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WHAT ARE THE KEY CULTURAL TRENDS INFLUENCING TODAY'S COLLEGE SPORTS FANS?

now what

NACMA - Cultural Expose

December 14, 2018

WHAT'S INSIDE

We embarked on a deep-dive into the cultural factors influencing today's college sports fans, cross-checking available secondary research with Now What's expertise in trend-spotting to identify and synthesize relevant learning + key opportunities.

This document serves as a summary of our cultural exploration, building a foundation of where college sports stands today, and the macro cultural factors that influence fandom at a micro-level.

Viewing college athletics through this cultural lens allows us to garner a rich understanding of the forces at play, providing NACMA members with tactical recommendations for how to best navigate the current cultural landscape.

PROJECT QUESTION

What are the key cultural trends influencing today's college sports fans?

OUR ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS



Macro (The Cause):

What's going culturally at a high-level?



Support (The Evidence):

How does this trend manifest?



Micro (The Effect):

What impact does this have on college sports?



Implication (The Takeaway):

What can NACMA + its member organizations do?

10 KEY CULTURAL TRENDS

- 1 Fandom is multi-dimensional, and less singularly defined than ever.
- 2 Attention spans continue to get shorter and shorter.
- 3 The gap between casual and avid fans is growing.
- 4 Personal investment inspires more meaningful connections.
- 5 Unpredictable experiences have become a novelty.
- 6 Individualism has made traditional “us vs. them” competition less significant.
- 7 Today’s young fans value active engagement over passive viewing.
- 8 Purpose-driven, young fans are more intentional with how they prioritize their time.
- 9 Blurring geographical boundaries have allowed fandom to transcend physical location.
- 10 Parent / child bonding is far less dependent on any single interest or activity.

№ 1

Fandom is multi-dimensional, and less singularly defined than ever.

Increased connectivity between people and the immediate transference of ideas has made it easier than ever to discover a wider range of interests and connect with communities of other, like-minded individuals, leading to more complex fans who are now focusing their attention on more than just sports.

Multi-Dimensional Fandom

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + With the accessibility of the Internet and modern media, individuals can now find a community to support even their most obscure interests or passions, increasing their confidence and willingness to be proud and vocal in support of their fandom.
- + This broadening of interests has led to a blurring of lines between traditional divisions of sup-groups, providing individuals with the opportunity to find a sense of belonging and identity within multiple fandoms.
- + As a result, individuals are no longer solely defined by any one interest. Rather, modern fandom has become increasingly complex, consisting of individuals who's own self-identity is broadly spread across a wider range of passions.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



Internet communities (like Reddit's 1.2 million sub-reddits) provide fans of any topic with a meeting place to dive deeper into their various fandoms, and connect with others.



Fandoms are becoming more diverse, and less strictly adherent to traditional expectations of who is allowed to be a "typical" fan of a particular interest (e.g., My Little Pony's older, male fans.)



The diversification of interests is leading to a blurring of how fandom is expressed and brought to life by different types of fans (i.e., it's no longer just Jocks vs. Nerds)

Multi-Dimensional Fandom

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + The traditional definition of a “sports fan” has evolved. Today’s fans represent a more diverse consumer set, who are now allocating and directing their attention toward a broader range of interests – less singularly defined simply by a passion for sports.
- + Because of this, fans seek experiences that appeal to as many of their interests as possible, keeping them engaged by giving them more reasons to invest their time and attention to a single activity (i.e., attending games).

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

NOT JUST “SPORTS FANS”

- + You’re not marketing to one type of person, anymore. Speaking to just the “sports fan” is only appealing to a small part of how today’s fans view and define themselves.
- + Opportunity exists to consider fans more holistically, looking beyond just their sports-related attitudes + behaviors to identify, and more intentionally target different types of fans.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCES

- + Today’s more complex fans are drawn to experiences that can appeal to a wider ranges of their interests, and now expect activities to be as multi-dimensional as they are – not just narrowly-focused on one source of entertainment or stimulation.
- + While the primary focus of any sporting event should continue to be the sports themselves, opportunity exists for the in-stadium/game-day experience to provide fans with more ways to tap into their other interests, beyond just sports fandom.

No 2

Attention spans continue to get shorter and shorter.

Busier schedules, and the continued rise of instantaneous access to a seemingly infinite stream of content has led to a significant shortening of attention spans. To keep up with this, content is now expected to be delivered in streamlined and consolidated bits of easily-digestible information, creating more competition within smaller windows of consumers' daily content-consumption routines.

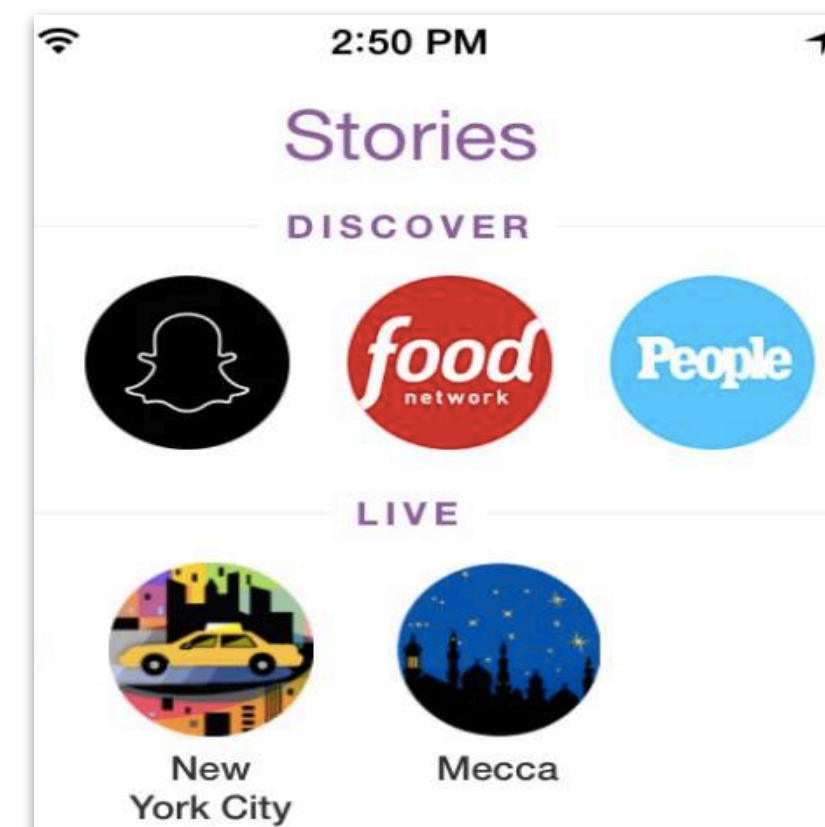
Shortening Attention Spans

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + An increase in the amount of accessible content has led to a desire for media that is reduced to shorter, simpler, more easily-accessible bits of content that range from seconds to minutes.
- + Smart devices make it possible for people to stay constantly connected and access content at any place or time, giving even the busiest people the option to fill every spare moment with some form of digital content + entertainment.
- + Increasingly shorter content continues to lead to even shorter attention spans, which in turn reinforces the demand for shorter content.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



With a maximum length of ten seconds per clip, Snapchat Stories have contributed to current expectations for bitesize snippets of content.



Shows like *Last Week Tonight* allow viewers to catch up with fast-paced summaries of the major news updates from the past week.



Listicles provide readers with only the information they need to know, communicating main ideas by breaking up longer text into numbered pieces.

Shortening Attention Spans

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + While college sports fans are still looking for ways to engage with their favorite teams, they are becoming less likely to commit the necessary time and attention to prioritize a full event.
- + Instead, today's fans seek content that fits into the small windows in their busy schedules – easily accessible and ready whenever they choose to seek it out.
- + What's more, fans have come to expect constant engagement from their favorite content, seeking continued interactions that exist not just "during," but keep the conversation open and ongoing.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAY):

NEW METRICS TO GAUGE FAN INTEREST

- + While attendance at games has been the primary long standing way to measure interest and define fandom in college sports, the increasing interest in shorter content means that fans do not put as much emphasis on attending games as they used to.
- + Opportunity exists to consider new methods of measuring and segmenting a fan base. Widening the traditional definition of sports fans to include those engaging with teams/ games remotely may create opportunities to reach (and monetize) new fans that may have previously gone overlooked.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

- + Fandom is not as static or "on and off" as it used to be. Instead, today's fans are constantly seeking ways to engage with their favorite teams or athletes on their time, unrestricted by a specific game time or season.
- + Opportunity exists to strengthen connections with fans by keeping the conversation open, longer. Providing fans with more ways to stay engaged and consistently tap into their fandoms keeps their interest in college sports more top of mind, and can also create hype by teasing fans with big moments to look forward to (e.g., big games, start of season).

No 3

The gap between casual and avid fans is growing.

The fragmentation and accessibility of media has created a “skimming culture,” which requires less of a commitment and has led to starker divides between casual vs. avid investment. While more content means easier access, the sheer magnitude of time and attention required to establish deeper, more avid connections can be an intimidating and daunting task for more casual individuals.

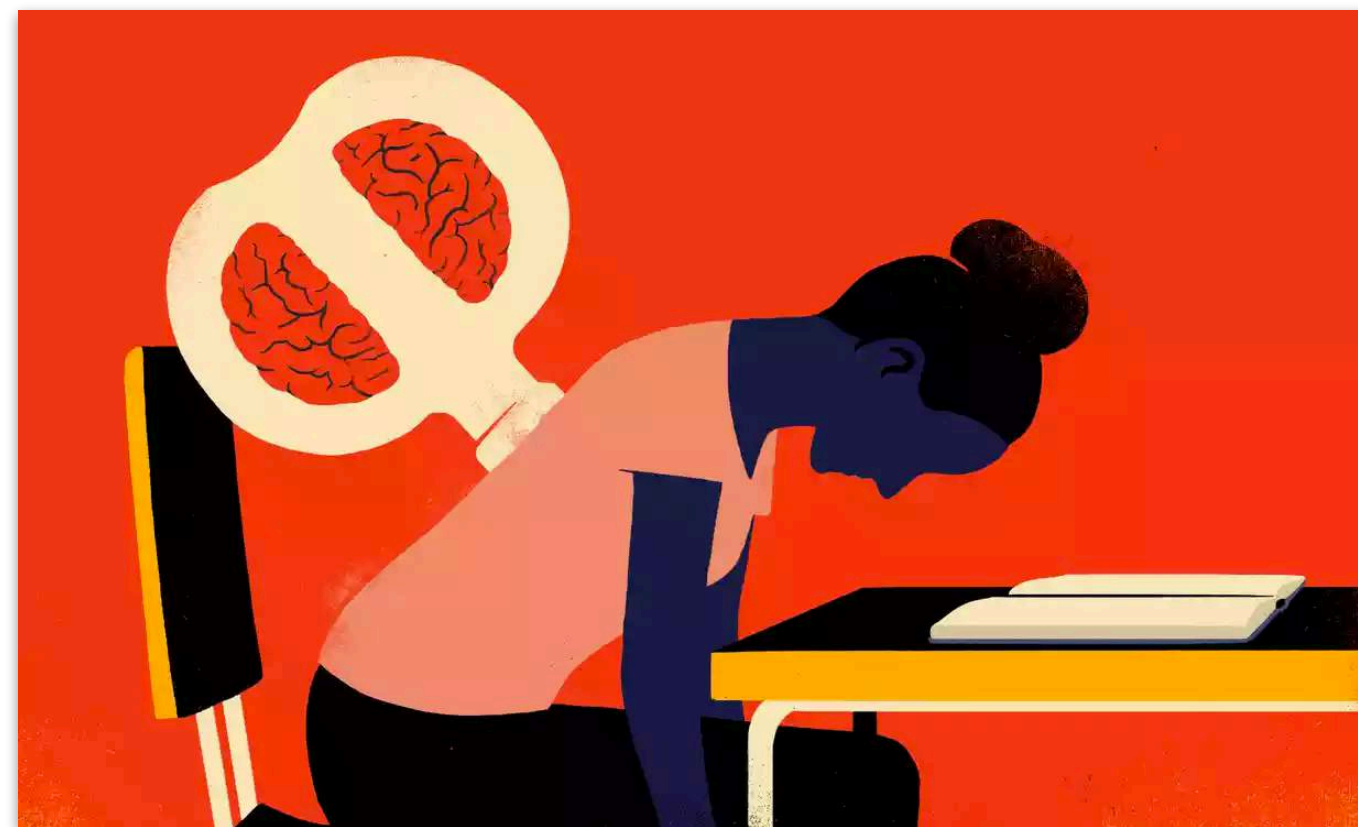
The Casual vs. Avid Gap

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + News, statistics, and highlights are all easily accessible, making it easier than ever to become casual fans of something without needing to fully commit.
- + But while the breadth of accessible information has made it easier to become a casual fan, it has also made it more difficult to reach + maintain “avid fan” status, given the sheer amount of content to keep up with related to any particular interest.
- + Because of this, there is a growing rift between casual fans putting in minimal effort to stay in the know, and avid fans who actively track all available information/developments in their field of interest.
- + In short: the polarity of fandom is becoming more pronounced, with casual fans getting more casual and avid fans getting more avid.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



People are spending more time skimming and less time absorbing information and establishing meaningful connections to content, leading to less committed, more casual engagements.

[Source: The Guardian](#)



Former U.S. surgeon general Vivek Murthy, recently declared we are living through a “cultural loneliness epidemic,” observing that while connections may be easier to make, many are not as meaningful.

[Source: HBR](#)

The Casual vs. Avid Gap

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + Sports fandom has become a more casual commitment than it previously needed to be, with a significantly lower amount of attention/investment required to be considered a “fan.”
- + The lower cost of entry means that it’s easier than ever to be a sports fan, but requires an even greater commitment to make the transition to a more avid fan.
- + However, current product offerings and marketing messages tend to focus primarily on avid fans, forgetting to establish clear pathways for casual fans to become more engaged.
- + Instead many casual fans can feel like the necessary investment required to be an avid fan is too much work.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAY):

CONSIDER THE CASUAL FANS

- + While avid fans may be the ones going to games and buying merchandise, casual fans are still a significant portion of college sports fans overall, and shouldn’t be forgotten, especially considering the fact that being “casual” is a necessary first step to evolving into an avid fan.
- + College athletic departments need to be aware that casual fan bases are significant, and that future avidity is dependent on nurturing relationships with casual fans. Make sure that marketing efforts consider the full “fan pipeline” and doesn’t exclusively cater to the needs of avid fans.

BRIDGE THE GAP

- + Appealing to both these two groups is critical in order to create a stronger fan base, both currently and in the future.
- + In attempts to bridge the gap between casual and avid fans, marketing efforts must be geared toward fostering meaningful emotional connections to teams and players, giving casual fans easier points of entry from which stronger, more avid bonds can form.



No 4

Personal investment inspires more meaningful connections.

Fans are no longer just interested in their favorite content itself, but those behind it, as well (e.g., creators, actors, musicians, athletes, etc.). These human connections are fostered by social media and provide fans with behind-the-scenes opportunities to dive a level deeper into their fandom.

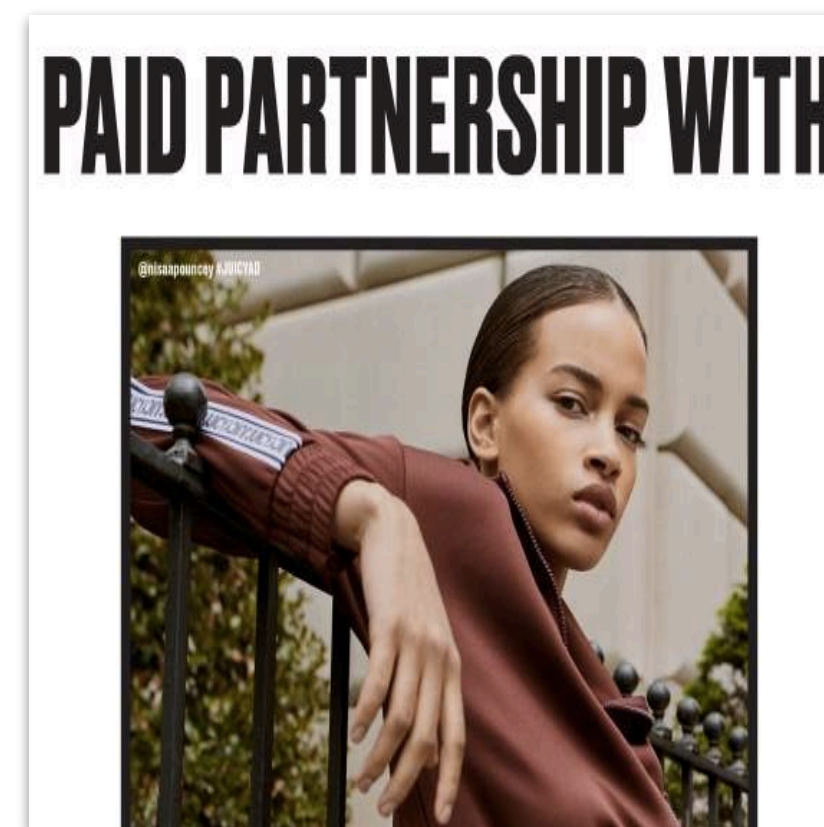
Human Connections

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + Social media have made connecting with others easier than ever, turning the lives of celebrities and content creators into its own realm of entertainment.
- + Today's fans are no longer exclusively interested in the content they're watching. Instead, they're using that content as a portal into the lives of those involved in an attempt to learn more and bolster their fandom with even stronger personal connections.
- + For some, the content itself can almost become secondary, and interest may become largely focused on individuals they feel a connection to as opposed to an entire TV show, movie, etc.

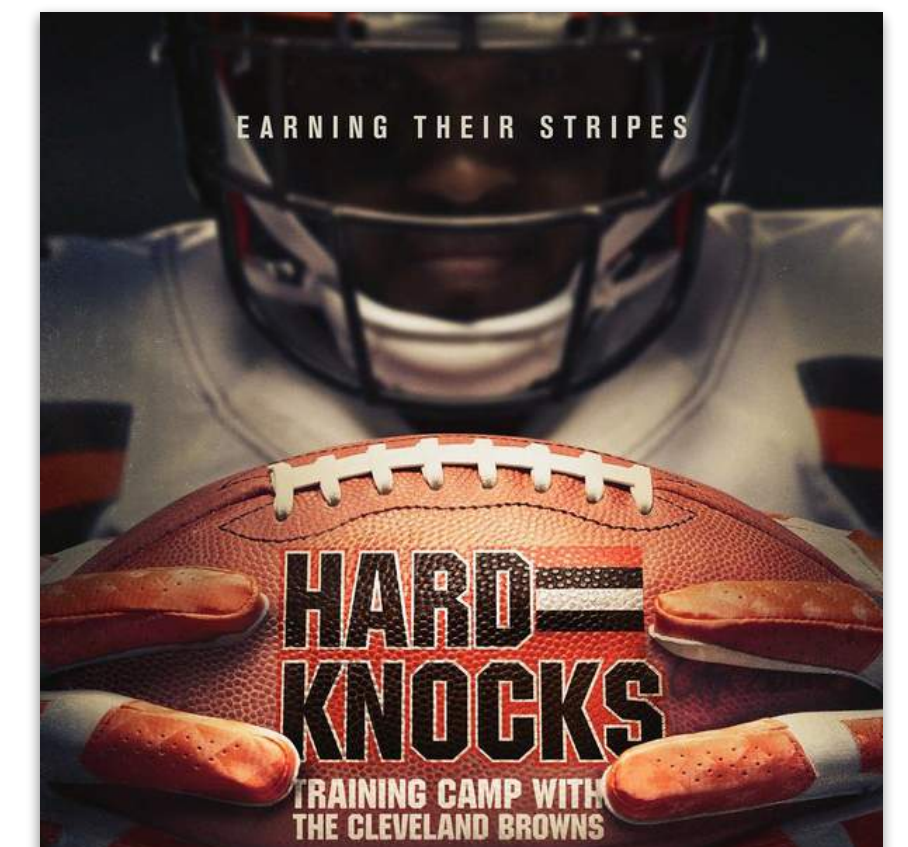
SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



Brands are becoming even more reliant on influencers to promote products to their followers. Today, even those with a few thousand followers can be considered nano-influencers, demonstrating the high value currently placed on human influence.



Reddit AMAs (ask me anything) are an extremely popular example of fan interest in the lives of the individuals behind their fandoms, allowing fans to form more personal relationships and blurring the lines between fan and fandom.



Behind-the-scenes access (like Hard Knocks) allows viewers the opportunity to see content through a new, more personal lens, establishing closer connections to the real people involved and putting fans even closer to the action.

Human Connections

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + College sports fans today are no longer solely interested in teams, games, statistics, and scores.
- + People are now searching for meaningful content that fosters connections to the players themselves as opposed to a team or school as a whole.
- + Fans today want to learn more about the stories of individual players and intra-team dynamics as opposed to static information that does not string together a meaningful narrative.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAY):

FOSTER PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- + Today's sports fans seek content that extends into the deeper stories regarding individual players and team dynamics, allowing them to view the actual event itself through a more empathetic context.
- + Human stories about players and teams are appealing to both casual and avid fans, providing easier points of connection for casual fans, while offering avid fans the additional detail and specificity they want in their sports fandom.

SHOW THE PROCESS

- + Focusing exclusively on game-day results and statistical outcomes downplays the players' and teams' effort, ignoring a significant piece of what people love about athletics. Fans are now beginning to expect full transparency and seek to be more invested in the entire journey, not just what happens during the game/athletic competition.
- + Better exposure to the full story (e.g., off-season, pre-season, practice, locker room dynamics, post-game, etc.) helps fans better understand the context of games/athletic competitions. Seeing the effort behind the results allows fans to be more personally invested in the bigger picture and truly relate to what's at stake.



No 5

Unpredictable experiences have become a novelty.

In a super-personalized “have it your way” world, ultra-curated and planned out experiences have become the norm, which have led to a decreased sense of spontaneity or feelings of true exploration. As a result, young people today value experiences that are unique and can’t be replicated by others, which is increasingly difficult when total control means less surprises.

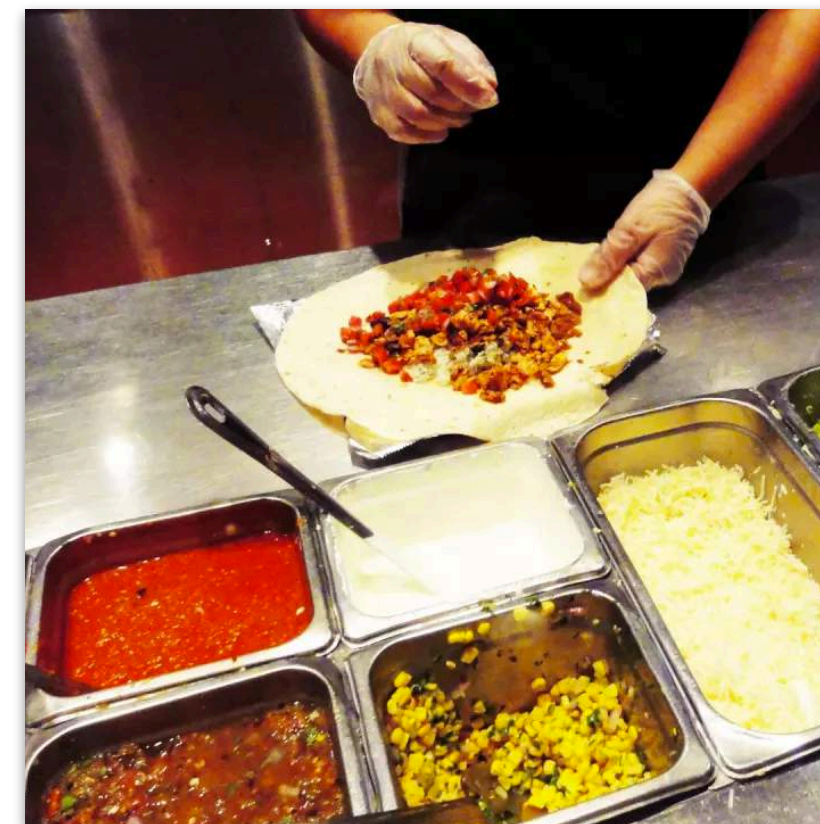
No Surprises

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + Modern day technology and innovation have made it easier than ever to totally control + understand every aspect of your life. As a result, young people have come to expect a high degree of personalization over everything from clothing to daily experiences.
- + Technology allows us to not only control many aspects of our lives, but examine ourselves with a level of scrutiny that completely removes any guesswork or unpredictability in terms of outcomes.
- + While control has become the norm, this has placed a higher premium on an under-served need for unique and surprising experiences where the outcome is not always obviously clear or pre-stated.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



Today's consumers have more influence and control over their lives than ever before, leading to hyper-personalized expectations with little room for deviation or unexpected outcomes.



"Made for Instagram" experiences (like Museum of Ice Cream) showcase an ultra-curated culture: setting clear expectations for what visitors will see and what shareable content they will likely walk away with.



The tendency to ultra personalize can also be seen through the popularity of at-home genetic testing kits like 23 and Me, which offer users the opportunity to learn the specific details about their health and heritage.

No 5

No Surprises

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + While there are many opportunities for people to control and curate their surroundings, experiences that are unique and impossible to replicate have become less common, and as a result, are now highly valued.
- + Unlike many, hyper-curated, static experiences that dominate today's social media feeds, college athletics (and sports in general) are one of the few experiences that offer a genuine sense of true suspense, excitement, and authenticity.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAY):

LEAN IN TO UNPREDICTABILITY

- + College sports can distinguish itself from other forms of entertainment by emphasizing lack of predictability as a benefit, offering the potential for virtually anything to happen.
- + Opportunity exists to lean into the unscripted and unpredictable nature of college sports, positioning college sports fandom as the direct antithesis of overly-replicated, inauthentic experiences, providing a more valuable social currency that can't be reproduced or experienced by anyone out of the loop.

No 6

**Individualism has made traditional
“us vs. them” competition less significant.**

Raised with a greater premium placed on individualism and personal achievement, today's young people have grown up with a higher standard for what they believe they can accomplish and who they hope and strive to be. This individualist-mentality has led to a shift in how these young people compete and compare themselves to others, as well as how they measure their own self-worth.

“Me” vs. “Us vs. Them”

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + Unlike past generations who used “us vs. them” competition as a primary measurement of success, today’s young fans have been raised with a focus on individualism, introspection, and personal growth.
- + With the ability to personalize their media, experiences, and more, millennials are considered by many to be more individualistic than past generations.
- + Individualism has impacted values, priorities, and personal growth metrics. As a result, young people today are often more focused on personal growth and fulfillment than competition.
- + Because of this, the emphasis on direct competition is less significant than it has been to past generations.

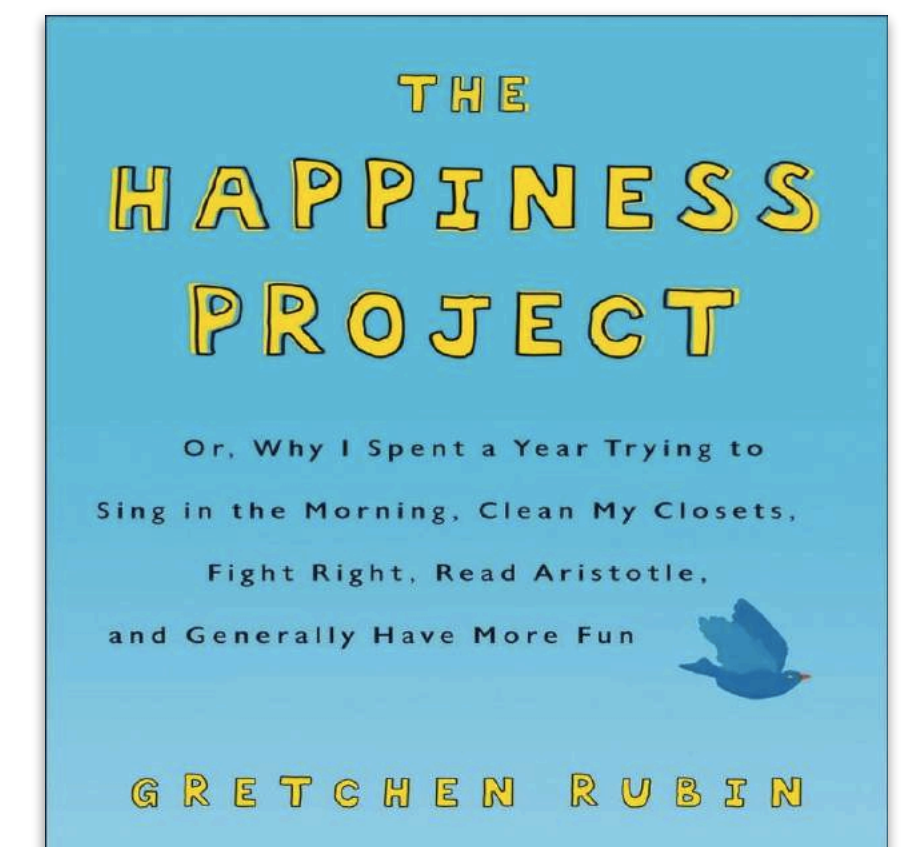
SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



Participation trophies are a clear example of how / why younger generations tend to place greater emphasis on participating and effort, rather than winning.



A product of the growing desire for fulfillment, independence, and the stronger emphasis placed on personal success, “side hustles” have become the norm among today’s younger generation.



Today, there is a strong emphasis on personal growth, fulfillment, and self-actualization, bolstered by the wide array of self-help content available today.

[Source: Quartz](#)

“Me” vs. “Us vs. Them”

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + Whereas previous generations' definitions of “competition” were focused on objectively being “better than” or “beating” someone else, today's young fans tend to be more interested in self-improvement and self-actualization, seeking to keep evolving into the next, best versions of themselves.
- + As a result, the traditional “us vs. them” competition that drives college sports may be less appealing to today's sports fans than past generations.
- + Though rivalries still offer exciting points of tension, today's fans may be more interested in the story of an individual team or player rather than the clash between two opponents.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

CELEBRATE PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

- + Rather than overly-focusing on rivalries and beating opposing teams, college athletic marketers should consider pushing narratives about individual players' personal growth / achievement, ladder up to the role that individual success has on overall team success.
- + Providing meaningful and emotional stories of growth and accomplishment that young fans can more closely relate to will create and strengthen the bonds between athletes and fans, and offer fans more ways to root for / support teams and players.

CONSIDER FURTHER SEGMENTATION

- + Not all sports fans are the same, especially when considering the distinct differences between younger and older sports fans.
- + One-size-fits-all marketing and messaging does not work for generations of fans who were raised and celebrated as unique individuals. Marketing strategies must appeal to specific, and different, groups of fans.

No 7

Today's young fans value active engagement over passive viewing.

The amount of digital content available today keeps many entertained and aware of what others are doing, but also puts a premium on actively engaging in something, as opposed to just seeing other people do it.

Seeing < Doing

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + With digital media today, it is possible to access content without having to actually do anything. This constant exposure and comparison to their peers have caused today's young people to feel an increased pressure to keep up (i.e., FOMO).
- + The societal need to broadcast + self-promote their lives means that young people are less likely to be satisfied or impressed by experiences unless they are the ones actually doing it.
- + While documenting an activity/event is a significant aspect of the overall experience, doing something instead of just seeing someone else do it online has become increasingly important.

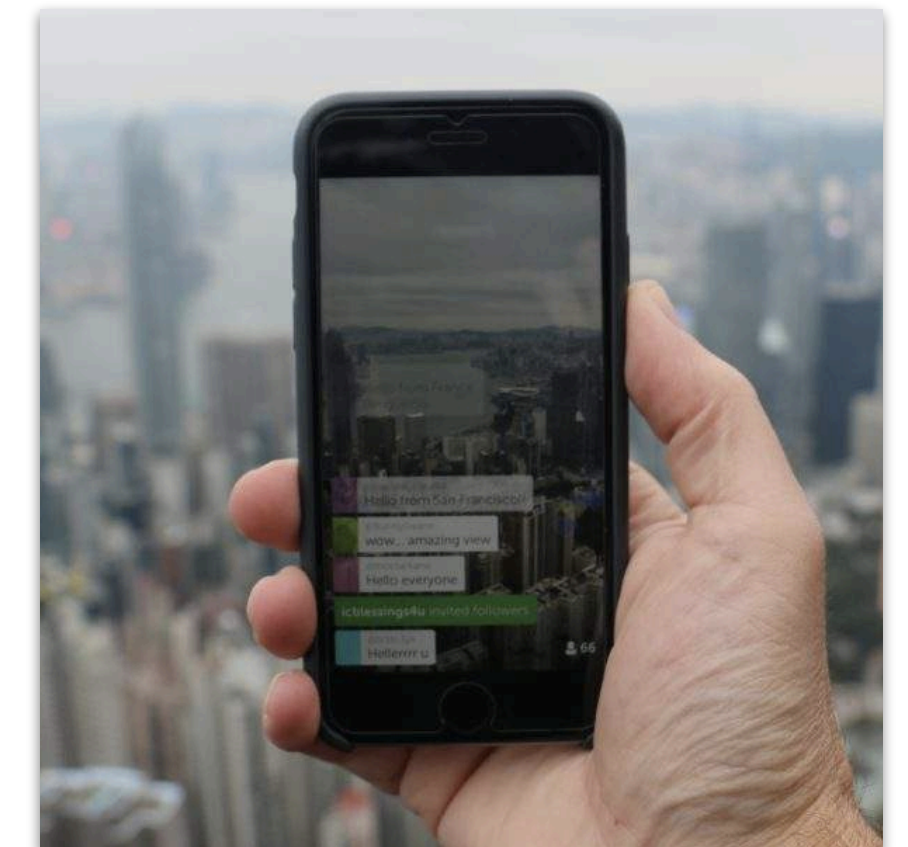
SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



The commonly used phrase "FOMO" (fear of missing out) highlights young fans' desires to never be excluded or miss out on doing something significant.



Participation rates in college sports are at an all time high, indicative of a desire to engage in meaningful experiences as opposed to just viewing them.



Periscope and other live streaming apps allow users to document live experiences, and bring others along in real time.

[Source: NCAA](#)

No 7

Seeing < Doing

(Micro + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + Because of the new premium on actively engaging in meaningful experiences, sports fans are becoming less satisfied with simply viewing their favorite teams from the sidelines.
- + Fans want to feel like they can be involved in the action, and that even as spectators, they can actively contribute.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

GET FANS INVOLVED

- + It's no longer enough to just see something; younger fans place a higher premium on experience and seek more ways to get involved in the action.
- + Continue to find ways to get spectators involved, giving fans a greater sense of purpose / elevated role in the team's overall performance + success (e.g., Seattle Seahawks 12th Man).

PROVIDE ACCESS TO MULTIPLE POVS

- + Younger fans care more about something if they can relate to the experience firsthand, or can imagine how they would react and handle a certain situation.
- + Consider strategies that help fans insert themselves into the mindset and perspectives of the athletes and coaches in an attempt to increase fans' perceived agency / sense of participation to establish deeper, more meaningful, empathetic connections between fans, athletes, and teams.

No 8

Purpose-driven, young fans are more intentional with how they prioritize their time.

Today's young people have a greater opportunity to express their beliefs and make their voices known, with social media providing the platform they need to connect with others, be heard, and affect real, large-scale change. As a result, young people feel an increased sense of purpose and are now choosing to prioritize interests / passions that they believe truly matter and make a real difference.

Purpose-Driven Priorities

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + With social media and easier access to one another, there are countless opportunities today for young people to voice their opinions and amplify their voices in support of many different causes in a variety of contexts.
- + Both individuals and groups have found success in creating change or drawing attention to issues of interest through voicing their views.
- + As a result, many young people today can feel increased pressure to make an impact and have their actions contribute to a purposeful cause, prioritizing their attention to pursuits that feel more meaningful and have a real impact, while de-prioritizing interests they deem to be frivolous.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



Platforms like [Change.org](https://change.org) allow users to sign petitions to affect real change. Recently two, 11-year-old girls successfully petitioned Starbucks to create more sustainable cups after collecting more than 300,000 signatures.



After *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* was cancelled, a public outcry went out among fans online, which eventually led to the show being brought back for a final season.



Social movements like #MeToo, or March for Our Lives have shown the real impact that individual voices can have, gaining mass traction online and orchestrating significant cultural change.

Purpose-Driven Priorities

(Micros + Implication)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + Today's fans not only want to engage, but engage with the intent of accomplishing an outcome or affecting change. As a result, college sports (and sports in general) may not be seen as a priority compared to other issues/causes/events in these purpose-driven younger fans' lives.
- + To compete, college sports needs to demonstrate the genuine value they offer, giving these purpose-driven fans more reasons to commit than being "just a game."
- + Additionally, young fans are becoming more and more used to getting a response when voicing their views, and as a result have come to expect their conversations with brands and content to go both ways.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

SPORTS MATTER

- + Whether through stories of personal development and growth of athletes and teams, or through the charitable work accomplished through college sports, young fans are looking for ways to justify their involvement by proving that their investment is worthwhile.

RESPONSIVENESS

- + Fans today not only want to make their feelings known, but have those feelings acknowledged in a direct way. Responding to fans on social media and other platforms is key to making them feel that their views matter, ultimately strengthening their college sports fandom.

EMPHASIZING LIGHTHEARTEDNESS

- + It is important to acknowledge that, while these young fans seek purpose in their lives, the need for relaxation through lighthearted interests like college sports provide an escape/break from constant engagement with more serious issues.
- + Avoid overstating the seriousness of college sports, or conflating the benefit that college sports provides by inserting topics that fans are actively looking for college sports to distract them from (e.g., talking about politics during NFL-coverage).

No 9

Blurring geographical boundaries have allowed fandom to transcend physical location.

Digital media has made it possible for anyone to explore and foster fandom far beyond their immediate geographic radius. Young people no longer feel as strong an allegiance or commitment to where they were born / raised, with more and more choosing to branch out and let their interests take them farther away from home.

Geographic Interconnectivity

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + With technology today, it's possible for people to extend their cultural reach far beyond physical proximity, exploring interests and engaging with content that would have been unattainable to previous generations of fans.
- + Through digital media people can learn about and connect with music, film, sports, and countless other aspects of another country or region's culture.
- + This is leading to a broadening of fandom, with content creators needing to consider the wants and needs of not just their core, local audiences, but those of their displaced fans as well.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):



The Internet and social media have given a home to every fan, regardless of location, allowing individuals the chance to support their fandom no matter where they are.



Many fans today follow and root for several teams across different states and countries as opposed to just those in their hometowns. Split jerseys are one way fans express this form of loyalty.



Popularity of international content (Like Japan's *Terrace House*) demonstrates the now far-reaching and undefined borders of modern fandom.

Geographic Interconnectivity

(Micro + Support)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + Physical proximity to a college or university isn't as critical in establishing sports loyalty as it used to be, meaning that college athletic teams must now provide value that transcends simply being the "local team."
- + Digital media, allows fans to keep up with countless teams across many cities, states, and countries, regardless of where they are located.
As a result, displaced fans are emerging as an increasingly important, but often underserved segment within a fan base.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

PROVIDE MEANING

- + College sports teams can't assume that the local community will automatically become fans simply because of proximity. Being the "[Enter City/State Here]'s College Team" just isn't enough to cut it for fans who are continuing to expect more.
- + As a result, teams must work harder to forge meaningful connections with fan communities in order to gain their loyalty, standing for something and providing a value that transcends physical location.

EMBRACE DISPLACED FANS

- + While displaced fans may not be a priority in terms of ticket sales, they are tremendously valuable in building a stronger "brand" and strengthening a team's chances of reaching new fans and creating a stronger sense of community that others want to be a part of.
- + Give displaced fans more ways to engage through additional access to teams and players (e.g., social media, behind-the-scenes stories, player profiles, etc.). Also, continue to give meaning to their fandom by showing how being a fan provides entry to a community of individuals, all rooting for a shared cause.

No 10

Parent / child bonding is far less dependent on any single interest or activity.

Parents (especially fathers) are spending more time with their children than ever before, which in turn has fostered closer relationships that are less dependent on any one shared interest.

Evolving Family Roles and Dynamics

(Macro + Support)

MACRO (THE CAUSE):

- + Parenting and gender roles have shifted significantly in recent history, with more parents taking on a nurturing role and encouraging their children to explore a wide range of interests.
- + This has led to today's parents being more accessible, and often having closer relationships with their children – developing bonds that are more multi-dimensional and less singularly focused on any one shared interest or activity (i.e., watching sports).
- + What's more, today's parents place a greater value on individualism and encouraging their children's unique passions, rather than passing down or forcing their own interests onto their children.

SUPPORT (THE EVIDENCE):

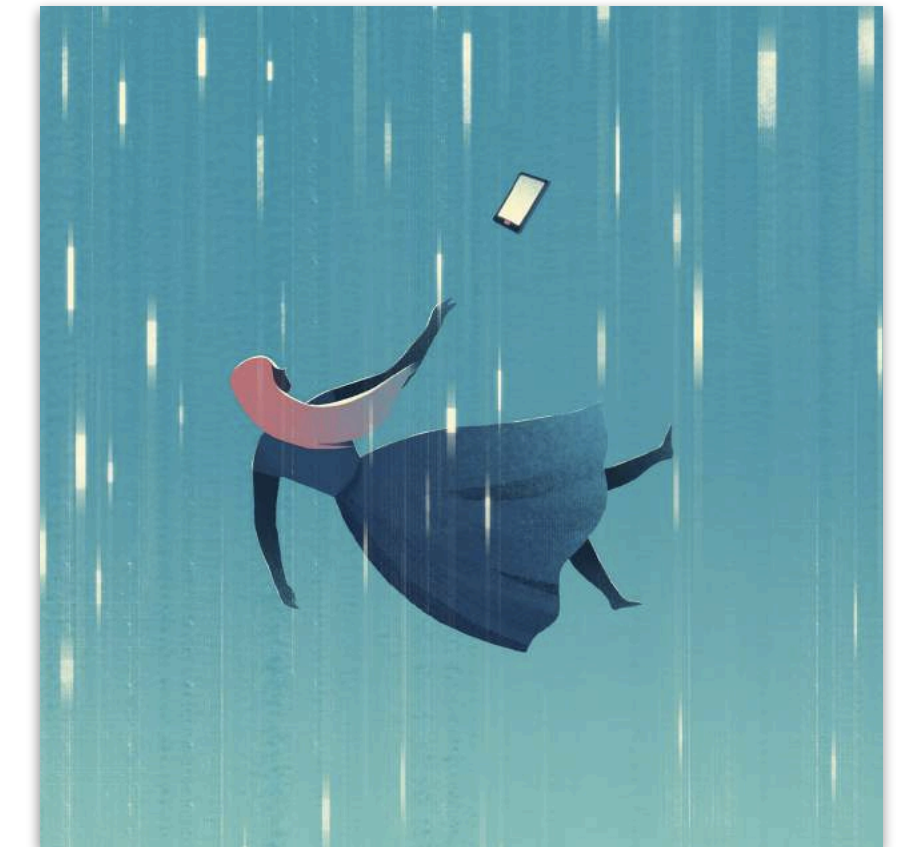


Since the 1960s, the average amount of time parents spend with their children per day has more than doubled (~70 min then, ~160 now).

[Source: UC Irving](#)



Many of today's young people were raised by a "helicopter parent" approach to parenting, described as somewhat overbearing parents who constantly supervise / keep in contact with their children.



As a result, studies have indicated that the "Smartphone Generation" (those born between 1995 and 2012) are developing slower than past generations (e.g., waiting longer to drive, date, and move away from home).

[Source: The Atlantic](#)

Evolving Family Roles and Dynamics

(Micro + Support)

MICRO (THE EFFECT):

- + While parents and children still bond through sports, these parent/child relationships are not as singularly based on individual hobbies or interests as they used to be, leading to many other activities/opportunities for families to explore.
- + As a result, sports fandom is less likely to be passed down from generation-to-generation, so traditional marketing strategies based on appealing to shared parent/child fandom may be less relevant to younger generations of fans.

IMPLICATION (THE TAKEAWAYS):

CONSIDER MODERN FAMILY DYNAMICS

- + Marketing college sports as a parent-child bonding experience may be less effective now that these relationships are less traditional and more centered uniquely around the child.
- + Consider today's evolving family dynamics to position college sports in a way that more closely resonates with modern ideas of familial bonding, with college sports being one of the many parts of the relationship, and no longer the only thing parents and children have in common.

EMBRACE INTRA-FAMILY RIVALRIES

- + Parents today are prioritizing encouraging self-exploration in their children more than past generations, making them more likely to support their children's interests as opposed to passing on their own
- + Opportunity exists to focus less on sending the same messages to families as a single unit, providing mixed messages depending on the intended target and allowing for members within families to have opposing rooting interests (a dynamic that is becoming increasingly more frequent).

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THANK YOU!

Any questions? Let us know!

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