



*knit*

# Growing Gen Z Fandom

through Social & Digital Channels



# knit

## Feedback from the Voice of Gen Z

- 🕒 60,000+ Gen Z Panel
- 🕒 Quant & Qual Research
- 🕒 City & Regional Targeting

More on Knit at: [goknit.com](https://goknit.com)

Trusted by **50+** Brands

for providing Gen Z feedback





# Sports has a Gen Z **problem**

“There’s no strategy for bringing in a 35-year-old fan for the first time. You have to make them a fan **by the time they’re 18**, or you’ll **lose them forever.**”



**Tim Ellis**  
CMO, NFL



Only  
**53%**  
of Gen Z consider  
themselves sports fans



Source: [Morning Consult](#)



In fact, **9** of **16** hobbies outrank Gen Z's preference to watch sports.

What would you rather do than watch sports?

1. Socialize / Going Out
2. Watching Movies
3. Outside Activities
4. Watching TV
5. Cooking / Dining
6. Music
7. Fitness / Workout
8. Shopping
9. Play Sports

**Knit Data:** Of the list below, which of the following would you choose to do INSTEAD OF watching sports? Select all that apply. Ranking is based on % selection. Responses greater than 50% shown here. n=423

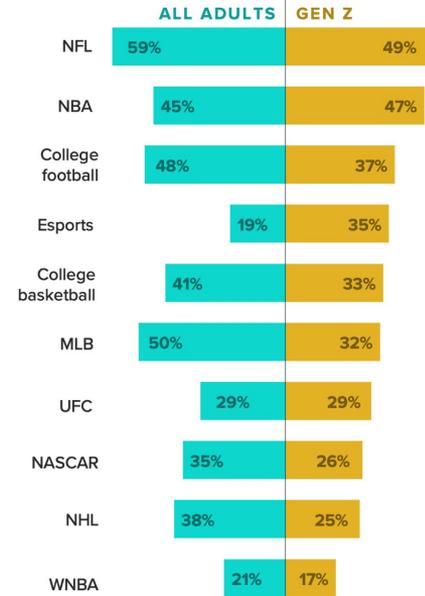
Gen Z is **less**  
interested in

**24** of **27**  
**College + Pro Sports**

vs the average adult

## Gen Z Less Interested in Most Sports Properties Than General Public

Share of respondents who identify as either  
“avid” or “casual” fans of each sport



# The Sports Industry is struggling to engage and retain Gen Z



Gen Z is **2x** more likely to **never**  
**to watch sports**

Only **1 in 4** Gen Z'ers watch live  
sports at least **once per week**  
(vs 50% of millennials)



So *why* are they not watching?

Their **Top 2** Reasons:

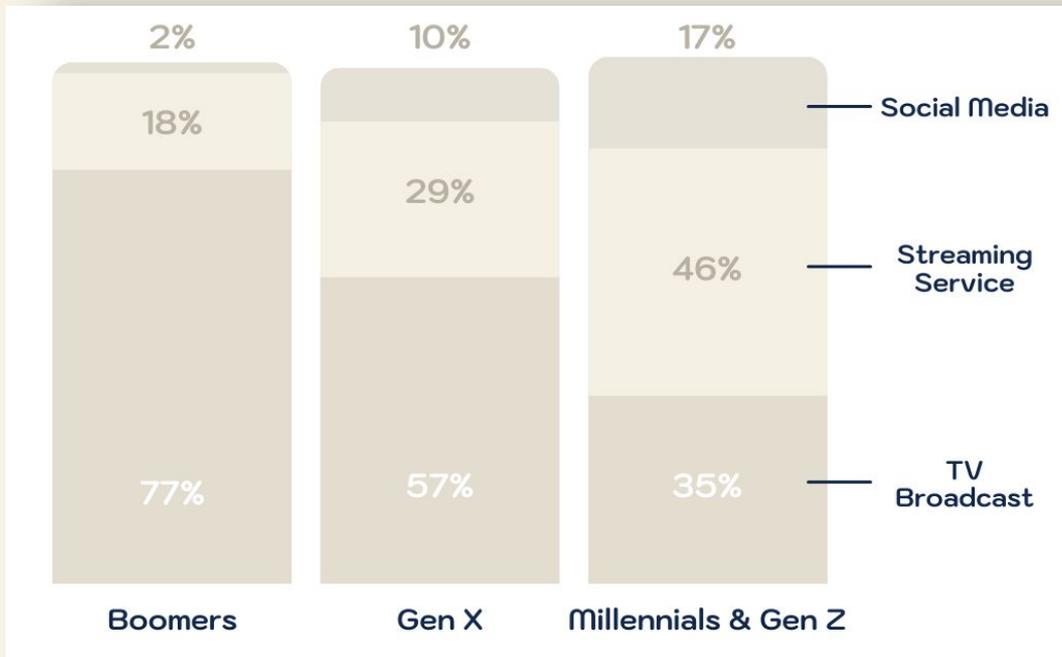
“Sports are boring to me”

“I don’t have access to games on TV or streaming”



**Knit Data:** Which of the following are reasons why you personally choose to not watch sports? Select all that apply.. n=423

# Gen Z's sports watching habits are significantly different



**Most Common Live Sports Viewing Platform by Generation**



And that's why  
we're here today.





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## Recommendation 1

Meet them  
where they are.

Social Media.



# How does Gen Z prefer to **keep up with** their favorite teams?

## #1 Answer



Following my team on  
**social media**

## Followed by...

2. Talking to friends or family
3. Watching the games
4. Sports apps (ESPN, Bleacher Report, etc)
5. Following sports news or highlight accounts on social media (ie: ESPN, Bleacher Report)
6. Sports TV (ie: SportsCenter)



# Why are Gen Z following teams on social media?

-  1 Keep up-to-date on team news
-  2 Watch game and player highlights
-  3 Get notified of upcoming events
-  4 Opportunities to engage with the team
-  5 Access to behind-the-scenes content
-  6 Get notified of new apparel & merch
-  7 Access to giveaways & sweepstakes

**Knit Data:** From the list below, please rank the reasons WHY you would follow a sports team on social media. n=423



Gen Z is willing to engage  
with teams on social... **a ton**

**4x**

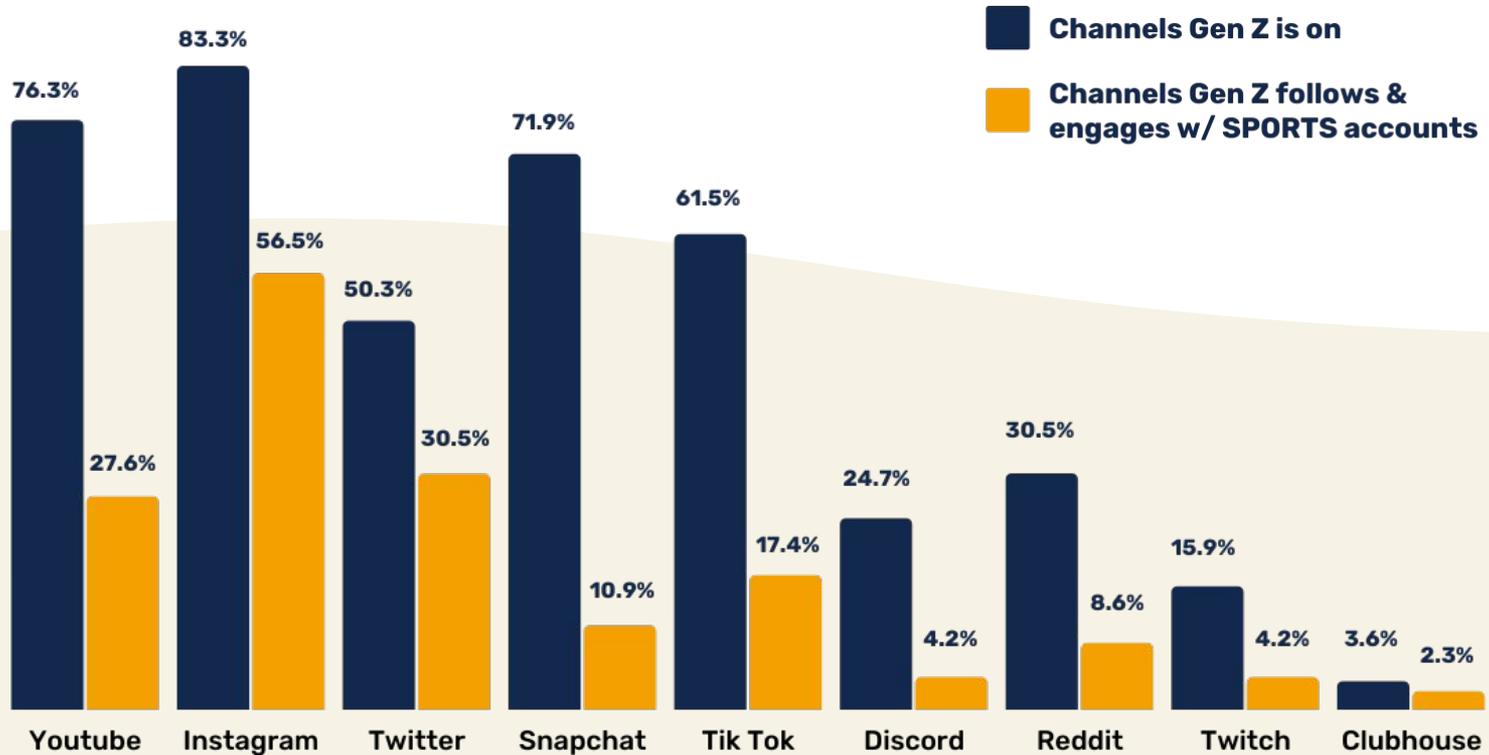
more likely

watch 3+ hours of

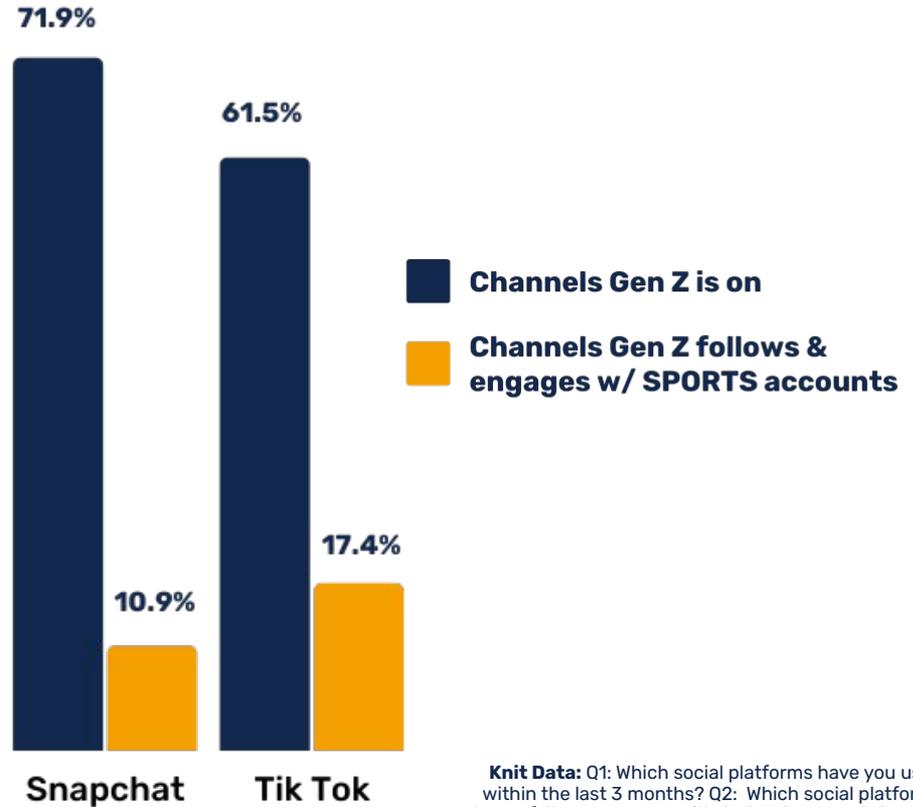
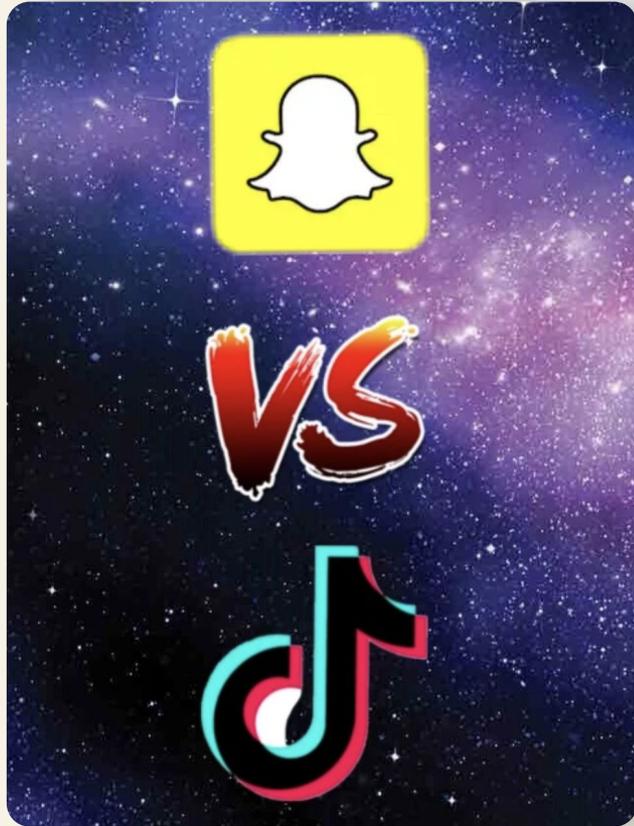
non-game content



# There's still a massive opportunity for teams on social channels



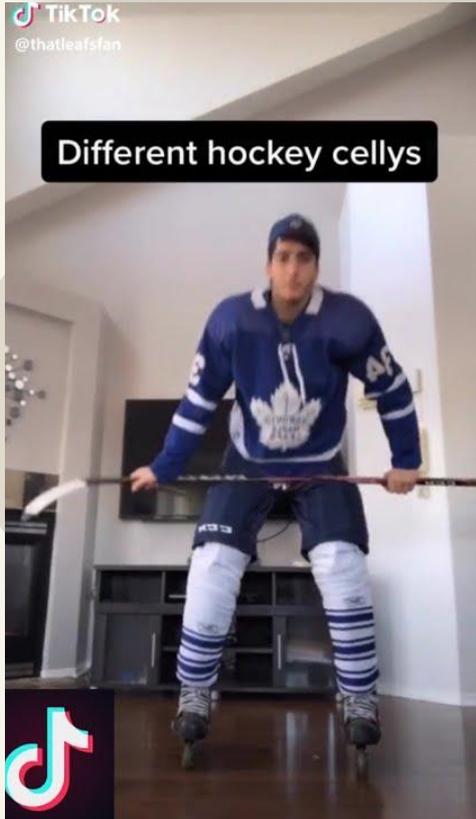
# There's still a **massive** opportunity for teams on social channels



**Knit Data:** Q1: Which social platforms have you used within the last 3 months? Q2: Which social platforms do you follow or engage with SPORTS accounts? n=423



# Gen Z prefers **short-form**, more raw content from their favorite teams



Longer-form more produced content

36%

Short-form, less formal content

64%

**Knit Data:** When it comes to the content your favorite sports teams post on social media, which would you enjoy more? n=423





Case Study

# NFL Tik Toks

winning with Gen Z





# Cleveland Browns

[Link to their Tik Tok](#)



# Detroit Lions

[Link to their Tik Tok](#)



## Purpose-Built Content

Leaning into the platform functionality with soundbites & stitching

## “CEO of Verified Replies”

Leading teams on fan engagement which leads to even more content



# What could teams be doing **better** on social media?

Make the players seem  
more like **people** and less  
like **celebrities**

Talking **informally** to their  
fans on social media

**Real-time** commentary and  
posts **during games**

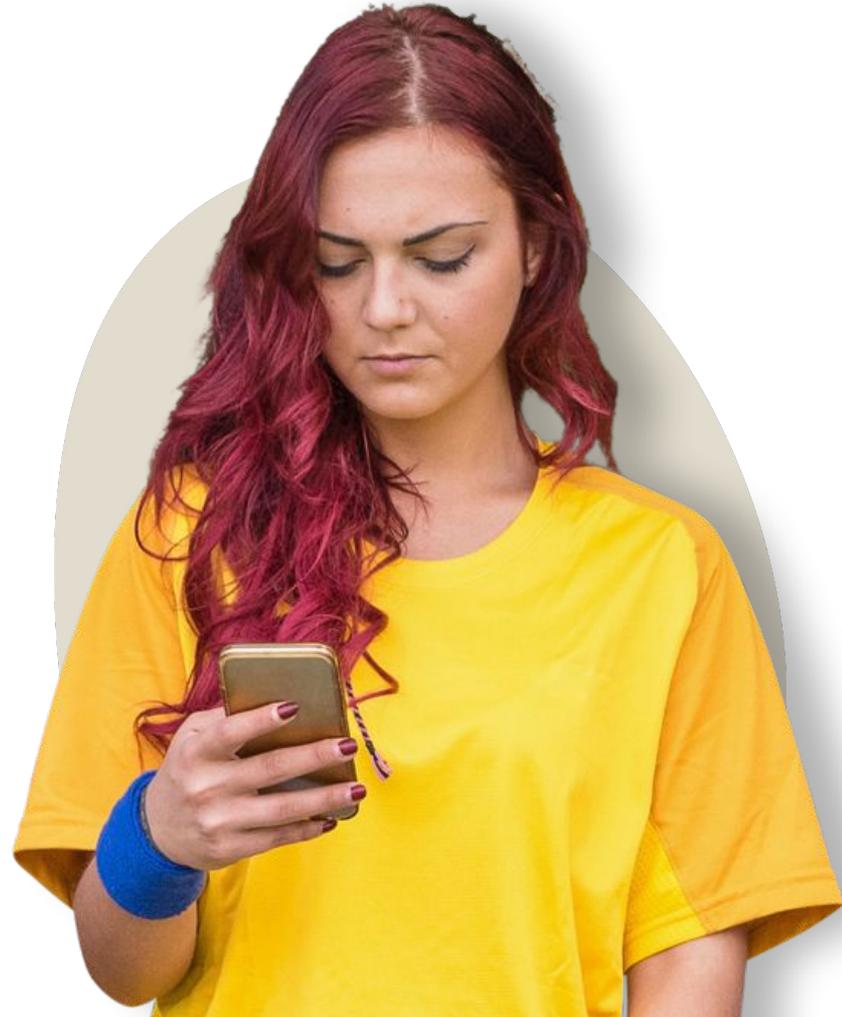
Show players  
as **role models**

**Explain** their plays  
and the **game**

Social media extends into game time...

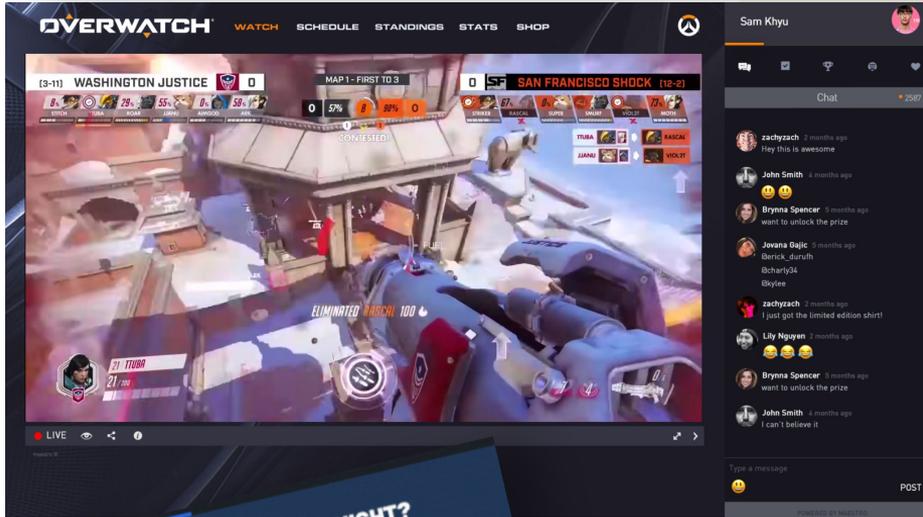
95%

use a second device  
while watching tv



Source: [Statista](#)

# What social content does Gen Z want **during** games?



- 1. Discussion groups with the team**
- 2. Q&A with team or players**
- 3. Live voting & opinion polls**
4. Discussion groups with fans
5. Behind the scenes content
6. Giveaways and sweepstakes
7. Reposted content from athletes & fans
8. Live betting or fantasy updates



## Recommendation 2

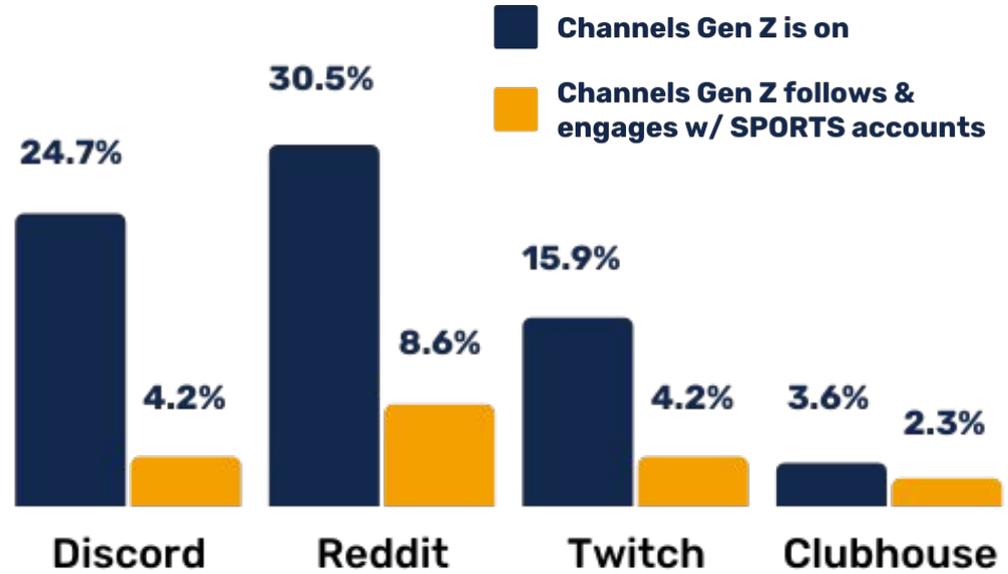
# Build your community.

## Next Gen Community Platforms



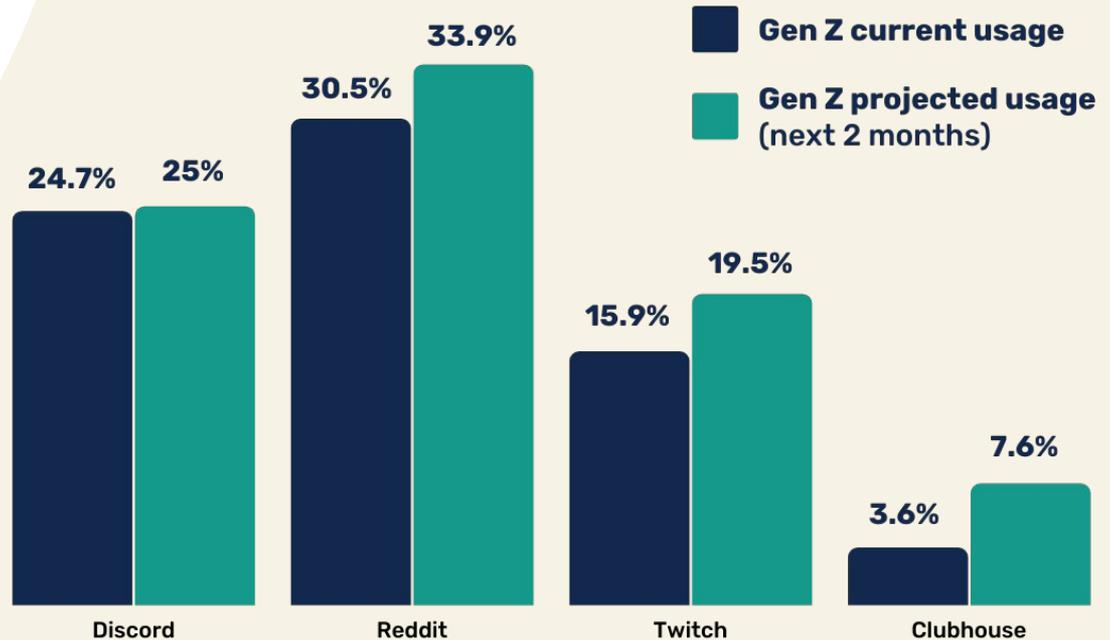
# Gen Z is building a presence here.

## Why aren't you?



Here's  
your best  
bet on  
where to  
jump in  
first...

## Gen Z projected use by channel



How are Gen Z using these platforms  
to engage with Sports today?



(Video Recording from  
prior [Gen Z Sports Panel](#))





Case Study

# Sacramento Kings

Leading the charge onto Discord





# The First Sports Franchise on Discord

[Link to their Discord](#)

Not only allowing game-time discussion, but furthering the conversation into other avenues:

- Live AMA's with players, staff and executives
- Player-specific discussions
- Dedicated gaming channels
- TopShot & NFT discussions
- And more...



Edward 12/09/2020  
**TYRESE HALIBURTON**

Thursday, December 10th, 2:00pm PST / 5:00pm EST: We'll be hosting the Kings' highly anticipated new draft pick, **Tyrese Haliburton**, for a Discord Ask Me Anything!

We will be updating **#read-me** and the Q&A channels with more information soon! **@everyone**

82 42 35 W 47 39 32 30 32 31 27 47 31  
35 33 38 34 28 31 38 33

jw916 06/25/2021  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTPqtlZzAyy>

YouTube  
**UNINTERRUPTED**  
De'Aaron Fox x Marvin Bagley x Caron Butler | WHO'S INTERVIEWING WHO?

ADVICE FOR YOUR YOUNGER SELF

Edward 03/05/2021  
**@KINGS SpaceGhostForce Got Fox!**

Tactician Musician 03/05/2021  
Get those stonks!

Harry Giles xorson 03/05/2021  
that is a good pack @Edward  
Limited edition jokic

Edward 03/05/2021  
yeah I like that Jokic a lot

[KINGS] SpaceGhostForce 03/05/2021  
@Edward solid pack! 3 big time names!

Wezz. 05/15/2021  
Update: we are now in 2043 and furthest is the finals were we got swept by orlando

Wezz. 05/15/2021  
They did it!!!!

ORLANDO MAGIC 103  
SACRAMENTO KINGS 94

CONGRATULATIONS!

JULY:



### Recommendation 3

New avenues &  
revenue streams  
to capture Gen Z's attention





# Capitalize on NFT's

**Non-fungible tokens** are digital collectibles that can represent anything from art to sports memorabilia. It's like owning a baseball card in digital form.



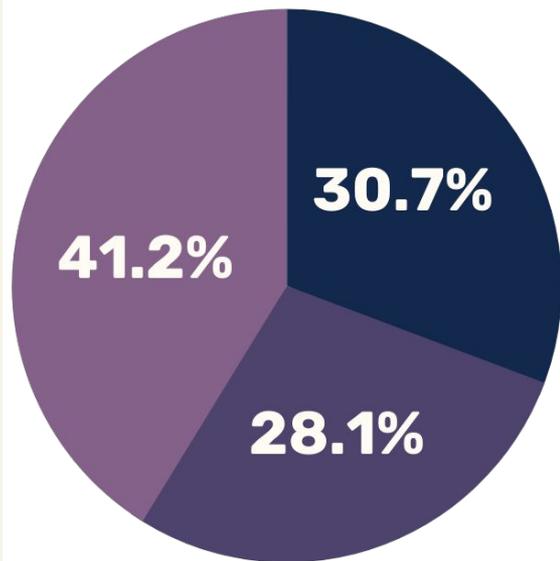
# 29.7%

of Gen Z have expressed  
interest in Sports NFT's



**Knit Data:** Given the definition above, how interested are you in NFT's? n=423

# So why are they interested?

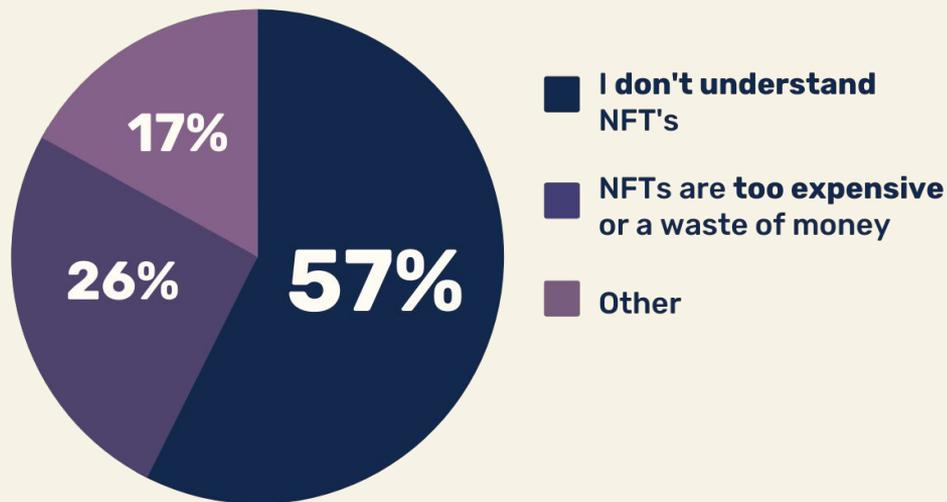


- NFT's are a **good investment**
- It's a **hobby of mind to collect**
- I'd like to own a moment that's **special to me**



And some good news for those not currently interested...

# A little education is all that's needed.



### Other reasons listed:

- Never heard of them
- Not a sports fan
- Prefer other investment types
- I prefer to own something tangible, that I can have more sentimental value.





## Case Study

# The Warriors cement their legacy

through exclusive NFT's





# First professional sports team to launch an NFT Collection

[Link to their collection](#)

Officially licensed digital collection commemorating the team's 6 NBA championships and most iconic games in franchise history, in the form of:

- Championship Rings
- Ticket Stubs
- Championship Banners

They even went one step further and gamified the collection with additional rewards.





# Untraditional Collabs & Exclusive Content

# 49%

Want to see more athletes from  
different sports  
collaborating  
on original content



**Knit Data:** Would you like to see more athletes from different sports collaborating on original content? n=423

# Which **collabs** or **content** ideas should your team tap into?

1

Your favorite team  
taking on sports

**outside of their  
comfort zone**

3

Your favorite  
players in their

**everyday life**

2

Your hometown teams

**competing  
head-to-head**  
in different sports

4

**Celebrities  
interacting**  
with your favorite team



**Knit Data:** Which of the following collabs or exclusive content ideas most interest you? Select all that apply. n=423



Case Study

# Leagues, brands, & media properties

utilizing collabs to reach Gen Z



# Elements to emulate from these three examples:



## NFL Pro Bowl Dodgeball:

Live mics and heightened competition drive engagement

## The Match:

Tapping into big-name athletes to attract new audiences

## House of Highlights:

Bringing in digital creators to capture their Gen Z audiences while prioritizing relatability

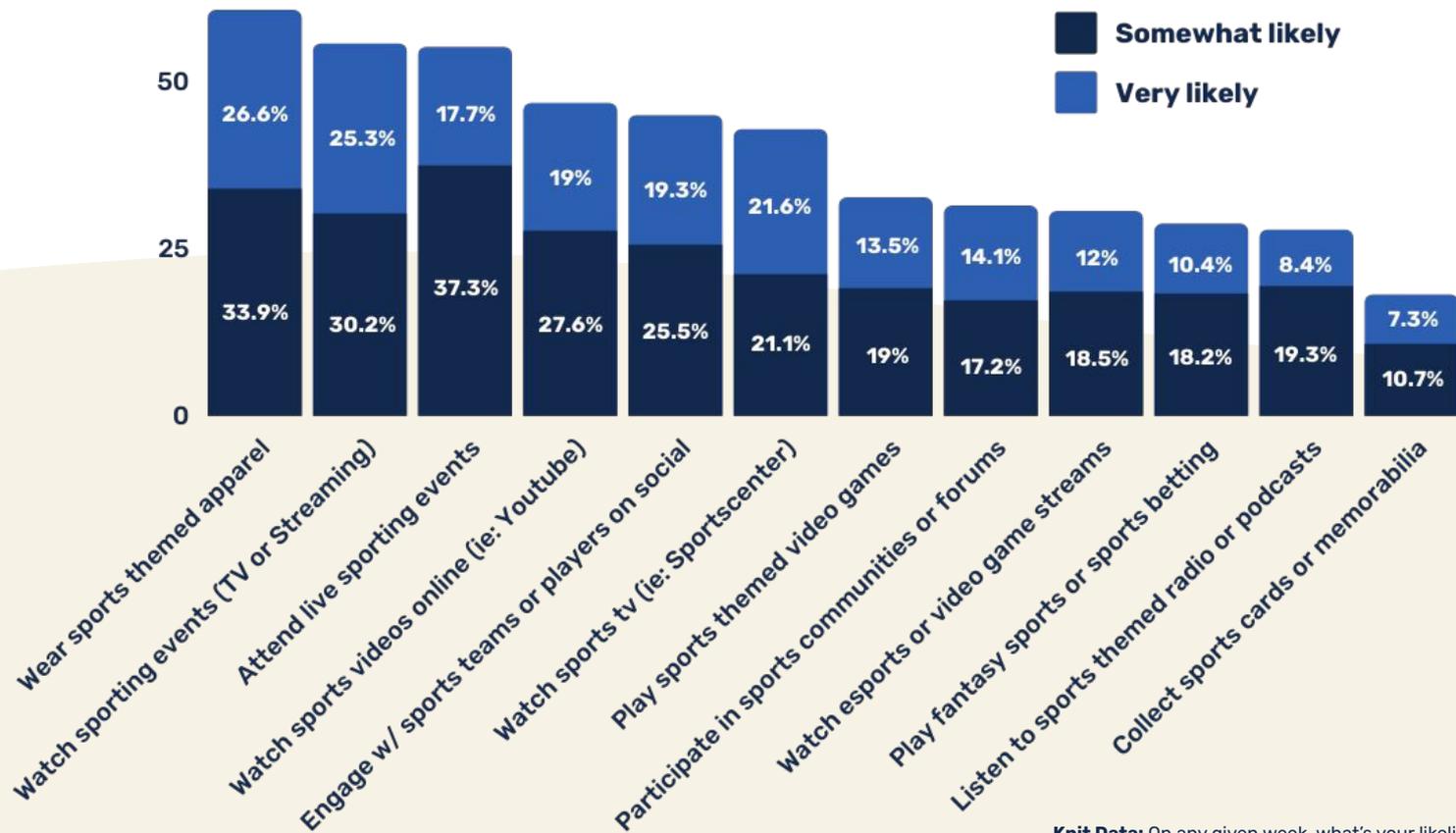


# Bonus Data

Additional Knit Gen Z Panel data,  
not used in our presentation



# On a weekly basis, many Gen Z'ers engage with sports in *some* way...



# Does your **team's record** affect Gen Z's fandom?



knit



# Thanks

For More **Gen Z** Insights:

Dive in anytime:

[goknit.com/insights](https://goknit.com/insights)

Launch your own study:

[adhawan@goknit.com](mailto:adhawan@goknit.com)

More on Knit at: [goknit.com](https://goknit.com)