



The Future of Automotive Events

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ABSTRACT

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Key words: car event, motor sport, car show, automotive industry, WRC, Formula 1, car events growing.

This thesis was undertaken to examine the potential risks and opportunities within the automotive event industry and assess how shifts in the automotive sector will impact this particular niche. In order to identify and analyse these risks and opportunities, the author immersed themselves in the practical aspects of a Polish car show, Ultrace, conducting on-the-ground analyses of events. Additionally, extensive research, including interviews with key figures in the car show and automotive business, was conducted.

The findings of the thesis indicate that automotive events presently maintain a stable position, evidenced by consistently high attendance numbers that continue to rise. There is still a strong demand for them among young consumers. Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in alternative variables for fossil-based fuels and liquids, reflecting a consumer desire for lower-pollution vehicles.

The research underscores the current dominance of ICE cars in the automotive event industry, as evidenced by their prevalence in car shows and motorsports series. In contrast, electric vehicle (EV) motorsport series face challenges, and the presence of EV cars in consumer car shows remains limited. Notably, the study identifies a significant opportunity for growth in consumer car events, providing a fertile ground for companies, especially car manufacturers and aftermarket brands, to effectively market their products.

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Abbreviations and terms.

ICE	Internal Combustion Engine
EV	Electric Vehicle
F1	Formula One Championship
GP	Grand Prix
WRC	World Rally Championship
WEC	World Endurance Championship
GHE	Green House Emissions
SEMA	Specialty Equipment Marketing Association
FOS	Goodwood festival of Speed
TAS	Tokyo Auto Salon
IAA	International Automobile Exhibition
GIMS	Geneva international motor show
NAIAS	North American international auto show

1 Introduction

The thesis aims to present an exploration of various forms of highly influential automotive events, delving into the factors that impact these events and the communities surrounding them. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate the evolving landscape of the automotive industry, particularly with the increasing presence of electric cars and other variants. The ultimate objective of the thesis is to uncover both opportunities and risks for organisers of car events.

In the upcoming chapters, the thesis will detail the diverse forms of car events and assess their significance based on spectator attendance. Subsequently, the third chapter will prognosticate the future of automotive events, drawing insights from extensive research, interviews, and analysis. Interviews were conducted with individuals wielding significant influence in the car culture and community, including Antti Eskeli, Co-Founder of CDLC.co (Finnish car event brand); Lucasz Dawczyk, COO of Ultrace (Polish car event brand); Roni Collin, Co-founder of Speed Hooked Oy (Finnish car event brand); and Matias Henkola, CEO of Secto Automotive Finland (Finnish auto leasing company). The practical analysis component involved immersing in the Car show Ultrace in Wroclaw, Poland, from June 6 to 11, 2023.

2 Different kinds of car events

Car events are a place where like-minded people gather to watch sports that they are interested or present and see cars that they have created. What are we talking about when we are talking about car events? A car event means a gathering of fellow minded car enthusiasts in form of motorsports, Car show or a Car meet. Like every community these different events have an important task to fulfil in the culture. Bringing the people together.

The motorsports come in various forms and types the thesis will study the most significant ones by spectator amount. There are many kinds of car shows entertainment car shows as well, commercial car shows, aftermarket car shows each one will be gone through.

2.1 Motorsports events

Motorsports is part of the group of competitive events that involves the use of motorized vehicles, whether it be for racing or for recreational purposes (Wood 2014). Different forms of racing are Wheel to wheel, which is the most common and type an example of this is Formula 1 (F1 for short). Another type is racing against each other based on time an example of this is World rally championship (WRC for short). Motorsports is an important part of improving car performance and efficiency. The car brands are trying their latest inventions in their racing cars and use these discovered improvements in their mass production cars. Motorsports is a channel and platform for car manufacturers that produce performance cars to try their newest innovations and to market their cars. "A prime example is Formula One racing, which first allowed race cars to incorporate a Kinetic Energy Recovery System (KERS) to improve acceleration and fuel efficiency in 2009. The French 24 Hours of Le Mans, the world's longest-running sports car endurance race, followed suit, and a hybrid car with KERS dominated in 2012" (Pikkarainen 2023).

The inventions car manufacturers create are usually downgraded and then put to their mass production cars. Formula 1 has been a driver of change, with numerous technologies influenced or bettered by the sport. The development of

aerodynamics, especially in supercars, or the advances in semi-automatic gearboxes, active suspension, and traction control are just some examples (Autovista24 2022). The motorsport regulations are year after year pushing the motorsport teams to come up with more innovative ideas how to be on the very top of their series. This results in new discoveries with materials, physics, aerodynamics, and mechanical processes. In the following chapters the most common motorsport series will be broken down and see how the series are doing and are the series growing?

2.1.1 Formula 1 championship

“Formula 1 is the pinnacle of motorsport and the highest class of single-seater racing. F1 races with open-wheel cars, and on both permanent racetracks and street circuits. F1 visits traditional racing hotspots such as the UK, Monaco, Italy, and Belgium every season” (Sporting news 2022).



PICTURE 1. As seen on picture 1, a Formula One car is an open-wheel, open-cockpit, single-seat racing car for the purpose of being used in Formula One competitions. It is equipped with two wings (front and rear) plus an engine, which is located behind the driver” (Tutorials Point n.d.) (Picture: Bob Ronald 2022). licensed under the Pexels.com free to use licence.

One F1 season is 18 races long and every race is held in a different track. The total attendance of one F1 season is 5,7 million people in 2022 (Haldenby 2023). In 2019 the attendance was 4,2 million people (Haldenby 2023). The attendance in 2022 was up 36% compared to 2019. Globally, the average of TV audience per Grand Prix in 2021 was 70.3m (F1 2022).

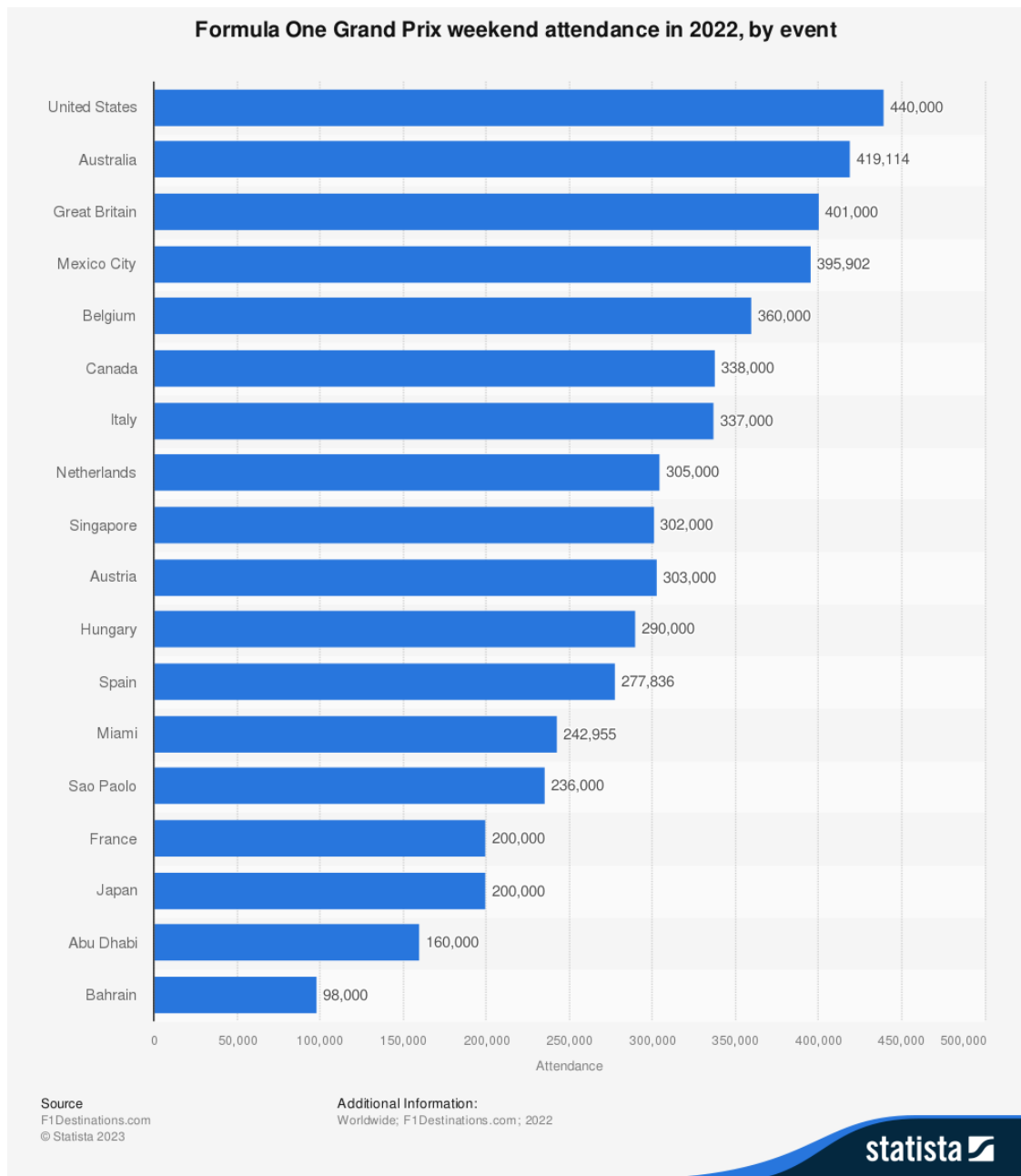


FIGURE 1. F1Destinations 2023. Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. As seen on the Figure 1 The United States Grand Prix (GP for short). Attracts the most visitors now on the F1 calendar as in 2022 the US. GP gathered 440,000 visitors. Bahrain GP was the least attended event with 98,000 visitors. The US. Gp has grown from 2018: 264,000 spectators to 2022: 440,000 spectators (Pompliano 2023).

On 2021 “Three Grands Prix had an attendance of more than 300,000 spectators over the race weekend: USA (400,000), Mexico (371,000) and Great Britain (356,000)”. (Formula 1). There has been massive improvement in the attendance

as it can be seen on the figure 1 impressive 10 Grand Prixes had attendance of over 300,000 viewers.

2.1.2 World Rally championship

What is the WRC?

WRC states “The FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) pits drivers, co-drivers and hybrid-powered production-based cars against some of the most brutally tough and unforgiving terrain on the planet” (WRC 2023). WRC rallies tend to last for 4 days, and the teams compete against each other on closed public roads that vary from the gravel, sand, asphalt, snow etc. The teams are formed from the manufacturer, main sponsors, managers, drivers the co-driver and the service team. The drivers drive on a special stage that are traditionally 20-40km long. On special stages the drivers try to get the best possible time and after the 4 days of driving all the rally’s special stages the times of the special stages is combined and the team with quickest total time wins the rally.

The rally championship is the biggest rally motorsport “The world rally championship averages 315,000 attendees for each weekend-long event, combining up to 4,1 million people when taking all 13 of their events into consideration” (The ticketing business 2019).



PICTURE 2.1 Rally racing is held on challenging public roads around the world. The rally cars are based on mass production cars. (Picture: Luca Scalvinoni 2023). Licensed under the Pexels.com free to use licence.

The global TV audience for WRC was 800 million in 2021. There is no data from 2022 yet. WRC owners claimed that from 2013 to 2019 their viewer amount raised 30% Also the legendary Monte Carlo rally has more than doubled its spectator amount to 200,000 spectators per weekend. (WRC 2019). The Jyväskylä's Secto rally Finland brought 230,000 spectators and 17 million euros of revenue for the Jyväskylä city area (Secto 2022). That's a huge benefit for the city's visibility and wealth. "Timo Koivisto, Mayor of Jyväskylä, is also delighted with the successful outcome of the rally". (Jyväskylä 2022).

In Sweden the Tv broadcaster SVT reported record breaking numbers in 2022. "The reach reached over 400,000 and the viewership 20 percent, which means that a fifth of all people who watched television at the time chose to watch the broadcast from the rally. It impresses." (Nilsson 2022).

Comparing the sizes of the biggest motorsports events in the world.

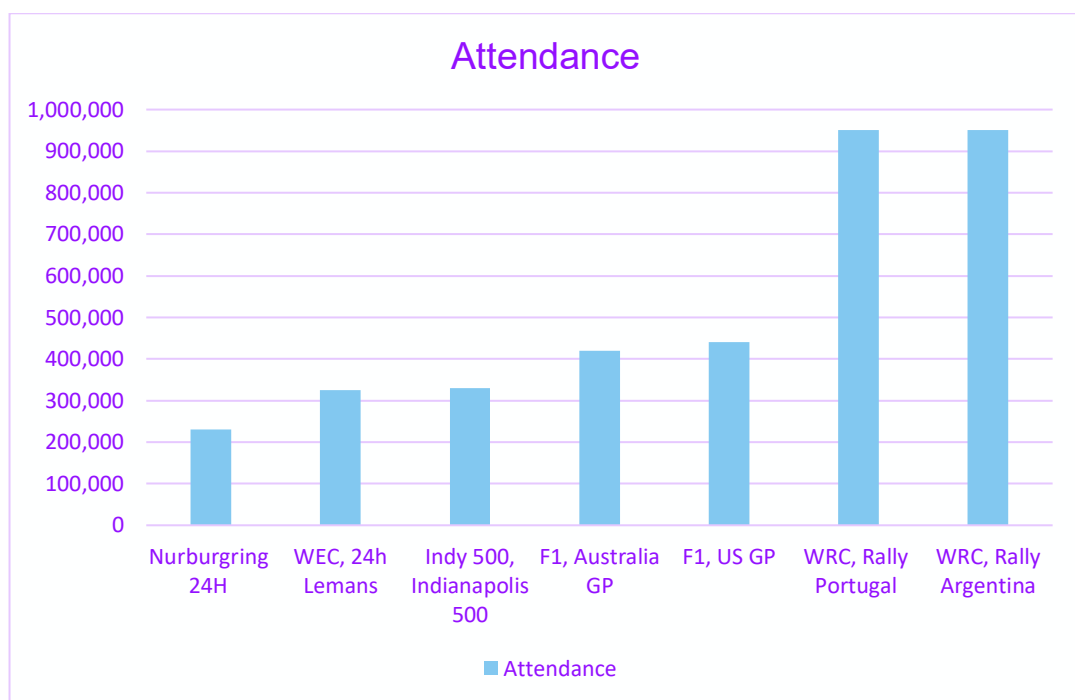


FIGURE 2. Motorsport event attendance comparison. Numbers are broken down in the appendices. (Figure: Veikko Airas 2023).

In Figure 3 the top motorsport events are both WRC with a notable lead. This is because of the length of the rally, traditionally one rally will last for four days. The second reason is that WRC special stages have little or no physical limits for the spectators as the special stages are held usually on public roads so the special stages fit higher amount of people when compared to a F1 track that has spectator stands.



PICTURE 3. Demonstration of how the spectating works in WRC. The special stages are traditionally 20-40km, so the special stages fit high amount of people. (Picture: WRC 2023). (WRC N.d.).

Based on the research made the top racing series F1 and WRC are both growing. This leads to more investment into the sport in general as well, so it also affects the smaller classes from the Formula and Rally series. It can be stated that the racing classes studied have a strong and promising future.

2.2 Commercial car shows

The commercial car shows are commercial events on the automotive industry. Commercial car shows have important role in making debuts for brand new car models and newest innovations on the Automotive industry. Geneva motor and IAA for example focus on publishing the newest models of cars and they have a lot of press visiting there. The events gather people from all around the world and they include consumers, resellers, dealerships, motorsport teams, etc. The

events typically vary in length from a weekend long to a weeklong. The different events focus on different themes like the SEMA show focuses on aftermarket parts, Goodwood festival of speed focuses on high-end classics and modern cars, Tokyo Auto Salon focuses on customized and tuned cars.

2.2.1 SEMA Show



PICTURE 4. The SEMA Show is famous for its high-quality customized cars, this is because the aftermarket brands put a high effort to present their products in best possible way. (Picture: Colton Kresser 2023). Licenced under the the [Unsplash License](#).

Specialty Equipment Marketing Association more commonly known as SEMA show is the biggest example of an aftermarket show. “The SEMA Show is one of the largest trade shows in the world, with more than 132,000 attendees plus automotive enthusiasts expected to descend on Las Vegas during what is now called “SEMA Week.” (SEMA Official website, 2023). SEMA Focuses solely on aftermarket part selling for example wheels, suspension systems, performance parts etc. And it focuses on the business-to-business market. You must apply or get invited to go to the SEMA show. So, it focuses mainly on companies.

2.2.2 Goodwood festival of speed

Goodwood festival of speed. (FOS for short) is a car event held in UK. FOS hosts 210 000 people every year (FOS official website, 2023). FOS is an event where car brands showcase their latest cars on track and in FOS's show area. FOS has successfully combined a car show, racing, and marketing. It has a famous road track where you can see cars from 100 years back to the newest innovations.

2.2.3 Tokyo Auto Salon

PICTURE 5. In Tokyo auto salon all the companies buy their own space to present their company and products. The companies are divided into different halls based on the category of the company. (Picture: Unknown N.d).

Tokyo Auto Salon (TAS for short) is Japan's biggest car show. It is a 3-day annual event. The event is held in Makuhari messe, Tokyo. The event has different section for each category aftermarket section, custom cars, manufacturers, racing car section. In total the event had 179,434 visitors in 2023. TAS did comprehensive research of the 2023 event it will be investigated to get a better understanding on the customer segment in car shows.

From the Tokyo Auto Salon Event report at the "Trend in age group" chart there can be seen a stable age segmentation. For this thesis the most important segment is the blue segment. In 2014 it was the highest at 24,6% and on 2023 event it was 18,1% although the number has gone down there is no gradual drop in the progress of the numbers that the popularity would be going down as the population is getting older. On the 2023 event the biggest age group was 20-29 old but the division between 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's was even with all about 20% presence.

When investigating the attitude about cars, TAS event report shows that 88% of the answerers have a strong relationship to cars additionally on the question, "what customization you made to your car" 61% of the answerers had made at least one customization and 58% a wheel customization to their car. After investigating this it can be stated that the average visitor in Tokyo Auto Salon is committed car enthusiast aged between 20-50. The Tokyo Auto Salon event report was the only public event report that could be found from the events

researched. Therefore, no more in-depth research or comparison couldn't be made.

2.2.4 IAA

IAA Mobility is a mobility focused show that has a car manufacturer section as well. IAA is the third biggest car show on the list with 500,000 visitors in the 5-day period. IAA reported that 70% of its visitors were under 40 years of age. And 30% of the visitors were from abroad. The event is annually held in Germany.

To showcase and compare the size of the events a comparison chart was made. Commercial car shows attendance chart.

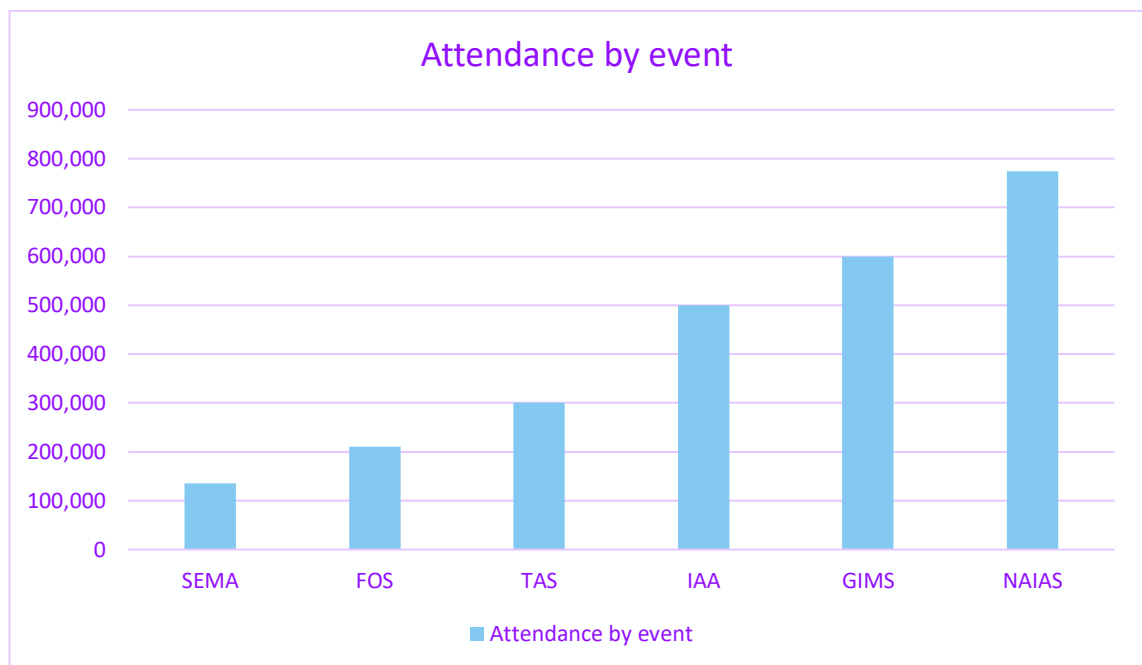


FIGURE 5. Veikko Airas 2023. On the figure 5 there is no drastic differences between the events.

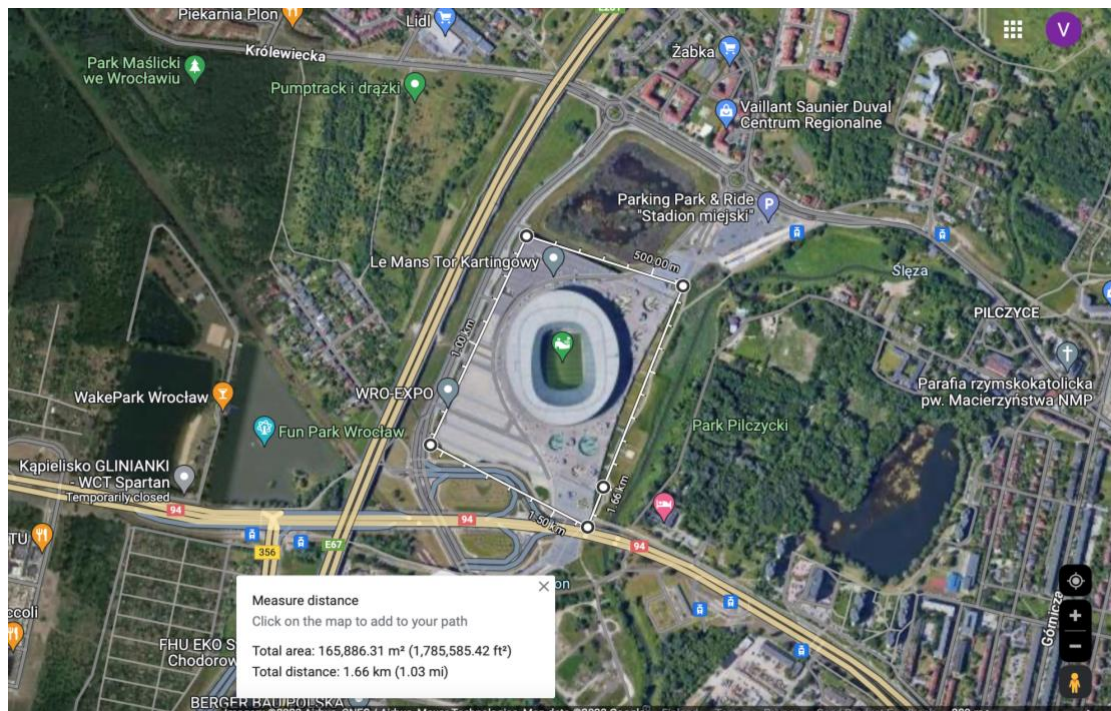
The events introduced in short before are the biggest and most influential car shows in the world. They all have a lot of visitors but there hasn't been any drastic changes on the past few years. And few of the events that offered more detailed data from the events show that also young people are still attending the events which therefore indicates that there will be demand for these events in the future as well.

2.3 Consumer car shows

Consumer car shows focus on entertainment and are less commercial. They can have some sponsorships and pop-up stores, but they focus on the entertainment, the revenue comes mainly from ticket sales. The consumer car shows have an important factor in the car community and culture as it is a place where people can share what they have created and meet each other. It is a social event in form of cars. Consumer car shows traditionally work in a way that the organisation is a club, brand or a community that invites people with a car with a car that they would like to have in their event, or the event has an apply form. In the most prestige events for a person to bring their own car to the show can even cost. In the event there's usually a ticket sale and people can go spectate the cars and there can be different variety of activities related to the event for example music, drifting, interviews, panels, competitions etc. In Ultrace Volkswagen had an innovative idea. They had blended into the custom car event with their newest Performance hatchback Volkswagen Golf R which was customized to fit the theme of the event. As it was seen on the page 17 (Picture 6.) the people who go to car events also take a lot of interest into cars therefore the consumer events for car manufacturers could be potential place for marketing and sales. No size comparison was made due to the lack of valid information.

2.3.1 Case study Ultrace

The case study was made in Ultrace. Ultrace is a Polish car show focused on custom, classic, and race cars. Ultrace is held annually. In the 2023 event Ultrace had 57,000 visitors, 1,200 show cars, and 300 drift cars (Airas 2023). The event gathered people and brands from Brazil, Australia, Japan, and South Korea. (Ultrace 2023). The combined revenue of the tickets, merchandise sponsors etc. of the 2-day event was around 1 million U. S. dollars. (Dawczyk 2023). The events are currently held at Wroclaw football stadium with around 12-hectare area.



PICTURE 6. 2Google maps, Ultrace Car show event area.

Location is an important factor which can be defining a car event's success. On the Picture 8 can be seen the location of the Ultrace event from 2023. The event is located at The Stadion Wrocław, known for sponsorship reasons as the Tarczyński Arena Wrocław. Strategically located between two main roads with easy access by car, foot, or public transport. This allows for such big human traffic during the two-day event.

The city of Wrocław is in the western part of Poland. The city has an estimated population of 640,000 people (World population review 2023). Wrocław offers a strategic advantage for a car show as the city is at the border of Czechia, Germany, and Slovakia which makes it more attractive event for people from abroad. The percentage of foreign people at 2023 Ultrace was estimated 40% (Dawczyk 2023).

The car enthusiasts from Germany are attracted to visit in Poland for car events because the car inspection law in Germany is very strict. For example, in 2022 XS Car night faced problems with the local law enforcement, and it affected the whole event. "Berlin Police did it all right in front of the venue, taking about 100 show cars. In our opinion, this kind of raid is a misunderstanding and misconception of the law enforcement role. None of what we've seen created any

danger or even appeared irresponsible” (Ultrace 2023). This makes it hard and expensive for people to modify cars there, so they go out of the country to enjoy car shows.



PICTURE 8. Ultrace focuses on customized cars as seen on the photo, most of the cars in the event are ICE cars and they are brought to the car show area with trucks or trailers. (Picture: Veikko Airas 2023).

Ultrace started as a car meet and in 2011. The event slowly grew into the influential event is now in 2023. In 2021 the visitor amount Ultrace doubled the visitor amount and in 2022 they repeated this. (Dawczyk 2023). Ultrace does not have competition in Poland in its customer segment, it's closest competitors are XS Car night in Germany. XS Car night is a car show brand based on Germany and it is the biggest competitor because of the geographical location. The location of the event changes and in 2024 it will be organized in Schleiz. (XsMag 2023). It's on the east boarder of Germany close to Czechia and not too far away from Poland border. The event's similarity and location make the event attractive for the same customer segment as Ultrace.

3 Thoughts of experts

To form a deeper picture of the future interviews with experts from the field was made. The interviews with Roni Collin and Antti Eskeli were done face to face and the interviews with Lucas Dawczyk and Matias Henkola were done on the phone. The questions varied by who was being interviewed because each of the experts had their own area of speciality.

Antti Eskeli is one of the Co-founders of CDLC Community Ry. A car event brand in Finland that plays big role on Finnish car community. CDLC has two events every year, big meet, and Fitted Fest. The fitted fest collects around 12 000 visitors there was no information available on the visitor amount from big meet.

Lucasz Dawczyk is working at Ultrace as the Chief Operating Officer. He was the contact person from the brand with the author and the author worked mostly with Dawczyk in the case study. Dawczyk interview focused more on getting more detailed information for the case study. Roni's and Antti's interview questions focused more on the car culture and the enthusiasts because Roni and Antti have been organizing consumer car shows over the years. The interviews overviewed how the car culture has changed over the years and where Roni and Antti speculate the car community and culture are going in future.

Matias Henkola is One of the Co-founders of auto leasing company SECTO Automotive Finland. SECTO Automotive is the biggest car leasing company in Finland. Secto is the main sponsor in the WRC Rally in Jyväskylä therefore Secto is playing big role in the Finnish car event industry. Henkola with Secto and Secto Labs investigates innovative and sustainable ways to save the individual mobility and motorsports. As we are facing the problems with the climate things these are very crucial for the future of ICE motorsports and car shows that mostly have ICE cars in them. Matias's interview focused more on the automotive industries future and how the cars will change to project the car event industry's future further.

Roni Collin Interview

Roni Collin is an entrepreneur and a car enthusiast. Roni has high number of followers on the social media platform Instagram 70k in 2023, he influences the Finnish car scene a lot. Roni Collin is one of the Co-founders of Speed Hooked Oy it is a car event brand based in Finland, and they used to hold 2 events annually.

With Roni we discussed about events that he has hosted and what elements good car events have. We also discussed about the change in the automotive industry into EV's and how is it going to affect the car events and what kind of attitude Roni has towards this change. It was also discussed that how could we get more people and wider audience to car events.

Roni said that they have organized multiple different car events in different forms some events in form of small meeting and then big events that need preparation of one year, and from drifting events to car shows. He said that every event they hosted surprised them some way positively. Roni said that when they reflected after a good event what made the event good was that the expectations and the objective of the event has been very clear when organizing the event, the analyzing of the event is very important before the event, during and after the event.

After this we discussed on the importance of the events in the community. Roni thinks that the people in the community are as important as the cars. It is important for people to gather around and see each other after some time and share what they have done to their cars. It is important also to choose the niche you are going for Roni pointed out that it can be bad for the events if the customer profile is too broad.

Roni takes positive approach when it comes to electric cars, he stated that many people in Finland are stubborn in good and bad and on this case have a bit negative attitude towards the transition to the EV's but something must change, and something will change so the best is to face what's coming and take the best from it.

Henkola's company SECTO Automotive Finland wants to provide the best possible service for their customers and make the usage of car more sustainable to make the individual mobility accessible also in the future. Secto has been world's first on many things for example making their WRC car completely fossil free. (Henkola 2023). Secto is also the main sponsor of the Jyväskylä Rally that I have mentioned before. It is the sporting event in the Nordics. Secto has a developing division Secto labs where new innovations are taken into practice. For instance, the team Secto lab's rally car uses CO2 0% P1 racing fuel and fossil free lubricant in their engine. This is something no other rally team has done before.

One question asked from Henkola was why Biogas never became very popular. Henkola stated that the reason behind this is that if this was scaled more there would not be enough trash to produce biogas. But for the right amount of people, it works well. Matias said that the concern about car enthusiast being at risk if traditional engines disappear completely is very valid. Therefore, for car events the fossil free fuel options will be very important in the future to maintain the market. Matias said that when businesses approach Secto to acquire a business car the most usual question now days is which option is the greenest? Companies are more interested on sustainability and want to lower the cost and as well want to make the mobility easy as possible. Matias stated that the greenest option is also the best option when investing in a car, as it will keep its value best in the future. Matias said that if electric cars would be cheaper than they are now they would be already much more popular in Finland.

4 Reflection

The authors personal reflection from the thesis research done.

Right at the start I thought that I want to do something meaningful and beneficial for my thesis. I tried to apply for different places to make the thesis for some company but I didn't succeed. After a while I came up with the idea about development of car community and culture. I started to think of what people I could interview and where could I do my practical work in.

On February 2023 I called for Lucasz Dawczyk about working in Ultrace. The car event in Poland that I've been following and fan boying for years. We agreed with Lucasz that I would work there so I set on a journey to write my thesis about developing the car community and culture. I thought about good people to interview, and this was quite easy since I was quite deep in the scene already, so I knew who to interview. Roni Collin and Antti Eskeli were already familiar with me from previous years because I've been active in the Finnish car events.

The thesis was also a good way to get to know them better as well and to show how dedicated I'm. The idea to go to Ultrace ended up being very good. I was very happy that I went to work there. I got to know the best doers in the scene and met lots of new people. I also got to see how a big event like Ultrace is organized from the ground level. The thesis process was occasionally very hard for me because of the precise academic writing.

I'm very slow when it comes to writing very formally and academically and on top of this in English. I've not done it many times so I think it definitely was beneficial and good learning for me to challenge myself to write academic text like on this thesis. I got two job opportunities as I was doing this thesis, so I highly recommend you to write about something meaningful to you and something that takes you forward with your career.

When writing about something that supports your career you show to your future possible workplace that you are truly committed to the area. Also, if you continue as an entrepreneur you have written academically about a subject you are going to work on so you will get strategic advantage over your competition.

5 Conclusion

Based on the articles, interviews and case study, car shows are doing good, and the spectator amounts are growing, young people are interested on the events and solutions to make cars more sustainable are being made. This can be seen in both consumer and commercial car shows.

As we are facing climate change, all countries must come up with new solutions everything has to be made more sustainable. Cars emit CO₂ gasses and so as countries are restricting the laws for cars, naturally this affects the automotive event industry. And as the cars usually used in events and sports cars, race cars classics or so on, the car enthusiasm might be disappearing. It was studied that still the ICE cars are still in a central role in car events and these cars are the most under the heat. But good for the car event market new fossil free fuels and oils are coming to the market so we can make the existing cars more sustainable.

From all the categories and events investigated it could be seen that the growth of motorsports events, commercial and consumer car shows is all steady and their can't be seen any starting descending in popularity on any of the events discovered. The biggest factor for car events in general is to reduce dependence on fossil-based liquids and fuels and as close to zero as possible. As seen from the popularity of the most followed motorsports events there's demand for ICE vehicle racing so solutions for ICE engines must be found. And the bigger goal behind that is to get the already existing ICE cars to emit less CO₂. There's possibilities on the market since the motorsports and car shows both show growing numbers on the attendance.

The motorsports market is growing, and it is getting attention with record breaking attendance's. Formula 1 supported with the Netflix series drive to survive has reached new audience and it is growing every year, it is now the fastest growing sport league on social media (Pompliano 2023).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The biggest motorsport events attendance chart.

Event	Attendance
Nürburgring 24 hours	230,000
WEC Lemans	325,000
Indy 500 Indianapolis 500	330,000
F1 Australia GP	419,000
F1 US GP	440,000
WRC Portugal	950,000
WRC Argentina	950,000

Appendix 2. The biggest car shows attendance chart.

Event.	Attendance.
SEMA Show	135,000 Visitors
Goodwood festival of Speed	210,000 Visitors
Tokyo Auto Salon	300,000 Visitors
IAA Mobility	500,000 Visitors
Geneva international motor show	600,000 Visitors
North American international auto show	774,179 visitors

