

# Sport Consumption Habits in Terms of Generations

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**Abstract:** Consumer behavior involves the experience resulting from using the product or service, as well as show we share our experience and opinions about the product with others. The way of sharing this experience and opinion can vary significantly in terms of generations. The aim of the study is to introduce the differences in sport consumption habits in terms of generations and to examine the services and products offered by a football club in the Slovak "Fortuna Liga" based on the consumers' opinion and experience. Research is based on a questionnaire survey (the number of items is  $N = 434$ ). 16.8% of respondents can be considered as distant fans as their residence is at least 50 km away from the town of the football club. Analysis was performed by Pearson's Chi-square test, descriptive statistical methods, setting hypothesis and determining Gamma coefficient. Based on the performed analyses, there is no significant relationship between the division of consumers into different generations and the detected followers of the football club's social media site. A relationship can be detected between the division of consumers into different generation groups and the fact whether they bought or received a gift from the web-shop or shop of the football club.

**Keywords:** consumer behavior; consumer loyalty; generations; sport consumption habits; sport tourism

**JEL Classification:** D12; L83

## 1. Introduction

Fact that the consumers and their environment is constantly changing underlines the importance of a continuous research and analysis of the consumer. In order for marketing managers to be able to monitor and respond to important development trends, it is necessary to continuously address the target group of consumers, monitor their behavior on the market as well as the changes of factors that influence the consumer behavior. Consumer behavior includes the purchase, consumption or disposing the goods and services, involving the decision-making processes that precede these acts (Novotný, 2015; Musová, 2015).

We live in an age of advertising. Advertisers use different types of advertising media to convince customers to buy the product or service. A good advertisement is funny, while it contains important information about the product, but never can be boring. Advertisements are a good tool to inform the customer about the new product of the company or the introduction of the redesigned version of the existing product. They also warn the attention of the customer for sales, discounts and the latest offers (Gerhat & Balázs, 2018; Kitukutha & Widyatama, 2020; Bruns, 2020).

Our research focuses on Generations X, Y and Z, who represent a relevant purchasing power in the society.

### 1.1. Generations

Scientific literature provides different definitions and division of generations in terms of the individual's age. To understand the generational differences in terms of social life, consumer behavior or lifestyle, it is necessary to define the term „generation“. The term refers to a group of individuals born at the same or similar time interval (no more than 15 years). They can be characterized with similar social features, in other words, a group of people united by age and values, surrounded by the same technological environment, accompanied by the same historical events and experience (Zhitomirsky-Geffet & Blau, 2016; Duffet, 2017; Okros, 2020; Maciaszczyk & Kocot, 2021). According to Llopis-Amoros et al. (2019), generations might be perceived as a group of individuals, where the members are connected by the same way of thinking, they experience the most important events of their personal biography in the same historical and cultural environment, who will attend educational institutions at the same time, will meet their life partner and choose profession during the same time interval. According to Berkup (2014), the generations fall under the following categories:

- „Traditionalists“ (born between 1900 and 1945);
- „Baby Boomers“ (1946–1964);
- „Generation X“ (1965–1979);
- „Generation Y“ (1980–1994);
- „Generation Z“ (1995–2009).

„Baby boomers“ were followed by Generation X, who were influenced by the political atmosphere of the era. The war in Vietnam, fall of the Berlin Wall, end of and the Cold War, the era of Margaret Thatcher government influenced the culture and life of Generation X. They started with use the Internet as adults, and they used it in their everyday life for work purposes. Despite of being introduced the modern technology, they still prefer handwriting and face-to-face communication, especially in the case of informal relationships. They prefer meeting their friends personally (Page & Williams, 2011). Compared to the previous generation, Generation X is open to diversity, learnt to accept religious differences, different sexual orientations, race, and ethnicity issues. The difference between these two generations is also reflected in expectations towards their parents. Generation X is the generation of planners, planned pregnancies and families, so it is not surprising that the life of Generation Y (children) was influenced by control of their parents. The parents of Generation Y supervise both school achievements and free time activities of their children. The key coordinates of Generation Y are electronic media, globalization of space and time. Generation Y is being brought up in a globalized world, where the lack of time and space is overcome by the development of information and communication technology. It is a generation brought up on technology and use smartphones, computers, e-mails, the Internet and social media in their everyday life. Generation Y lives in a virtual freedom, while having weak verbal skills.

We can call them the first generation of consumers. As employees can be characterized as those, who enter their office in flip-flops and listen music on their iPods while working. They want to work, but their life is not about work. They would like to work better, faster and try to find creative forms of education. They are goal and deadline oriented, imagine fair bosses for themselves. Need for love and the need for belonging somewhere is still a priority in the life of this generation (Korcsmáros et al., 2019).

Group of individuals born between 1980–1994 is referred to as Generation Y. This generation is also called „Echo Generation“, „Nintendo Generation“ or „Nexters“. Generation Y is referred to those who were brought up on the Internet, electronic devices, and social media sites. According to DMR (Digital Marketing Ramblings), the representatives of this generation spend 18 hours on their smartphones weekly. This generation is more likely to be influenced by the Internet than the TV. They are more familiar with electronic devices than their parents or bosses. Most of them are registered on Facebook or Instagram or both of them. They are used for multitasking and use multiple channels. Unlike Generation X, they prefer online communication instead of face-to-face contact (Page & Williams, 2011). Some of the facts provided by the Pew Research Center indicate that members of this generation are more likely to be university graduates and high is the probability that they will live with their parents until the age of 25–35 (Korcsmáros et al., 2019).

Generation born between 1995 and 2009 has a distinctive name after the last letter of the alphabet. The generation proceeding them will be called the Alfa. The arrival of Generation Z meant the end of clearly defined tasks and traditions, which had been accepted automatically until now. Scientific literature or studies refer to Generation Z as the Zeds, Zees, bubblewrap Kids, The New Millennials, Digital Natives, Wired Generation, Screenagers or iGen (Zhitomirsky-Geffet & Blau, 2016; Duffet, 2017; Okros, 2020; Maciaszczyk & Kocot, 2021). World Health Organization has revealed that this generation has passed through more different life phases than the generations before them. Representatives of Generation Z enter different phases of their life earlier than expected, which means that they are growing up faster. Differences are visible in the way of bringing up children and looking after the household. The life of Generation Z was also determined by significant events. e.g., terrorist attacks, which started on 11th September 2001 with an attack on the Twin Towers in New York. These served as a basis for war against terrorism and the global unrest between East and West. One of the characteristic features of Generation Z is that they have been surrounded by technology since their childhood e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones, iPhone, iPads, etc. Technological development is not the only factor that has influenced this generation (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). Generation Z has become far more financially conscious than the generations before. The research conducted in the USA present a situation, where the members of Generation Z would like to buy something. They are willing to postpone the purchase of product until they compare the prices on the Internet and choose the best price in relation to quality. (Williams, 2015).

## 1.2. *Consumer Behavior*

„Consumer behavior refers to all activities conducted in the process of purchasing and

using products and services (choosing the product and the outlet) that result in increasing consumer satisfaction" (Gáti et al., 2018). The concept of consumer behavior includes also the experience related to use of the product and how we share our experience and opinion about the product with others (Shaw et al., 2017). Consumer behavior is a type of behavior shown by a consumer when looking for purchasing, using, evaluating products and services, while expecting the satisfaction of their desires. (Repanova & Profietova, 2018; Poliačiková, 2017; Benda-Prokeinová et al., 2017; Loucanova et al., 2018, Mura & Kajzar, 2019; Prince et al., 2020)

The intrinsic or psychological factors are the most difficult to define. These are individual characteristics that shape the perception of the consumer and the integration into the environment. The most important intrinsic factors are personality, sense, motivation and attitude. They also include the learnt and developed skills. (Repanova & Profietova, 2018; Loucanova et al., 2018; Matijová et al., 2019)

Not only the everyday experience but also the research results show that mostly women are the engines of consumption in the family, they have positive attitude to shopping. This assumption is also questioned by male consumers (Bezuidenhout et al., 2016; Delong et al., 2017; Hassim & Zahid, 2017; Chacko et al., 2019).

Factors influencing consumer behavior can be divided into two major groups: social factors and psychological factors. Social factors affecting consumer behavior focus on the relationship between people that are essential in terms of the purchasing process. These relationships are the family, social status reference groups, which are related to consumers (Biscaia et al., 2012; Sudbury-Riley et al., 2014; Çevik, 2020; Baša & Sánta, 2021).

Since people living in the same household manage the available finances together, the financial decisions will be taken together with other members of the household, where each member is participating. The consumer behavior of the family as a unit is influenced by what kind of members the family is made up.

#### Psychological factors influencing consumer behavior

- Perception – creating a direct connection between the external environment and the personality is called perception.
- Learning theory – learning is a process that results in the change of performance, behavior or knowledge.
- Motivation and personality – there are three stages of motivation. The first influences the behavior. The second stage is behavior driven by instincts and needs. The third is achieving goals e.g., if we are hungry, will go shopping.
- Attitude – those positive and negative emotions assigned to different objects or groups of people are called attitudes (Sudbury-Riley et al., 2014).

Since consumer behavior is not constant, it is very difficult to define or describe the phenomenon. The consumers are exposed to external factors that might influence their decision-making any time. Examining the consumer behavior is addressed by marketing specialists. The increasing number of customers does not allow to examine all the individuals separately, they examine the market asking several questions. This is called the seven „O" of the market (Kotler et al., 2021).

**Table 1.** Seven „O” of the market. Based on (Kotler et al., 2021)

Who make up the market?	<b>Occupants</b>
What do they buy?	<b>Objects</b>
Why do they buy?	<b>Objectives</b>
Who is participating in buying?	<b>Organization</b>
How do they buy?	<b>Operations</b>
When do they buy?	<b>Occasions</b>
Where do they buy?	<b>Outlets</b>

Based on the differences between the brands and the complexity of purchase, we differentiate 4 types of consumer behavior:

- Complex consumer behavior – collecting information of the product, the consumer is intended to buy is high, the consumers are aware about the differences between the brands.
- Dissonance-reducing purchasing behavior – the buyer has a significant individual interest in the purchase, but experiences minimal differences between the brands.
- Routine purchasing behavior – there is no relevant difference between the brands, so buying the product does not involve greater consumer interest.
- Consumer behavior looking for change – low interest for consumption with significant differences between the brands. In this group, the consumers change brands frequently. (Schmidt et al., 2016; Repanova & Profietova, 2018)

Advertising efficiency refers to the return resulting from costs invested into advertising to generate profit. The advertising costs may be measured efficiently, but the return resulted as a result of advertising is less measurable. The investors are trying to support the decisions related to advertising with statistics on return. (Gáti et al., 2018)

The goal of advertiser is to achieve an impact that makes the customer to choose a particular product. Long and complex is the emotional process to become a purchaser. The advertisements have to provide information why the product is good, what are the specific features, and why it is useful to buy the product or the service (Csapó-Horváth, 2021).

The primary role is to convince the customers why the products or services offered by the given company are better than the products or services of the competitors. The goal of advert is to shift the consumer’s opinion about the product or service into a positive direction. More and more we can hear about the anti-advertising campaigns, protests and more and more consumers protest on the content of the adverts (Schmidt et al., 2016; Repanova & Profietova, 2018). Sport consumption can be a part of sport tourism as well (Tiimub et al., 2021; Luu & Galan, 2021)

## **2. Methodology**

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the services and products offered by a football club in the Slovak “Fortuna”, based on the consumers’ opinion and experience. A questionnaire survey was used to collect data about the consumer purchasing habit. The online survey began on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 and finished on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The survey

included demographic questions, which made it easier to identify the social background of the participants. The next group of questions asked the respondents about the services and products of the club, thus we obtained basic marketing research data for our research. The summary of this data served to find correlations between the partial results gained. The survey included open-ended questions that allow respondents to answer in open text. These types of questions were used at the beginning and at the end of our survey. A snowball sampling method was also applied in the survey.

Most of the questions were multiple-choice questions and rating scales. The questionnaire was shared in a closed Facebook group of more than 12.3 thousand fans. Sharing the questionnaire in the targeted group generated a relevant number of filled questionnaires. The questionnaire was filled in and returned by 434 respondents, which is approx. 3.53% feedback rate compared to the size of the group. Based on the collected data, we decided to analyze 3 generations (Gen X, Y, and Z). We formulated the following two hypotheses:

*H1: The ratio of representatives of younger generation distant fans following their favorite team on social media sites is high.*

Distant fans form a group of fans living further than 50 km from the headquarters of the club. The most known social media sites are Facebook and Instagram. These definitions were also part of the questionnaire survey to avoid misunderstanding.

*H2: Members of the younger generation received a higher proportion of fan souvenirs than they gave to others as a gift.*

The term „younger generation“ is used for the representatives of Generation Z. They were compared with the representatives of Generations X and Y.

### **3. Results**

Only 34.6% of the respondents were female, the remaining ratio of 65.4% were male respondents. The examined sample shows that most of the fans of football can be found among the male respondents, so the fans of the examined football club are also formed dominantly by men. When examining the age of the respondents, we were interested in the age of the youngest and the oldest respondent. 32.9% of the respondents represented Generation X, 32.7% fall into Generation Y, and 34.4% belonged to Generation Z.

A multiple-choice question was offered to provide information about the employment type of the respondents. According to the survey results, 55.1% of the respondents work as employees, 15.7% are self-employed, 1.2% are unemployed, 24.9% are students, 2.3% are pensioners and only 0.8% of the respondents chose the „other“ option.

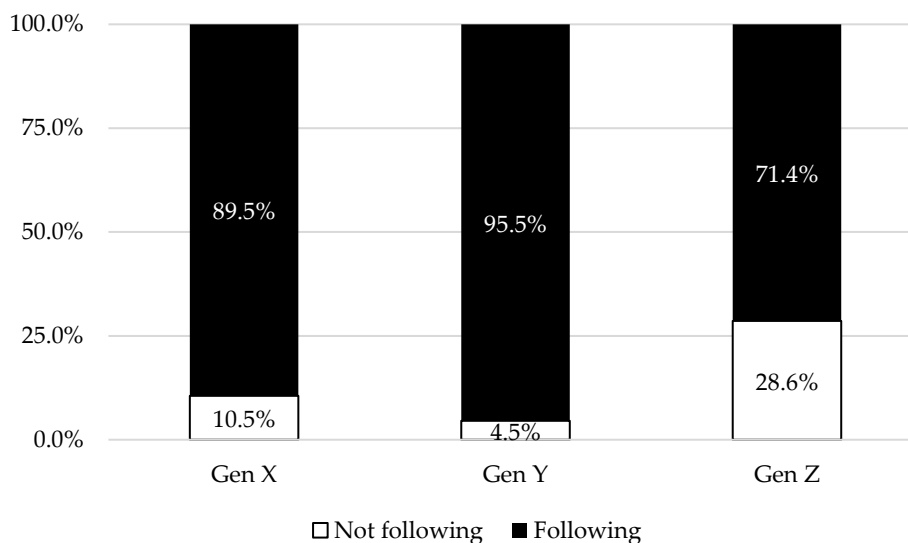
Following the question about employment, we found it necessary to ask the average monthly income of the respondents. The options for answer were the following: less than 200 EUR/month, 200-500 EUR/month, 500-750 EUR/month, 750-1500 EUR/month, above 1500 EUR/month. The answers provided for this question were diverse. 21.7% of the respondents had less than 200 EUR/month. The answer is not surprising since there are many students among the fans. 14.3% of the respondents have an income of 200-500 EUR/month. The highest ratio of our respondents belongs to the group with monthly income between 500 and 750

EUR. They are represented with 28.1%. 26.7% of the respondents were from the group of 750-1500 EUR monthly income. Based on the questionnaire survey, 9.2% of the respondents had more than 1500 EUR monthly income.

The last question of this type addressed the highest education degree of the respondents. The options to choose were the following: basic school, high school without final exam, high school with final exam, college/university, and postgraduate studies. 8.8% of the respondents have a basic school degree, 24.0% high school degree without final exam. The highest ratio of the respondents had a high school degree on final exam (46.05%). The ratio of the respondents with university degree was 19.6%, and postgraduate studies were completed by 1.2% of the respondents.

Our first hypothesis was the following: *The ratio of representatives of younger generation distant fans following their favorite team on social media sites is high.*

To test our hypothesis, we had to select the collected data. Only those fans were included in the survey who live 50+ km from the headquarters of the sport club. We wanted to examine the relationship between the generation groups (independent, ordinal) and the frequency of following social media site of the club (dependent, ordinal). We had to conduct an independence test. We obtained the following observed values (Figure 1):



**Figure 1.** The relationship between the age of the respondents and the frequency of following the social media site of the club

Since both variables are ordinal – not metric variables – we applied a crosstab. Our statement sounds that there is no relationship between the observed variables. Pearson's Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to perform the test. We obtained the following values by applying SPSS.

The value of the Chi-square is 5.881; the value of the degree of freedom (df) is 2; the significance ( $\alpha$ ) value is 0.05. The critical value of the  $\chi^2$  (in case that the degree of freedom (df)=2, the level of significance is 0.05) based on the table of quantile values of the Chi square distribution is 5.991. According to this,  $5.881 < 5.991$ , which means that  $\chi^2 < \chi^2_{crit}$ .

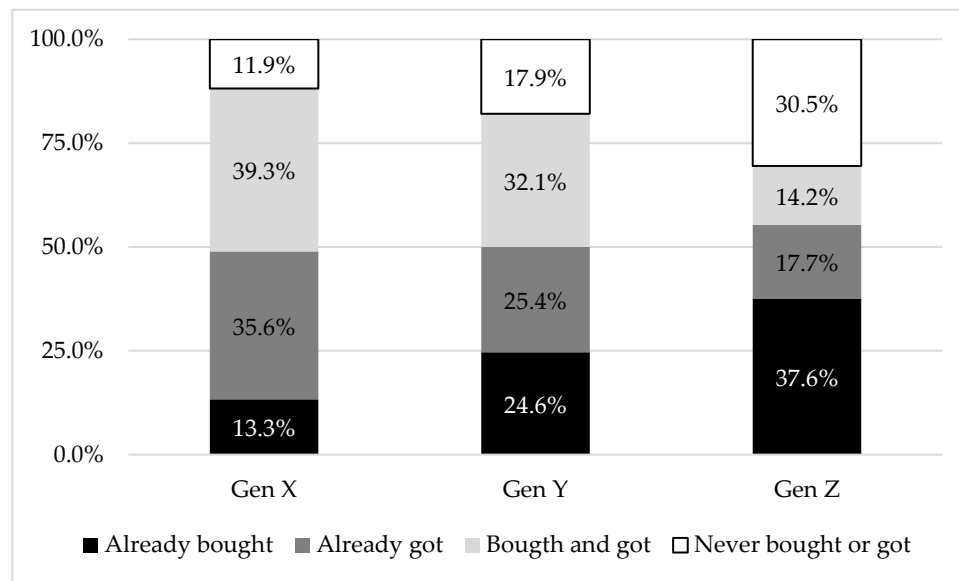
**Table 2.** The result of the Pearson Chi-Square test – Hypothesis 1

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	5.881	2	.053
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	6.116	2	.047
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	3.345	1	.067
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	69		

The value of P (empirical significance level) is 0.053, which is higher than the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Based on these results, there is no relationship between following social media site of the football club and the differentiation based on the age of the fans. Since there is no relationship, it is not necessary to examine the relationship between the two variables.

According to our H2 hypothesis: *Members of the younger generation received a higher proportion of fan souvenirs than they gave to others as a gift.*

We wanted to examine the relationship between differentiation based on age group (independent, ordinal) and whether the representatives of age groups had purchased a souvenir from the webshop/souvenir shop of the football club (dependent/ordinal). We performed an independence analysis. First, we got the following value (Figure 2):



**Figure 2.** The relationship between the age of the respondents and the purchase

**Table 3.** The result of the Pearson Chi-Square test – Hypothesis 2

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	53.195	6	.000
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	55.196	6	.000
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	.861	1	.353
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	410		

Again, both variables are ordinal in nature, so a crosstab was used in this case as well. Our basic statement was that there is no relationship between the two examined variables. The rule of the feasibility of the test was met, so we applied the Pearson's Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )



test. Our basic statement was that there is no relationship between the examined variables (income, expenditure). Using SPSS, we obtained the following values (see Table 3).

The value of the Chi-Square is 53.196. The value of the degree of freedom (df) is 6. The significance value ( $\alpha$ ) is 0.05. The critical value of  $\chi^2$  distribution (degree of freedom (df)=6, significance level=0.05) based on the table of the quantile values of Chi-Square distribution is 12.592. According to this,  $53.195 > 12.592$ , which means that  $\chi^2 > \chi^2_{crit}$ .

Furthermore, the value of P (empirical significance level) is 0.000, which is lower than the level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The obtained results prove that there is a relationship between belonging to a generation group and whether members of these groups received or purchased a gift from the web-shop or souvenir shop of the football club.

Since there is a significant relationship between the two ordinal variables, it is necessary to examine the Gamma coefficient. The results were obtained by using SPSS program. The value is  $-0.06$ , which shows a weak negative relationship between the variables.

**Table 4.** The value of Gamma coefficient – Hypothesis 2

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.360			.000
	Cramers's	.255			.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.339			.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	-.060	.062	-.974	.330
N of Valid Cases		410			

The opposite of our hypothesis was confirmed, the representatives of younger generation purchase frequently not only receive gifts from the club's shop. The representatives of the older generation received gifts more frequently than purchased.

#### 4. Discussion

The examination of sport consumer habits is basically formed by examination of consumer habits and mapping the factors influencing the consumer behavior. In exploring the factors influencing consumer behavior, many scientists (Biscaia et al., 2012; Sudbury-Riley et al., 2014; Çevik, 2020; Baša & Sánta, 2021) agree that consumer behavior is fundamentally influenced by social and psychological factors. While social factors primarily focus on interpersonal relationships, respectively the power to influence the purchasing process, the most relevant psychological factors are perception, learning theories, motivation, and personality.

As the consumer behavior is not constant, it is very difficult to define or describe. The consumers are exposed to external factors that allow them to change their decision at any time, which results in brain work for researchers and marketing specialists as well.

By analyzing the obtained data based on primary research, we wanted to know whether the younger generation of distant fans follow their football team on social media sites more frequently than the rest of the fans; and whether the representatives of younger generation received fan souvenirs more frequently than they gave. According to the Statista (2019) people belonging to age group 18–35 are the most active when it comes to consuming sports

content on social media. The statistical analysis of our research shows no relationship between belonging to certain age groups and following the football team on the social media site. The reason behind this difference could be that Statista (2019) dealt with “sport consumption” but not necessarily with following a sport club's fan page at social media. On the other hand, Statista (2019) did not deal with the distance as affecting factor.

According to KPMG (2017) research Generation X make more transactions (18.6) than Millennials (15.6) and Baby Boomers (15.1). On the other side Baby Boomers spend the most at one transaction (203 USD). We were assuming that this could lead older generations buying more gifts to their family members, while younger generations getting more gifts than giving away. Our analysis showed that significant relationship was detected between being a member of a certain generation group and purchasing, resp. receiving a souvenir from the gift shop of the football club – but the representatives of the older generation received gifts more frequently than purchased.

Based on these facts, we find it easier to get familiar with fan groups of different generations and apply targeted methods and tactics to stimulate consumption.

## 5. Conclusions

The obtained research results can contribute to improve the marketing activity of football clubs. The following suggestions are related to our research:

As fans of different age groups are active in following the social media sites of the football club, the content appearing on the site should target both the younger and older generation. The information provided to fans should be exciting, easily understood e.g., the communication of events, adverts, and sponsorship should be designed to reach a wider scope of audience.

As the representatives of the younger generation purchase fan souvenirs more frequently and not only receive them from the souvenir or web shop of the club, it is important to design a shop to target the needs of the younger customers, as well as active presence in social media is advised. The management cannot forget about the fans representing the older generation, so it is essential to find those communication channels that can be used to address these fans directly and motivate them for purchase. Identification of consumers representing different generations is essential, as it plays a key role in determining the appropriate marketing strategy, which can help the fans to develop strong commitment to be interested in the examined Slovak football club.

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