or Saturday night. The participants will be viewing more rugby content more frequently during the days leading up to the game, such as seeing how the teams are progressing for the week. They will also be viewing content in the days after the game has concluded, as this is due to the hype of the game and to rewatch parts that were exciting and most talked about. Edward says:

... then with other highlights on something, sometimes after the Dolphins win, I'll just watch the highlights again because it's so good, just feels pretty good.

Drake says:

I rewatched the highlights of the Suzuka Grand Prix. So even if I've seen the race live, I'll tend to just go back on the highlights anyways... I think it's always good to just get like that recap and see where everyone finished.

4.4 Reasons and Motivations for Viewing Sports Games on Social Media

The main reasons and motivations that participants have for viewing sports games on social media include time, types of sports watched, occupation, convenience and accessibility, gaining skills and knowledge, socialising and entertainment. These reasons and motivations have been shaped through participant's factors in their life, such as their interests, employment and their friends and family.

4.4.1 Time

'Time' is one of the key reasons and motivators for why the participants watch sports on social media. For instance, how much time participants have available to watch sports games and the international time zones for when games and races occur. This makes time an essential reason and motivator for the types of sporting content and videos that the participants consume from different social media platforms. Due to the majority of participants being students and full time workers, they do not always have time available to watch sports games live or the full-length of a sport game. This will be due to the games and races occurring during working hours, where participants have limited access to sporting content. The participants would watch the highlights and short video clips on their phone during their break times at work, depending on the length of their break. For example, if the participant were on a short break (such as 10-15 minutes), they would consume short video clips of a game or race they are interested in, particularly videos that are under one minute to a few minutes on Instagram, Facebook or Tik Tok. These short video clips provide convenience and accessibility for the participants to stay up to date with what is happening during a race or game, such as an exciting play or a quick highlight. Ethan discusses his preferences for using social media platforms, depending on his time availability, the sport, and what he wants to consume at the time. He says:

So I prefer watching on Instagram when I'm just wanting to catch like, quick highlights into the game. But I prefer watching on YouTube, when I'm wanting kind of like in depth. Like a fuller version of the game with commentary and less like music and edits to it. Where it's more pure in that sense.

If the participants were on a longer break while working (such as a lunch break of 30 minutes), they will have more time to consume more sporting content, such as longer video clips of highlights on YouTube and Instagram reels. Participants can watch the full highlights that are around 10-15 minutes of a race or game, while also watching the short video clips of the exciting plays and also keep up to date with any news, information and commentary about the race or game. This also provides convenience for participants since the content is on the social media platforms on their phone, which is readily accessible. During the participant's break times, either a short or long break, social media provides entertainment through the sporting content provided on the participant's feed.

Sporting events that occur internationally may simultaneously occur at times not suitable for participants to view live for example, such as during times when participants are sleeping or when they are working. Some examples of sports where this occurred is with F1 or with NFL. F1 Grand Prix races occur internationally, generally after midnight in New Zealand where participants do not stay up late to watch the full race, as they will be working the following day and because it is their usual sleeping time. Drake illustrates this by saying:

With Formula One, I used to watch it all the time, but obviously, because of the time schedule, it's like, one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning. So because of that time difference. It's really difficult to stay up and watch if you don't want to ruin your sleep schedule.

The participants will consume content from the Grand Prix races after it has occurred when they have spare time. NFL games also occur internationally, where the majority of the games are held during working hours in New Zealand. Therefore, the participants watch the highlights of the game they are interested in their spare time, if they do not have access to the live game.

4.4.2 Types of Sports Watched

The types of sports that participants are interested in will also influence the level of commitment they will have to watching the particular sport. For example, participants that are interested in or/and have watched golf and cricket games discussed that these two sports are longer per game and are of a slow paced nature. Due to the longer length of golf and cricket, the participants do not watch the full-length version of the game, as they can take a few hours for golf or a few days for cricket. These participants choose to have these sports playing in the background on television while they are doing a different task, occasionally engaging with the game from time to time.

For sports particularly like the NFL, where multiple games occur each week, participants can consume more American football content in a short amount of time, rather than watching all of the games for the week, which is around 15-16 games. An example is viewing a 15 minute highlight video of the best plays for the week on YouTube. Additionally, some participants have a variety of choices with the types of content that they can consume in regards to their time availability and how much they prioritise a team. An example is that Josh and Edward have discussed that they will watch their favourite team's highlight videos on YouTube for the week. They may also watch additional videos of other games for the week, depending if they support another team, or if there is a competitive matchup between two teams and the stakes are high, or it is a playoff game. This continues their personal enjoyment and provides entertainment of consuming NFL content and keeps them up to date with what is happening in the NFL.

4.4.3 Occupation

The occupations that the participants have will influence their access and time availability to view sports games on social media. As discussed previously, their occupations complements the concept of time, which can determine what types of sports they watch and the length of sports videos and overall, the type of sports content that they watch on social media.

The majority of participants who are students generally watch more sports games on social media, consume more sporting content and social media content in general, compared to those who are not students, but have full time jobs. This is again due to their time availability as they commit to their working hours and will view sports games on social media during their work breaks and outside of work. Brittany says:

I'm working full time minimum. And so I probably won't be able to watch some games during the day. And that's a very good platform for me to rewatch. But also, I think that there's an advantage of using social media to watch the game is like, if there's not live, so you won't watch the full game sometimes. And they'll just give you a very short clip of each game.

Josh says:

Well, it's a bit easier to watch NFL games and F1 highlights on Instagram, just because like I can't stay up to watch F1. That's an international time. So it's usually like really early in the morning so I

can't afford to stay up on the Monday before work. When I get up at like five o'clock in the morning, so I'd rather just watch like the highlights on Instagram, they take one of the best parts most interesting parts and capsule them into smaller, more bite sized bits. Same with the NFL games, because I used to watch them. On the Monday when I didn't work, and I was at university. Now I work so I can't afford to watch it all day.

The students however, are more flexible with their time, so will view sports games live when they can, or when it best suits them, such as in their spare time or even while they are studying. Three participants who are students have discussed that they can get distracted and will procrastinate from their studies by viewing sports games on social media. These participants have discussed that procrastination is also a motivator for why they view sports games on social media, mostly being distracted by their mobile phones. Violet also finds that while using her laptop to complete work, she can be distracted and end up searching for other things, such as information about sports and for highlight videos of sports games on social media. Travis says:

I guess it's also probably a way of procrastinating from doing my study, which isn't the greatest thing. But yeah, that's probably the only other reason why I would watch further into it.

4.4.4 Convenience and Accessibility

The majority of participants have mentioned that a reason for them to watch sports games on social media, is for the convenience and accessibility. Instagram is conveniently installed on the participant's mobile phones, therefore the participants have easy access to view short highlights and important plays. The social media platform design of Instagram is also convenient in terms of the algorithm, as while the participants are scrolling through their feed, they will watch sports games reels and share it with their friends and family through direct messages. This is similar to the other social media platforms that the participants use, such as Tik Tok, Facebook and YouTube. The algorithm again provides recommendation of sports highlights as reels, videos and posts, which is determined by what content the participants engage in and the accounts that they 'follow', 'subscribe' or 'like'. Out of these social media platforms, YouTube, has the advantage of a search bar, where the search bar allows the participant to conveniently search for specific sports games highlights or moments. The search bars on the other social media platforms are not as accurate as YouTube's, therefore, the sporting content that the participants view on Instagram, Tik Tok and Facebook are conveniently passive, by popping up on their feed. YouTube is also convenient for

participants because they can fast forward or replay particular moments in the highlight videos that is relevant to them. Other social media platforms do not offer the same experience with highlight videos as YouTube. As discussed previously, mobile phones are also of convenience for the participants as it is one of the most accessible methods for them to view sports games on social media. The participants will have their mobile phones on their person or within reach, so that they can easily access Instagram and other social media platforms, to then easily access sporting content.

Viewing sports on social media overall is a convenience for the participants. This is because the wide variety of sporting content that is available on social media is easily accessible, only requiring a strong internet connection which all participants have. It is not necessary for the participants to make an account in order to view sporting content on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok. But it is free and since the participants already have an account, the algorithm becomes more of an element and motivator to continue pushing and recommending sporting content that is catered to what each participant is interested in.

Another reason why social media is convenient for the participants regarding sports, is because the information that the sports teams and organisations post, keep the participants up to date. These posts can be score updates during halftime or quarter breaks during a current game, any exciting or controversial plays or moments, information about the status of an athlete, game, sports organisation or venue, and so on. Participants are conveniently kept up to date with what is happening in the sporting world on social media, as they are provided with a quick snapshot and summary with the information. This is beneficial and convenient for participants since they do not necessarily have to search for further information, unless they want to find out more on sports news websites for example. Drake discusses that he benefits from the recommendations from social media algorithm to receive news and information, saying:

Yeah, I do. As long as it's like, for example, that comes up with anything related to Formula One like is bound to spark some sort of emotional response from me whether I'm like laughing or just general information as well. It's really good to receive just Formula One for example. There's so many like small updates and little pieces of drama that will happen throughout the year, like someone gets signed on for a new team or someone is leaving at the end of the year, or the contracts expired. And then all this drama kicks off about something real political, and it pops up on my feed. And like it's good to just stay engaged. So I actually like it.

Social media is also beneficial in terms of accessibility because it is free for users. Some of the participants do not have access to streaming services, as these services such as Spark Sport, Sky Sport and Sky Go need to be paid for through a subscription or by pay-per-view games or races. Therefore, the participants will view the most exciting and controversial events that are of importance, along with the highlights of a sports game for free on social media. The disadvantage to this is that the participants cannot access the full game or race on social media, unless that sports team or organisation live streams or provides it for free on their social media platforms. If there is a game or race that is of importance to the participants, they are willing to pay-per-view the event to watch. For example, these games could be post season games, such as games leading up to the final, the final game itself, or if their favourite athlete will be competing. Travis says:

For me, most of my stuff is free. But I guess I get that from like my dad has a streaming service for I guess Sky. I'm using my parents one but if they didn't have it, then I wouldn't pay for it. So I guess I tend to lean towards free stuff. But there's some things that I'm willing to spend money on. Like, for example, UFC, like they do pay per view, is that something I used to spend money on. Not every month, but I guess whenever an event that I was actually interested in. But yeah, I spend the amount for that or some other streaming services I'd probably spend money for mainly football, or Formula One, I guess.

4.4.5 Gaining Skills and Knowledge

While the participants view sports games on social media for time convenience, accessibility and to stay up to date, they also learn from athletes and players from the sports that they are interested in. The participants gain skills and knowledge from those more experienced than them in the sport, so that they can improve their performance when participating. For example, the participants can learn new techniques and manoeuvres in a particular sport. Furthermore, they gain a better understanding about the sport itself, such as learning more about the rules and regulations of a game along with how and why the outcome for a play occurred, such as a yellow flag or card on television.

For example, Ethan, Brady and Jackson view professional and amateur golf, where they learn from the athlete. Gaining skills and knowledge through watching sports on social media to improve their sporting performance is a benefit for the participants, because they are essentially learning for free from experienced athletes. They learn by watching how the athlete's posture and how they swing their golf club to maximise the distance of how far the golf ball can travel. Jackson says:

Just, yeah, notes for yourself that when you go to the driving range, you know, you might have the video, which has popped up on an Instagram reel of somebody's professional golfers swing works and slowed down dramatically so that you can see every kind of bit and then you go to the range. You have your friends record you and you hit a few balls, and then you're like, Okay, I'm comparing now side by side. What do I need to do to make mine look like this one where this one's very efficient and good. And yeah, that's happens quite often, actually.

Additionally, the participants also have the opportunity to learn more about sport equipment and clothes that athletes wear and use. Jackson discussed that while watching surfing videos and reels on Instagram, he saw an athlete wear these shorts in a particular style. This intrigued him to research the shorts more, where he bought them with the influence of social media. Instagram has 'shopping' features on the social media platform, where users can browse and purchase items that an account posts. Jackson says:

Yeah, it was those shorts, like it was specifically Nike shorts. Yeah, almost straightaway went out the next day and bought them just because that's what I wanted.

Gaining new skills and knowledge by watching sports games on social media is very beneficial for the participants, because they can share their knowledge and what they have learned to their family and friends. This is another topic that the participants can engage in conversation with, to socialise with their friends and family when they see them next. The participants value gaining new skills and knowledge regarding sports important to them, because it helps them to understand the game and sport better, therefore, they will enjoy the sport much more.

4.4.6 Socialising

Socialising is another reason why the participants view sports games, friends and family can initiate the participants to view sports games with them, or simply share with them a short highlight reel on social media. As discussed earlier, socialising is an important aspect for the participants, because it allows them to connect with others and form relationships with their friends and family by discussing sports related topics. The participants have different ways of socialising with others when viewing sports games, either through social media or in-person. They socialise on social media through direct messages and in-person by discussing the current season of a particular sport or view a sports game or race live together.

On social media, particularly Instagram, the participants use the direct messages function to communicate to their friends and family. The participants send and receive text messages, quick highlight videos, reels and memes that are sports related which prompt discussion. This allows the opportunity for the participants and their friends and family to discuss interesting and exciting moments and plays that occurred during the race or game. They also discuss controversial plays or decisions made by referees or officials, records or statistics, points, the outcomes of games and also parts of the sports games they find funny, which is expressed through memes. Those that participate in fantasy sports teams will discuss these topics with their friends, so that they can see which players will have the potential to score them points in the next game, along with bantering and being competitive with their friends on how each team member is performing in the fantasy league. When there is a moment during a sporting event that is funny, or not so funny but can be turned into a laugh, fan accounts or even the sports team that is associated with the moment can make memes out of it. The participants will find these memes funny and send them to their friends and family to engage in and laugh about it. Both the participants and their friends and family will send and receive memes on social media, particularly consuming meme content on Instagram. Drake says:

And then occasionally, I'll see like rugby memes on Facebook. I remember there's one example like two or three years ago, and Richie Mo'unga pretty much saved us the rugby championship by hitting the slight drop kick from almost 40 meters out from the goal, and everyone was just calling him a goat. And that putting his face on like an actual goat.

Josh says:

And the memes like they are just hilarious they add like an extra sort of depth to the sport like a funny thing and like a nuance so that you can like send to your friends and they'll have a laugh about it. Because it's sort of like a social thing that adds like an extra depth, I'd say to the sporting.

When the participants socialise with their friends and family in-person, this can be through attending a live game or having a conversation in-person. The most popular sport attended live in-person by the participants was rugby, followed by cricket. The participants that attend live rugby games discuss that they are proud Cantabrians that come to support their home team, the Crusaders. They are also big rugby fans that enjoy the sport and the live atmosphere and experience of being in the crowd. Brooke and Edward discuss their experiences of being at live rugby games:

Edward says:

I guess it's just that sense of community kind of, I know the team is called Canterbury, kind of grown up here. Yeah, it's just something I'm proud of, I guess to be from Canterbury. And then that's kind of something that Canterbury is quite good at so it's nice to see them winning.

Brooke says:

I have been to a sports game in Fiji and the crowd was just absolutely insane and like, it was just such a good game. Like half the time I didn't even know what was going on cause I couldn't see, it's not like tiered seating but like the crowd was going wild and it was just, it was so good. So, so good.

The participants discuss that attending live games in-person with their friends and family is a good reason and motivator to catch up with them, along with discussing the game itself. When the participants do discuss sports games or races with their friends, it is generally to discuss an exciting play or moment that happened in the most recent game or race of the season. For example, their friend or family member will ask the participant if they had seen the particular moment yet. If not, the participant will search for that moment on social media, to then discuss and engage in a conversation. They also enjoy bantering and having bragging rights with their friends about the game, players, or team and enjoy the competitiveness about the sport. Drake says:

I think the interaction was friends and family. So like keeping in the loop you can sort of socialize with your friends about it that's a big benefit, so if you have seen it gives you something to talk about. And the other benefit is it brings you happiness and pleasure and enjoyment to watch it so those are the biggest benefits. You can watch her enjoy it and then even after the race or the games happen, you then have like a week to talk about and yarn about it with friends and family. So it's more than just that like hour and a half to two and a half hours of enjoyment actually extends into their whole week of like having a yarn with a mate about it or something so yeah, I think those are the benefits.

If the participants cannot attend a live game in-person, they will watch the sports game live on television, either at home or in a public place, such as a bar/pub. When the participants are watching the sports game live at home with their friends and family, they are doing so in a comfortable home environment. They organise their own food to share, which initiates engagement with the game as

they will eat and watch the game simultaneously, where they will cheer on their supporting team and favourite athletes. The participants and their friends and family will mostly focus on the game on the television, but will engage in conversation during exciting or controversial moments of the game and when the game has finished. Brady discusses how having a connection with his friends and family through the mutual interest of sport is important to him. He says:

Yeah. And it's something to talk about. As a base for conversation, or base for arguments love having arguments about who's the best player and where the teams deserve to win that sort of thing. I think it's really important just to have that social connection... I think a bit of healthy banter and a bit of healthy communication and argument with your friends is really important.

If the participant's friends or family are watching a live game at home on television that they are not particularly interested in, they may still decide to engage and watch the game with their friends and family. They may also engage and view the game passively this way, due to the game already being on the television and to have a topic to discuss with their friends and family. Tiana says:

I like to watch, I wouldn't say like to watch rugby but I'll watch rugby if it was in a group setting like if I was going to hang out with people and they were watching rugby or if my family was watching I would watch it.

4.4.7 Entertainment

Another key reason and motivator for why the participants view sports games on social media, is for entertainment. When the participants are viewing sports games, either a full-length game, the highlights or quick reels and videos, they enjoy watching the sports games for personal enjoyment and entertainment. The participants discuss feeling excited, happy and positive when viewing sports games, because it is an activity that they enjoy engaging in. When the participants socialise with their friends and family through watching sports games together and discuss sporting topics with them, they enjoy doing so because they form stronger connections and relationships. This is because both the participants and their friends and family enjoy the sport, so they have a common interest to engage in.

4.5 Chapter Summary

To summarise the findings, the key themes explored were *social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendations, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for sports games views*. The key reasons and motivations for viewing sports games on social media include *time, types of sports watched, occupation, convenience and accessibility, gaining skills and knowledge, socialising and entertainment*.

From these findings, interesting themes and reasons emerged from the participants, showing further insight and a clearer understanding on how and why they use social media and their mobile phones to view sports games and consume sporting content. This shift in sports viewership illustrate how younger audiences maximise social media so that they can receive the types of sporting content they want to view and at a time that best suits them. With the different functions and features of each social media platform, the participants will take this into consideration to select which social media they want to use to have the best viewing experience for sports. The next chapter will explain more in-depth the implications of these findings for consumers and how they answer the research questions.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The discussion chapter will analyse the importance of the key themes identified in the findings, along with insights to how consumer's sports viewership patterns have changed through the influence of social media. The findings contribute to answering the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, further discussing the motivations and benefits of viewing sports games on social media for consumers. From the findings, a conceptual map was developed (Figure 1), to illustrate what motivates consumers to view sports games on social media and the benefits they gain from it. This chapter will also discuss theoretical and managerial implications for the sporting industry and social media marketing, along with discussing the limitations for this research and future research opportunities.

5.2 Overview of Findings

The findings provided interesting results from participants that illustrate how social media has been an influence for changing sports viewership patterns. This change in the viewership patterns also

shows a change in participant's behaviour for selecting a method to view sports games, by seeking short 'snack-sized' video clips, instead of viewing the full-length of a sports game. Personal mobile phones used to access Instagram and YouTube has a significant impact on participants viewing 'snack-sized' sports video clips, especially highlights, where participants are choosing to view relevant and exciting parts of the sports game (Tamir, 2019; Fan et al., 2015). The convenience of social media through access to mobile phones demonstrates an essential factor that caused a behavioural change for sports viewership patterns. Each social media's algorithm provides recommendations for sports videos on participant's social media feed, resulting in sporting content that is passively consumed. On the other hand, participants also actively search for sporting videos and content, such as choosing to view a full-length sports game or specific highlights or moments that occurred. There is also a pattern illustrating the peaks for when participants view sports games and consume information and content related to the sport. The peaks occur leading up to, during and after a sporting event.

The key reasons and motivations showed insights to why participants view sports games on social media. The participant's time availability and their occupation showed a connection relating to the types of sports watched, along with the amount of time spent viewing sports games on social media. Time availability also relates to the convenience of social media providing sporting content, because participants can view a wide variety of sporting moments and highlights in a short amount of time. Social media also provides participants the opportunity to socialise with their family and friends (Chang, 2018) through instantly sharing video clips directly on social media, especially on Instagram and Tik Tok. Sharing sporting moments on social media and attending live games initiates a common interest in sports between participants and their friends and family (Doyle et al., 2017; Weed, 2006; Funk & James, 2001). Figure 1 demonstrates how time, socialising and entertainment are not only motivators for consumers to view sports games on social media, but they are also benefits gained as well. Participants also benefit from the entertainment and skills and knowledge they gain through the sports they are interested in on social media.

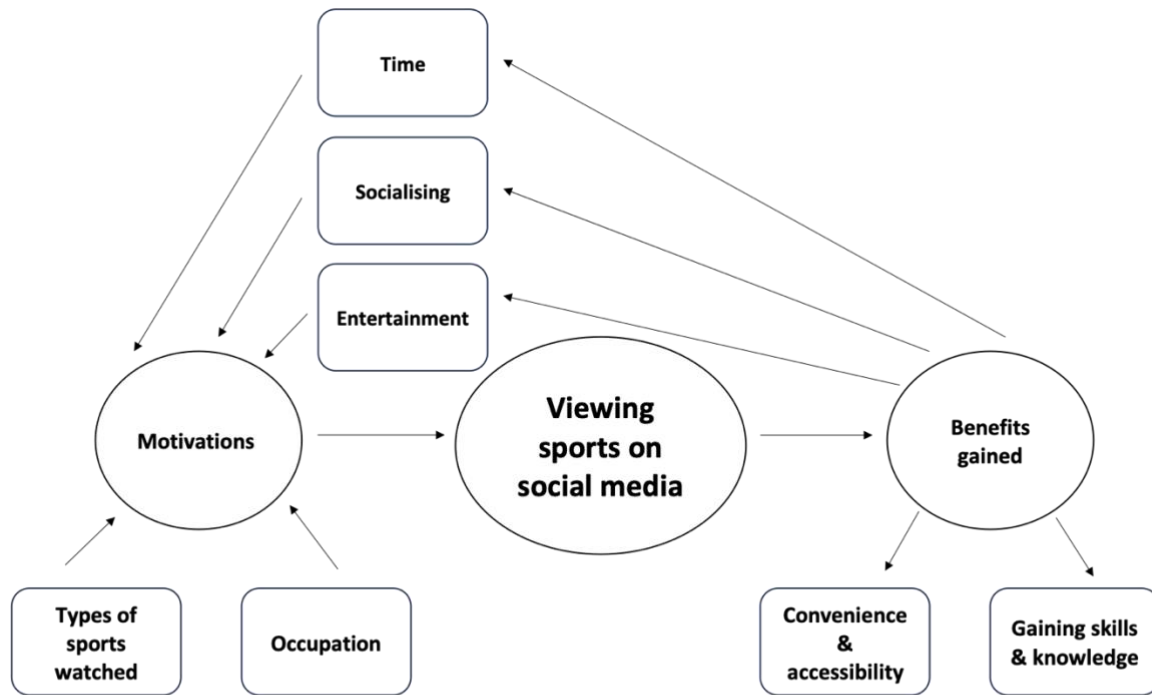


Figure 1: Consumer's Motivations and Benefits Gained from Viewing Sports on Social Media

Findings from this study help gain a better understanding of how consumer's sports viewership patterns have changed, along with the motivations and benefits gained by consumer's by viewing sports on social media, and thus answer the research question and two sub-questions proposed previously:

How has social media influenced sports viewership patterns to change for consumers?

- **What motivates consumers to view sports games on social media?**
- **What benefits do consumers gain by viewing sports games on social media?**

The next part of the discussion will now analyse and answer the research questions accordingly.

5.3 How has social media influenced sports viewership patterns to change for consumers?

The main research question will discuss the five key themes from the findings. Using these themes in addition with the findings from the two sub-questions, the conceptual map (Figure 1) was developed to illustrate how the themes developed and the motivators for viewing sports games on social media lead to the benefits gained by consumers.

5.3.1 Social Media Usage

Depending on participant's time availability, they will use different social media platforms to view sports games according to their viewing preferences and what they want to consume in the moment. YouTube provides longer and fuller versions of games and highlights and is also used for streaming live events and playing it in the background while participants are engaged in something else. The quality of videos is also higher definition (Annamalai et al., 2021; Jang et al., 2021) and less edited, meaning that it includes fuller versions of commentary and highlights with no music or special editing effects (e.g., editing in a transition from one sporting moment to another). Whereas for Instagram and Tik Tok, it is used for quick, 'snack sized' highlights and plays, which is convenient for consumer's time by viewing multiple sporting moments in a short amount of time. Instagram is the most popular social media used by all participants for consuming sports content. This is because as shown from the findings, Instagram's algorithm aligns well with the participant's interests, especially for reels when scrolling on their feed and being conveniently displayed on the explore page. According to the data in this research, Instagram is also used frequently by participants to socialise with friends and family, by sharing and receiving sporting content to discuss and to have a common interest when sharing a conversation. This use of Instagram illustrates the benefits of information sharing amongst users on social media and the convenience of it (Tuten, 2021; Haugh & Watkins, 2016).

Since Instagram is used on a daily basis by participants, a routine has formed for participants to use Instagram before going to sleep. This routine has led to a mindless addiction to scrolling and consuming content on social media, because it provides participants being fulfilled with short term satisfaction because they were entertained by the sporting content and content in general on social media. Most of the sporting content consumed on social media by the participants is short video clips and reels. In this study, 73% of participants view sports games on social media because it is convenient and 64% of participants do so because they do not always have access to a streaming service. In ways, social media acts as an equaliser (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2020; Rowe, 2000) for consumers when they view sports games, as although the viewing experience is different to attending

live in-person and on television, consumers can view close-up angles of plays and pause and fast forward specific sports moments during videos. Hence, this aspect of equalisation allows more consumers to access and view sports games on social media since it is readily available online and free to use. Therefore, this shows a change in viewership patterns for viewing shorter versions of sports games on social media on mobile phones, because it requires much less effort than viewing a live, full-length sports game on television or in-person.

Due to social media platforms that provide ‘snack sized’ sports games videos, particularly like Tik Tok and Instagram, the shortened length of sports games video clips reduces the attention span of younger generations. This can be reflected through the behaviour change for sports viewership, where participants mindlessly scroll through their social media feeds to find a sports video to watch that interests them. The behaviour change is also connected to time availability because participants know highlights and short video clips of sports games is accessible at any time on social media. Whereas with full-length, live sports games, they are on at a specific time that they are not always available to watch. Therefore, a shift is also shown in preferences for the amount of time spent watching sports games. This means that these ‘snack sized’ sports games videos can diminish the value of a full-length sports game. However, this is not always applicable, as 64% of participants would still prefer to watch a full-length sports game if they have the time available, it is a game or sporting event relevant to them (a specific team or player is competing or it is a final round event) and if they have the means to (such as access to Sky Sport for example). These viewership preferences reflect research by Feng et al. (2020), Doyle et al. (2017), Funk and James (2001) and Stewart et al. (2003) in terms of how committed sports fans are, as they will prioritise the types of sporting content they wish to view and consume, based on their level of loyalty and attachment.

Although some participants cannot always view the full-length version of a sports game for the reasons just mentioned, especially for their time availability, there is some contradiction shown from the participants, as a few are addicted to viewing and consuming sporting content on social media. This addiction to being active on social media and viewing sports games is mostly to view reels of sports content on Instagram and Tik Tok, with the majority of the time spent consuming sports content before going to sleep. This shows that the time availability of each participant varies throughout the day and what they are engaged in that either prevents or influences them to view sports games and content on social media.

The literature covered Facebook as a popular social media platform for viewing sports by users, along with Facebook being one of the most used social media platforms by sports organisations and teams (Cao et al., 2021). However, Facebook is the least popular social media platform used because 55% of participants do not associate using Facebook for the purpose of viewing sports games and consuming sporting content. Research by Trivedi et al. (2020), Nisar et al. (2018), Haugh and Watkins (2016) and Fil et al. (2015), discussed Twitter and Snapchat being two other popular social media platforms to view sports games, however, they are not mentioned at all by participants in the findings. Instead, 91% of participants discuss YouTube as a frequently used social media to view sports games, along with Tik Tok as an emerging social media of choice by 36% of participants due to viewing convenient ‘snack sized’ videos of sports games. Both YouTube and Tik Tok were not discussed in the literature review. Thus, the social media platforms selected by participants to view sports games also illustrates a change in viewership patterns, by using one social media over another, because the participants associate the different social media platforms for different purposes. The type of sports content and length of sports video clips that is on each of these social media platforms shows a perspective on consumer’s decision making with that they feel like watching at the time.

5.3.2. Active and Passive Searches

Active and passive searches occur depending on what social media the participants are using. If participants are using YouTube, they will actively search for specific sports games videos they want to view. Therefore, participants have predetermined the sporting content and best social media platform to do so. Participants also actively search for sports games and sports video clips through their family and friends. If a friend or family member asked the participant whether they have seen an exciting play or moment of the game and they have not, they will actively search for this on YouTube. Active searches also occur when there are peaks for sports games and events occurring. For example, during the build-up to a game, participants will view short highlights and reels of the previous game that occurred, or from the most recent matchup of the two teams playing. After the game has been completed, participants will also actively search for highlights. This is because participants will not always have access to live stream services and because they want to re-watch relevant, exciting and controversial moments. Active searches illustrate that participants choose what sports they would like to watch, the amount of time dedicated to watching sports and the social media used.

Active searches ultimately lead to passive searches because the algorithm has now generated a pattern for what the participant is interested in, catering content to suit their interests. The more that the participants view sports video clips and reels on social media, the more the algorithm provides recommendations to watch. This leads to participants consuming more content than they actively searched for and originally intended. Passive searches also illustrate a connection between the time spent watching sports games on social media, where participants spend 10-15 minutes on Instagram before sleeping and during work breaks. It is convenient for participants to quickly access and consume sporting through passive searches, because they are already there on the participant's feed to continue watching and scrolling. Through this mindless consumption, there is a connection shown between passive searches and the algorithm recommendations, because very little effort is required to initiate suggestions for viewing content.

5.3.3 Algorithm Recommendations

Since the algorithm recommendations conveniently provide content for participants, less active searches for specific sporting moments occur, because the algorithm already knows what the participants would be interested in consuming. This connects with passive searches because the participants will watch these video clips out of habit mindlessly, especially on Instagram and TikTok. The algorithm also provides access to a wide variety of sports video clips that participants would not necessarily actively search for themselves. Participants then become further interested in what they watched because they have never seen it before or would like to seek out a fuller version of what they watched. This shows that although the participant did not actively search for these videos or reels, the algorithm made a recommendation based on the participant's potential interest to watch. Once interested to watch more, participants will actively seek more of the content on YouTube to view the sporting moment in more detail, which these 'snack sized' videos do not provide. Furthermore, the algorithm is also a key motivator for participants to continue watching sports video clips on social media, because it consistently pushes content for participants to view. The push for content ultimately leads to the change in viewership patterns to occur because participants have an endless supply of sporting entertainment and content to view with few barriers to restrict them.

5.3.4 Methods of Viewing Sports Games

There is an insight drawn from the data that generally the smaller the screen, the shorter the sports game viewed, whereas the larger the screen, the more likely participants are to view the full-length of a sports game. This viewership pattern shows that participants utilise different social media platforms for different types of sports content consumption, resulting in different methods used to view the sports games. If participants wish to view short highlight videos and reels for convenience, they will go on Instagram. Instagram is most suited for mobile phones, showing the relationship between short viewership times and a small screen size. If participants wish to view a fuller, in-depth version of highlights with commentary, they will go on YouTube. YouTube is compatible with any screen size, so participants can view YouTube on a mobile phone, laptop or television. However, when determining the method to view the sports game, participants will take into consideration different factors that will best suit their viewing. For example, they will consider: their time availability, time length of a video clip or sports game, accessibility to the sport on social media, their social surroundings and situation and so on. Overall, this shows a change in sports viewership patterns because these different factors influence the decision making for participants selecting the amount of time spent on viewing sports games.

Live in-person sports games are valued by the participants, because the experience when attending is completely different to a screen on their mobile phone for example. 45% of participants prefer viewing live sports games because they enjoy the live atmosphere of the crowd and experiencing the live game with their friends and family. As previously discussed, highlights and short video clips and reels diminish the value of full-length and live sports games, because a few seconds to around 10 minutes is more convenient to view than around two to three hours of a full-length sports game. However, the key benefit to full-length in-person sports games is the experience itself, where participants can fully immerse themselves in the game, which cannot be fully replicated through a screen outside of the sporting venue.

However, not all participants are able to watch a live, full-length sports game on a streaming service or attend live, so watching on social media has its benefits. It keeps participants updated with what is happening, along with important news regarding players and the team. Furthermore, many of the sports that participants are interested in are not always available to attend live in New Zealand, or the time that the sporting event is on is not suitable, such as international sports. Some examples include tennis, F1, NFL and EPL football. Whereas many rugby and cricket games are easily accessible live in the participant's hometown and are playing live at a time that suits them. The timing and availability of sports in New Zealand further illustrates the significance of social media providing

free access to participants to view sports games, that they would have otherwise paid for through a streaming service.

The methods used to view sports games reflects the change in generations viewing sports games, shifting away from traditional methods of television and in-person to modern methods of social media on laptops and mobile phones. The Millennials and Generation Z participants view more sports games and sporting moments on social media, rather than on television and in-person like older consumers (Gilal et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2017). This is reflected in the literature, with research by Abdourazakou et al. (2020) and Holt et al. (2013) illustrating that with the emergence of digital devices and social media, it has disrupted how consumers choose to view sports games. Digital devices also demonstrate how specific sporting moments are captured to provide short-term entertainment to consumers, especially through mobile phones.

5.3.5 Peaks for Sports Games Views

As previously mentioned, there are peaks for when sports games and events are viewed, the peaks occur a few days before the game, on game day and a few days after the game. This pattern for when sports games are viewed and when related sporting content is consumed also reflects on the type of content consumed by participants. On game day, participants will watch the full-length sports game and will continue to watch consistently for the rest of the season if they can. Before the game, participants will consume content such as video predictions by commentators to see how well their favourite team will perform, along with viewing existing statistics that show how athletes and sports teams are currently performing so far in the season. After the game, participants will view highlights, along with more commentary to debrief and analyse the performance by athletes and teams. Participants will also rewatch sporting moments that were exciting and controversial to form an opinion and to share with their family and friends. Once the buzz of the sporting event has fizzled out, the pattern for viewership peaks will continue and repeat for when the next game occurs.

Overall, the findings for the first research question and discussion illustrate that there has been a change in sports viewership patterns which are influenced by social media. The themes developed of *social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendations, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for sports games viewed*, all show a behavioural change for how consumers view sports games and consume sporting content. Social media makes sports viewership convenient for consumers, because it makes sporting content readily accessible, essentially with endless content

to keep consumers entertained. Hence resulting in an increased use of social media to view sports content. Social media also provides ‘snack sized’ sports video clips, showing the relevant highlights for consumers, which is not always available through other methods of viewership. From the variety in length of sports video clips, the ‘snack sized’ videos are mainly available on Instagram and Tik Tok, with longer and fuller highlights on YouTube, providing consumers with options on how they want to view and consume sports content. The use of Instagram, YouTube and Tik Tok is more preferred by consumers over Facebook, with only a few participants still using Facebook to consume sports content. When selecting sports videos to view, the participants directly search for the videos themselves actively, but then will passively search for sports videos due to the algorithm’s recommendations. These themes and findings clearly demonstrate a new culture for online sports consumption for younger consumers.

5.4 What motivates consumers to view sports games on social media?

To help support and answer the main research question, the first sub-question discusses five key motivators to explain why participants view sports games on social media. The five are: *time, occupation, types of sports watched, socialising and entertainment*. The motivators influence participant’s behaviour on the method used to watch sports games, showing that each viewership method is connected to a different purpose to suit the participants.

5.4.1 Time

As previously discussed, participants are full time students and part-time workers, or are full time workers. Therefore, are not able to dedicate as much time to viewing sports games because their time is mostly taken up by study and employment. Research by Tamir (2022) discusses that when sports fans grow up and become working adults, their employment commitments prevent them from fully engaging with sports. Hence due to missing out on viewing a full-length sports games, participants choose to view highlights and short video clips and reels to capture the best and relevant sporting moments that they missed. This results in participants being motivated to view sports games on social media because they can receive all the relevant information they need in a timely manner. A full-length sports game varies, depending on the sport, where participants will not always have time available to watch the full-length game because it is too long. Therefore, social media conveniently provides participants with a shortened version of the game through highlights and reels. Another key reason relating to time that motivates participants to view sports games on social media, is because

the sports they are interested in are during international times, simultaneously when they are sleeping or working. This shows that social media is readily accessible for whenever participants are ready on their own terms to view sports games and content at a time that suits them.

5.4.2 Occupation

The participant's occupations show a connection to *time* because it influences the types of sports they can watch live, the amount of time spent watching sports games and the methods they use to watch sports games. Participants that are employed full time will not have as much access to viewing sports games on social media compared to students, because they prioritise their work (Tamir, 2022). They have access to their mobile phones, so will use social media during their breaks to catch up on and view highlights and reels for sports games they missed. Participants who are students are more flexible with their time and may view a full-length sports game if they can. They will also have access to a mixture of mobile phone, laptop and television when studying, so have a greater variety to choose how they want to watch sport. The result of this means that in some situations, students will have a better experience viewing full-length sports games compared to full time working participants, because they have the access and means to.

5.4.3 Types of Sports Watched

The participants discussed being interested in a wide variety of sports, either participating or spectating or a mixture of both. This shows different levels of interest and levels of commitment to viewing their favourite sports (Feng et al., 2020; Doyle et al., 2017; Funk & James, 2001; Stewart et al., 2003). The level of interest for the types of sports viewed also connects with time, because as mentioned, different sports vary in time length. Therefore, participant's time availability will influence what sports they can watch the full-length version of, such as cricket or golf (they can take a few hours to days to complete), or if participants only have enough time for, or wish to only view the highlights on social media.

The types of sports watched also influences the type of social setting participants are involved in. Sports such as rugby, football, cricket and NFL are more social, where research by Weed (2006) analyses that consumers will view sports together with others in a collectively to socialise with others. From the findings, participants will view these sports in a collective setting, live in-person or live and view the full-length version on television if possible. Participants view these games in a

social collective setting live because they want to spend time with their friends and family, along with supporting their favourite team because they are fans. Another reason is because they want to share the excitement and entertainment of the game with others and because it is a good conversation starter. Nevertheless, team sports like rugby, football and NFL are still viewed by participants as individual consumption, such as on breaks at work, in their downtime and before sleeping.

Viewing sports such as golf and skiing are more of an individual consumption for participants, because they are supporting an individual athlete, rather than a team. These sports are more of a specific interest to a few participants, and were not as popular as rugby, football, cricket and F1. The popularity of these sports reflects whether participants view golf and skiing as individual or collective consumption.

5.4.4 Socialising

Socialising is a key motivator for why participants view sports. Although socialising connects more with finding a common interest with friends and family when viewing sports games together live either on television or in-person (Chang, 2018), social media acts as a medium for participants to share sporting moments with their friends and family. Participants value sports as an important part of their identity (Bouchet et al., 2011), along with the importance of sharing their interest in sports with friends and family. This aspect of socialising also connects with the methods of viewing sports games. Viewing live sports games in-person gives participants a reason to see their friends and family and simultaneously to support their favourite team. The bigger the screen, such as a television, the more suitable it is for collective viewing with friends and family. The collective viewing (Weed, 2006) allows for more comfortable viewing of the live, full-length sports game at home, because less monetary costs are involved and participants can decide on the food and drinks they want. On the other hand, the smaller the screen, such as a mobile phone and laptop, the more likely participants are to view sports on social media as individual consumption. The aspect of individual consumption highlights a shift in viewership patterns, where the traditional viewership methods of attending live in-person and watching on television allow for collective consumption (Weed, 2006). Thus, allowing consumers more options and preferences on how they choose to view sports games and content. Again, sports games viewed on smaller screens are mostly short highlights and reels, which are shared with friends and family. Participants appreciate this sharing aspect on social media, because it is a conversation starter, adding more value to their relationship with friends and family with the common interest of sport.

5.4.5 Entertainment

Viewing sports games provides exciting entertainment for participants and ties with *socialising*. Participants and their friends and family will have healthy arguments and banter when they discuss and share controversial plays and calls by referees, exciting moments and scores and the happiness and pride when their favourite team wins (Weed, 2006). Having these discussions, arguments and moments add to the importance of the participant's relationship with their friends and family. The entertainment from sports games fuels participants needs for action and excitement in a social/collective and individual context.

Entertainment in an individual context refers to participants viewing sports games and video clips by themselves on social media. Since the participants are full time workers and students, they find viewing sports a way to escape and relax from their busy lives (Stavros et al., 2017). The entertainment that they receive from viewing sports games on social media is short term and is not as meaningful as viewing sports with friends and family in a social and collective context (Weed, 2006). This is because they are not embracing the excitement with their friends and family in-person, where social media restricts this to online communication, with limited face-to-face human interaction.

To conclude, the motivations of *time, occupation, types of sports watched, socialising and entertainment* help to answer the first research sub-question. These motivators influence consumers to view sports games on social media, which also determines which social media they use. The motivators are different for each consumer, such as the amount of time spent viewing sports games, how interested they are in a sport and whether they view sports games individually or collectively, will help consumers decide which is the best social media for them to use. As these motivations can change (such as which sports are available to watch seasonally), it also develops a routine for consumers to view sports games on social media, because consumers will adjust their viewership patterns to best suit them and the other motivators that can influence their viewership decision.

5.5 What benefits do consumers gain by viewing sports games on social media?

To help support and answer the main research question, the second sub-question helps to explore the two key benefits that consumers gain by watching sports games on social media. These answers also support why consumers use social media and the advantages associated with viewing sports games

on social media. The first key benefit that consumers gain from watching sports games on social media is because it is convenient and easily accessible than other methods of watching sports games. The second key benefit is that consumers gain skills and knowledge about sports when viewing them on social media.

5.5.1 Convenience and Accessibility

The benefit of social media being convenient and accessible for viewing sports games connects with the reasons for why participants use social media as discussed in the findings. Since social media is readily available on participant's personal mobile phones (Tuten, 2021), they can easily view sports games without any restrictions. This shows a relationship between mobile phones and social media, because all participants will view at least one sport on one social media platform on their mobile phone (Wong, 2023). Therefore, the insight to the accessibility that participants have is that very little effort is required to view sports games on social media, along with participants not needing to contribute monetary costs to view sports games on social media. Viewing sports games is convenient for participants, because again, very little effort is required to gain information about athletes and sports and 'snack sized' entertainment from games. The algorithm recommendations along with passive searches on social media has contributed to the convenience of viewing sports games, because participants have actively searched for sporting content. Therefore, the videos and reels of sports games are conveniently on the participant's feed when they access social media.

5.5.2 Gaining Skills and Knowledge

The other key benefit that participants gain from viewing sports games on social media, is skills and knowledge on sports they are interested in. As discussed, participants will learn more about rules, game plays, information about athletes and teams, along with techniques and manoeuvres they can apply to themselves when participating in sports. Learning these new skills and knowledge is beneficial because this means that participants are more interested in the sport, because they can better understand what is happening when watching a game. The information that participants gain from viewing sports games is supported by the commentary, where participants value the commentary because it supplements their interpretation of the game and entertainment when viewing. It is also beneficial for participants because they can improve their sporting performance and share with their friends and family the new techniques and manoeuvres they learned. Again,

there is no monetary costs involved with gaining new skills and knowledge on social media and very little effort is required to do so, because social media is convenient and accessible for participants.

To summarise, the relevant benefits that consumers gain from viewing sports games on social media is that it is convenient and accessible, along with gaining skills and knowledge. Convenience and accessibility to sports games on social media is valued by participants, because it also connects with their time availability, making it effortless to view which sports participants want to watch and when. Gaining skills and knowledge is also valued by participants because essentially, they are fuelling their interest in their favourite sports, making it a key reason and motivator to view sports games. These benefits help to support the main research question and first sub-question because the benefits derive from the motivations, which drive participants to change their behaviour when viewing sports games on social media.

5.6 Theoretical Implications

The research conducted contributes to existing literature and research regarding sports marketing, along with social media usage by consumers. The main research question and two sub-questions helps to fulfil the research gaps identified in Chapter 1, being how social media has influenced sports viewership patterns to change for consumers, what motivates consumers to view sports games on social media and the benefits they receive from doing so.

Firstly, the key theoretical contribution of this research is the methods that consumers use to view sports games. Traditionally, these methods were live in-person or on television. But now with social media and digital technologies being widely available and accessible to consumers, sports games are now frequently viewed on social media on mobile phones. This implies that mobile phones are now a key method to view sports games, primarily due to its convenience and accessibility. It also contributes to existing literature that consumers are shifting away from viewing sports live in-person and on television, to smaller screens for personal entertainment.

Another key theoretical contribution this research provided was how consumers use YouTube to view sports games and the benefits they receive from it. This helped to fulfil the research gap mentioned in Chapter 2 and provided helpful insights into why YouTube is a popular method to view sports games. The addition of Tik Tok included as a social media to view sports games also contributes to the idea that consumers are viewing ‘snack sized’ video clips of sports games, rather

than the full-length sports game. This idea is also illustrated using Instagram, as reels are popular amongst consumers to view sports games. From this research, Facebook is shown to not be as popular amongst consumers to view sports games as the other social medias, which differs from the existing literature (Westberg et al., 2018; Haugh & Watkins, 2016). Overall, these four social media platforms function differently from each other, providing various benefits and sporting content for consumers.

Secondly, this research contributes to existing literature by demonstrating concrete motivations as to why consumers choose to view sports games on social media. The main motivation evolves around time, which connects to the types of sports watched and consumer's occupation. Time is a significant influence for consumers to view sports games on social media, because it ties with the idea of consumers viewing 'snack sized' video clips of sports games, as they cannot always watch the full-length sports game. Active and passive searches on social media leading to algorithm recommendations is also a significant contribution to the literature. This causes content to be pushed onto consumer's social media feed based on their searches and what they have already viewed. Socialising with friends and family through sports and viewing sports games for entertainment is another motivator for consumers. This is because they enjoy interacting with others and the excitement and happiness consumers receive from viewing sports games.

Thirdly, this research contributes to existing literature by illustrating the benefits that consumers gain from viewing sports games on social media. The first benefit being convenience and accessibility, because social media is designed for mobile phone use, where consumers frequently use their mobile phones to gain information regarding sports and to view sports games. This benefit contributes to the literature by illustrating the idea that because consumers have easy access to mobile phones (Feng et al., 2020), very little effort is needed to view sports games. Gaining skills and knowledge is the second benefit that consumers gain from viewing sports games on social media. This contributes to the literature, because from simply watching athletes perform, it is also another way for consumers to gain skills and knowledge about sporting techniques and manoeuvres, along with joining Facebook groups (Braumuller, 2020).

The research conducted has contributed to existing literature, especially for how consumers use social media for different reasons and specifically for how they want to view sports games. The motivations explored in this research contributes to what drives consumers to view sports games on social media, along with how this behaviour change influences sports viewership patterns to change.

The benefits that consumers receive from viewing sports games on social media illustrates the value that they gain, which also supports their motivations and choosing a social media to use. This value can be enhanced for consumers through managerial implications by sporting organisations and teams on social media.

5.7 Managerial Implications

Following the theoretical implications, there are also managerial implications that can be applied on social media by sporting organisations, sports teams and social media marketers. Overall social media has the potential to open up new segments of consumers, who cannot regularly attend games in person, or spend the time to watch full-length games on television. Thus, sporting organisations, teams and marketers, need to use these tools to the full extent. Social media gives them the power to keep these fans and consumers engaged. They can cater towards sports fans and followers to increase engagement and to provide value in terms of viewership. Sporting organisations and teams can create content that is relevant and targeted for social media users. Social media marketers can design and push sporting content through editing and creating sports video clips at various lengths.

As shown in the literature, findings and discussion, consumers are now viewing ‘snack sized’ video clips of sports games, shifting away from viewing full-length sports games. The social media platforms discussed have different purposes and meanings to the participants, further illustrating that the participants will view varied sports content based on what the social media provides. Sporting organisations and teams can take into consideration the type of content that fans like to view to suit the different social media platforms that they use. In addition to the highlights that is on social media, they can include reels of athletes and players demonstrating a certain technique or manoeuvre, so that fans can view it and improve their performance. For example, a short snippet could be on Instagram and Tik Tok, but a fuller, more in-depth video with explanations could be on YouTube. This would increase engagement with fans, athletes and the team, where this would be beneficial for the sports teams to grow the brand and for fans to gain skills and knowledge. Furthermore, sports teams can have players explain rules, techniques and plays they executed during the game on social media for fans to view and learn from. This would increase engagement and generate relationships between fans, athletes and players, because it would make it more personalised for fans since they are learning from their favourite athletes.

To further increase engagement sports teams and organisations can have an online presence on social media platforms that they do not already have, to target specific segments of their fan base (Filo et al., 2015; Naranine & Parent, 2017). Tik Tok can be used to target younger fans, because the content is short, making it easy to capture the attention of younger audiences. This provides short term entertainment to keep the viewer interested, so that they can view more sporting content. Social media marketers can conduct market research to determine which would be the best social media for posting content to target older fans. Although as mentioned, older fans are not as likely to consume sporting content on social media as younger fans (Holt et al., 2013; Abdourazakou et al., 2020), they still make up a large portion of the fan base and are considered loyal and dedicated, compared to younger fans (Todor-Alon et al., 2019). Social media marketers can create and develop a new social media platform, targeting older fans, which can be specific towards a sport or team, focusing on the sporting content itself, rather than for viewing a variety of content on different topics (like Instagram or Tik Tok). This can make social media easier to use for older fans, allowing them to feel more comfortable online because they are isolating themselves to only sporting content they are interested in. Therefore, it is important for sports teams and organisations to also build a relationship with older fans to show appreciation for their long term support.

Another implication that can be applied to increase attendance at live games and to bring value for sports fans, could be to have tickets available in bundles, rather than sold individually. These tickets bought in packs can have a discount and could include some food and beverages. This helps to support one of the key motivators for why the participants view sports games, because they can socialise with their friends and family and for entertainment. It also provides a live experience for consumers that they cannot have when viewing sports on a screen through social media. The live experience is appreciated and valued by the participants, because they enjoy the atmosphere, seeing athletes play live and being amongst other fans. The tickets at a discount with food and beverages also help to support one of the restrictions that participants discussed, being monetary costs, which can be a discouragement to attending live games.

5.8 Limitations

This research had a few limitations, mostly during the recruitment process and sampling methods used. The recruitment process did not widely target potential interviewees, only targeting those from a convenience sample, who had similar demographics as the researcher. Therefore, a variety of

demographics and perspectives were not captured to fully represent sports consumers in New Zealand.

The first limitation to this research was that the age range for the participants was considered young, being the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts. The limited age range does not accurately capture a diverse range of consumers in New Zealand, particularly for the age demographic. Additionally, 64% of the participants were students, showing a common occupation that influenced the time spent watching sports games on social media and methods chosen to view sports games. The literature review discusses connections between older sports fans and their dedication and loyalty to their favourite sports teams, along with older sports fans more likely to view sports games on television and in-person, rather than on social media (Gilal et al., 2021). However, it would still be important to research and interview older sports fans in New Zealand, because older sports fans and consumers are a large segment that make up the fan base.

The next limitation was that the sample was small because data saturation was reached at 11 participants. Interviewing others outside of the existing demographics in this research would likely have led to differing perspectives and insights, because these participants will have different factors that motivate them to view sports games. Such as occupation, time availability, financials, accessibility to sports games, location based in New Zealand and so on. Therefore, data saturation could have been reached at a later stage due to the potential varied information and insights gained from participants.

Another limitation was that while recruiting for participants, the recruitment poster was only posted on the researcher's personal Facebook page, not on any sports fan community groups, or on other pages or social media platforms. This method was useful for the convenience sample and for the snowball sample, as those who had access to the recruitment poster could share it to those who would be interested. This therefore restricts the potential for diverse participants to be interviewed, limiting the insights gained from sports consumers in New Zealand for this research. These limitations can be turned into future research ideas to gain more information on consumer's social media usage and their behaviour and preferences for viewing sports games on social media.

5.9 Future Research

One future research opportunity would be to conduct the study domestically in New Zealand, as discussed previously. This would allow sports teams and organisations along with social media marketers and other stakeholders in the sporting and marketing industry to gain a better understanding of different consumers. This opportunity would be advantageous to gain further insights on demographics in New Zealand and sports consumer's preferences for using social media to consume sports content. This is relevant for future research because there is a shift in sports views from traditional methods, to now viewing sport on social media. Therefore, as discussed previously, social media presents the best of a sports game, to make viewership convenient and timely for consumers.

Exploring a singular social media in-depth further would also be an insightful opportunity to gain a better understanding of the consumer behaviour for using the social media. It would also be useful to research any emerging user patterns, such as amount of time spent and reasons for using the particular social media, to understand consumer's preferences and what they want to benefit from on social media. For example, further research can be conducted targeting sports viewers who view sports games on Facebook, to further explore how popular Facebook is for the purpose of viewing sports games. Similarly with Tik Tok, further research can be conducted to study sports viewership patterns, as it is an emerging social media that provides endless reels and content, suitable for 'snack sized' sports videos.

Netnography (Kozinets, 2020) can be a future research method to further investigate how online users interact with others on social media. This could be through communicating with friends and family through chats, engaging through comments on posts or online community groups for user's favourite sports and teams. Netnography can be useful for marketers to understand how user's behave online, to strategise how the social media organisations can improve or cater to the needs of users to maintain usage and enhance their experience.

More research can be conducted for the aspects of products, such as clothes and sporting equipment, as they are linked to social media platforms on the account page. Further research into how that has turned into a shopping experience for consumers, shifting away from online website shopping, to shopping on social media can illustrate a change in shopping behavioural patterns.

5.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis and research conducted explored the relevance of changes in sports viewership patterns for consumers that were influenced by social media, along with discussing the key motivators for why consumer's watch sports games on social media and the benefits they gain from doing so. The themes emerged had the element of convenience and accessibility for consumers connected to them, showing that the themes are an integral part of the result of consumers viewing sports games on social media.

The literature review covered aspects of sports fan's characteristics, social media platforms, consumer's social media usage and methods of viewing sports games. The methodology discussed the research approach of an interpretivist, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and thematic analysis. The key findings were the main themes of *social media usage, active and passive searches, algorithm recommendation, methods of viewing sports games and peaks for sports games views*. In addition to the five themes, the other main points of discussion were the motivations that influence consumers to view sports games on social media and the benefits they receive from it, which was illustrated by the conceptual map. The thesis contributed to a gap in the literature by answering the research questions, identifying key patterns and trends that social media has changed consumer's sports viewership patterns. This contributed to the theoretical and managerial implications for sports marketing and social media marketing research areas and industries. The limitations identified allows opportunities for future research to be conducted, specifically in a wider New Zealand context and using netnography to further analyse interactions between fans and sports consumers on social media. Overall, social media is now commonly and widely used by younger generations in New Zealand, along with social media marketing becoming very popular and effective for sports organisations and teams to maintain their online presence and to gain and attract fans.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Advertisement



Participants Needed for Sports Marketing Research

This study is about understanding changes in sports viewership patterns influenced by social media. Participants needed for semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes), with a \$20 Westfield voucher offered as a thank you for participating.

Participation inclusion criteria

- Views sports games on social media
- 18 years old or older

For more information/questions, please contact me by chb51@uclive.ac.nz. This study is under the supervision of Chris Chen (chris.chen@canterbury.ac.nz) and Lucie Ozanne (lucie.ozanne@canterbury.ac.nz).

This study has been approved by the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee (Ref: HREC/2022/42/LR).

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



UC Business School
Department of Marketing, Management and Entrepreneurship
Phone: +6433693813
Email: chb51@uclive.ac.nz
21/10/22
HREC Ref: HREC 2022/42/LR

Research Project: Understanding the Changes in Sports Viewership Patterns: How and Why Consumers Are Using Social Media

Information Sheet for participants

Hello and welcome,

You are invited to participate in a research study on sports viewership patterns. This study is being conducted by, Cindy Bui, a Master of Commerce (MCom) student majoring in marketing from the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha (UC). Other research team members include my supervisors, Chris Chen and Lucie Ozanne. The study is being carried out as a requirement for a MCom degree.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to determine how and why consumers are using social media to view sports games, along with what motivates consumers to do so and the benefits they gain from it. The information from this study will help to gain specific knowledge about sports consumers in New Zealand along with contributing to existing areas of knowledge about sports and social media consumers and behaviour.

Why have you received this invitation?

You are invited to participate in this research because you meet the criteria of being someone that views sports games on social media. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there are no consequences. Your decision will not affect your relationship with me, the University of Canterbury, or any member of the research team.

What is involved in participating?

If you choose to take part in this research, you will participate in an interview. This interview will take place face-to-face. I will contact you to arrange a suitable time and location. The interview will involve me introducing myself, answering any questions you have, and confirming your consent to participate. Then, we

will begin the interview and I will ask you questions about your interests in sports, social media platforms that you use, your motivations to view sports on social media and the benefits you gain from doing so. I estimate that the interview will take around 45-60 minutes.

Will the interview be recorded?

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded using a portable recorder. The recording will be used to create a written transcript of the interview, which I will analyse as part of the research. If you choose to review a copy of the interview transcript, I will provide this to you on 31st October 2022. I will ask you to provide any amendments or additions via email within one week of me sending you the transcript for edits/changes. Therefore, the final date for withdrawal is 7th November 2022, hence it is not possible to withdraw from the research beyond this date.

Are there any benefits from taking part in this research?

A potential benefit is that participants will develop further understanding of how and why the sports viewership patterns for consumers, along with further understanding the motivations for viewing sports on social media and the benefits that consumers can gain from doing so. A koha will be provided at the end of the interview with a NZD20 Westfield voucher as a token of appreciation for your participation in the study. You will get this inducement even if you withdraw from the study.

Are there any risks involved in this research?

We are not aware of any risks to participants in the research.

What if you change your mind during or after the study?

You are free to withdraw any time. To do this, please let me know either during or after the interview. I will remove any information you have provided up to that point from the data set if it is still possible. Once data analysis has commenced on 8th November 2022, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen to the information you provide?

I/we will transfer the audio recording to a password-protected file on the University of Canterbury computer network and then delete this from the recording device as soon as practical. All data will be confidential. To ensure your identity is not known to anyone outside the research team, we will keep your signed consent form in a file separate from your interview transcript. To keep your identity confidential, your name will be changed to a pseudonym (a fake name) whenever it appears in the transcript and anywhere else. We will store the file that links your real name and your pseudonym individually on a password-protected, secure device.

All study data will be stored in password-protected files on the University of Canterbury's computer network or stored in lockable cabinets in lockable offices.

All data will be destroyed in five years after completion of the study/publication of study findings. I will be responsible for making sure that only members of the research team use your data for the purposes mentioned in this information sheet.

On the consent form you will be asked to consent to your contact information being securely stored by the research team, and for permission to contact you in the future about further elaboration/follow-up questions/answers that may be relevant information to be included in the study.

Will the results of the study be published?

The results of this research will be published in a Master's thesis. This thesis will be available to the general public through the University of Canterbury library. Results may be published in peer-reviewed, academic journals. Results will also be presented during conferences or seminars to wider professional and academic communities. You will not be identifiable in any publication. A summary of results will be sent to all participants who request a copy.

Who can you contact if you have any questions or concerns?

If you have any questions about the research, please contact myself, Cindy Bui: chb51@uclive.ac.nz; under the supervision of Chris Chen: chris.chen@canterbury.ac.nz; and Lucie Ozanne: lucie.ozanne@canterbury.ac.nz for any concerns about the research.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If you have a complaint about this research, please contact the Chair of the HREC at human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

What happens next?

Please review the consent form. If you would like to participate, please sign, scan/take a photo of, and return the consent form to my email: chb51@uclive.ac.nz, or by hand before the interview begins (I can provide you a physical copy for you to read and sign).

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this research,

Cindy Bui

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



UC Business School
Department of Marketing, Management and Entrepreneurship
Phone: +6433693813
Email: chb51@uclive.ac.nz
21/10/22
HREC Ref: HREC 2022/42/LR

Research Project: Understanding the Changes in Sports Viewership Patterns: How and Why Consumers Are Using Social Media

Consent Form for Participants

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without consequences. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain possible.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher along with her supervisors. I understand that any published or reported results will not identify me.
- ☐ I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form. I understand the data will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I agree to being audio recorded. I understand how this recording will be stored and used.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher, Cindy Bui by email: chb51@uclive.ac.nz or the supervisors, Chris Chen by email: chris.chen@canterbury.ac.nz and Lucie Ozanne by email: lucie.ozanne@canterbury.ac.nz for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Research Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, (email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ I would like a copy of the transcript from this interview.
- ☐ I consent to my contact information being kept and used by researchers to contact me

about future, related research.

- ☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix D: Questionnaire Guide for Interviews

Sports Viewership on Social Media – Semi-Structured Interview Questions/Guide

Introduction for Interview:

- *thank and welcome participant for coming along and participating in the interview*
- *introduce myself and talk a little bit on what the research is about*
- *go over the ethics and consent form, ask participant to sign, ask again if they feel comfortable being audio recorded*
- *give participant voucher (explain that it is theirs to keep, even if they withdraw without completing the interview)*
- *ask participants if they have any questions about the research or interview before starting*

Introductory Question:

Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself? (E.g. interests, work etc)

Sport and Social Media Platforms:

What sports do you enjoy watching? What do you enjoy about these sports? (what influenced you to enjoy these sports e.g. childhood, playing these sports)

How do you watch sports games? (E.g. in-person, television, social media)

How often do you watch sports games on social media? On which platform and why?

- What motivates you to watch sports games on social media? (E.g. what factors influence you to watch games on social media?)
- What types of social media platforms do you use to watch sports games?
- Why do you prefer/choose these social media platforms over others?

- What do you think are some pros and cons for watching sports on different social medias? (e.g. comparing two social media platforms, such as ones that have mentioned earlier) -> this question can be a prompt for the one above?

Can you provide an experience/time when you watched a sports game on social media?

- How did you feel/what emotions did you have when watching the game? (E.g. happy, excited, suspenseful)
- **Ask about devices used for watching sports games (e.g. what and why)**

Time Length for Viewership

Recalling a recent experience with watching sports games on social media, can you describe how it developed into a routine?

- Do you have a preferred time length for watching a sports game? (E.g. full length, 15 minutes etc)
- Why do you prefer this time length? (E.g. not enough time, only watching what is relevant)
- Do you have a pattern or routine for watching sports games on social media? (frequency)

Enjoyment/Benefits of Watching Sports Games:

What do you enjoy most about watching sports games on social media compared to other methods? (e.g. television, in-person)

- What benefits do you gain from watching sports games on social media? (E.g. convenience, accessible, affordable)
- Do you talk to other people online while viewing sports games? (E.g. replying to comments with other online users or talking to others you already know about the game?)

End of Interview:

Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Conclusion to Interview:

thank participant for coming along