Contextual Inquiry Research Report

Research report for contextual inquiry: NFL fans and long-form content consumption



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INTRODUCTION

The Orange and Brown Report is at a critical juncture in its evolution. Barry McBride, the dedicated owner and publisher, has nurtured this small business through multiple iterations since its inception in 1995. Now, as he looks to secure the platform's relevance for the next generation, Barry seeks to understand the preferences of Generation Z when it comes to consuming long-form content. He has two main goals: to uncover how NFL-enthused members of this demographic engage with in-depth football coverage, and to explore their broader habits of consuming detailed content about other topics they are passionate about. By researching these questions, the Orange and Brown Report can adapt to meet the expectations of a younger, digitally native audience.

This project aims to provide actionable insights through contextual inquiry, a research method that combines observation and targeted questioning. Following the principles outlined by Erika Hall in *Just Enough Research*, this study will involve observing participants in their natural environments as they engage with their chosen content. Two participants are passionate NFL fans, observed during their game-watching rituals, while the other participant is someone immersed in a non-sports-related hobby involving long-form content. By immersing ourselves in their habits, preferences, and motivations, we can uncover meaningful patterns in how Generation Z interacts with content they care about. These findings will be delivered in a comprehensive report to Barry, enabling him to refine the Orange and Brown Report's strategy for engaging a new generation of fans.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a contextual inquiry approach to investigate Generation Z's preferences for consuming long-form content, both in the context of NFL fandom and other hobbies. The research process was conducted in five phases: recruitment, scheduling, observation, interview, and data analysis. These phases provided a comprehensive understanding of participant behaviors and motivations in their natural

settings.

Recruitment and Scheduling

Participants were recruited through a brief screening process to confirm they met the study criteria. Two participants were 21 year old full-time college students, also NFL enthusiasts, while the other participant was engaged in a video game as their hobby. Once recruited, the two participants were scheduled for an observational session at a time and location reflective of their typical content consumption habits. For the NFL fans, this coincided with watching the *Thursday Night Football* game: the Detroit Lions versus the Green Bay Packers., while for the non-sports hobbyist, the session involved activities such as reading in-depth articles, viewing detailed tutorials, or exploring thematic videos.

Observation and Interview

During the scheduled sessions, I silently observed participants in their natural environments to document how they engaged with long-form content. We watched the Green Bay Packers and Detroit Lions game for *Thursday Night Football* on *Amazon Prime*. This observation phase captured authentic behaviors and interactions without interference. All of the participants were Detroit Lions fans. After the observation, a semi-structured interview was conducted with participant 1 to explore their habits and preferences in greater depth. The interview questions focused on the types of platforms used, preferred content formats, and the motivations behind their engagement with long-form content. This combination of observation and interviewing provided both behavioral data and contextual insights.

Data Analysis

After completing the interview session, the collected data—including observation notes, audio recordings, and interview responses—were analyzed to identify patterns and trends. The analysis highlighted commonalities in Generation Z's preferences for consuming long-form content, both within the NFL context and across other hobbies. Seen below is an image of the two NFL fan participants watching the game, and the audio recording from the interview with Participant 1.

NFL FAN ANALYSIS

The interview with Participant 1 revealed several key insights into their preferences and habits related to consuming NFL content, highlighting a blend of traditional and emerging media platforms. This participant's content consumption habits demonstrate a preference for brevity and accessibility, relying heavily on platforms like TikTok and Twitter for quick updates and analysis, while also using television for live game viewing. These habits align with broader trends among Generation Z, who often gravitate toward mobile-friendly platforms that deliver concise, engaging content.

While the participant occasionally conducts independent research on players, their primary engagement with long-form content is indirect and situational, often driven by curiosity sparked during or after games. They enjoy exploring advanced metrics to deepen their understanding of players' performance, suggesting a potential interest in data-driven storytelling. However, their interaction with post-game content is limited, with the notable exception of Dan Campbell interviews, reflecting a more selective approach to supplementary content. Social interactions also play a role, as daily discussions with a roommate reinforce their connection to the NFL. Overall, this participant values content that enhances their understanding of the game in real time, particularly through live stats and quick, digestible analysis, while demonstrating less interest in traditional long-form formats like detailed post-game breakdowns.

During the game, Participant 1 revealed that they and five friends had placed a small $2 parlay bet on three specific plays by the Lions, and one by the Packers.. This friendly wager added an extra layer of excitement to their viewing experience, as they closely followed the game to see how their predictions played out. Unfortunately, only two out of the four predicted plays were successful, resulting in Participant 1 losing their $2 stake. Despite the loss, the parlay appeared to enhance the social and engaging aspects of watching the game, reflecting how casual betting can contribute to the enjoyment of NFL fandom.



Participant 2 (left) and Participant 1 (right) watching the Packers and Lions game. I was observing the participants from the couch on the right of the photo.

NON-NFL FAN ANALYSIS

For the sake of this study, the non-NFL fan participant will be referred to as “Participant 3”. Participant 3 demonstrates a deep appreciation for long-form and technical content, reflecting their interest in the engineering-driven aspects of the sport. Platforms like YouTube and Netflix are their go-to sources, with YouTube standing out for its ability to provide in-depth race analyses, technical breakdowns, and STEM-focused discussions. They gravitate toward content that offers a comprehensive understanding of Formula One, such as Formula One’s official TechTalks, which cater to their curiosity about the sport's engineering complexities. This preference highlights their desire to engage with material that educates and informs, rather than superficial commentary or shallow hot takes.

Their consumption patterns show a nuanced balance between active and passive engagement, often influenced by their mood or external activities. For instance, they prefer active engagement, like taking notes or reflecting on what they watch, when

they’re multitasking with schoolwork or gaming. However, during downtime, they lean toward casual browsing, where platforms like Twitter provide quick hits of relevant F1 opinions or news. This flexibility in consumption styles allows them to seamlessly integrate their interest in Formula One into various aspects of their daily life, maintaining a consistent connection with their hobby.

Socially, the Formula One fan values thoughtful discourse but avoids the often-polarizing nature of online communities. While they discuss Formula One extensively with their roommate, they limit online interactions to commenting on smaller YouTube channels, where their contributions feel more meaningful. This selective participation underscores a preference for authentic, constructive engagement over combative or performative exchanges. Overall, their approach to Formula one content is driven by a blend of intellectual curiosity, a desire for meaningful connections, and an appreciation for content that dives deeply into the sport’s intricacies.



Participant 3 watching a Youtube video about the latest Formula One race, while they play a low-attention video game on the side

SUMMARY

This study highlights distinct yet complementary approaches to engaging Generation Z with long-form content, offering valuable insights for the Orange and Brown Report's future strategy. Participant 1, an NFL fan, demonstrates a preference for concise, real-time content, relying on platforms like TikTok and Twitter for quick updates and analysis. Their habits underscore the importance of delivering mobile-friendly, accessible content that enhances live experiences, such as integrating live stats or social features like casual betting and game-day interactions. On the other hand, Participant 3, a Formula One enthusiast, illustrates the appeal of long-form, educational content for those seeking deeper engagement. Their preference for YouTube and Netflix as platforms for detailed analyses and technical discussions points to the value of creating narrative-driven, intellectually stimulating material.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Rough Transcription of the interview with Participant 1: NFL Fan

Interview with Participant 1 Audio File Link

- How do you typically follow NFL content when you're not watching a game? (e.g., podcasts, articles, YouTube videos, etc.)

Twitter for checking out the league, guy on tiktok does 5 min player analysis for games.

- What type of content do you prefer when you want a deeper understanding of the game (e.g., player analysis, team strategies, overall league news)?

Not really, sometimes independent research about players in leagues

- Which platforms or devices do you typically use to consume NFL content? (TV, apps, mobile, websites)

Twitter on the phone and the tv for watching the game

- How do you decide where to get your NFL content? Do you rely on specific sources, like YouTube channels or websites, for in-depth coverage?

Tiktok channel is my main medium for game content

- When you're watching a game, do you engage with supplementary content like live stats, commentary, or social media? How?

I enjoy keeping up with live stats, very interesting to see how the game progresses. I don't really go on twitter during the game, I just post short snippets about the game on Twitter instead

- Do you share or discuss NFL content with friends or online communities? If so, in what ways (e.g., social media, forums, group chats)?

My roommate and I discuss football almost everyday

- What do you enjoy most about long-form NFL content (e.g., analysis, player

stories, team breakdowns)?

The variety of things to keep track of in a football game, it's pretty interesting to see how it plays along in the leagues.

- How does this content enhance your enjoyment of the game or your overall understanding of the NFL?

It makes me look into more advanced metrics to determine what players are better than others.

- After a game, do you typically watch post-game content like analysis or interviews? What types of content are you most likely to engage with?

Doesn't typically watch post-game content, the only post game interview I watch is Dan Campbell (Detroit Lions coach)

Rough Transcription of the interview with Participant 3: Formula One Fan

Interview with Participant 3 Audio File Link

- What types of long-form content do you enjoy related to your hobby? (e.g., tutorials, podcasts, documentaries, in-depth articles)

I read articles, look at people's opinion on Twitter, watch A LOT of Youtube videos about Formula One, tried to watch the Netflix series about James Hunt (Formula One racer from the 70's), but didnt like it that much, but [Netflix] just put out a Ayrton Senna, so I watched a bit of that.

- How do you usually find new content related to your hobby? Do you rely on specific platforms or communities?

It's mostly just Youtube and Twitter, and then whatever platforms the documentaries happen to be on.

- What platforms do you primarily use to consume long-form content about your hobby? (e.g., YouTube, blogs, streaming services)

Youtube, Twitter, Netflix.

- Are there specific websites, apps, or platforms that you find most effective for engaging with this type of content?

[Same as above]

- When you're consuming content, do you prefer active engagement (e.g., taking notes, pausing to reflect) or passive consumption?

I don't know, depends on my mood. I like active when I'm trying to do things, like if I'm doing homework and I want to watch something, or if I'm playing a game and I want to watch something, I prefer active. If I'm mindlessly scrolling, I don't want to sit down and look for something while I'm just trying to have something to do while I eat, so I'll just scroll through Twitter. If I get an F1 (Formula One) post, I get an F1 post.

- What do you like most about long-form content for your hobby? Does it help you learn, get inspiration, or connect with others?

Well, there's a lot of learning in F1 because it is the most engineering focused motorsport, so I'll watch the official Formula One TechTalk (STEM form of TedTalk) on Youtube. I like that because I do learn about engineering. I like the longer (half an hour, maybe an hour long content). Shorter snippets that are like "I hate what Max (Verstappen, current racer for RedBull) did in the race today!", that's not enough. That doesn't tell me anything. When you watch an actual long video, they talk about every aspect of the race, everybody on the grid, and how they did. If you're just hearing people's opinions on just the top 5 guys, it's not interesting.

- How does long-form content contribute to your enjoyment or growth in the hobby?

- Do you interact with other people who are passionate about the same hobby? How does this influence the content you consume or how you consume it?

In real life I do, I talk to Ben (participant's roomate) about it. On the internet, not really. I've learned not to argue with people on the internet. When somebody says they hate your favorite driver, there's no point in going "Well I hate *your* favorite driver". It doesn't do anything for anybody. Occasionally, I'll leave a comment on a Youtube video, especially if it's a little tiny channel. 20 views, I'll leave comments. If

it's one of the million view Youtube videos, I'm not saying [anything], they're not going to see it.