

# What is Driving Younger Fan Experiences? Exploring Generational Differences in Large Event Consumption at the “Battle at Bristol”

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## **Abstract**

*Given the aging fan base across spectator sport (Fischer, 2017), and the decline in attendance at NASCAR races (Gluck, 2016, July 2), live sport consumption is of high interest among sport marketers as they explore new ways to increase attendance and revenue for motorsport organizations. As a result, sport marketers of motorsport venues are now seeking non-traditional events to generate interest in their venues and drive revenue. This study focused on a one-off event, the Battle at Bristol, which was created to bring spectators to Bristol Motor Speedway, a NASCAR sanctioned racetrack. The event required the speedway to transform the infield into a football field for a collegiate football game. With nearly 160,000 in attendance, this event was the most highly attended NCAA football game in history. Marketing researchers examined the fan experiences at the Battle at Bristol including; generational differences, consumption of ancillary events, and communication of this crossover event. As motorsport facilities continue to explore ways to increase interest and improve fan experiences, especially with an aging fan base, there is a need for practitioners to understand different generations, their interests, and how they experience non-traditional events.*

*Data for this study was collected on-site at Bristol Motor Speedway before the Battle at Bristol event. Participants (N = 728) completed a survey which explored many facets of fan behavior and generational differences. Results indicated differences among the generations and how they consumed this event. The study looked at generational differences among social, technological, and ancillary elements that were part of the event’s overall success. Millennials emerged as the most active generation when looking at the ancillary events. Attending in groups of five or more emerged as another trend among the different generations, suggesting the social atmosphere was of high importance to all age groups. It is vital for sport marketers to recognize these trends as motorsport organizations continue to explore these types of one-off events.*

*NASCAR; College Football; Generations; Fan Experience*

## **Introduction**

As the median age of live sport consumers increases (Fischer, 2017), sport managers are seeking to better understand the generational differences regarding live sport consumption. This is particularly of concern for the motorsport industry, as NASCAR, the flagship enterprise of motorsport in the United States, continues to decline as its fan base ages (Gluck, 2016, July 2). As a result of this desire to capture audiences again, some motorsport facilities have utilized large, one-off events to generate interest in their facilities, such as the Las Vegas Motor Speedway hosting the Electric Daisy Carnival festival, Daytona International Speedway hosting NBC's America Ninja Warrior, or the Tennessee vs. Virginia Tech football game, "Battle at Bristol" at the Bristol Motor Speedway (Gluck, 2016, July 28; Stern, 2017). As other college football teams and large-scale venues mull over these types of events, there is a need for better understanding regarding spectators at events such as Battle at Bristol.

A vast majority of sport spectators still seek social experiences (Chalip, 2006), whether through an increased social network for older fans (Oxman & Hull, 1997), or engagement online for younger fans (Gainor, 2015). Due to environmental circumstances, such as the Vietnam War or the invention of social media, generations have had markedly different life experiences (Lowe & Skarl, 2009), and as such, differ in their preferences regarding the live sporting experience (Gainor, 2015). Generally speaking, generations can be categorized as Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Stollings, 2015). Millennials have been found to seek party-like atmospheres and opportunities to celebrate, regardless of the sport or activity (Yeoman, 2013). Based on technological differences, they also are more market and tech savvy (Halliday & Astafyva, 2014). Baby Boomers often use support for a local sports team

to enhance their in-person social network, and therefore their social support, in the community (Oxman & Hull, 1997). How these spectators choose and consume events is important to sport and event managers, including the efficacy and importance of ancillary events that surround many sporting events.

As ancillary events are not as common in college football, the research on spectator experience regarding ancillary events is sparse, and mostly focused on tailgating (Drenten, Peters, Leigh, Hollenbeck, 2009). However, there are multiple types of ancillary events in both motorsports and college football. Some events, such as the team walk or driver introductions can be defined as 'rituals' by their respective fans (McDonald & Karg, 2014), whereas others such as parades, family fan fests, and music concerts were added to create the feeling of a festival-type atmosphere. Previous research has indicated that atmosphere is a key aspect for attendees of a sporting event (Bauer, Sauer, & Exler, 2005). Similarly, a connection to non-ticketed events, such as College GameDay, can increase the likelihood of attendance at the actual game (Shonk, Pate, Lee, & Bosley, 2017). However, this may not apply equally across different generations. There is previous evidence indicating undergraduate students view event experiences differently than their older counterparts. For instance, they desire more in-game and pre-game activities and entertainment (Palanjian, Cooper, Weight, Mihalik, 2014). The literature generally agrees that sport fans enjoy ancillary events and opportunities to be social, but that there are differences in the fan experience across the generations.

The purpose of this study was to examine the pre-event fan experience at a large, one-time, crossover mega event, including generational differences, attendance at ancillary events, and modes of communication. This study examined spectator awareness, engagement, and satisfaction with various ancillary events

including an interactive fan zone, a pre-race concert, ESPN's College GameDay, and other ceremonial activities. As college football and motorsport facilities continue to explore ways to increase fan attendance and improve fan engagement, particularly as the average fan increases in age, there is a need for scholars and practitioners to understand the generational differences at these types of events.

## **Literature Review**

### *Generational Comparisons*

Before analyzing consumption habits of fans, it is important to gain a better understanding of each generation. The following paragraphs provide more detail of each generation's views on work, family, religion, relationships, society, culture, etc.

#### *Baby Boomers (Born between 1946 – 1964)*

The work of Stollings (2015) suggests Baby Boomers have worked hard to build the American Dream. This generation was raised in a time of American prosperity, and their goals included having a nice job, a nice family, and a nice home. His research also indicated that professionalism is important to this generation, and they prefer face-to-face, politically correct communication. According to Williams, Page, Petrosky, and Hernandez (2010), Boomers valued self-perfection over teamwork and rebelled against conformity. They are materialistic and workaholics, with discretionary income and time as they move forward into retirement. Health, energy, and wellness are important to this generation and they are seeking out the prime of their life, as they get older. As these researchers found, Baby Boomers feel entitled to a good life (Williams et al., 2010).

#### *Generation X (Born between 1965 – 1980)*

In terms of Generation X, Williams et al, (2010) found that this generation raised

themselves, grew up quickly, and view nothing as permanent. They value family and have a broader view of family: step parents, half siblings, etc. Stollings (2015) suggests that they value flexibility of work-life balance and tend to be skeptical. Education is a great opportunity, and as parents, Generation X found it important to provide extracurricular opportunities, safety, and family time for their kids. According to Williams et al, (2010), this group blames Baby Boomer's materialism for many of their issues, and they will not sacrifice time, energy, and relationships for work. They tend to be more diverse and globally minded than generations before them and women in Generation X are more educated (Williams et al., 2010).

#### *Millennials (Born between 1981 – 1994)*

Finally, for Millennials, cultural diversity, divorce, dual-income households, and economic uncertainty are norms (William et. al, (2010). Due to popular use of the internet, Google, eBay, PDAs, GPS, and social networks, the world became much smaller as this generation was coming into adulthood. They grew up being told they could be anything they want to be, so they are ambitious, demanding, optimistic, and determined. Stollings (2015) found that they were sheltered and protected growing up, and they think work should be flexible. Williams et. al (2010) suggests they should be the most highly educated generation to date. They recognize problems, they are civic minded, and they are highly motivated. Millennials are concerned with aesthetics and apparel, and technology is a form of accessory. They often trust peers more than experts. They want to live their best now, not wait for retirement. According to Williams et al.'s (2010) research, Millennials want to promote positive change and they are spread across the political spectrum.

According to The NACDA Report, this generation, that is now a strong part of the work force, has an increasingly more disposable

income (Gainor, 2015). Millennials comprise 25% of the U.S. population, and should out pace Boomer earnings in 2018 with \$2.5 trillion in spending power. Also, by 2025, they will be 75% of the workforce. Williams et al, (2010) states Millennials are self-absorbed, self-reliant, expressive, and inquisitive. They are selfish, they are not fearful, they live for today, and they are willing to spend big (Williams et al, 2010; Eisner, 2005; Novak et.al, 2006).

### **Consumption Comparison**

Different world events, wars, trends, and societal pressures have defined Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. Though each generation is different, they all consume sport. The following literature compares popular forms of consumption (social, technology, and ancillary events) and how each generation participates differently.

#### *Social Consumption.*

For every generation, there is something special about the social connection through sport. Chalip (2006) explains this connection:

The sporting outcomes may matter to some, but there is a sense that something more important- something that transcends the sport- is going on. It feels as if new energy has been injected into the communal atmosphere- an energy that can be shared by all. Social rules and social distinctions seem less important and are sometimes suspended altogether. (p. 110)

Affiliation with a local sports team can create a large social network for older adults, and in turn, social support. Social activities through sport and support through this new community can be valuable resources for a person adapting to later life (Oxman & Hull, 1997). Additionally, Wann, Rogers, Dooley, and Foley (2011) found that high identification with a sports team can be helpful with successful aging. Following a team in the media, keeping track of statistics, and

attending games can help with physical and cognitive functions beyond that of routine activities.

Similar to the social activities that Boomers value, such as NASCAR scanners, message boards and tailgating; Millennial sport consumers crave interaction and connection, but they often seek this through the control and insider information on their devices (Gainor, 2015). It seems that sport attendance is down, but that does not mean that fandom has decreased; Millennials just want to control when, where, and how they engage. There is a clear delineation between how Baby Boomers and Millennials consume sport, but their reasoning remains similar in terms of desiring social connection.

#### *Technology Consumption.*

Today's tech savvy society has created a need for social capital, and therefore an increased benefit in participation of big events. Twenty years ago, flaunting a large house or new car was a way to gain status, but today there are other options to reveal status or capital. As revealed in Yeoman (2013)'s research, Instagram, Twitter, etc. reveal more about someone's status or capital than their bank account, career, or home for the Millennial. Posting pictures from a big game or event can drive a person's capital and worth. Social media allows participants to show off their experience and create a portfolio of experiences (Yeoman, 2013).

With technology, it is easy to access a multitude of platforms without attending. As a result, consumption habits are changing. For instance, fans can follow an event (race) on their mobile device via live streams or social media updates. It is vital for organization to remember that attendance is critical, but there are other ways for fans to consume (Gluck, 2016, July 2). Mobile devices have changed sport consumption, but a major competitor for attendance is TV. For example, broadcasting the halftime show or national anthem during the Super Bowl has

become a critical element to fully involve the at home fan (Apostolopoulou, 2006), and even college bowl games have become “made-for-TV” events. This is evidenced by an expanded bowl season, TV contracts (Eddy, Rascher, & Stewart, 2016), and an increase in corporate sponsorship. Additionally, watching TV is a favorite leisure activity for older adults, where there is a positive relationship between aging and television viewing (Ryu & Heo, 2016). To improve the TV product and increase the excitement of its racing events, NASCAR has made several changes to the structure of its sport in recent years including the addition of stage racing, green/white/checker overtime rules, and a new playoff format to determine its series champions (Jones & Byon, 2020).

Other avenues of technology consumption are also garnering new potential fans for sporting events. Goldsmith and Walker (2015) studied one way to increase non-fan consumption for 18-25 year olds, the lower end of the Millennial generation. Results of the study found that by involving a non-fan into fantasy sports, they could activate brand awareness and change participant attitude, behavioral factors, and intention. Self-identified non-fans became involved fans through increased engagement via fantasy participation (Goldsmith & Walker, 2015). Social media, television, and fantasy sport are just a few ways that fans can consume sport without being there (i.e., through Twitter updates, fantasy leagues, bracket challenges, etc.) or can even enhance the in-game experience (i.e., through video boards, music, team/facility apps, etc.) Technology has impacted both the live and home viewing experience. Prior to the Battle at Bristol event, Bristol Motor Speedway installed a 30 ft. tall by 63 ft. wide free hanging video board, to display game statistics, replay important plays, and engage with fans through its video technology (i.e., Colossus TV; Bedard, 2015). The enormous Jumbotron is now used during racing events to communicate driver statistics,

lineups and running orders, and replay action on the track such as lead changes and driver crashes. TV has allowed people who are at home to still feel like they are part of the game (Apostolopoulou, 2006), but if sport marketers can make the game an experience beyond the game itself, they can motivate fans to attend live, in person. Spectacle has media value (Chalip, 2006) and the use of ancillary events can make the game into an event, a celebration, and a party.

#### *Ancillary Event Consumption.*

Apostolopoulou (2006) noted that entertainment “has become a core element of any major sporting event as demonstrated by the presence of bands, dance teams, mascots, halftime shows, and other game promotions” (p. 224). Since sport marketers have limited control over the core product, they can manipulate ancillary elements in order to enrich fan experiences (Apostolopoulou, 2006). These extensions allow some control of the periphery of the event and help enhance fan experiences, which can lead to repeat consumption (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2000).

In addition, research suggests that Millennials desire ancillary events beyond the sport itself (Christiansen, Greene, & Jones, 2019). These activities can include halftime promotions, pre- or post-game concerts, and fan giveaways. Indianapolis Motor Speedway provides several concert events in the lead up to the Indianapolis 500 including their annual Carb Day and Legend Day concerts, in addition to multiple acts that perform each year inside the infield’s famous Snake Pit. Research suggests that fans may seek more ways to be connected to the primary event (e.g., Indianapolis 500, Battle at Bristol), in order to build their social capital (Yeoman, 2013). Shonk et al. (2017) found that non-ticketed events (e.g. College GameDay) can provide unusual and unique experiences. The study showed that spectators may be more likely to attend a game if it is connected to a non-

ticketed, ancillary event. The scholars found that amusement and community were two motives for attendance: community for attending the football game itself and amusement regarding College GameDay. These events often help spectators connect and celebrate, increasing opportunities for camaraderie (Chalip, 2006).

Yeoman (2013) found that Millennials often find any excuse to celebrate. In his study, 60% of respondents stated they often look for excuses to celebrate and to make every day exceptional. There is always a reason to indulge and this trend is carrying over into other generations (Yeoman, 2013). Societies are growing wealthier, creating more opportunities to consume sport, music, food, culture, etc. As Yeoman (2013) stated, for Millennials, “sporting events are a justification for celebration- often a party not for the sport fanatic but for the party lover. The game, race, match may, in fact, become secondary to the social gathering it spurs” (p. 251). Indeed, sport managers can encourage sociability through ancillary events (Chalip, 2006). Consider how many people attend Super Bowl parties without paying attention to the NFL all season, or the number of individuals who fill out a March Madness bracket based on mascots and school colors. People not only love to celebrate, but they want to feel a part of the success, and then advertise their participation, often through social media.

Additionally, Ferreira and Armstrong (2004) found pre/in-game entertainment was a significant variable in predicting specific sport preferences, finding it to be a core aspect of how men’s basketball should be positioned. James and Ross (2004) found pre/in-game entertainment to be the highest rated motive for attendance at a non-revenue sporting event. Also, for low/moderate sport fans, the halftime show of the Super Bowl has been found to be more important than the game itself, and Super Bowl commercials are sometimes viewed as a core-product of the event (Apostolopoulou). Meir

(2000) found that a majority of fans rated a new game day entertainment package positively, which included festival-like elements such as sound systems, fireworks, and music. They found the most support came from those under the age of 40. As Meir (2000) suggests, “the challenge for the sport marketer is to develop a match day experience that recognizes this diversity while preserving the integrity of the core product” (p. 241).

The literature suggests that ancillary events can enhance the core sport product and increase motivation for sport attendance. Millennial fans are interested in ancillary events as an option for consumption, and the Battle at Bristol highlighted how marketers can focus on these events and improve game attendance. Therefore, this study will examine generational differences across three different generations of sports fans: Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers, and seek to identify consumption behaviors at the Battle at Bristol event.

## **Methods**

### *Context*

The context of this research was a one-time event collaboration between Bristol Motor Speedway and two universities, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and Virginia Tech University, which culminated with the Battle at Bristol college football game played on September 10, 2016. Both Division I Football Bowl Subdivision schools have devoted, large fan-bases that are equidistant to Bristol Motor Speedway, located in Bristol, Tennessee (Schroeder, 2016). The crowd in the stadium was 156,990, which was over 40,000 more spectators than the previous college football game record, with additional thousands of attendees who came for tailgating, concerts, and other program events.

### *Participants & Procedures*

Data collection took place on-site at Bristol Motor Speedway during the Battle at Bristol event. Following three days of the ancillary events, potential survey participants were approached by a trained study staff and asked to complete the survey. A total of 728 ticket holders completed the survey prior to the start of the game. The survey was designed to explore many facets of fan behavior and generational differences in the areas of social, engagement, and ancillary event consumption. Of the study participants, 64.5% (n=470) were male, and 35.4% (n=258) were female. Respondents were categorized into three generational groups: Baby Boomers, 14% (n=102), Generation X, 36.4% (n = 265), and Millennial, 49.6% (n = 361).

### *Measures*

An extensive review of literature that focused on consumer behavior, neutral-site mega sporting events, engagement, and sport consumption among different generations was conducted to elicit a preliminary list of measurement items for this study (Meir, 2000; Williams, 2010). To test face validity of the study instrument, a panel of experts reviewed the literature and the preliminary items of measurements. As a result, the items were refined to include only items appropriate to assess participants of the Battle at Bristol event.

All constructs in this study, except frequencies and past attendance behavior, were measured with multiple items as recommended by Churchill (1979) and Kline (2005). Measuring constructs with multiple items can enhance validity and cover various facets of the construct. Specific constructs identified for this study were engagement, awareness, and consumption behavior (see Table 1). Both the ritualistic and festival type events were part of the Battle at Bristol event weekend, and therefore, fans were asked several questions regarding consumption of these ancillary events. The term ancillary can

be further described as auxiliary, subsidiary, or secondary. These secondary events proved to be an important part of the Battle at Bristol as thousands participated in these events prior to the big game.

Participants were asked to report which of the ancillary events they attended, as well as, if they were aware of such events during the Battle at Bristol weekend. This survey item allowed participants to mark multiple events attended, in regards to the ancillary events. These events were all free to ticket holders of Battle at Bristol, except the concert. The remaining free ancillary events were as follows; Interactive Fan Zone, Fan Midway, team walk, pre-game ceremonies, and College GameDay.

### **Results**

Results were analyzed using IBM SPSS 23.0 and were completed using descriptive analysis, crosstabs, and ANOVA, as appropriate. When surveyed about their duration at the event, 47.4% of participants reported staying two nights in the Bristol area, while almost half of participants indicated a willingness to travel up to 120 miles (46.6%) to attend the event. When asked about income, twenty-two percent of Millennials reported falling within the \$50,000-\$75,000 range, with Baby Boomers reporting much larger incomes. Overall, slightly less than half of participants reported attending the event in groups of five or more (43.9%).

In terms of demographic information gathered, significant differences were found among the different generations. There was a significant difference in reported annual income among the generations ( $F(2, 719) = 51.443, p < .05$ ). Findings reveal the Baby Boomer generation ( $M = 4.29, > \$125,000$ ) has a larger income than that of the Millennial ( $M = 2.63, \$25,000-\$50,000$ ) or Generation X ( $M = 3.97, \$75,000-\$100,000$ ). When asked about prior attendance at the event location (Bristol Motor Speedway), results

Table 1.  
Survey Items

Context	Item	Responses/Scales
Social	How many are in your group today?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more
	Who are you attending with?	Family, friends, business associates
	How many days are you staying? Are you camping?	1, 2, 3 or more
Technology	Where did you go to acquire information about Battle at Bristol?	Bristomotorspeedway.com, online to another website, social media, internet search, friend or family member, called the Bristol ticket office, Bristol mobile app, looked through a brochure, Ticketmaster, visited the Bristol ticket office, other
	On which device did you perform your search?	Desktop, laptop, mobile device, not sure
	To what degree are you aware of the Colossus Jumbotron?	Not at all, slightly, aware, very aware
Ancillary events	Which of the following activities did you participate? (Yes or No)	Interactive Fan Zone, Honda Ridgeline Bristol Tailgate Party, Fan Midway, Team Walk, Pre-Game Ceremonies, College GameDay
	To what degree do you feel significant effort was made to make sure you were informed of all the details related to events this weekend?	Scale 0-4 (Poor effort to Excellent effort)
	Based on experiences so far, rate your level of satisfaction with the ancillary events.	Scale 0-10 (extremely unlikely to extremely likely)
	Based on your overall experience at Battle at Bristol, rate your level of satisfaction	Scale 0-10 (extremely unlikely to extremely likely)

indicated a significant difference among the generations ( $F(2,719) = 6.107, p < .05$ ). Findings suggest that the Generation X ( $M = 3.70$ ) attendees had far more prior visits to the speedway than did the Millennial ( $M = 3.10$ ) or Baby Boomer ( $M = 3.36$ ) consumers.

*Social Consumption*

Results indicated Millennials represented 44% attending in groups of five or more. All

generational groups reported that “groups of five or more” was the most popular choice when looking at group size for each generation separately. While there are some differences in-group consumption there were no statistically significant differences found ( $F(3,721) = 1.006, p = .363$ ).

See Table 2 for comparisons among group sizes within each generation.

Results indicated ( $F(2,719) = 4.226, p < .05$ ) the Generation X ( $M = 9.216$ ) participants found

the overall Battle at Bristol event, including pre-event ancillary events to be significantly more enjoyable than did the Millennials (M = 8.956) and Baby Boomers (M = 8.990). However, all generations rated “high” enjoyment of the overall event, again including pre-event festivities (M = 9.054). In terms of travel, when asked about nights stayed during the event weekend, Generation X (M = 2.71) and Baby Boomers (M = 2.17) indicated the most nights stayed. Millennials (M = 1.91) revealed the least amount of overnight stays surrounding the event.

*Technology Consumptions*

When asked about efforts to ensure all were well informed before and during the event, all Table 2

*Generation and group size*

Group Size	Millennial	Gen X	Boomers
Alone (1)	10 (2.8%)	1 (.4%)	2 (2%)
Group of 2	74 (20.5%)	70 (26.4%)	19 (19%)
Group of 3	43 (11.9%)	29 (10.9%)	9 (9%)
Group of 4	75 (20.8%)	57 (21.5%)	17 (17%)
Group of 5	159 (44%)	108 (40.8%)	52 (52%)

generations reported “excellent efforts” were made (M = 1.26). Results indicate a significant difference among the generations regarding their feelings of being well informed (F(2,720) = 4.439, p < .05) as well as technologies used to gather information (F(2,433) = 8.488, p < .05). The Tukey Post Hoc test revealed a significant difference between Millennials (M = 1.35) and Baby Boomers (M = 1.16), with the Baby Boomers significantly more satisfied with the efforts made to keep them informed throughout the Battle at Bristol event (see Table 3).

There were differences found in device usage for information seeking. A significant difference among type of device used was found (F (2,433)

= 3.995, p < .05) indicating that of the responses (n = 722), the mobile device was the most utilized device among all participants (47.5%). The laptop (30.1%) and desktop (19.1%) devices were used, but not as popular when looking at all respondents for this survey item. When looking at the Tukey Post Hoc test and type of device used to locate information, Millennials reported a significantly higher rate of utilizing mobile devices (see Table 4).

Continuing with the focus of technology, participants were asked if they were aware of Bristol Motor Speedway’s electronic signage (i.e., Colossus TV), currently the world’s largest free-hanging jumbotron. Colossus was installed at BMS in April, 2016, prior to the September Battle at Bristol event. While there was no significant difference (F = (2, 723) = .694, p = .50) when asked about the awareness of the device, participants indicated they were highly aware. Baby Boomers were the most highly aware (M = 1.26), while Generation X (M = 1.35) and Millennials (M = 1.36) had similar reactions. Participants were then asked if they expected the jumbotron would enhance their overall satisfaction with the event. Again, across all generations, reports indicated that spectators anticipated high levels of event enhancement because of the jumbotron (overall M = 1.35). There was no significant generational difference among these findings (F = (2, 680) = 1.887, p = .152).

*Ancillary Events*

Overall, Millennials made up 49% of those in attendance at the ancillary events, with Generation X (36.7%) and Baby Boomers (14.2%) reporting less participation. Looking at participants in the study, attendance among the different ancillary events, frequencies indicated the Team Walk was the most highly attended (N = 524, 22.2%) of the six events offered prior to the football game. Of those in attendance at this event, Millennials reported the highest engagement (50%) when compared to GenX

Table 3  
*Top three platforms used to be informed of events at the Battle at Bristol*

Platform	Overall (N = 722)	Millennial (N=364)	GenX (N=263)	Baby Boomer (N=95)
Word of mouth	156	85 (54.4%)	54 (34.6%)	17 (10.8%)
BMS website	132	52 (39.3%)	53 (40.1%)	27 (20.4%)
Social media	120	83 (69.1%)	31 (25.8%)	6 (5%)

(36.8%) and Baby Boomers (13.2%). A ranking of the events by reported participation is provided in Table 5. The most popular types of ancillary events attended, the football ritualistic events (Team walk, College GameDay, pre-game ceremonies) were more popular when compared to the typical NASCAR ritualistic events (Interactive fan zone, concert, Fan Midway) surrounding a race (see Table 6). The study revealed, that of the ancillary events offered, the football ritualistic events were the most highly attended.

A significant difference was found when participants were asked about their overall enjoyment of the ancillary events ( $F(2,719) = 4.226, p < .05$ ). Results indicated high satisfaction ( $M = 9.054$ ) among the generations. Generation X ( $M = 9.216$ ) spectators found the overall Battle at Bristol event to be significantly more enjoyable than did the Millennial ( $M = 8.956$ ) or Baby Boomers ( $M = 8.990$ ).

**Discussion**

This study focused on how different generations consumed the Battle at Bristol, a one-time, unique event at Bristol Motor Speedway.

While there were many similarities between generations, there are also some differences that can provide further insight into the social, technological, and ancillary elements that were a part of the event’s overall success. It is important for sport marketers to recognize these trends. Some interesting results came from the descriptive statistics, in particular, a general threshold of willingness to travel up to 180 miles (equivalent to about a 2.5-3 hour drive). For potential future collaborations between motorsport facilities and college football, management should take this into mind when choosing locations or university opponents. Interestingly, in terms of new visitors, the collaboration attracted the most Millennial and Baby Boomer first time or second time visitors to the facility. This type of event could be helpful for motorsport organizations to engage with those who have never attended a motorsport event. Indeed, scheduling non-motorsport events at motorsport venues is a growing trend. Recent examples include the Electric Daisy Carnival Festival at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, NBC’s American Ninja Warrior events hosted by Daytona International Speedway, and the annual Firefly Music Festival at Dover International

Table 4  
*Top three technologies used to retrieve information about Battle at Bristol.*

Technology	Overall (N=724)	Millennial	GenX	Baby Boomer
Desktop	83 (11.4%)	24 (28.9%)	41 (49.4%)	18 (21.6%)
Laptop	130 (17.9%)	63 (48.4%)	49 (37.7%)	18 (13.8%)
Mobile Device	207 (28.5%)	121 (58.4%)	69 (33.3%)	17 (8.2%)

Table 5.  
*Rankings of most highly attended ancillary events by generations*

Ancillary Event	Millennial	GenX	Baby Boomer
Team Walk	262 (50%)	193 (36.8%)	69 (13.2%)
Pre-game ceremonies	234 (49.1%)	171 (35.9%)	71 (14.9%)
College GameDay	249 (52.9%)	162 (34.4%)	59 (12.5%)
Fan Midway	100 (42.9%)	95 (40.8%)	38 (16.3%)
Interactive Fan Zone	111 (47.8%)	89 (38.3%)	32 (13.8%)

Speedway. In terms of social consumption, our results showed that almost 44% of Millennials attended the Battle at Bristol with five or more people. Findings suggested that attending with groups of five or more was popular among each generational category (52% Boomers and 40.8% Gen Xers). The attendees also indicated they had high enjoyment at the ancillary event. These two results likely influenced each other, as previous literature found that the social nature of a sporting event was a large motivator for attendance (Wann & Wilson, 1999). Indeed, affiliation, social support, identification, and involvement in sport are beneficial for all generations (Oxman & Hull, 1997; Wann et al., 2011). Additionally, Millennials crave interaction and connection to others, in addition to the sport experience itself. Mechanisms for improving the small group experience need to be considered in terms of sitting together, communication between individuals, and communication with each group from the organizers. Practical ways to create a social environment could include group-seating

areas. Press boxes and suites have been popular for the affluent fan, but finding ways to create those spaces for the average fan is important. Recently, motorsport venues including Bristol Motor Speedway, Daytona International Speedway, Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and others have made facility renovations to encourage more social spaces. These updates include new grandstand areas, larger concourses, new entryways, and interactive sports lounges (Simmons, 2016). Owners and operators of sport venues have been recognizing this trend, updating their facilities, and increasing these diverse social offerings (Prado, 2016, April 2). Overall enjoyment of ancillary events at the Battle of Bristol was high, but Generation X did enjoy them more. Generation X also reported more experience at the facility, so their greater familiarity might influence that sentiment. Knowledge of a facility or familiarity with resources available to spectators make them more comfortable (Christiansen, et al, 2019).

This is a potential area of future research as many managers are very comfortable with

Table 6.  
*Most highly attended ancillary events based on sport specific rituals.*

Ancillary Event	Overall	Millennial	GenX	Baby Boomer
Football ritualistic	1,703 (72.4%)	745 (43.7%)	526 (30.9%)	199 (11.7%)
NASCAR ritualistic	648 (27.6%)	299 (46.1%)	256 (39.5%)	93 (14.3%)

their own facility, yet first-time visitors may need additional resources to further their enjoyment. It would be particularly pertinent for attracting those younger, first-time fans they so desire.

Though technology is critical for the sport consumer, the largest percentage (21.5%) of participants gathered information from their friends and family. After friends and family, people found information on Bristol Motor Speedway's website, through social media or using an internet search. While all generations felt they were well informed, Baby Boomers felt more satisfied. Baby Boomers used the website much more than social media, whereas Millennials relied more on Word-of-Mouth and social media as avenues for information. This supports previous literature that indicates Millennials trust word-of-mouth marketing more than standard forms of advertising (Gainor, 2015). For organizers, making information shareable for Millennials so they can easily give to their four or more friends attending the event with them, would likely make them more satisfied with the information they procured. Indeed, the accessibility of that shareable information, or information generally from the organization seems to be another important aspect of the user experience. Mobile devices are key to communication across each generation, but more so for Millennials. This generation reports even experiencing their socializing through their mobile devices (Gainor, 2015).

As literature suggests (Williams, 2010), different generations consume sporting events differently, especially when it comes to utilizing technology. Attendees at the Battle at Bristol revealed three main platforms in which generations gathered information about the event, as well as the top devices used to access the information. This is important for sport marketers in deciding when and where to disseminate information and which platforms are most effective in reaching the different generations. The current study indicated

Millennials were the most active in information seeking and did so using their mobile devices most often. This discovery is in line with Gainor's (2015) literature on Millennials and their need for devices to gain information. The BMS website was the second most popular search platform, with social media following. Generation X was evenly spread through these three platforms, however, Baby Boomers were virtually nonexistent in participation within these platforms (50% of Boomers chose the "other" option). Further research should be conducted to uncover where this age group is retrieving information.

Finally, in terms of ancillary event consumptions, there were clear generational differences. Results show that Millennials participated in ancillary events more than other generations. Our findings indicated that Millennials attended the most (49%), then Generation X (36.7%), while Baby Boomers (14.2%) participated the least in ancillary events. This could suggest the Battle at Bristol did not offer events that appealed to Boomers or that they were only interested in the game itself. This behavior agrees with current literature, which suggests Millennials crave these secondary events alongside the main sporting spectacle (Christiansen et al., 2019).

For each event, generational attendance ranked in the order of Millennials, Generation X, and then Baby Boomers. Additionally, the least attended ancillary event was the concert; this was the only event with an additional cost, which is important to note. Shonk et al. (2017) also found that non-ticketed (free) events was a motivator for increased attendance and involvement at sporting events. Outside of pre-game ceremonies, all generations reported the most participation at ancillary events that did not require active engagement in activities, suggesting they were merely being spectators and not actively participating. One example is the team walk, generally a spectating activity versus

the interactive fan zone, which required participation. In NASCAR, venues provide ancillary activities with varying degrees of engagement; for instance, the hauler parade, which is primarily a spectating event, and the fan zone, where fans can engage with race teams, drivers, and other fans. This supports Chalip's (2006) proposition that participants can create celebration and camaraderie through sport in a variety of ways.

At the Battle of Bristol, football-related ancillary events were the most popular, in particular College GameDay for Millennials. This is important to keep in mind when targeting a fan base. It is a possibility that marketers need to find ancillary events that will be more appealing to multiple generations. While literature specific to generational consumption of ancillary events at mega sporting events is lacking, Meir (2000) did find it a challenge for sport marketers to create a variety of secondary events to appeal to all age groups. Our results make it clear that Millennials wanted to attend the ancillary events. Sport marketers must make ancillary events part of the sport experience in order to meet the high expectations of Millennials. Based on previous research, Millennials seek out opportunities to celebrate and be social, including sporting events (Yeoman, 2013). To promote these social spaces, it is important for sport organizations to provide group spaces, trash bins, and food to help people gather (Chalip, 2006). Bristol Motor Speedway recently renovated their facilities to improve amenities, including the addition of railings for spectators to place their drinks, and expanded seating areas for additional legroom and areas to place personal belongings (Dodson, 2019). In sport, it is not possible to control the core product, so the use of ancillary events is a great way to enrich the fan experience (Apotolopoulou, 2006). It has been found that some view pre/in-game entertainment (ancillary events) as part of the core product (Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004), and

spectators are more likely to attend a game if it connects to a non-ticketed event (Shonk et. al, 2017).

### **Implications & Future Research**

This study was conducted in an effort to capture consumer behaviors and generational differences of those in attendance at the highest attended collegiate football game in America. The focus was on how the fans consumed this non-traditional, one-off event at a NASCAR track. For sport marketers planning these types of events for motorsport facilities, this information brings value and understanding in many areas of consumer behavior across generations. When looking at the most effective use of technology, this study found several key components when seeking how fans search for information about the event and on which devices they use. Finding that Millennials were most active on their mobile devices suggests that sport marketers seeking to communicate with this generation should be cognitive of creating materials that are mobile friendly. However, not everyone utilized mobile devices; laptops and desktops were still a popular means among all age groups for gathering information. The study overwhelmingly revealed "word of mouth" as the top "place," with the BMS website in second. Again, sport marketers can take this information to create "word of mouth" opportunities for their event, such as earned media and creating a buzz. They can also make sure event websites are up to date and user friendly, particularly mobile friendly.

When looking at how the different generations consumed the ancillary events, researchers started with the number in each party, seeking to know how many people were attending as a group. As stated before, all age groups reported attending mostly in groups of 5 or more. This indicates to researchers that the Battle at Bristol was certainly a social gathering.

Researchers also looked at consumption behaviors prior to the main event, specifically looking at the ancillary events offered. This information is invaluable to marketing teams seeking to add secondary events to a mega-sporting event. Our data revealed Millennials were the most active generation and the one-ticketed event, the concert, was the lowest attended of the secondary events. Overall, the main implication, for sport marketers, that can be taken from this study is the idea that not all generations consume mega-sporting events similarly. The study revealed many similarities, however, there were many differences in consumption behavior detected as well. This information can be used to enhance future events at motorsport venues to garner even more success through adaptation and specialization of social opportunities, technology, and ancillary events.

While this study was full of insightful findings from three different generations, there are items that render further study to be able to understand each generation more completely. When looking at where fans retrieved their information, researchers found that out of eleven options within the survey 50% of Baby Boomers chose the “other” option. With this being such a large percentage, future research in this type of setting should allow participants the opportunity to explain “other.” Again, with information seeking, results showed a drastic drop from the top platforms (word of mouth, website, and social media) used to the bottom platforms (ticket office, direct mail, email). In future research, it would be interesting to know if the bottom platforms are necessary for marketers to spend time on or if focusing on the most popular could potentially save time and money, while reaching the same number of consumers.

Another suggestion for future research would be to ask more questions surrounding the ancillary events. The current study found high levels of participation at these secondary events, but there remains a need to more fully understand

the impact these ancillary events can have on the larger event as a whole.

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