



Fan Engagement and Motivating Factors to Attend Live Basketball Games Among Generation Y and Z Consumers

Case: Kouvolan Kouvot ry

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Tiivistelmä

Kouvolan Kouvot on pitkään ollut yksi suomalaisen koripallon menestyksekkäimpiä seuroja ja saavuttanut vuosien saatossa vakaan fanipohjan. Seura on omalla toiminta-alueellaan Kouvolaissa yksi tunnetuimpia urheiluseuroja ja tarjoaa toimintaa kaikenikäisille henkilöille. Pääsarjatasolla Kouvojen miesten edustusjoukkue on esiintynyt vuosikymmeniä saavuttaen useita Suomen mestaruuksia ja mitaleja. Vaikka fanipohja on pitkään ollut vakaa, ei Kouvot ole onnistunut haluamallaan tavalla houkuttelemaan nuoria katsojia ja tästä johtuen katsojien ikärakenne on ikääntynyt ja tämä voi johtaa tulevaisuudessa ongelmiin.

Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kerätä Kouvolan Kouvoille tuoretta tutkimusdataa nuorempien sukupolvien kuluttajakäyttäytymisestä ja tätä kautta tarjota tapoja saada nuoret ikäpolvet kiinnostumaan Kouvojen ottelutapahtumista. Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kartoittaa nuorempien sukupolvien edustajien tämänhetkistä tietoisuutta sekä kiinnostusta Kouvoja kohtaa, sekä heidän mielenkiinnostaan ottelutapahtumia kohtaan.

Opinnäytetyön kohderyhmäksi valittiin Z- ja Y-sukupolvien kuluttajat Kouvolan alueella. Aiheen perusteella opinnäytetyön tyypiksi valikoitui case-tutkimus, jolloin pystyttiin tutkimaan yksittäisten kohderyhmien edustajien kuluttajakäyttäytymistä ja mielenkiintoja ja vertailemaan niitä keskenään.

Tutkimus osoitti, että sosiaalisen median ja digitalisoitumisen myötä, myös kuluttajien mielenkiinnot ottelutapahtumissa ovat muovautuneet. Vuorovaikutus ja erilaiset lisäsisällöt ottelun aikana olivat entistäkin tärkeämpiä nuorempien sukupolvien edustajille. Kouvolan Kouvoille annettiin ehdotuksia erilaisista lisäyksistä ja parannuksista ottelutapahtumaan, jolloin nuorempien sukupolvien mahdolliset ja nykyiset kuluttajat voisivat kiinnostua Kouvojen ottelutapahtumista entistä enemmän.

Avainsanat (asiasanat)

Koripallo, fanien sitouttaminen, urheilukuluttaminen, katsojan olettamukset, katsojan motivaatiot

Muut tiedot (salassa pidettävät liitteet)

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Abstract

Kouvolan Kouvot has been one of the most successful basketball organization in Finnish basketball for a long time, and the organization has gained a strong fanbase over the years. In its' own area in the city of Kouvola, Kouvot is one of the most known sport organizations and it offers activities to all age groups. On the highest competitive level of men's basketball, Kouvot has participated several decades and won multiple championships and other medals. Even though, the fanbase has been strong, Kouvot have not had the success of gaining the interest of younger customers like the organization would have wanted, and has led to aging spectator groups, which might be a problem for the future.

The purpose of the thesis was to collect up to date data of the consuming behavior and offer new features to attract the interest of younger generations towards Kouvolan Kouvot and organization's game-events. In addition, thesis provides information about the awareness and interest towards Kouvot among younger generations and their interests towards basketball game-events.

The focus groups of the thesis were generation Z and Y consumers in the area of Kouvola. Based on the topic the type of the thesis was selected to be a case study, so there an opportunity to study the consuming behavior and interests of a single consumer and compare those with each other.

Based on the results of the study, interests and motivations in game-events have changed because of the rise of social media and digitalization. Interaction and different types of extra features during the game-event have increased the level of importance among younger generations. Kouvolan Kouvot was given suggestions on, how to improve and increase the interest level among generation Z and Y current and prospective customers.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Fan Engagement, Sport Consumption, Spectator Expectations, Spectator Motivation, Basketball

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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1 Introduction

Goal of this thesis is to give a basketball club Kouvolan Kouvot information and data, what are the motivating factors and desires to teenagers and young adults attend live basketball games in the area of Kouvola. The purpose of this thesis is to find out the main motivating factors for selected segment of potential customers to attend basketball games and that way to provide updated knowledge for Kouvot to utilize in their marketing actions and game-events. When the research gives us data of the selected segment, it is easier to select best marketing operations for the club. When the proper knowledge is gained it makes marketing easier to meet needs and desires of generation Y and Z people. This will also help making marketing actions financially more effective.

Sports club Kouvolan Kouvot was founded in 1964. Kouvot is a specified club for basketball and only basketball club in the city of Kouvola. There have been some other junior clubs for organized basketball in the area, but nowadays Kouvot is the only one. Men's basketball team has been playing at the highest competition level (Korisliiga) from year 1993, this season 2020-21 marks 28th season in Korisliiga. Achievement-wise Kouvot has won the league 4 times, in 1995, 1999, 2005 and lastly in 2016. In addition to championships Kouvot also has 4 silver medals, one bronze medal and one national cup championship. In recent years Kouvot has developed a reputation as a development place for young promising players and the organization has valued reputation in general. Last season which was cancelled due to Covid-19 pandemic Kouvot was in 8th place at the point of cancellation. (Finnish Basketball Association, 2020)

Kouvola as a city is Finland's 11th biggest city measured by population. At this moment Kouvola has over 82,000 residents, so there is volume for fans to be in stands for basketball games.

(Kuntaliitto.fi, 2020) The biggest competition for fans Kouvot has with ice-hockey club KooKoo, which plays in the highest level in the nation (Liiga). Kouvola is considered as a sports city. In addition to Kouvot and KooKoo there is a Finnish baseball club at nation's highest level and the city has teams in lower divisions in floorball, football, volleyball and American football.

1.1 Popularity of Korisliiga and Kouvot

In 2019 when measured in attendance averages Korisliiga was Finland's 5th most popular sport league. Four more popular ones were ice hockey premier league, football premier league and 1st

division and Finnish baseball premier league. Korisliiga had attendance average of 873 per game. (Satakunnan Kansa 2019) The difference within the league is very big as in last season the club averages were between 1,368 and 418 fans per game (Finnish Basketball Association 2020). Korisliiga has gained more popularity due to the rise of Finnish national basketball team in past few years but this past season the attendance averages started clearly come down. There have been some doubts about the reporting of attendance in the games but in this thesis, we trust the statistics provided by national basketball association of Finland. In the season 2020-21 Finnish government has limited attendance levels in all sports because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the average attendances for current season are not so comparable for previous seasons.

Kouvot has enjoyed good amount of attendance in their home games, looking back at last ten years from 2010 to 2020. As said before we can't be entirely sure about the reporting of home game attendance as it is the club itself which reports it. If looking at regular season averages in attendance for Kouvot, it can be seen that they have had over 900 fans per game in every season last ten years. (see Figure 1) Over the half of those seasons Kouvot has had average attendance of over 1,000 fans. This puts Kouvot in top 5 every season in attendance. (Finnish Basketball Association, 2020)

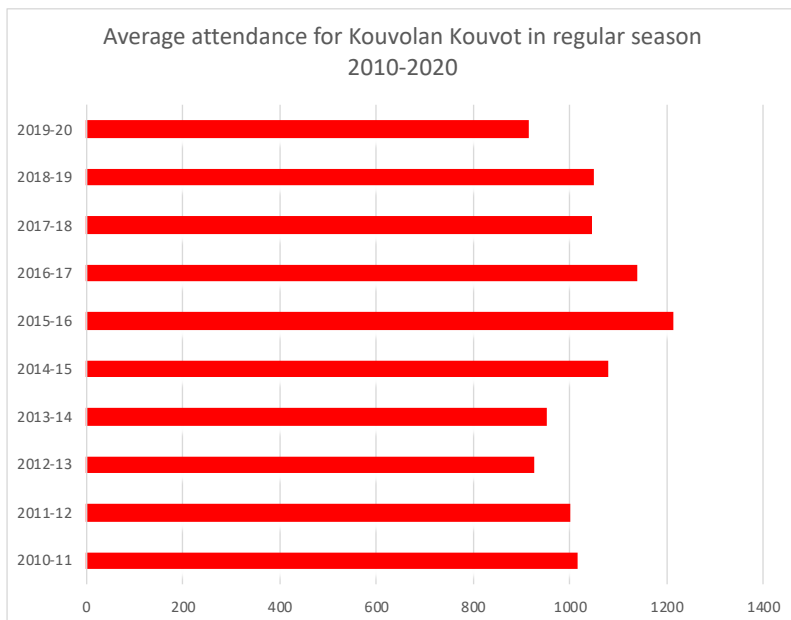


Figure 1. Kouvot average attendance in regular season 2010-2020.

Some sports fans are considered as “glory-hunters”, which means they show up in the stands when the team is doing well. Aaltonen (2019) studied the glory hunting phenomenon in English football. In his study he presented the theory of competitive success affecting to attendance levels and through the attendance levels to the team’s market-size. In his study Aaltonen (2019) found out that, his theory was supported. When researching the attendance levels compared to team’s competitive success in the second highest level of English football, he found up to 30% variation in attendance level depending on the team’s position at the league table.

It is quite normal that in Finland the attendance increases when the team is in the playoffs. When looking at Kouvot attendance in regular season compared to playoffs, there is actually not that big of an increase in attendance (see Figure 2). In seasons 2015-16 and 2018-19 Kouvot played their playoff home games in bigger arena than their normal arena, so that explains the huge growths in attendance those seasons. Other seasons there is little growth in attendance, so it can be assumed that the fans are quite loyal to the team in every situation. When comparing the attendances, it needs to be remembered that in playoffs team’s might play only one home game or up to almost ten home games depending on their success.

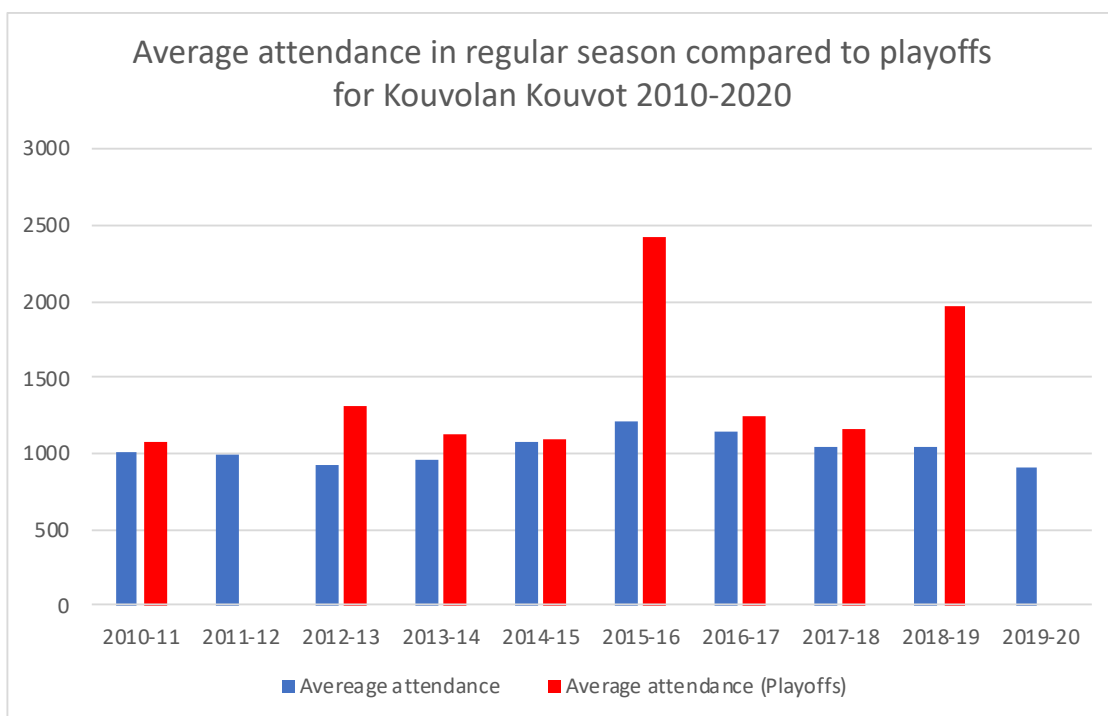


Figure 2. Kouvot average attendance in regular season compared to playoffs 2010-2020.

Last few years there has been several theses regarding mostly game-events of different Korisliiga teams. Lapila (2019) researched the game-event of Kouvolan and the goal of his work was to bring new ideas to table on how to improve the event. In that work, there was not defined any segments specifically and the main group of the respondents were between 35- to 50 years-old. The research did not provide the information about motivating factors for spectators to attend games, but it reflected on the game-event meeting the desires and needs of the spectators. Viertola (2016) researched in his thesis the game-event development for Kobrat Lapua and Savino (2018) researched development of game-events for Tampereen Pyrintö including raising attendance levels and improving communication tools.

Seppänen (2017) researched all game-events and Korisliiga brand in her thesis. Mainly the research has been around developing the game-events, not in the motivating factors and in all theses the segment has been wider than in this work. Pupaza & Ruskio (2019) researched the motivations to make the decision to attend Kataja Basket games. They centered their study around the 7P-model of marketing. That research is the closest to this thesis, but the approaching angle is different.

For this thesis some valid terms and concepts to understand are the basic consuming behavior of generation Y and Z. How these generations have been raised and how they make consumption-decisions and search for information. Also, important concepts are the basic psychology and motivation of fandom and fan engagement.

The structure of this thesis is made by the guidelines JAMK University of Applied Sciences requires the thesis' been constructed. First the research problem and questions are determined and after that research methodology like analysis methods, objectivity, aims and benefits etc. are explained. After that research implementation like data collection, survey frame and possible problems are presented to the reader. Chapter 3 contains the theoretical background needed to understand the phenomenon researched in this thesis. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the results from the research and chapter 5 provides conclusions and suggestions from the researcher regarding the research made.

2 Research Frame

2.1 Research problem

Kouvolan Kouvot has had one of the best attendance averages in Korisliiga last 10 seasons. Still, the club has had some financial problems in the past. Unfortunately, Finnish basketball business is very dependent on gate revenue. Basketball has risen its' head in Finnish sport scene, but it is still far behind from ice-hockey and football. Because business model is so gate revenue driven, basketball clubs need to have good attendance average through seasons, so they can stay competitive in the league. In the case of Kouvot this was proven by the fact, that as after November Korisliiga team were not able to take spectators in their arenas, Kouvot was forced to lay off their head coach and three American players in order to secure the club's financial healthiness and possibility to play in Korisliiga in the future. (Kouvolan Kouvot 2020) Kouvot was not the only club in Korisliiga, which needed this tragic measure to ensure their future and existence.

Research problem in this thesis is, how Kouvot could attract and motivate more younger spectators to the game-events. Kouvot has a large amount of current junior players and former junior players and other personnel, who have some kind of relationship with the organization. Considering this, Kouvot has not been able to motivate this younger generation to visit their game-events, especially after they are no longer members of the organization as players, coaches etc. As Kouvola is king of a big city in Finland's standard, there should be potential customer segments within younger consumers. At the moment, the basic consumer for Kouvot is over 40 years old and there is a significant amount of over 60-year-old consumers. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Finnish government has limited the arena capacities to make game-events safer. Kouvot could this season take in little over 600 spectators, but the average has been only little over 300 per game. Over 60-year-olds have higher risk on getting the coronavirus and that is why this spectator segment stays home and watches the game from TV.

One part of the problem is that Kouvot does not have the proper information of the consuming behavior of these generation Y and Z consumers. As generation Y and Z have grown into era of the Internet and social media, the consuming behavior of these generations have changed. Traditional marketing activities are no longer the most effective ones. Consumers search the information and

share their experiences in social media. Overall, the average attention span of a customer has decreased. Research have shown that the attention span of a human and a goldfish are very close, actually goldfish having a half a second longer attention span. This gives marketers and content creators a huge challenge. The evolution of attention span can be seen for example in TV commercials, decades ago commercials were even a minute long, but nowadays commercials top at 15 seconds most. (Subramanian 2017)

2.2 Research questions

To find some answers and solutions to the research problem, there is a need for some research questions. For this thesis the first question is, how good is awareness generation Y and Z consumers have of Kouvolan Kouvot in the city of Kouvola area. The awareness of the organization and its' operations like games etc. is kind of crucial if the organization thinks of having more these generation spectators in the audience. If these consumers don't have the proper awareness of the organization, it is hard to make operations to motivate them attend games.

Other question we have to ask is, what are the crucial motivating factors for generation Y and Z consumers to attend live basketball games. Does competitive success still drive more people to the stands or is there some new waves of motivation for these generations. For example, does the younger generation want more online activity and engagement during the games or do these spectators want to see huge slam dunks, deep three-point shots and other spectacular highlights in the game. If we can find some clear answers and factors to these two questions, Kouvolan Kouvot will have usable data to alter their marketing operations and game-events to meet the desires and expectations of generation Y and Z.

To summarize, the research questions in this thesis will be:

- Main question; What are the main motivating factors for generation Z and Y customers to attend live game-events.
- Supporting question; How good is awareness generation Z and Y customers have on Kouvolan Kouvot.

For Kouvolto to stay competitive and basically stay alive, it needs new ways to motivate and attract younger spectators to games. The club is willing to improve its' strategies and approaches, but at the moment they don't have the data on what younger spectators want to see in games to attend.

2.3 Research methodology

For this research the method will be quantitative research. With quantitative research researcher can gain more volume and responses from our target group. For the research a survey was used to determine what potential younger spectators would like to experience in game-events and that way bring more money in.

Presenting the information numerically

In quantitative research researcher will present the data numerically and then explain essential parts of the data and research verbally. Main purpose of this is to explain how different matters attach to each other or differ from each other. When researching things about persons with quantitative research, the matters that are research have to be changed to structural form. This means researched matters are operationalized and structured. Operationalizing means changing theoretical and conceptual things to a form anyone can understand. Structuring on the other hand is the way to standardize the matters that are researched. (Vilkkä 2007, 14-15)

Objectivity

Basic research methods for quantitative research are questionnaire, interview or observation forms or surveys. Research should always be objective, in quantitative research objectivity can be divided to two areas. First one is the objectivity of research process and objectivity of the results. Quantitative research is regularly quite objective on this area since the subject and researcher have remote relation and the researcher has very little effect on the results collected. Second way of measuring the objectivity of the quantitative research is the interpretation of the results. Interpretation means putting the results in external frame of references. Interpretation is often affected by the tradition research and professional, scientific schools, theories, and models of the one's research. This is why the results can be interpreted various ways depending on the external frame of references chosen by the researcher. Because of this the objectivity of

interpretation of the results is something researcher needs to compromise a little. (Vilkka 2007, 16)

Benefits, purposes, and aims

One clear benefit for quantitative research is that usually the number of responds is large. The questionnaire or survey is nowadays easy to share for larger group via e-mail, social media etc. platforms where people can just click the link to the survey and give their answers. On the other, for quantitative research to give useful data there needs to be good number of responds. For researcher to be able to use statistical analysis and gain usable and reliable data the minimum number of responds is approximately 100 responds. With at least this number of responds researcher is able to form observations from the point of view what makes it possible to explain researched matter numerically. (Vilkka 2007, 17)

Quantitative research aims regularly to answer questions like how often, how much or how many. It often tries to find and explain causality of different phenomenon and matters. To explain causality quantitative research often aims to find certain patterns which help to explain and justify certain causalities in the researched matter or subject. The purpose of quantitative research can be divided to five different purposes: descriptive, interpretative, exploratory, comparative, or predictive research. (Vilkka, 2007, 19-23)

Descriptive research aims to explain accurately and systematically the key features of the researched phenomenon and present them in the research. Interpretative research aims to give additional information or present the causes having the effect on the researched subject. Aim of the interpretation is to make researched subject more understandable and clearer. Exploratory research aims to bring new points of view to the table. Usually, it helps to find certain models, themes, classes, and patterns regarding to researched subject. Comparative research compares similar phenomenon in different places and in different times. The goal for this type of research is to understand better the researched phenomenon from the point of view of different research topics. Predictive research aims to produce data, which helps to predict and evaluate the manifestation of the phenomenon or repercussions in different contexts and during different eras. (Vilkka 2007, 19-22)

Sampling and analysis

There are several different methods for quantitative data analysis. Often, quantitative research is thought as numerical research but in this kind of survey researches the analysis is often verbal. For verbal data analysis there are two ways to do it: nominal scale or ordinal scale. In nominal scale the variables have some kind of classification feature. These kinds of features are for example gender, nationality, and marital status. In ordinal scale, the variables can be put in some type of order by their value. Simple example of ordinal scale is so called "Likert-scale". (KvantiMOTV 2013) In this research survey Likert-scale was used when asking about the expectations and motivations about the game-event.

To analyze verbal data and research done with Likert-scale, there are different ways. For the right method researcher needs to analyze in what questions is the data wanted to provide answers and the filter and analyze the data guided by that choice. To analyze the collected survey, researcher found cross tabulating and variance analysis most useful. With cross-tabulating, one can compare the dependence of different variables. This kind of analysis of dependence, can be found how variables differ within determining variables like age or gender. Variance analysis gives you the opportunity to analyze how much difference there is between different two or more groups. The amount of determining variables used effects on variance analysis. If one uses only one determining variable (for example age), we talk about one-way analysis of variable. You can also use two determining variables (two-way analysis of variance) or multiple determining variables (multivariate analysis of variance). (KvantiMOTV 2013) In addition to these forward mentioned analyzing methods, in this research researcher used measures of central tendencies to analyze some questions and to have understanding of overall results among the whole group.

Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are constructs that measure the trustworthiness and legitimacy. These constructs help the researcher measure, are the sampling methods right and are the results trustworthy. (KvantiMOTV 2013) Basically, the research should be possible to repeat by another researcher or with the same group and the results should not differ too much. Good validity and reliability make sure the researcher has been objective while analyzing and conducting the research.

With good validity, researcher can prove the research being competent and the results and conclusions being “right”. Validity helps researcher prove the research’s credibility. (KvantiMOTV 2013) For this thesis the analyzing and sampling methods cross-tabulating between different responder groups and variance analysis, were chosen to be used to make sure the research has enough validity. The small number of responds hurts the validity of this research, and to get more trustworthy results, this research should be repeated with a goal to get more responds.

To measure the reliability of a research, there are three different methods: quixotic reliability, diachronic reliability, and synchronic reliability. Quixotic reliability measures the credibility and logicity of different methods. Reliability can be affected by the questions leading responders answer like the researcher wants or expects them to answer. (KvantiMOTV 2013) In this research, the survey was conducted with open and half-constructed questions, so the responders would not be leaded to give responds researcher expects. Diachronic reliability measures the permanence of the responds through different times (KvantiMOTV 2013). This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which could have an impact on the responds, as the responders have not been able to attend live sporting events for some time. To ensure the reliability through time, the questions used in the survey were not bound to certain time, questions were universally valid, and responders were not required to have an experience of Kouvo’s game-event at any point of their life for being able to answer the survey. Synchronic reliability measures the logicity of the research results when used different sampling and analyzing methods. Ensuring that, is difficult as the researcher is often forced to analyze how different results, conducted with quantitative research about same phenomenon can be possible. (KvantiMOTV 2013) Ensuring the synchronic reliability, the results of this research were analyzed with many types of cross-tabulating and the analysis was made with objectivity, so that differences in results were noticed and shown.

2.4 Research implementation

Survey

For this research a survey was made with Webropol. Survey had some open questions and then more structured questions where the responder had to think about his or her response on a scale. In total the survey had 13 questions. To make survey even easier and faster to answer all questions were not mandatory to answer in order to proceed.

At first responders asked their basic information which in this survey were their age and occupational status. After that responders were asked about their overall interest in Finnish basketball and then in Kouvolan Kouvot specifically. To get better understanding about their involvement and interest in basketball and Kouvot, responders were asked how much they have watched basketball in the last year. Last there was a question about how the responders would define their relationship with Kouvot at this moment. (See attachment 1. Survey frame)

After the background information the survey focused on the expectations of the responders regarding game-events and on their engagement with Kouvot. Responders were asked on which channels they use to follow and engage with Kouvot and how they seek information about the game-events. Responders had also chance to tell would they like to have social media content on some new channels, which are not used at the moment. These questions were mainly used to get the idea of the main social media channels responders use and that way giving Kouvot better understanding on what channels should be focused on. (See Attachment 1. Survey frame)

Last part of the survey was focused on the expectations about game-events. First responders had opportunity to answer on open questions about what they expect about Kouvot's game-events and then what would increase their motivation to attend game-events. After the open questions there was a question about how important the responders considered different aspect of the game-events. In last question the responders were given different additions to game-events and were asked how much those additions would increase their motivation and interest towards the event. In both these questions, a five-step verbal scale was given to responders to estimate their answers. (See Attachment 1. Survey frame)

Data collection

In this research the population used will be both generation Y and generation Z population in Kouvola area. Generation Y are people born in the late 1970's to mid-1990's and generation Z are people born in mid-1990's to late 2000's. Best way to reach these generations to answer the survey is through social media and their school's communication channels. There is multiple high schools and vocational schools in Kouvola and one university of applied sciences campus, so there should be plenty of potential customers for Kouvot in the area.

The survey was shared with the university of applied sciences students via their student services and for high school and vocational school students via Kouvola sports academy. In addition to those channels survey was shared in social media by the organization, and I shared the survey in my own social media channels. All the answers for the research were collected from an open internet link, which was shared in those before-mentioned channels.

The survey was collected during March and there was total 88 answers collected. Before the last week of March there was only 28 answers, at that point the survey was shared to university of applied sciences, Kouvola sports academy and to Kouvot's own older junior players. For the last week the survey was shared in Kouvot's own social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) to get more answers.

Problems

In this research, there were a clear problem in data collection. As for some reason there was very few answers given to the survey. The link for answering to the survey was open about two months from early February to early April. Link was shared multiple times and remainder messages were sent to different parties about sharing the survey with their students. In addition to a very poor answering percent, there was a big number of responders, who started to answer to the survey but for some reason did not finish answering.

These problems raise the question about the survey itself. Some of the questions might have been poorly constructed or the responder did not understand fully, what was asked. In addition to that,

the survey was specified mainly on one sport and one team, so if the potential responder did not have any interest and knowledge of Kouvol, they would probably not use their time to answer to this survey.

3 Theoretical Background

3.1 Sport Marketing and Sport Markets

Sports has certain unique features when we think it as a field of marketing and consumption. Funk (2011, 9-10) points out 10 features that sports has making it a unique product. Sport organizations cooperate to make their league and consuming product better, this is a very different type of action compared to traditional marketing between competitors. Sport consuming has multiple unique features like consumers being the experts, they have strong opinions and thoughts how their favorite organization should operate. The traditional supply – demand relation fluctuates a lot more in sports and often sport products are consumed simultaneously. Sports is an intangible product and in addition to that marketers rarely have control over the core product like a game or race. Lack of control brings out the inconsistent nature of the product, outcomes of games and races are uncertain, which makes every product and event different. In many ways sports relies on extension of the products, in sport events there are often halftime entertainment, pre-game promotions, music etc. Sports creates opportunity for socialization as rarely consumers attend games and events alone. The last special feature is that sports is both consumer product and industry product.

Sport marketing as a phenomenon is still kind of new. In the 1940s and 1950 sports was not very commercialized and it was seen more of thing people did in their leisure time. Attitudes towards sports were shaped by tradition and family values and peer-group influence. At that time sales pitches and marketing were not needed to people get interested in sports; people were driven to sports by “natural” methods. Nowadays things are different. For sport organizations to attract more junior players, more volunteers and have people spend more time in the games and events. Every sporting body despite their area, nation, or sport, understand that their product can grow only by using professionally driven marketing campaigns and operations. (Smith & Stewart 2015, 3-4)

Smith & Stewart (2015, 5) make a clear case for sport marketing being multidimensional. First, sport marketing involves the marketing and promotion of sport products and services and, second, it involves the marketing of non-sport products, like Funk (2011, 10) suggested sport consuming having the unique feature of product extension. These two angles give an understanding of how sport is managed from a marketing perspective. Like Smith & Stewart (2015, 6) point out, the truth is not that simple, and this explanation emphasizes too much on the selling part of sport marketing. For some sport product or service to be sold, it needs to have some kind of place in the mind of consumer. This means consumer needs to have some awareness of the sport product or service. Overall, strong marketing position and successful branding in sports consuming and marketing focus on single transaction and purchase. Sport marketing is more about establishing an ongoing relationship between a sport brand and its users. To summarize sport marketing, it can be divided to marketing of sport products and services or marketing through sport products and services.

Sport as an industry can be defined to include all suppliers of products and services that satisfy the needs of sport consumers. The industry constitutes of marketplaces where consumers are able to acquire products and services associated with the multitude of sports. Each of these marketplaces often offer unique experience to its participants and fans. Sports as an industry can often be too narrowly defined, as it comprises a lot of different parties. One way of thinking the composition of the sport industry is to think about the chain from the supply of raw materials used to create sport products and services. There are numerous ways of measuring the size of sport industry. One way is to count how much money is spent on sport, like sporting goods, building venues, and organizing sport activities. Other way could be determining the amount of money provided to sports by government and private organizations by the way of grants and sponsorship. Or it could be examined how much money consumers spend to sport-related products and services, how many people participate in sport, how many people are employed in the sport industry and how many volunteers provide their service. Ultimately sport industry is just too large and too fragmented that it is not practical to locate and study the industry, to calculate accurate statistics of all these aspects. (Smith & Stewart 2015, 15-17)

3.2 Generation Y and Z as Consumers

When speaking about generation Y, studies define this generation to people born between 1977 to 1995. Generation Y people are often regarded as confident, brand conscious and internet savvy. They are a powerful consumer segment, which exhibits a tendency to prefer brands possessive of a core brand and values. Generation Y consumers benefit from the discretionary / disposable income afforded to them from their indulgent parents and even grandparents. Generation Y people can largely be fitted in three classifications: experiencers, strivers, and achievers. Psychological values of materialism, reference group influence and prestige sensitivity are likely to influence generation Y consumption, especially regarding to status consumption. (Butcher et al. 2017, 673-674)

Jason Rice (2015, 57-59) expanded in his study about sport participant involvement generation Y as diverse, open to change, service oriented and expectant of immediate access to information. With these characteristics Rice suggests that generation Y has waning interest in many traditional sports. Rice found five motivating factors to sport participation for generation Y. These five factors were achievement, emotion, social, health and nature. Three first mentioned were the biggest motivators. When considering the sport event consumption, we can see those three motivators be achieved there too. For many sport events are social events where you meet friends or spend time with your family. Sports are very emotional-based business and often spectators get emotionally caught in action on the field. Achievement-wise spectators often take pride on their team achieving something and it makes often spectators feel the same winning euphoria as the players on the field feel. Even though there were multiple motivating factors for generation Y members, achievement was the one big motivator. (Rice 2015, 57-59) This raises a question, could generation Y consumers need more involvement in sporting events, to feel this achievement and they would come again to event.

As Butcher et al. (2017, 673-674) point out, Generation Y consumers are influenced by materialism and group. This backs up Rice's (2015, 57-59) point about biggest motivators of sport consumption being emotional, social and achievement. With these two before mentioned arguments, an assumption can be made that generation Y consumers can use the achievements of their teams in building their own status. They value emotions and social aspect in sport consumption, the assumption could be that group reference has some effect on the decision-making of sport

consumption. If consumers have their friends or family attending to some sport-event, it is more likely they attend it too, in comparison of one attending the event by him- or herself.

Generation Z is defined as people born after 1995. This generation has grown as users of the internet and various forms of digitalization and social media. Persada, Miraja & Nadlifatin (2019, 22) observe in their article, that this usage of various technologies has made generation Z develop different characteristics from earlier generations. Generation Z is very competent technology user because they have been exposed to social media and internet since been born. Persada et al. (2019, 22) also point out that generation Z becomes more and more dependent of these modern technologies.

Hungarian professors Garia-Fodor & Csiszarik-Kocsir (2019, 113-114) have studied generation Y and Z financial consciousness. They found that where earlier generations have used printed information and stood in the lines in banks. Generation Z people usually suffer from constant lack of time and they want to do all their banking and financial communications online as rapidly as possible. In their research Garia-Fodor & Csiszarik-Kocsir (2019, 116-117) found out the most valued financial motivations for generations Y and Z were that money gives sense of security and the value of money is bigger when one has earned it. For these generations' security was the dominant force in money management, the desire to save money was strong among them. Overall, the research indicated the pursuit of security, long-term value orientation, the importance of price and the pursuit of decision based on financial issues generally characterized both generation Y and Z consumers.

Sport-Event Consumption

Yim & Byon (2019) studied Millennials (Generation Y) sport consumption decision making. They point out that Millennials are a big segment for marketing of sport events, but also Millennials influence the decision making of other segments. Millennials have evolved generational characteristics; technology-driven, connected, interactive, having viral impact, authentic, transparent, adamant about sharing opinions, invested in "cause marketing", highly networked and collaborative. Marketers could capitalize their marketing actions with these characteristics, that method has been proven to be good for long-term profitability. Even though, Millennials are

considered as younger consumer generation, their characteristics are not result of their age. Those characteristics will remain through their lifetime.

Yim & Byon (2019) point out that particularly important for millennial sport consumption is future-oriented emotion:

“Spectator sport is a hedonic product that a consumer uses to experience psychological well-being. However, unlike other products and services, spectator sport cannot consistently provide the same quality core product due to uncertainty of game outcome.”

This means that one cannot promise certain outcome of the sport event. In this sense, when sport fans decide to attend the next game, they will likely evaluate their anticipated emotions and makes future-oriented emotions important predictor of future attendance. Sport event marketers should be able to predict the emotions of the fans about their event, especially after the event. If the fans predict win or other success for them in the event it is more likely they would choose to attend the game than if they predict a loss.

According to Yim & Byon (2019) sport fans model of goal-oriented behavior (MGB) is a result of four variables: past satisfaction, fan engagement, team identification and fan community engagement. For Millennials there are some clear behavioral motives when consuming sports when looking at those four variables. Yim & Byon (2019) tell that previous scholars have found Millennials to have higher tendency to engage with organizations they like. For Millennials team identification is an important antecedent to attend an event. Still, there was other reasons why these fans did not attend the events:

“Many of the participants who identified themselves as highly identified fans mentioned that they wanted to go to the game, but their desires sometimes did not move to the intention level due to travel inconvenience, lack of time and lack of money.”

Millennials are seen as more community-oriented that the previous generations. Yim & Byon (2019) predicted that community-orientation can help predict Millennials’ consuming behavior:

“When individuals highly identify with a brand community, they are likely to value the norms and values of the community members and to try to behave like them. Sport consumers with high community identification will show higher levels of behavioral intention to meet the expectations of community members in order to maintain their sense of belonging. Therefore, community identification should predict millennial fans’ behavior.”

In their research Yim & Byon (2019) found several of their hypothesis and predictions to be correct as Millennials consume sport events. Past satisfaction rose as the most significant predictor of desire and intention to all behaviors. Fan engagement predicted much of the online and social media consumption. As predicted, Yim & Byon (2019) found that team identification was significant to predict desire and intention but reverse to their prediction community identification was not significant at all.

Yim’s & Byon’s (2019) research provides the information many have identified in other consumption forms for Millennials. For sport organizations to engage and meet the desire and intention of Millennial fans, social media is the most powerful platform. Through good social media marketing, presence, and engagement with fans, you increase to possibility to Millennial fan to consume your sport events and revisit those events. In addition to that, as a marketer one should be able to predict fans’ future emotions and maybe effect those predictions of the past satisfaction with marketing actions.

3.3 The Psychology of Fandom

The concept of sports fandom has a broad and rich tradition. The roots of fandom are from the more general construct of group identification. Identification has been described by psychologists like Freud and Kagan being a process in which people include characteristics as part of themselves from the group. More recent research has advanced the view of the identification being a condition where group’s actions are central component of one’s social identity. Categorization as a member of a group is important and significant to the individual, one of the defining elements of sports fandom is that the fan identifies oneself highly by the performance of the favorite team and with that becomes part of the group. (Kahle & Close 2011, 60)

Kahle and Close identify fandom as a part of one's psychological need to feel part of a group. That is a fair assumption for Finnish sports and specially basketball, where the league's competition level isn't on the level of bigger leagues. For fans the events are then social event where they can meet people with same kind of interests. Kahle and Close (2011, 60-61) acknowledge that, there are many ways one could define fandom. Core to this definitional issue, however, is considering the dimensions of this definition that allow for differentiation among individuals.

Beyond the specific dimensions that constitute a fan, Kahle and Close (2011, 61) pay attention to categorization and labeling of the fans. In our everyday vernacular, we tend to demarcate fans in terms of qualitative labels or categories such as casual fans, fair-weather fans, and diehard fans. Researchers, however, tend to treat sports fandom more as a hierarchy than as a set of discrete categories. The focus in this hierarchy focuses on the variations among fans in terms of the relative importance that their identity as a fan has within the pantheon of other social identities. For some individuals their primary social identity may be the sports team affiliation, for others their sports team affiliation is given less priority. (Kahle & Close 2011, 61)

From the psychological aspect of fandom Kahle and Close (2011, 63-64) give seven different motives that underlie sport fandom: entertainment, eustress, escape, aesthetics, self-esteem, companionship, and group affiliation. Arguably the most basic and most-investigated motive at the core of sports fandom is that of entertainment. The enjoyment and emotional satisfaction fans anticipate experiencing as they cheer on their favorite team to a hopeful victory is undeniably a primary driving force behind the appeal of sports consumption. One's ultimate enjoyment of a sporting event, is a function of the outcome of the contest relative to the strength and valence of one's dispositions toward the competitors.

For many sport fans the "thrill of victory", uncertainty and suspense create the biggest interest and enjoyment to consume sports. Researchers have claimed this is due to chronic lack of such action in individual's daily life. The uncertainty of the outcome is the most fascinating feature of sport events, for some customers it is also the feature that drives them away from sport events as they seek some other activity for their mood management. For the sports fans, the unscripted, suspenseful nature of sporting events makes them particularly appealing and enhances their enjoyment. (Kahle & Close 2011, 64-66)

A distinct but related motive to those of entertainment and eustress is the fact that sports spectatorship affords sports fans the opportunity to escape the stresses of daily life (Kahle & Close 2011, 82). This motive is particularly interesting to this thesis and research as in nowadays world sports compete with Netflix, social media etc. for the leisure time of individuals. Society and daily life have changed more stressful and anxiety-provoking. High pressure lifestyle makes people seeking content and ways to get their mind off the stress and pressure. Sports has become a way for people to take a moment and forget those before mentioned aspects of their everyday life.. (Kahle & Close 2011, 67-68)

Professional sports are great example of mastering some skills to perfection. One big motive for certain sport fans of gymnastics and ice-skating etc. is the joy of seeing those graceful aesthetic features of the sport. Kahle and Close (2011, 68-69) point that despite the gender sport fans form an appreciation for the beauty and style in athletics. The highlight reels on the internet and in TV are made because audiences appreciate exceptional plays and aestheticism inherent in athletics. Aesthetic motive is not as researched as other fan motives, but existing research show that fans express significant appreciation for the novelty, riskiness, and unexpectedness of the play. In other words, fans have tremendous appreciation to plays that have higher risk of failure. When such plays prove to be successful, fans are elated. Fans tend to be drawn to sporting events during which they might see something they've never seen before.

Kahle and Close (2011, 69-70) point out that self-esteem is key motive to sport fandom. As fandom can have potential benefits to one's self-esteem. People seek to satisfy their self-esteem needs by indirect means (in form of the accomplishments of others) in addition to direct means (their own accomplishments). This means fans can feel tremendous pride of the accomplishments of their favorite sport team. Compared to that after team losses fans tend to distance themselves from the team. Best way to see this listening how fans talk. After wins it is often "we won" and after loss "they lost". The community pride after winning championships is evidenced by the increase in the sales of merchandise, people are proud of to identify themselves with their community.

Kind of hand to hand with self-esteem goes companionship as a motive to fandom. Fans typically attend sport events with others like family or friends. Compared to other media content, watching sporting events with others has been argued to provide a broader set of opportunities for

communication and information sharing. In research this phenomenon has been called sports encounter. This means fans sharing a common knowledge of teams, players and even the sport in general. Fans share a commitment and an enthusiasm for the game, and they have a common set of assumption about the appropriate time for conversation. Sociologists have claimed watching and participating in sports being an outlet for men to share their feelings with other men. (Kahle & Close 2011, 71-72)

Last but critically important motive is the group affiliation. Being a social being makes people want to feel connectedness with others. Researchers indicate that the fundamental need of love and belongingness, lead to forming and maintaining connections with others. Sharing same interests and desires is a good way to connect with others, for example a fandom of a certain sport club. Beyond the opportunity to satisfy identification needs, the affiliation motive of fandom allows the fan the opportunity to connect something beyond ourselves. Intriguing research shows that this broader connection allows people to transcend their innate fear of death. When confronted with the inevitability of their own death, fans clung to their team allegiances to grasp hold of something that would extend beyond their own existence. (Kahle & Close 2011, 72-74)

3.4 Fan engagement

Huettermann, Uhrich & Koenigstorfer (2019, 1-2) studied fan engagement in team sports from the perspective of managers and fans. They define fan engagement as a central construct of customer relationship management in professional sports. Sport fandom has a wide scale of forms. Fans can support their clubs by cheering in the stands or working as volunteers, they can follow games on the stadium or from the media and use different channels online and offline. All these interactions have been subsumed under the concept of engagement; it can be defined as a person's investments of resources into interaction with an organization.

Fan's investment of resources can be seen as positive or negative, but generally high engagement of a fan is seen positively and beneficial for the sport club for various reasons. The clearest benefit from high fan engagement is the constant income fans provide by buying ticket, merchandise etc. despite how the team performs on the court. Highly engaged fans usually have positive impact on other consumers too for example via word-of-mouth in social media. Engaged fans can co-create value with the clubs in various ways, whether it is the atmosphere in the stadium or participation

in different volunteer activities or innovation processes. Highly engaged fans can bring in higher revenues and reduce costs. (Huettermann et al. 2019, 2)

Although, fan engagement is seen as positive phenomenon and clubs want to have better and better engagement level with their fans, it can have negative effects. Fans can throw objects to the field, set up fireworks or even ran to the field during game. Negative forms are not seen only in the stadiums, disrespectful and unfavorable word-of-mouth and brawls with opposing fans are all negative forms of fan engagement. These types of interactions usually lead to lowering team's performance, increasing costs and even put other's health at risk. (Huettermann et al. 2019, 2)

Previous studies have divided fan engagement to three dimensions: management cooperation, prosocial behavior, and performance tolerance. These three dimensions have been seen positively associated with beneficial outcomes for the sport clubs. Out of these three dimensions management cooperation and performance tolerance positively correlate with purchase intentions and prosocial behavior correlates with referral intentions. (Huettermann et al. 2019, 2-3)

Fan Engagement via Social Media

As this thesis studies generation Y and Z customers, assumption that engagement through social media is crucial part of fan engagement strategy can be made. Rahman et al. (2018) studied fan engagement through social media and its effects on purchase intentions. They did not specifically talk about sport clubs, but because sport clubs are brands and businesses themselves, these theories can be applied to sport clubs too.

Social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube are nowadays good ways for companies and sport clubs to increase customer brand engagement (CBE). Social media is often utilized by companies and sport clubs to engage with followers and fans. As there are many available platforms, marketers should identify to what extend each platform interacts with others or the connectedness of social networking sites. (Rahman et al. 2018)

Rahman et al. (2018) describe starting the customer engagement process in social network:

“Consumer engagement on a social networking site begins by establishing a connection between oneself and a brand page. Engagement is what the public feel about social media content and what they do about it, including searching for, commenting on, and sharing content online.”

When people engage in social media by “liking” or “retweeting”, they tend to do it through their common networks. Engaged customers then exhibit consumer empowerment, connection, and commitment. Engaging with both the online brand community and brand are closely related and online brand community then enhances consumer brand interactions. CBE generates customer’s levels of brand activity-related thought process and elaboration; this proves us that consumer engagement is a committed act of looking for information. (Rahman et al. 2018)

Rahman et al. (2018) studied the customer engagement in relation to purchase intentions of customer. Purchase intentions in this means customer’s willingness to buy and repurchase. In previous studies, there has been suggestions that consumer interactions in social networks lead to recommendations and purchase intentions. This means engaged customers are more willing to purchase brand products or services their community suggests. When customers follow your page on social networks, it increases their viewing of advertisements and then increases their awareness and purchase intentions.

Rahman et al. (2018) say that the studies about fan engagement in social networks have shaped companies’ goals in engagement:

“Considering the value of fans for a company, companies are now trying to increase the depth of commitment and loyalty among fans, which will affect the purchase intentions of friend of the fans. Fan-page follow is a state of brand involvement/attachment action, and higher involvements can create positive attitude towards products and brands. Increased interaction via social network and community membership will influence purchase intention and change customer behaviors towards brand.”

4 Results

4.1 Background

In the survey responders age and occupational status were asked as a background information. Most of the responders were either 18 – 25 years old (31%) or over 35 years old (40%). When looking at the occupational status 44% of the responders were in employment and 37% were either high school/vocational school students or university/university of applied sciences students. For the purposes of the research and presenting results more clearly, responders have been later in the thesis divided to two age groups: under 35-year-olds and over 35-year-olds.

Before collecting answers about game-events and social media engagement, responders were asked how much they follow basketball overall and specifically Kouvot games in the arena or via TV. From these answers we can see that responders are quite active followers of basketball and Kouvot. Over 70% of the responders say that they watch/follow Finnish basketball at least once a week, 50% do that multiple times a week (see Figure 3).

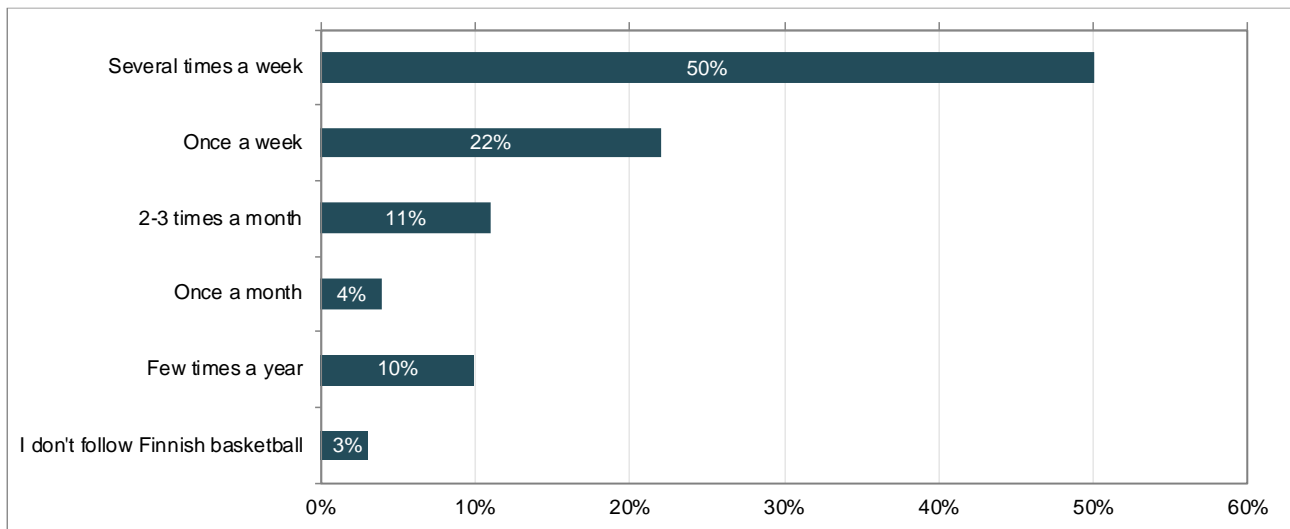


Figure 3. How much responders follow Finnish basketball. (n=88)

When asked about the time responders follow Kouvot during the last year in the arena or via TV, the effect of Covid-19 can be seen. During the last year Kouvot has been forced to play in empty arena like most sport clubs in Finland regardless of the sport (see Figure 4).

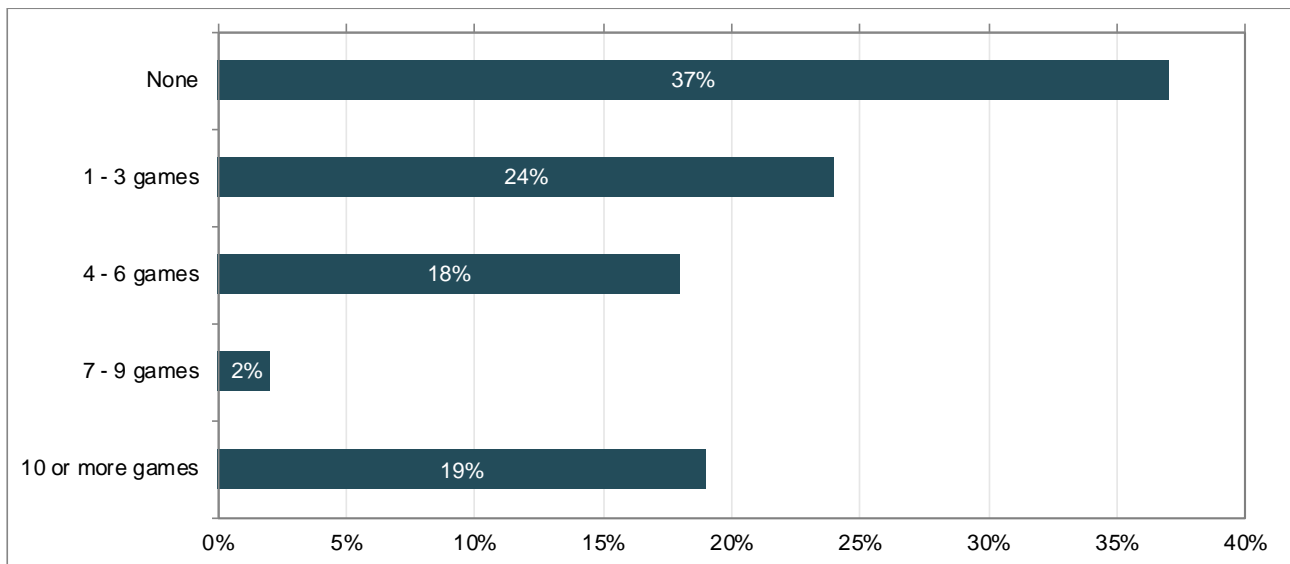


Figure 4. How many Kouvot games responders have watched live in the arena during last year. (n=88)

But when looking at how much responders have watched games from TV, 40% of the responders have watched over 10 games and total of 70% at least 4 games (see Figure 5). From this data we

can assume, that Kouvoť gains quite much interest from the responders. From these responds the conclusion can be made, that the survey did not reach new potential fans and customers so well and the results will give more the answer on how we can motivate current customers and make the game-events more interesting to them.

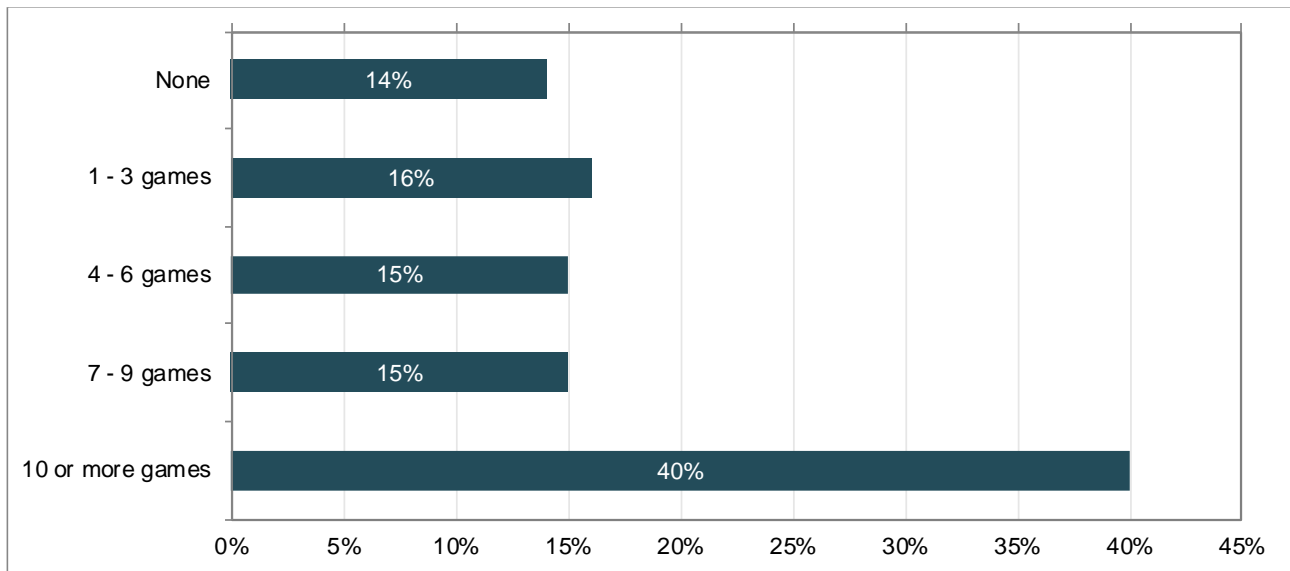


Figure 5. How many games of Kouvoť responders have watched from TV during last year. (n=88)

4.2 Fan engagement

One key element in this research was the engagement level of responders to Kouvoť. Responders were asked, how they would describe their relation to Kouvoť. Do they see themselves as fans, casual followers or they are not even interested in Kouvoť. In addition to responder's own description of their engagement with Kouvoť, engagement in this instance was measured by the number of games watched live or from TV. In addition to that responder's social media engagement and desire for new type of social media content were studied. Responders were asked about the channels they use to follow Kouvoť and in what social media channels new content would be wanted. One aspect of the social media engagement and usage was the channels responders use to get information about Kouvoť home games.

57% of the responders described themselves as fans of Kouvoť. Of the remaining responders 19% described them being casual followers and 19% chose the option "other". Most of those

responders who answered “other”, were either volunteer workers or current / former junior players. 5% of the responders did not know how to describe their relation (see Figure 6).

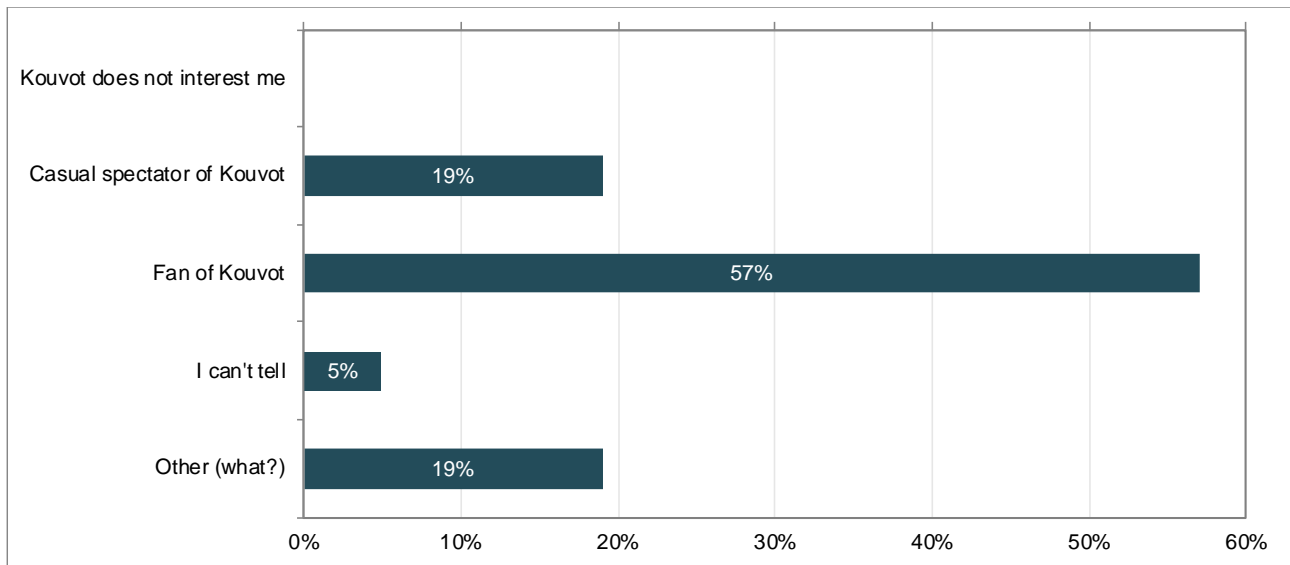


Figure 6. How would responders describe their relation with Kouvot. (n=88)

The main social media channels Kouvot use are Facebook and Instagram. They have Twitter and YouTube accounts, but those are not used as much as Facebook and Instagram. Overall, 77% of responders followed Kouvot on Facebook and 72% on Instagram. Only 14% followed Kouvot on Twitter and 11% on YouTube, this gives a clear data, that according to this research Twitter and YouTube are not important channels for Kouvot. When we sort the responds by responder’s age, we can see differences in social media following.

Every over 35-years-old responder follows Kouvot on Facebook, but 63% of them follows Kouvot on Instagram. Facebook seems to be the main channel for most of the responders, but clearly younger responders use Instagram. The main channel for under 35-year-olds seems to be Instagram, where 77% of the responders from that group follow Kouvot. The big difference is in Facebook following as 62% of under 35-year-olds follow Kouvot there. With these results, an indication of Facebook not being the most efficient channel to create content for generation Z consumers.

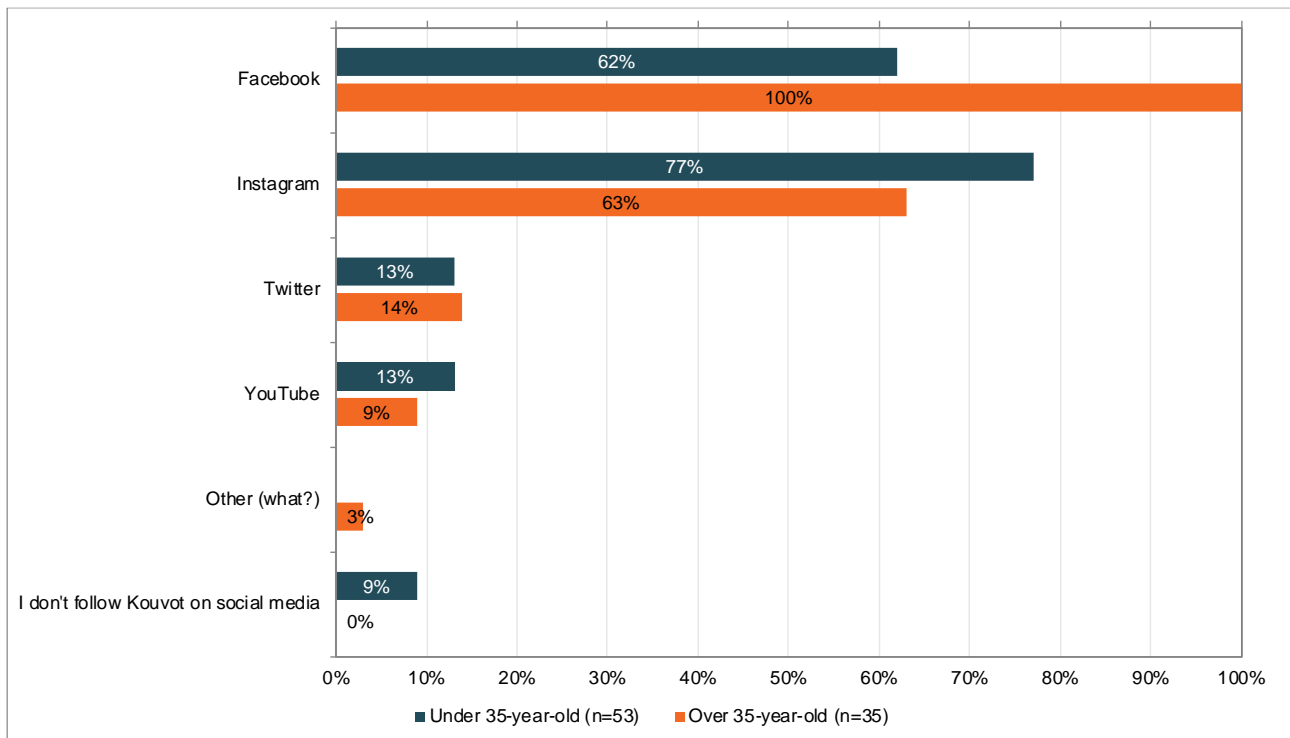


Figure 7. On what social media channel responders follow Kouvot.

After finding out, on which channels responders currently follow Kouvot, responders asked if there was some new channel, they would like to see Kouvot create content. From those answers we can see the evolution and change in social media. Younger responders would like to see content created in Snapchat and especially TikTok, but older responders did not know if they would like to see content on some new channels and seem to be pretty satisfied with the channels used at the moment (see Figure 8). The number of the responds is not large, but for younger generations, especially generation-Z customers TikTok might be a channel to consider being used to create content.

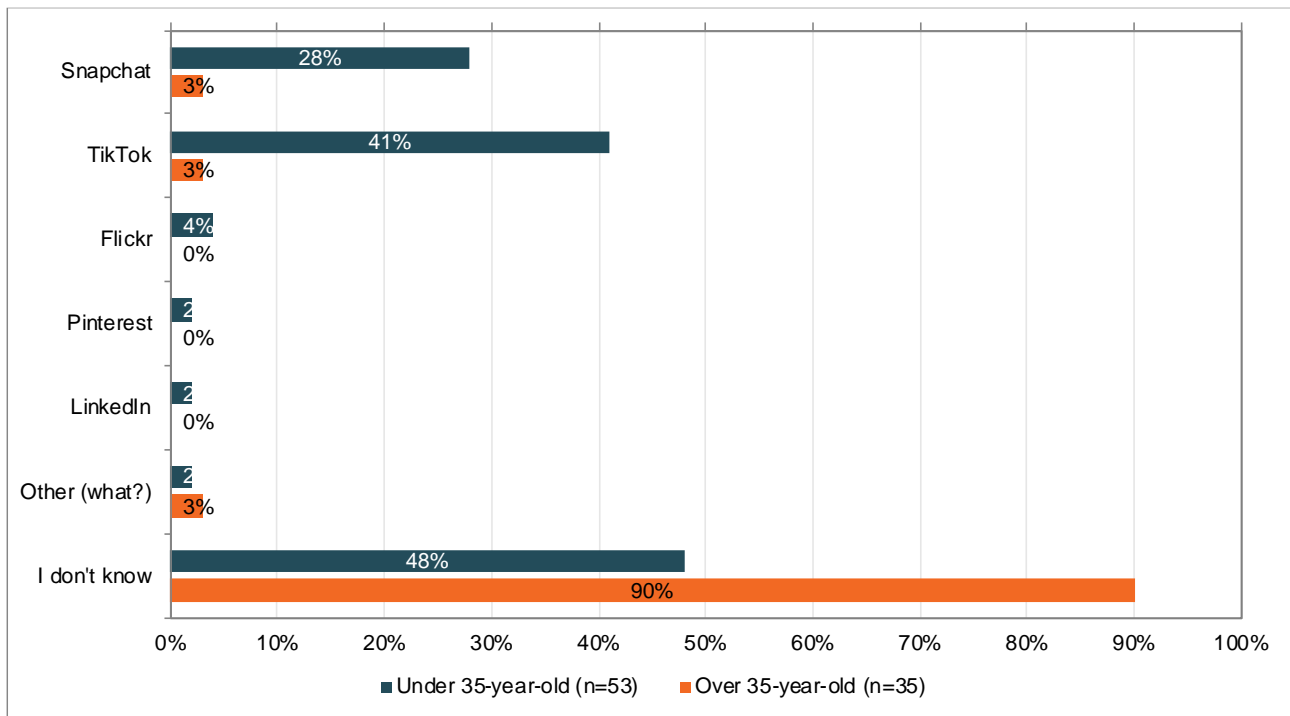


Figure 8. Which new social media channel would responders like to see Kouvot create content.

Overall, it can be said that responders were quite engaged with Kouvot as over 75% of the responders describe themselves at least casual followers. When adding the volunteers etc. who answered “other” the percentage goes up to 95%. It is fair to assume that volunteers, own junior players etc. are some of what engaged with Kouvot.

4.3 Game-event

The main purpose of the thesis was to find out, what generation Y and Z customers value in game-events and is there something that would motivate them even more to attend games live. For these questions, 4 different questions were asked in the survey. First responders had opportunity to answer two open question: name 1-3 things you expect from a game and name 1-3 which could increase your interest and motivation to attend games. After those questions, responders were given two more structured questions. First responders were asked how important they feel certain features are in a good game-event (see attachment 1. Survey frame, question 12). Last we gave responders certain new features for game-events and asked how much those features would increase their interest and motivation to attend games (see attachment 1. Survey frame, question

13). In both questions responders were given a 5-step scale from “not at all important” / “does not increase my interest at all” to “extremely important” / “Increases my interest very much”.

Current game-events and expectations

When asked about the expectations responders have about the home game-events of Kouvo, there were couple of features that repeated in answers. Most expected thing was exciting and entertaining game and Kouvo winning the game. These are things the organization can't really promise and have impact on otherwise than trying to build as competitive as possible roster. Also, a very common answer and expectation was good atmosphere and social interaction. Both these are also almost impossible for the organization to provide, but it can try to improve the atmosphere as much as they can. Music, player introductions, play-by-play calling etc. can improve the atmosphere and get the crowd excited. One possibility could be trying to form a small fan group which starts the cheering and chanting. At the end of the day, it is kind of at crowd's responsibility to build the final atmosphere, organization can only give tools and boost to that.

When looking at, how important certain features are in a good game-event according to the responders, there are few clear most important features. 66% of the responders thought atmosphere is very important and it clearly most important thing in a good game-event, as it was the one of the two features with median answer of “extremely important”, other being an exciting game. After those two features the most important features seemed to be play-by-play calling, player introduction and representation and the event facilities. The least important feature according to answers was competitions on the breaks. Overall, majority of the features listed had over 60% of the responders say they were at least important for a good game-event. (See Table 1)

Table 1. The importance of certain features in a good game-event.

	Not at all important	A little important	Fairly important	Important	Extremely important
Overall atmosphere in the event	0 %	1.1%	5.7%	27.3%	65.9%
Music	1.1%	14.8%	27.3%	32.9%	23.9%
Play-by-play calling	0 %	2.3%	11.3%	48.9%	37.5%
Competitions during breaks	17 %	36.4%	26.1%	15.9%	4.6%
Customer service	0 %	5.7%	14.8%	38.6%	40.9%
Chance to spend time with family and friends	0 %	9.1%	18.2%	35.2%	37.5%
Exciting game	0 %	0 %	10.2%	39.8%	50 %
Venue accessibility	0 %	5.7%	28.4%	38.6%	27.3%
Venue facilities (WC etc.)	0 %	2.3%	13.6%	46.6%	37.5%
Amount of spectators	0 %	4.6%	38.6%	40.9%	15.9%
Single player presentation	1.1%	3.4%	14.8%	47.7%	33 %
Favorite player participation	8 %	22.7%	21.6%	30.7%	17 %
Reasonable ticket prices	0 %	1.1%	25 %	43.2%	30.7%
Good seat	0 %	6.8%	23.9%	36.4%	32.9%
Crowd interaction during the event	4.5%	17 %	20.5%	34.1%	23.9%
Social media interaction during the event	13.7%	22.7%	40.9%	12.5%	10.2%
Possibility to buy merchandise	13.6%	23.9%	22.7%	30.7%	9.1%
Food and drink stands	1.1%	14.8%	19.3%	34.1%	30.7%

To get a wider perspective and understanding how the two generations and people with different relations towards Kouvot value good game-events, the data was analyzed with different sorting features. The assumption was that younger generation had different type of values about good game-event than older generation. Looking at the results, there were some clear differences, but overall, the responders' values were close to same. For both over and under 35-year-olds' the overall atmosphere and exciting game were extremely important for good game-event. The biggest difference was in the music section, where under 35-year-olds valued it as important aspect but over 35-year-olds valued it only as fairly important aspect. In addition, under 35-year-olds valued play-by-play calling little more, both before mentioned features are quite important in building the overall atmosphere and that explains why under 35-year-olds had the overall atmosphere as the most important aspect of good game-event. Where the under 35-year-olds valued more the atmosphere aspects in a game-event, for over 35-year-olds aspects like single player presentation, favorite player participation and good seat were more important than those were for younger generation. This could mean older generation responders are more engaged

with Kouvol and they don't attend events just for excitement and good atmosphere. The deeper connection has been built and there are features of real fandom attached to the event experience.

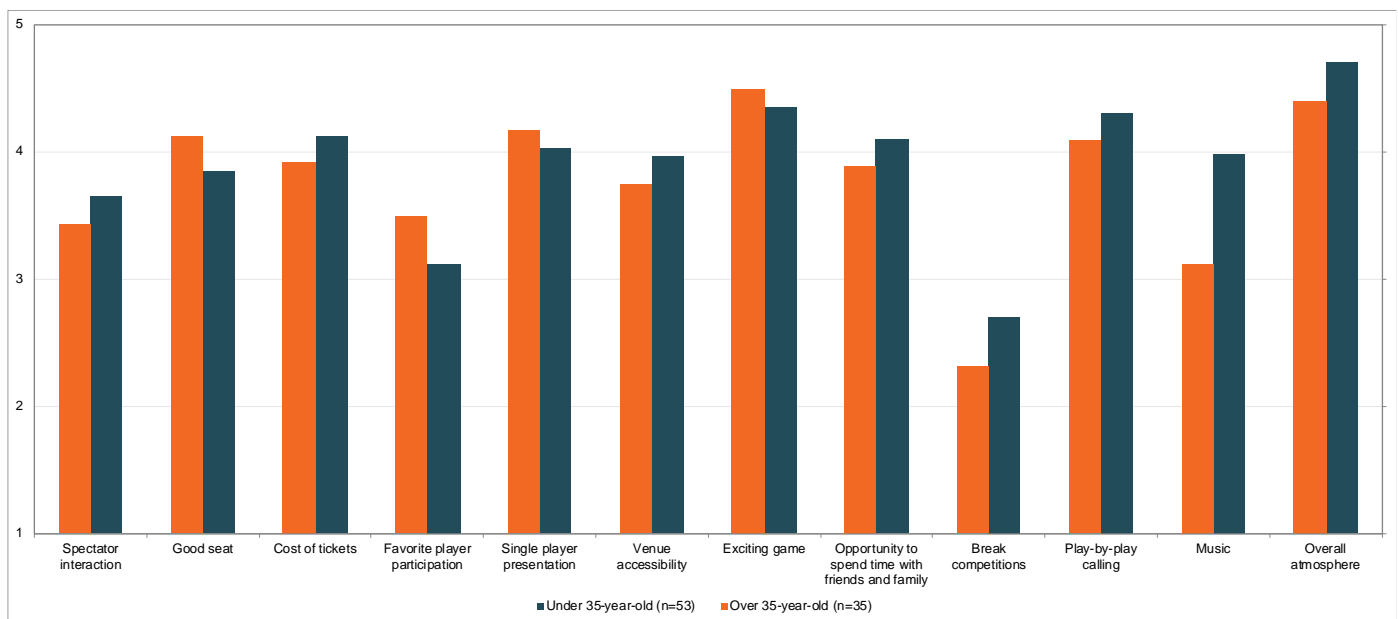


Figure 9. What different generations value in a good game-event.

As earlier mentioned in this thesis, fans tend to stand by their team and favorite players through good and bad times. This often means, fans are not so keen on how much the ticket prices etc. are. For casual customers and followers these things are more important and feature a big role, when making consumption decisions. When analyzing different groups' values in a good game-event, to simplify data responders were divided to two groups: fans and others (casual customers, volunteers etc.). Assumption was that there would be quite clear differences between the groups.

Like with different age groups, between these two customer sections could not be found a huge difference on the values of good game-events. The answers still give us some understanding and confirmation about the key factors for consumption of Kouvol's home games. Reasonable ticket prices, good seat, accessibility of the venue and food / drink stands were all more important for casual fans and others than for the responders who identified themselves as fans. Fans valued in their respond's player representations and favorite player participation as well as opportunity to buy merchandise and social media interaction during the event. Both groups had the overall atmosphere and the thrill of the game as most important features of a good game-event. (See

graph 11. How important different features are in a good game-event between customer segments)

Overall, even with quite small sample size we can see the truth behind that customers who identify themselves as fans are easier to please and after the relation is created, they don't value same features that much in their consumption process as other customers. Organization (in this case Kouvol) need a way to get these casual followers and others even more interested, so the organization can believe there will be customers and fans in the stands in the future too, without so much pressure to succeed and win all the time in the competition. This is not an easy task by any means and on aim of this thesis was maybe find out, what improvements could there to be made for younger generations and casual followers to interest even more about Kouvol.

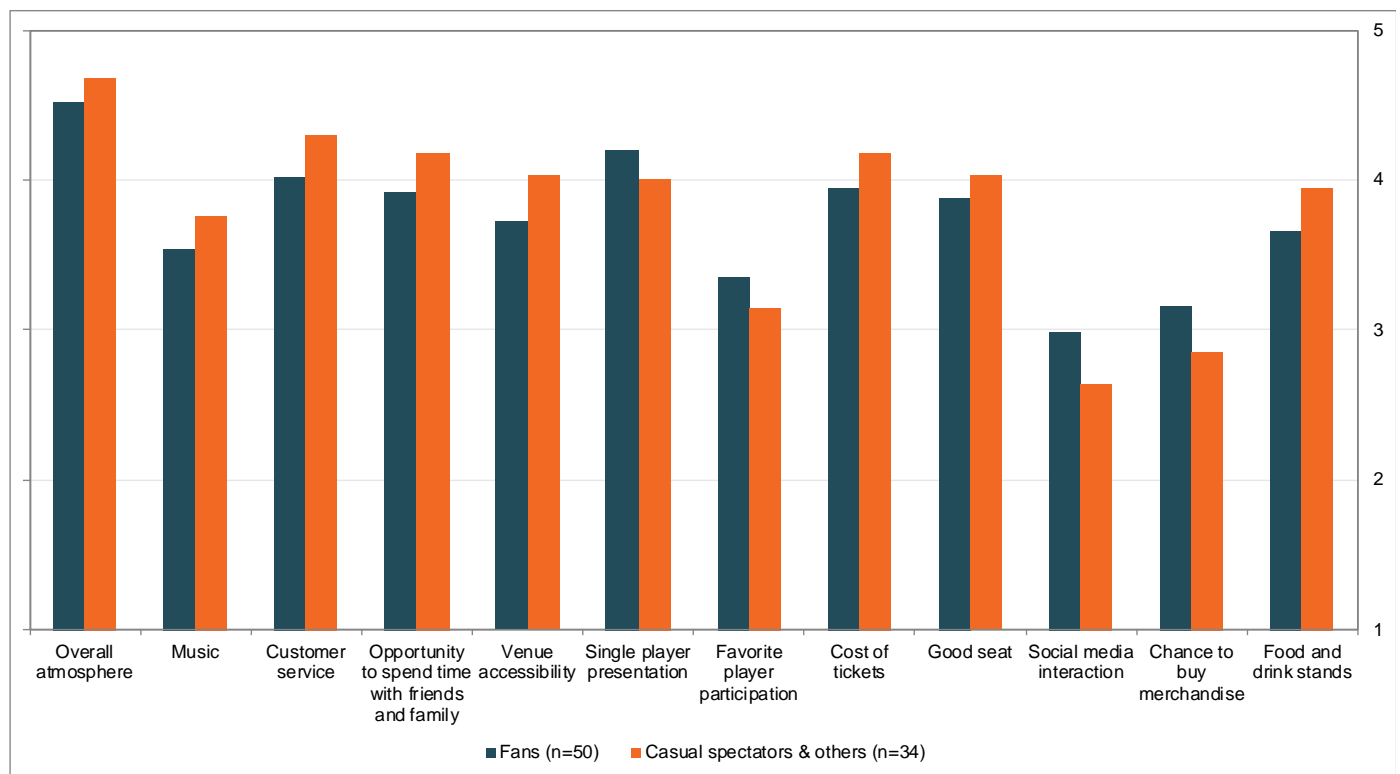


Figure 10. How important different features are in a good game-event between customer segments.

Increase of the motivation and interest of customers

The primary objective for this thesis was to find out the main motivations and interests for generation Z and Y customers to attend live basketball games. From the organization, there was clear assumption that the event needed to be developed to the direction of these generations. As told previously in this thesis, the consuming behavior of generation Z and Y differs from older generations, which currently are the main segment and audience for Kouvot. In the survey responders were given new features and elements that could be added to game-events and asked would those elements increase their motivation and interest towards the event.

As the sample size was quite small, to get better understanding and picture on the differences between younger and older generation, to analyze data on the last question, responders were divided to two groups: under 35-year-olds and over 35-year-olds. This makes both groups approximately same size and it makes data presentation and analyzing easier. This way there could be clearer differences seen too. In the question responders were given different features that could be implemented in the game-event, features like interviews, competitions, engagement through social media etc.

The scale to evaluate responder's motivation and interest was in the question verbal from "would not increase my interest at all" to "would increase my motivation very much". In the figure the responds are presented on a numerical scale, in the way that the higher the number the more it would increase responders' interest. (See Figure 11).

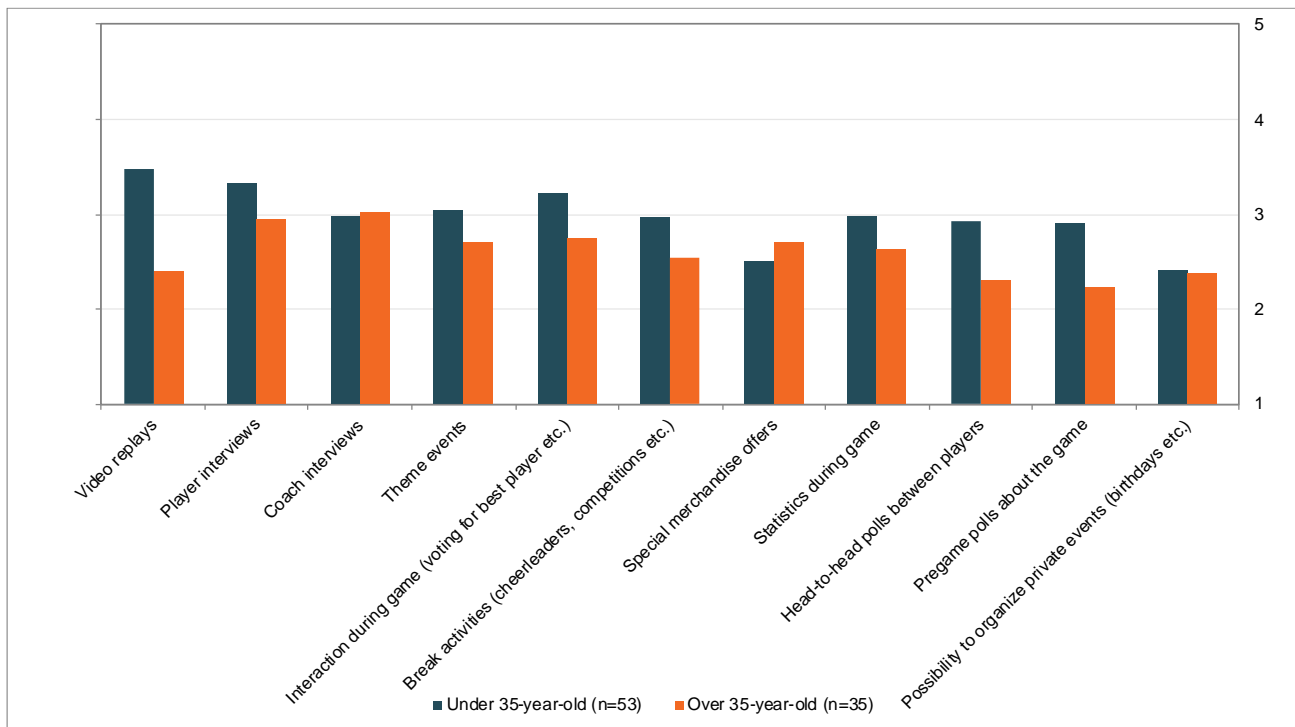


Figure 11. How much different features would increase customer's motivation to attend game-events.

From the responds, can be found a clear trend on what differences these two generations have between one another. Leading two features for under 35-year-olds were video replays on the breaks and player interviews in the event. Overall younger responders seem to give value to different types of engagement and interaction during the game. Voting for the best player in the game, statistical content, some types of polls about the game before and during the event and even head-to-head polls between two players would increase the interest about the event. For the over 35-year-olds' group different types of interviews, being it, player, coach or some type of expert / analyst interviews were the features which would increase the interest the most. For that group some type of special offers in merchandise were some of what key feature. Both groups seemed to have increase of interest if there would be some type of themes build around the game-events. With these responds, the trend of different type of interest and consuming behavior between younger and older generations can be seen. Under 35-year-olds gave all the technological and social media driven features clearly more value and said it would increase their motivation and interest.

To analyze more deeper, the under 35-year-olds' group was divided according to their own definition about the relation between them and Kouvol. Making responders who saw themselves as fans of Kouvol one, and responders who gave some other answer the other. This type of sorting was made, so there could be provided some ideas, how to motivate and increase the interest of the younger generation that do not necessarily see themselves as fans of Kouvol. These ideas would maybe give some tools for Kouvol to engage these people more and at some point, change the relation to fans.

Overall, all the given features would increase the motivation of fans more. Despite that, there are some types of features that would increase the motivation of non-fans more than other features. The non-fan segment seems to value most different type of interviews and video replays, which all are features that give customer better understanding of the game and can provide some clear features to follow during games. Different kind of theme events and interaction during the event, in example best player voting would increase the motivation for non-fans. Features requiring more in depth understanding of the game, teams, and individual players, like statistical information and some types of polls were clearly more features to increase the interest among the fans. (See figure 12)

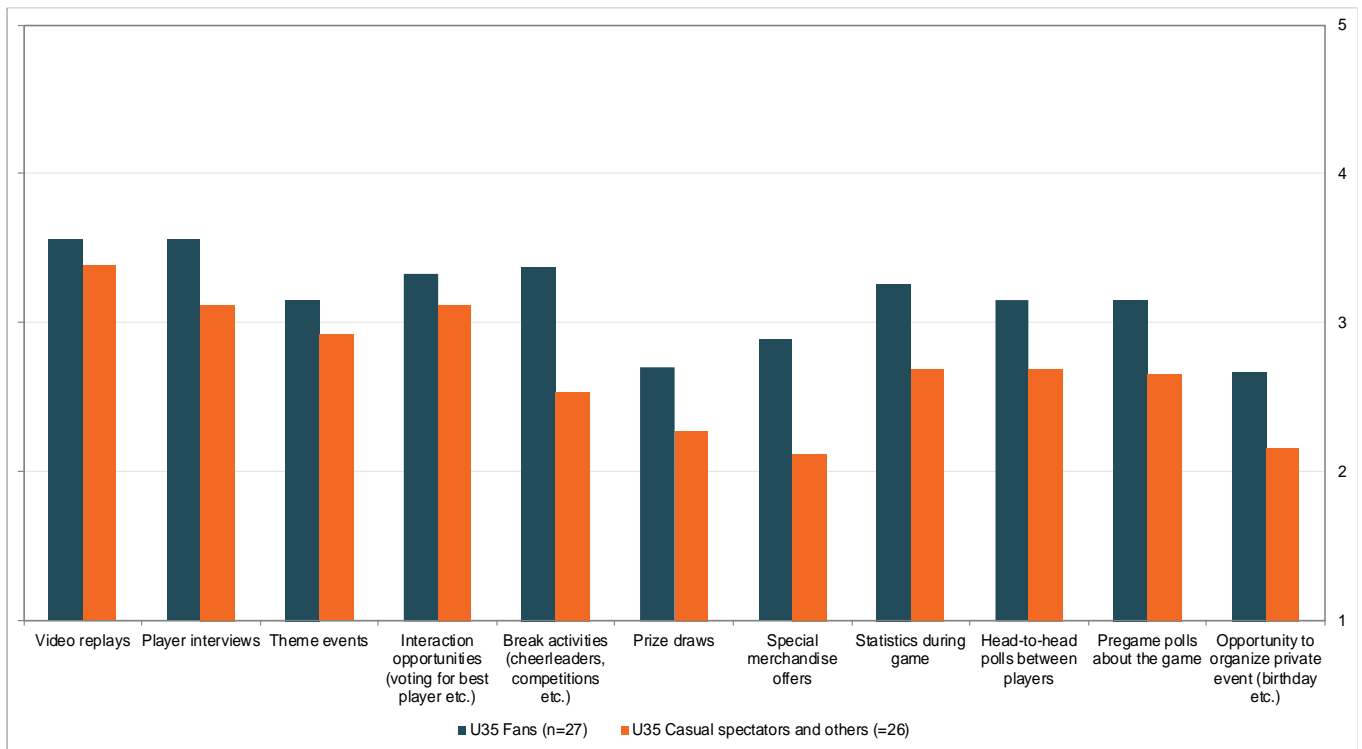


Figure 12. Comparison between under 35-year-olds in motivating features in game-events.

5 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to find out motivations of generation Z and Y consumers towards basketball game-events in the area of Kouvo. The main assumption and hypothesis were that there would be a need of change in game-events to gain the increased interest of these younger generation consumers.

The number of responds was not high, and it would be good to repeat the research again, with focusing more on the improvements on the game-event. With more responds, Kouvo could get more accurate data on what they should do, to achieve the interest of younger generation customers. Research was capable of scratching the surface of generation Y and Z motivations and interests giving some ideas for Kouvo on what to do next. Most of the responders were under 35-year-olds and belonged to the exact group, which was under the study. Because there was quite big number of responders, who did not finish answering the survey, it can be assumed that the survey was either too long or questions difficult to understand. Despite that, questions provided information, which was wanted for the research. Overall, the research can be seen successful start for Kouvo to change their spectator demographic younger.

The main research question was determined as what the key factors are to increase interest and motivation to attend Kouvot's game-events among generation Z and Y consumers. When analyzing the data, can be seen clear trend of digitalization and social media affecting in live sports. The consumers of generation Z and Y would like to have some added features in the events. The overall atmosphere and quality of the game are important, but those are not necessarily enough to get consumers in the arena.

For fan engagement for generation Z consumers, social media was shown to be important channel. When studying the current engagement in social media channels, there was a clear change happening between generations. Facebook is losing its' value as a channel and Instagram has become the main channel. In addition, younger generation seemed to have desire for new content in new channels, especially on TikTok. Older generation seemed happy with current channels, so for them new type of content is not needed. If Kouvot wants to gain attention of younger generation better, TikTok should be in consideration of a marketing channel. Kouvot has young players on their team, these players could be used in TikTok marketing as they belong to generation Z themselves. Possible generation Z consumers might get interested, when they see their own generation marketing and making content on the social media channels they use. In addition to using players make content, Kouvot could use well known TikTok content makers in Kouvola to cooperate on some type of marketing actions.

Social media gives the organization a simple way to increase engagement during games and add more content for the consumers. For example, in Instagram Kouvot could publish some polls about the game during the event and that way increase the interest towards the game as the audience at the arena would then follow the game more intensively. In social media Kouvot could also give audience a possibility to have an impact on who will be awarded as best player in the game etc. These type of small additions to social media would easily increase the engagement as the consumers would probably deepen their relation and following of the sport and team. Organizing polls and voting in social media does not require Kouvot to make financial investment, only need for organizing them would be to have one person in the organization to do it and marketing this new feature so that people know something new is going on.

Social media polls and voting would be a simple first step as said. That type of engagement has been used in Finnish sports for some time, not so much during game-events but in other marketing and engagement actions. For Kouvot to do something new in Finnish sport scene, a creation of a phone app to give consumers behind the scenes material about the team, statistical data, news etc. material for the fans could be a possibility. The app could give Kouvot a bigger opportunity and more possibilities for during the game engagement. Several football clubs in England for example have their own app for the fans, where they give even more detailed content for the followers than they give in social media. So, the idea of phone app is not completely new, but in Finland the question would probably financial. Creation of the app would need a financial investment and the app would probably need updates and maintaining, which would make a need to hire employee or third party to run that app and make sure it works. Because in Finnish basketball there is not that much money involved, every financial investment should be carefully evaluated, this could be a too much at the moment for Kouvot.

Overall, the research shows that some type of change would be needed to be done to increase the interest of younger generations. Social media engagement through polls and voting in Instagram and Twitter are a simple way to increase engagement and as a result of the research, this would be recommended for Kouvot to do. In addition to that, some highlights and video replays on a big screen during the game would give more value to customers according to their responses. As teams in Korisliiga have access to video material of the games, this would not be too difficult addition to be made either. Neither of these additions to game-events would not require big financial investments and can be executed with the channels and tools used at the moment. At best these additions and improvements can even make the overall atmosphere in the games better, which can be a huge factor to gain more audience in the stands and that way give Kouvot a bigger audience in the area of Kouvola.

This research shows that Kouvot has done a good job to engage with its' followers and consumers as over 50% of the responders would their relationship with Kouvot as fans. Over 75% of the responders describe themselves at least a casual fans / follower. This gives important feedback that Kouvot has been able to gain their spot in their current followers' life. With the addition of the improvements and ideas provided in this thesis, Kouvot has an opportunity to gain the interest

of younger generations and change the demography of their audience younger, which is the ultimate goal for the future.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Survey frame

Kouvojen ottelutapahtuman kiinnostavuus

Pakolliset kentät merkitään asteriskilla (*) ja ne tulee täyttää lomakkeen viimeistelemiseksi.

1. Ikäsi *

- Alle 18-vuotias
- 18 - 25 vuotta
- 26 - 35 vuotta
- Yli 35-vuotias

2. Ammatillinen asema *

- Opiskelija (lukio / ammattikoulu)
- Opiskelija (korkeakoulu)
- Työllinen
- Työtön
- Yrittäjä
- Varusmies / siviilipalvelusmies
- Muu (mikä?)

3. Kuinka paljon seuraat kotimaista koripalloa paikan päällä tai television välityksellä?

- Useita kertoja viikossa
- Kerran viikossa
- 2-3 kertaa kuukaudessa
- Kerran kuukaudessa
- Muutamia kertoja vuodessa
- En seuraa kotimaista koripalloa

4. Kuinka monta Kouvojen kotiottelua olet käynyt katsomassa paikan päällä viimeisen vuoden aikana?

- En yhtään
- 1 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 tai enemmän

5. Kuinka monta Kouvojen ottelua olet katsonut televisiosta viimeisen vuoden aikana?

- En yhtään
- 1 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 tai enemmän

6. Millaisena koet suhteesi Kouvoihin?

- Kouvot ei kiinnosta minua
- Olen Kouvojen satunnaiskatsoja
- Olen Kouvojen fani
- En osaa sanoa
- Muu (mikä?)

7. Missä seuraavista sosiaalisen median kanavissa seuraat Kouvoja?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Muu (Mikä?)
- En seuraa Kouvoja missään sosiaalisen median kanavassa

8. Toivoisitko Kouvoilta sosiaalisen median sisältöä johonkin seuraavista kanavista?

- Snapchat
- TikTok
- Flickr
- Pinterest
- LinkedIn
- Muu (mikä?)
- En osaa sanoa

9. Mistä kanavista haet tietoa Kouvojen kotiottelusta?

- Seuran omat kotisivut
- Suomen Koripalloliiton kotisivut (Basket.fi)
- Sanomalehti
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Tienvarsimainonta
- Muu (mistä?)
- En mistään kanavista

10. Mainitse 1-3 asiaa, joita ennakkoon odotat Kouvojen kotiottelulta1 2 3 **11. Mainitse 1-3 asiaa, jotka lisääisivät kiinnostustasi osallistua Kouvojen kotiotteluun**1 2 3

12. Kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat asiat ovat mielestäsi hyvässä ottelutapahtumassa? *

	Ei lainkaan tärkeä	Hieman tärkeä	Melko tärkeä	Tärkeä	Erittäin tärkeä
Tapahtuman tunnelma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Musiikki	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ottelukuulutus / -selostus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taukokilpailut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asiakaspalvelu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mahdollisuus viettää aikaa perheen tai ystävien kanssa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ottelun jännittävyys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tapahtumapaikan saavutettavuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tapahtumapaikan tilat (katsomo, wc yms.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yleisömäärä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pelaajien esittely ja esiintuonti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suosikkipelaajan osallistuminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kohtuuhintaiset pääsyliput	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hyvä istumapaikka	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yleisön vuorovaikutus ottelutapahtumassa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sosiaalisen median vuorovaikutus ottelutapahtumassa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fanituotteiden ostomahdollisuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Kuinka paljon seuraavat asiat lisääisivät mielenkiintoasi osallistua Kouvojen ottelutapahtumaan? *

	Ei lisää kiinnostustani lainkaan	Lisää kiinnostustani hieman	Lisää kiinnostustani melko paljon	Lisää kiinnostustani paljon	Lisää kiinnostustani erittäin paljon
Videousinnat ottelukatkoilla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pelaajien haastattelut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valmentajien haastattelut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erilaiset teemaottelut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vuorovaikutusmahdollisuudet ottelussa (esim. parhaan pelaajan äänestys)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tauko-ohjelmat (kilpailut, livemusiikki, cheerleaderit yms.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arvonnat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asiantuntijahaastattelut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erilaiset tarjoukset fanituotemyynnissä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yhteistyökumppanien toimipisteet ottelutapahtumassa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pelit (esim. ilmakiekko, minikoripallon heitto yms.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ottelun aikaiset tilastosisällöt (esim. yksilöllisiä tilastoja)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ottelun aikaiset veikkaukset (esim. yhden pelaajan pistemäärä ottelussa)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kahden pelaajan väliset ennakkoveikkaukset (esim. kumpi tekee enemmän pisteitä)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mahdollisuus yksityistilaisuuksien järjestämiseen (syntymäpäivät, polttarit yms.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>