

***Formula 1 and the Power of Story: Emotional Narratives and
Fan Engagement among Gen Z and Millennials***

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Submitted to National College of Ireland, August 2025

Abstract

Formula 1 and the Power of Story: Emotional Narratives and Fan Engagement among Gen Z and Millennials

The interest in Formula 1 has been increasing among the young audience, shifting the profile from a middle-aged group. Moreover, the rise in popularity is a result of many new strategies adopted by Liberty Media since the Formula 1 group acquisition in 2017. One of the strategies is the release of *Drive to Survive*, a documentary which brings the audience into the paddock, revealing the humanised side of the sport through behind-the-scenes. In addition, series such as *Senna (2024)* enable the young audience to learn about the sport's story and its legendary legacy, providing rich historical context. However, before Liberty Media came to Formula 1, in 2013, the movie *Rush (2013)* introduced the emotional narrative content of the sport and attracted the young generation.

The research is placed in this context, aiming to explore the impact of the emotional narratives on fan engagement, increasing their interest and attraction, and analysing how fans' perception has changed because of the audiovisual content and its impact on long-term loyalty. Additionally, this research is timely and necessary, in that it is largely unexplored in academic research to date. This research adopted a qualitative method, with semi-structured interviews, which were carried out with ten fans from different countries who have watched at least one of the three audiovisual productions investigated. The data were analysed using the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) by Funk and James (2001), exploring the fan involvement levels, awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance/loyalty.

In conclusion, the results gained by the interviews indicated that the emotional narratives significantly increase the curiosity about the sport, strengthening emotional connection with drivers, teams and the sport itself. Also, fans tend to adopt an active engagement, such as merchandise purchase, social media interaction, audiovisual productions consumption, and allegiance, suggesting the sport to others. Emotional narratives also reinforce belonging and fan self-identification within the Formula 1 universe.

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Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dave Harley, for investing his time, energy, and patience throughout the process. My sincere gratitude for all the feedback, technique suggestions, and guidance, which were crucial for my dissertation process.

I truly appreciate all the participants of the interview for investing their time to share their life experiences with the sport, their perceptions, and their insightful knowledge of the Formula 1 universe. Because of all of their thoughtful participation and passion for the sport, it was possible to produce this research.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family, friends, and girlfriend for their patience, support, and motivation. During the challenging and stressful moments, their words of encouragement and emotional support kept me going forward, expressing their love and positive energies, which were the fuel to keep pushing hard to conclude this special stage of my life.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background to the study	1
1.2	Gaps in the Literature	2
1.2.1	Research focused on emotional storytelling and its impact on Formula 1	2
1.2.2	Lack of integration between theory and fans' qualitative insights	2
1.3	Academic Justification	2
1.4	Research Aim	3
1.5	Research Questions	4
1.6	Methods and Scope	4
1.7	Dissertation Structure	5
2	Literature Review	7
2.1	Sports Narrative Storytelling	7
2.1.1	Storytelling concept, <i>transportation</i> and <i>identification</i> :	7
2.1.2	Athletes becoming "humans" through Drive to Survive, Senna (2024) and Rush (2013)	8
2.1.3	How does the audiovisual content use this technique?	9
2.2	Emotional Engagement and Character Building	10
2.2.1	Building Heroes and Villains	10
2.2.2	Rivalries' Representations to ignite emotions	12
2.2.3	Creating Passion and Identification through Dramatisation	13
2.3	Sports Consumption by Younger Generations	14
2.3.1	Digital Consumers' Behaviours	14
2.3.2	Behind the Scenes: Immersive Experience in Sports	15
2.4	Emotional Narratives: Fan Engagement and Fan Passion	16
2.4.1	Fan evolution: from unknowing to Passion	16
2.4.2	How do Drive to Survive, Senna (2024), and Rush (2013) boost engagement and sports advocacy?	18
2.5	Long-term Loyalty and the Role of Emotional Narratives	19
2.5.1	Loyalty based on emotional connection and belonging	19

2.5.2	The Strategic Value of Emotional Narratives to Retain New Fans	20
2.6	Chapter Summary	21
3	<i>Research Methodology</i>	23
3.1	Introduction	23
3.2	Research Aims and Objectives	24
3.3	Proposed Research Methodology	25
3.4	Research Philosophy, Approaches and Strategy	25
3.4.1	Interpretivist and positivist approaches	26
3.4.2	Qualitative and quantitative research methods	26
3.4.3	Inductive and deductive research	28
3.5	Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interviews	29
3.5.1	Online Interview	29
3.6	Population and Sampling	30
3.7	Analysing Qualitative Data	32
3.8	Ethical Considerations	32
3.9	Limitations	33
4	<i>Research Findings and Discussion</i>	34
4.1	Introduction	34
4.2	Qualitative Research Findings	34
4.2.1	First Floor: Awareness	35
4.2.1.1	First Formula 1 Memory	35
4.2.1.2	Curiosity Sparked	36
4.2.1.3	The role of the audiovisual productions and their importance	37
4.2.2	Second Floor: Attraction	39
4.2.2.1	Narrative emotional moments	40
4.2.2.2	Identification with heroes	41
4.2.2.3	Narrative arcs impact the sports' perception	42
4.2.3	Third Floor: Attachment	43
4.2.3.1	Content consumption and social media interaction	43
4.2.3.2	Watching races	44

4.2.3.3	Merchandising purchase and race attendance _____	45
4.2.4	Fourth Floor: Allegiance _____	45
4.2.4.1	Recommending F1 content _____	46
4.2.4.2	Online community participation _____	46
4.2.4.3	Posting on social media _____	47
4.2.5	Fourth Floor: Behavioural Loyalty _____	47
4.2.5.1	Consistency in following F1 _____	48
4.2.5.2	Future intentions and wishes _____	48
4.2.5.3	Sense of belonging _____	49
4.3	Limitations _____	50
5	Conclusion _____	51
5.1	Overview _____	51
5.2	The emotional narratives as catalysts for interest _____	52
5.3	From emotional involvement to behavioural engagement and sense of belonging _____	53
5.4	Building long-term loyalty through storytelling beyond the race weekend _____	53
5.5	The diversity of motivations and profiles among Formula 1 fans. _____	53
6	Recommendations _____	55
6.1	Recommendations for future research _____	55
6.2	Recommendations for professionals _____	56
6.2.1	Fan engagement _____	56
6.2.2	Fan experience _____	56
6.2.3	Fan loyalty development _____	56
7	References _____	57
8	Appendices _____	65
8.1	Appendix 1 – Participant Consent Form _____	65
8.2	Appendix 2 – Interview Questions _____	68

List of Tables

Table 1 – Participants' Informations	31
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The sports industry has been adapting over the last decade as a consequence of technological evolution (Ratten, 2022). Fans are becoming more rigorous and interested in content beyond the competition itself, aiming for experiences that provide an immersive point of view, and seeking more information and knowledge to connect deeply with athletes, teams, organisations and the sport itself (Kim *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, Formula 1 has been shifting its positioning from a middle-aged, elitist and exclusive audience to a mixed group encompassing different ages, social classes and consumer behaviour (Belkovics *et al.*, 2025). In 2017, Liberty Media acquired the Formula 1 group, beginning to explore the hidden potential of Formula 1 (Formula 1, 2017). This allowed teams and drivers to establish social media accounts, increased media access to the paddock, and led to investments in movies, series, and documentaries. In other words, rejuvenated the sport and adapted its approach to Generation Z and Millennials, the current and upcoming consumers (Belkovics *et al.*, 2025).

Therefore, following the new generation's interest, documentaries such as *Drive to Survive*, movies such as *Rush (2013)*, and series such as *Senna (2024)* are bringing behind-the-scenes access, technical and engineering points of view, business approaches, and historical backgrounds, embodied into an emotional storytelling which humanises the sport and makes it more accessible and immersive (Shah and Williams, 2024). This tendency is a natural movement led by the global sports media revenue, which indicates a growth in Formula 1's digital presence and customer attendance at races (a discussion explored in detail in topic 1.3). As a result, this study aims to examine the impact of emotional narratives, in *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)*, and *Senna (2024)* on fan engagement and attraction among Generation Z and Millennials, analysing how their perception has changed because of the audiovisual content and their fan journey within the sport.

1.2 Gaps in the Literature

1.2.1 Research focused on emotional storytelling and its impact on Formula 1

Previous studies on the impact of emotional narratives in sports are limited, often focusing on articles covering the evolution of streaming and the incorporation of storytelling in sports. *Drive to Survive* is the most analysed in different research, but researchers have neglected the view of different productions and their importance. Moreover, studies acknowledge the importance of the emotional connection gained by sports storytelling, mainly among Generation Z, who perceive their media consumption more critically and are interested in immersive experiences (Charalambidou, 2024). Therefore, this study not only aims to explore this lack of literature providing an analysis beyond emotional content in *Drive to Survive*, but also presents the importance of historical and biographical content in fan attraction and engagement, acknowledging that each fan has their own journey within the sport and an individual perception.

1.2.2 Lack of integration between theory and fans' qualitative insights

Moreover, most of the studies have focused on quantitative research and the measurement of engagement and audience. Shah and Williams (2024) adopted the qualitative approach, but they only analysed all episodes of the first season and how the emotional narratives were applied; however, they did not collect fans' perceptions. By focusing on the customer's point of view and personal experience, the interpretation becomes broader, with insights that weren't predicted, resulting in rich data to be explored further by other researchers and professionals. The importance of this research is justified by the recent growth of this fan profile, customer interest, and the shift in the Formula 1 audience profile and behaviour after the Liberty Media acquisition, revealing the need for a study of this new sport marketing approach (Palermo and Delaine, 2023).

1.3 Academic Justification

Formula 1 has become more popular among Generation Z and Millennials. After 2017, when Liberty Media assumed command of the broadcast rights, the sport has constantly been breaking audience records (Belkovics *et al.*, 2025). According to the

official 2024 annual report, 6.5 million fans attended the race, 9% more than in 2023, and 1.6 billion viewers watched Formula 1 via TV, and the total number of followers in the F1 official accounts on social media is 97 million (Liberty Media, 2024). The increasing interest was reflected in the numbers gained by the “*F1: The Movie*” released in June of 2025, reaching \$57,001,667 in the opening weekend in the US & Canada, and \$570,681,000 worldwide (IMDB, 2025), being an instant trend and forcing Apple Original Films to put the movie back in cinemas for one extra week in response to fans acclaim (Apple, 2025).

Drive to Survive is available on Netflix, and according to the official Formula 1 website (2025), over 700 million people have watched the documentary since 2019. The series *Senna (2024)* “has become the most-watched non-English language production worldwide”, reaching over 37 million hours watched in less than two weeks after its release (Senna Official, 2025). Finally, the Formula 1 official website surveyed more than 100,000 respondents across 186 countries who self-identified as F1 fans. 27% of the respondents are Gen Z, with 94% having constantly followed Formula 1 for 5 years, showing a loyalty commitment to the sport. Moreover, 90% of respondents are emotionally invested in race outcomes. Finally, 39% were driven to the sport by friends and family, 24% by TV coverage (mostly long-time fans aged 45+), 12% by social media, 12% by driver interest, and 10% “*Drive to Survive*” (Formula 1, 2025).

In conclusion, a review of the market situation and literature review pointed out the need for deep research into Formula 1 emotional narrative content and its perception by fans among Generation Z and Millennials, both emerging generations of the technological era with purchasing and influence power (Williams *et al.*, 2010; Deloitte, 2025). Therefore, this study will focus on a qualitative analysis to extract the motivations, experiences, and reasons that influence the new generation of fans' attraction to Formula 1.

1.4 Research Aim

The research aims to fill the gaps highlighted in the literature review, such as the limited number of studies analysing the influence and impact of emotional storytelling in Formula 1 and the lack of research based on the qualitative analysis of the fans' perceptions. In addition, it is notable that there is an excessive focus on Generation Z

consumption and engagement in the sport, while Millennials have been forgotten, even though they were born and raised during the technological evolution (Williams *et al.*, 2010). To reach the objectives, the research analyses the current market movement, enriching it with insights gained through critical theoretical reflection and interviews with self-identified fans, unravelling the minutiae of their fan journeys. As a result, the study aims to contribute to a full analysis of fan behaviours, fan perceptions, fan motivations, and fan engagement.

1.5 Research Questions

Aiming to achieve the research objective and explore the fans' emotional connection and engagement with Formula 1, and fill in the gaps outlined, the research is based in the question "How do the Emotional Narratives in *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)* and *Senna (2024)* impact the attraction, engagement, and loyalty among Generation Z and Millennials' fans to Formula 1?". To answer this question, four subquestions were defined:

1. How do the emotional narratives driven by the audiovisual productions (*Drive to Survive*, *Rush [2013]*, and *Senna [2024]*) contribute to the awareness of Generation Z and Millennials in Formula 1?
2. In what ways are emotions provoked through these narratives to foster emotional connection with Formula 1, its drivers, and the associated brands?
3. How do these emotional connections evolve into active participation, including consuming primary and additional content, engaging on social media, following the sport on television or at live events, and purchasing licensed products?
4. "How do the emotional narratives affect their long-term engagement and advocacy with the sport?"

1.6 Methods and Scope

This study adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in semi-structured interviews with Formula 1 fans who have watched at least one of the three media productions investigated, and belong to Generation Z or Millennials (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This

method aims to explore and interpret the fan journey of each participant through their individual experiences, backgrounds, and how the audiovisual content has impacted their perception of the sport.

Moreover, the analysis incorporates the study of the fans' involvement level, starting from awareness, continuing with attraction and attachment, and finalising with loyalty/allegiance (Funk and James, 2001). Acknowledging the fact that each participant has their own reason and perception, the study avoids the quantitative perspective of the audience and the measurement of financial growth. In contrast, the objective is to answer “why” fans are engaged with the sport, their plans, and insights, providing a humanising comprehension of the current phenomenon (Stevens *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, interviews were conducted with 10 Formula 1 fans from India, Brazil, Spain, Paraguay, Belgium, Ireland, France, and Romania, 6 men and 4 women who belong to Generation Z or Millennials. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, starting with a small number of interviewees and expanding through the researcher's network and recommendations from participants (Naderifar, Goli and Ghaljaie, 2017).

1.7 Dissertation Structure

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The first chapter presents the central topic and the context in which the study is located. Throughout the introduction, the recent shift in the market and fans' consumption of sports marketing initiatives will be examined, focusing on the growing role of emotional narratives in fans' sports perception. Moreover, it addresses the literature gaps, the academic justification for researching the topic, the academic aims, and the research questions that will guide the study, while also providing an overall explanation of the methods and their scope.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The Literature Review comprises and critically discusses the academic studies and relevant market data. Across this chapter, the main concepts of emotional storytelling, transportation and identification, sport humanisation, emotional engagement, digital

consumer behaviours, immersive experience in sports, and the evolution framework of fan engagement are examined.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Chapter 3 encompasses the chosen methodological approach, discussing the advantages of the qualitative method and semi-structured interviews in comparison with the alternative approaches. Moreover, techniques are explored and explained, including all criteria for participant selection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the insightful findings of each interview and their interpretation and correlation with the Fan Engagement Framework (Awareness, Attraction, Attachment, Allegiance) and the literature review. Throughout the findings and discussions, the researcher demonstrates reflective analysis of participants' experiences and perspectives, while understanding their fan journey and critically discussing the research topic and objectives.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Chapter 5 summarises the main findings and answers all research questions, and discusses the objectives and aims covered in Chapter 3. Moreover, it reviews and critically analyses the literature and its contribution to the understanding of the theoretical implications, methodological approaches, and the data collected.

Chapter 6 - Recommendations

This chapter not only recommends strategies for sport organisations and professionals to better adopt emotional narratives to enhance fan engagement and attraction, but it also provides guidelines for future academic research, considering the current study's limitations and future opportunities to be explored.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Sports Narrative Storytelling

2.1.1 Storytelling concept, *transportation* and *identification*:

The movie *Rush* (2013) is based on the rivalry between Niki Lauda and James Hunt during Formula 1's golden age in 1970. It represents the true history of this great combat between these two racing drivers' legends, showing the dilemma behind the decisions, the strategies, and the drama during the astonishing 1976 season in which they were competing for the world championship title. Moreover, the fictional mini-series *Senna* (2024) is based on the life of Ayrton Senna, one of Formula 1's legends. It presents the driver's career from his beginning in the Go-Kart competition to his tragic fate during a Grand Prix in 1994, covering his rivalries, challenges, achievements and personal dramas. Finally, the docuseries *Drive to Survive* (currently updated on Netflix) shows the "behind the scenes" of the race, covering racing drivers' dramas, team principals' challenges, team meetings, and everything that happens in the paddocks. Overall, these productions' approach to narratives intends to humanise the sport and make viewers feel part of it, creating an emotional connection and sense of belonging.

According to Green and Brock (2000), viewers who were transported into the narrative intend to respond positively to what is being told in the story, making the narrative experience seem more "like real experience". The direct representation of a story, such as *Rush* (2013) representing Lauda and Hunt, *Senna* representing Ayrton Senna's life directly, and the *Drive to Survive* showing the backstage from the professionals' point of view, is more powerful than "non-narrative mode", because it "enables mimicry experience" (Green and Brock, 2000). Consequently, these points enhance viewers' experience and strengthen their connection with the characters (Brown, 2015). Moreover, all three audiovisual productions have the foundation of well-built narrative storytelling, focused on engaging the audience through two primary mechanisms: Transportation and Identification. The "transportation" approach integrates attention, imagery, and the audience's feelings, making them vulnerable to being easily persuaded and able to absorb the content (Soble and Lowes, 2024). In

addition, “identification” is when the audience feels represented by the identity, goals, and perspective of a character. Both approaches provide an emotional connection and increase fan conversion (Soble and Lowes, 2024).

Despite their different narrative storytelling and format, *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)*, and *Senna (2024)* follow a plot based on drivers as hero archetypes, who possess clear goals and strong determination to achieve them, enhancing emotional identification and connection between drivers and spectators (Platinga and Smith, 1999). The adventure covers a racing driver's background, from childhood to their quest to conquer the championship. Along this journey, they found obstacles, victories, and disappointments, captivating the audience through a compelling narrative (Whannel, 2003). Those familiar with sports understand how unpredictable and unstable it can be; ascension and descension can happen in the blink of an eye, making the narrative convincing, fascinating and interesting (Whannel, 2003). These productions aim to humanise the sport, inviting fans to connect with their heroes more than the awards and victories, but with their personal lives and beliefs.

2.1.2 Athletes becoming “humans” through *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)*

According to Shah and Williams (2024), their participants' interviews indicate that the behind-the-scenes of *Drive to Survive* creates an interactive experience with drivers, the sport's complexity, and a sense of intimacy with the personalities, which have transformed racing drivers from superhumans to characters with whom they can empathise. Another point brought up in the research is the familiarisation with the sport, in which the audience learns more about the rules, meanings, and political decisions that are not shown on TV, making the sport more understandable and knowledgeable (Shah and Williams, 2024). These points can be transferred to the film *Rush (2013)* and the miniseries *Senna (2024)*. Additionally, the sports legends' history creates a deep background in the audience, making them feel more integrated into the Formula 1 universe.

Such productions have driven the audience's perception towards the athletes' humanisation, which can facilitate the identification and emotional connection. *Senna (2024)*'s miniseries works on the process that made Ayrton become one of the Formula

1 legends, representing his trajectory through struggles, rivalries, failures, sentimental conflicts, love involvements, and his hard work during training, analysis and negotiations. *Rush (2013)* explores the difference in mindsets between Niki Lauda and James Hunt, their contrasting way of work, and different paths to achieve their personal goals; however, it also represents the respect and admiration between them despite the competition. *Drive to Survive* follows the same structure, but it goes in-depth into the backstage to reveal how the drivers and Formula 1's professionals balance their lives, goals and personal issues with their careers. Ultimately, these three productions expose athletes' vulnerabilities and personal narratives, fostering a sense of empathy and connection among the fans, which will strengthen the long-term connection and loyalty to motorsports.

2.1.3 How does the audiovisual content use this technique?

According to Nielsen Sports Report (2022), "TV programming can do more than just fuel internal passions: In the case of docuseries, which are becoming increasingly popular on streaming platforms they can transform audiences into sports fans". Following this principle, its storytelling creates an emotional connection with drivers and teams, the productions make an atmosphere of belonging through the view behind the scene, focusing on individuals' histories and humanising drivers, team principles and those working in the paddock.

Furthermore, the immersion in audiovisual productions is supported by soundtracks, narrative point of view, framing and more. All of these elements have a direct impact on the fan's emotional response (Platinga and Smith, 1999). The soundtrack (songs, sound effects, and dialogue) creates the atmosphere, shapes the mood and situates the spectator and contributes to the emotional and intellectual experience (Millet *et al.*, 2021). The framing shapes how the spectator will perceive the scene, contributing to the dramatisation, empathy and sympathy with the character; it can channelise their emotions to the narrative (Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., & Smith, J. (2020). And finally, the point of view can limit or expand the watcher's story comprehension, placing them in the character's narrative and driving their perspective to the intended interpretation (Bordwell *et al.*, 2020).

However, documentaries, series and movies based on real stories are not a representation of reality, rejecting the idea of being only a replica, but they reflect the world through a particular point of view (Nichols, 2017). The director, the company, and producers shape their intentions and objectives through storytelling, promoting a balance between accurate facts and intended dramatisation (Nichols, 2017). In *Drive to Survive*, for example, the narrative perspective shapes the audience's perception, not only by what it shows, but also by how it shows the sequence of facts.

Analysing each production individually, the immersion in *Drive to Survive* is built through the drivers and team principals' points of view and opinions, inbound cameras in the car's cockpit, cameras into paddocks and meeting rooms, and fans' atmosphere in the race weekend. The docuseries "pays a historical tribute" to the sports, legendary drivers, and the *Scuderia's* legacy (such as Ferrari and McLaren, both the longest current teams in the competition), resulting in an "enhanced brand and loyalty by integrating emotional connections through a narrative-driven content" (Charalambidou, 2024). Moreover, *Senna (2024)*'s content represents the driver experience in the first-person view, transporting the fan to the driver's seat and simulating his experience on the track. The soundtrack during the conflicts or when the goal is achieved situates the viewer in the narrative, connecting them with the main character and fostering their empathy (Millet *et al.*, 2021). *Rush (2013)* does the same, using close-up shots, first-person experience, raw emotions and a soundtrack to conduct viewers to the right emotion during the scene. The rivalry between Lauda and Hunt represents the multidimensional layers of human beings: empathy, ambition, love, anger, obsession, resilience, gratification, and frustration. The story invites fans to reflect on the relative concept of good and bad, depending on the perspective analysed, considering that each side has its reason to make the decision, but in the end, it is equally important (Platinga, 2009).

2.2 Emotional Engagement and Character Building

2.2.1 Building Heroes and Villains

Aiming to increase fan involvement and loyalty, the archetype construction of Heroes and Villains results in an extra motivation to cheer for someone or some team against the enemy (Muller and Sutherland, 2010). The theory of the hero's journey defines the

hero as someone who leaves behind ordinary life to chase adventure, travels through an unknown world, fighting threats and challenges, and is supported by his mentor and helpers (Voytilla, 1999). After all, the hero will overcome the supreme test and claim his prize, returning to his place with the victory. On the other hand, the villain, the antagonist, the shadow theorised by Voytilla (1999), is the hero's enemy, being complex and hard to defeat, harming the hero at every opportunity he has (Davies, 2015). Because of that, heroes are "embraced, encouraged, and worshipped, while villains are cajoled, ridiculed and scorned", bringing to the sport more drama, values and background to create entertainment and to hold the fans' attention via his emotional connection with his favourite athlete and team, which becomes the hero in his perspective and experience (Muller and Sutherland, 2010).

Regardless, the hero embodied by bravery, self-sacrifice and virtue has been portrayed as a moral hero in media narratives; however, the expectation that athletes can consistently perform this character often results in fan frustration (Whannel, 2002). This frustration emerges from negative news, driven by the morality crises, such as scandals and moral failings, which have broken the image of the symbol of morality and altruism. When athletes attempt to perform the perfect persona of a hero, they frequently become simplistic avatars, lacking the complex personalities of real human beings, reduced to an artificial symbol of a role (Whannel, 2002).

Contextualising the analysed shows *Senna (2024)* represents the hero from a poor country, encountering challenges, threats and injustices from the beginning of his career. Throughout its episodes, he fights against corrupt politics, skilled rivals, cheating rivals, and reaches the peak of glory when he becomes world champion three times, but subsequently is overcome by a competitor who is using an unfair car, lastly he faces a tragic accident during the race which results in ending his life, but transcending him to an eternal legend. Moreover, *Rush (2013)* portrays not only the competition between Niki Lauda and James Hunt, but also an opposite view of the world, life, and goals. The movie narrates the differences between them and how they worked on their individual qualities to achieve the world championship, representing Hunt's impulsive lifestyle, which includes drugs, numerous romantic affairs, and irresponsible acts, while Lauda shows strict behaviour, a strong personality, and a lifelong love with his wife. Throughout the movie, Lauda suffers a tragic and almost

deadly accident, which leaves him with scars for life. On the other hand, Hunt had his marriage ended and almost lost his career because of his controversial reputation. Both storylines offer a choice, in which narrative and archetype are preferable and how the differences can be surpassed by respect and equal admiration. Finally, *Drive to Survive* builds the narrative by season, creating the drama through the current racing drivers and *scuderias*, showing details and dramatising conflicts to let fans choose, and they will decide who is their hero and who is their villain.

2.2.2 Rivalries' Representations to ignite emotions

Rivalries bring emotion into the competition, showing both sides of the story and encouraging the public to choose one of them. Not only do drivers create feuds, but teams also have enmities that motivate them to perform better, such as the historical battle between Ferrari and McLaren, and the current chase behind McLaren and Red Bull Racing by Mercedes and Ferrari, offering the public a deeply engaging history. Furthermore, the hero archetype is denser because it embodies the sacrifices drivers make, both physical and emotional, as well as their obsession with glory, which is driven by talent, skill and bravery. The hero is turned humanised by the narrative, once their “powers” are inherently human traits, such as resilience, persistence, and the ability to overcome challenges, fostering admiration and identification with the public (Soble and Lowes, 2024).

These rivalries transform sports narratives into an emotional bond with their favourite racing driver or team, which is a powerful narrative to retain fans and boost the audience. Although it is impossible to win all the time, the hero vs villain narrative attaches the audience's attention and enhances the consumer experience with feelings like empathy and passion (Muller, T., and Sutherland, J., 2010). The classic “good in an epic battle with evil” creates a feeling of belonging in the fans' community, turning the spectacle more personal and emotional (Muller, T., and Sutherland, J., 2010). Aiming to deepen fan involvement, it is noticeable this narrative being applied in the movie *Rush* (2013) with the story of the enmity and respect between Niki Lauda and James Hunt; in *Senna* (2024) with his rivalries since the kart, going through his seasons in Formula 2, and finally in Formula 1 against Prost and the F1's politics; *Drive to Survive* also incorporates this narrative, such as between the drivers like Verstappen and Hamilton in 2021, and *scuderias* contests to the title. The strategic

use of the archetypal conflict dramatises the real competition, creates a deep involvement and background, enriching the glory journey, going beyond the performance and becoming emotional and humanised.

However, the rival's storytelling can often be overdramatised by the media, focused on monetisation through public interest and emotional investment. As Boyle and Haynes (2009) argue, the consequence of overuse of dramatisation and fabricated rivalries creates doubts about the sport's integrity and fair representation, generating an emotional dissociation between long-time fans and the productions, because they start to feel alienated by the perceived loss of authenticity.

2.2.3 Creating Passion and Identification through Dramatisation

Sports have the power to connect intimately with fans, which is boosted by the melodramatic narrative of the rivalry between *us* against *them*, through the deep emotional involvement with a specific team or athlete (Muller, T., and Sutherland, J., 2010). The dramatisation of content fosters the athlete idolisation, according to Widiastuti, Mawarpury, Sulistyani and Khairani (2019), fans absorb the idol's identity, transferring some repressed feelings to them. The “idol worship” is divided into entertainment-social, in which the interest relies on achievements, skills, attitudes and behaviours; intense-personal, in which there is an extreme interest to the idol, with a persistent overfocus on them; and borderline-pathological, in which the obsession may lead them to do anything to prove their love for the idol. This process of idolisation and admiration is reflected in the “parasocial interaction” behaviour, in which fans feel closer to the idol by their interest in his talents, achievements, and abilities, feeling happiness, sadness, anxiety, frustration and excitement for the athlete or team performance and result (Widiastuti *et al.*, 2019).

While some productions aim to portray the idol's mythic status through his humanisation, fostering the identification among their fans, others seek to represent the raw humanity. *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)* transport the spectator to the environment, seeing, listening, driving and feeling as the same as the drivers' representations, boosting empathy, admiration and devotion. In contrast with *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)*, *Drive to Survive* addresses the human side of the drivers, aiming to present the pure human being through a combination of selfishness and

ambition, alongside mercy and friendship, revealing the natural human personality contrast and enabling fans to connect with their imperfection. Through the dramatisation, balancing admiration, authenticity, and humanisation, these productions drive passive audiences to become passionate fans with personal involvement in the sport.

2.3 Sports Consumption by Younger Generations

2.3.1 Digital Consumers' Behaviours

Narrative storytelling has become crucial in Millennial and Generation Z sports consumption decisions, as both generations are digitally connected and technologically oriented. Millennials are defined as the generation born between 1986 and 2005 (Byon and Yim, 2020), while Generation Z comprises those born between 1995 and 2009 or between 1997 and 2012, depending on which specialist's point of view (Voracek, 2021). Furthermore, Millennial consumer behaviour is defined as being “technology-driven, connected, interactive, having a viral impact, authentic, transparent, adamant about sharing opinions, invested in ‘cause marketing’, highly networked, collaborative, focused on community and active participation in marketing” (Byon and Yim, 2020), which influences their fans’ decision-making process about sports, as being more influenced by the community where they are included, more emotional-driven, technologically included, motivated by engagement, and a fear of missing out (Byon and Yim, 2020). Additionally, Gen Z is well known for being born into a digitalised world, having modern technology as part of their life. Friends and influencers' opinions impact their own, paradoxically; however, they are also sceptical of influencers involved in marketing. They prefer reviews and opinions from specialists who know the product or service which is being promoted, and endorsements by athletes are perceived as more relevant (Voracek, 2021).

Traditionally, Formula 1 has succeeded in terms of audience and interest over decades, although between 2006 and 2017, it underwent an audience drop, declining from 600 million people watching at least 15 minutes in 2006 to 350 million in 2017 . In 2024, Formula 1 reached 750 million audience (Brown, 2024), an incredible shift headed by the Liberty Media Group, a US company that has the sport’s commercial rights. Moreover, the actual media success of Formula 1 goes through the

incorporation and integration of traditional media with new media strategies. The new audience of Millennials and Generation Z is interested and engaged in communication that allows them to interact and feel part of the community. Aiming to meet young people's needs, the use of multimedia channels has positively impacted their relationship with the sport (Palermo and Delaine, 2023).

In addition, while *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)* add a rich background to the sport experience and enrich fans' knowledge and belonging, *Drive to Survive* brings the current emotion, extending emotional engagement beyond the race itself, connecting them with the humans behind the steering wheel and the teams. According to the Netflix reports, in 2022, between 4.14 million and 5.5 million viewers watched the season 4 premiere, representing the massive audience acquired by the show since its release in 2019 (Wood and Burkhalter, 2023). The behind-the-scenes approach, which aims to reveal paddock conflicts, drama, strategies and more, reflects the modern sports narrative, which aims to portray Formula 1 as a fully immersive experience.

2.3.2 Behind the Scenes: Immersive Experience in Sports

Subsequently, Millennials' sports consumption is driven by their intention to engage with teams and athletes (racing drivers) through online platforms, such as streaming and social media. The feeling of belonging and identification is important for increasing fan engagement satisfaction (Byon and Yim, 2020). Generation Z shares the same interests as Millennials, although they are also influenced by personalised experiences, with an emphasis on interaction and immersion. Both tend to consume sports in multiplatform, such as traditional TV, social media and streaming, seeking to be more into the match or race by watching it from the athlete's point of view and having exclusive behind-the-scenes content (Giorgio *et al.*, 2024).

Agreeing with the younger generation's needs and desires, the Series *Senna (2024)* presents classic Ayrton Senna races from his perspective, stimulating adrenaline and chilling the audience. The show also brings others' points of view behind the scenes, with his family, lovers, rivals, teammates, and F1's politics. The movie *Rush (2013)* does the same, showing Niki Lauda and James Hunt in their personal life, interacting with their teammates, and the controversy with F1's organisation. *Drive to Survive* is currently presenting more details about the people behind the Grand Prix and racing

cars, humanising the relations and the sport. Thanks to Liberty Media's strategy, premium motorsports broke a barrier, moving from an impenetrable and exclusive middle-aged male elite group audience to a global media and entertainment brand that keeps growing among women and the younger generation. Thus, Formula 1 is becoming more accessible and engaging, increasing the sport's digital presence on social media and streaming platforms (Charalambidou, 2024). The younger audience prefers different and interactive content, such as driver and team updates, results and the grand prix highlights, instead of traditional technical and review analysis and pre-race or post-race interviews' content (Charalambidou, 2024).

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the negative effects of emotional narratives in audiovisual sports content, where dramatisation often blurs reality and manipulates fan perception (Carter, 2013). For instance, in *Rush (2013)*, the rivalry between Lauda and Hunt is portrayed as unfriendly and almost hateful, whereas in reality, they had a friendly relationship since their early days in the racing academy. In *Drive to Survive*, a similar approach occurs, sometimes, to build the tension between drivers. The framing selection mixes events from different races to create the dramatic narrative, also transforming drivers like Max Verstappen (currently four times world champion in a row) as villains, shaping spectators' emotions and biases (Carter, 2013).

The scope of changes in the multifaceted approach has been attracting a younger audience through leveraging social media and digital platforms, providing detailed content about the sport and athletes. While digital platforms enhance fans' participation, movies and series pay tribute to historical figures, creating an honourable background and increasing the feeling of belonging, fostering the connection with the Formula 1 environment and making it more immersive (Wood and Burkhalter, 2023).

2.4 Emotional Narratives: Fan Engagement and Fan Passion

2.4.1 Fan evolution: from unknowing to Passion

Funk and James (2001) drew the psychological connection between spectators and sports, understanding fans' journey from unknowing to passion. The authors contextualised the idea by four floors (or levels) of involvement, with awareness being the initial level, in which the individual has the first contact with the sport, team and athletes. Followed by attraction on the second floor, in which the individual evolves to

a preference for teams and athletes in a specific sport. After it comes the attachment on the third floor, in which the individual develops a psychological connection where his favourite sport, team or athlete has an important role in the life routine and happiness. Finally, the allegiance is the ultimate connection, in which “an individual became a loyal fan of the sport or team”, representing a long-term relationship, connection and involvement, turning into a naturally engaged and passionate fan.

Furthermore, Giulianotti (2002) categorises fans into four groups: Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs. Supporters are understood as people who have a traditional relationship with the team, the club, and the sport, have a personal and emotional involvement for a long time, are loyal, and have a strong identification. Followers are categorised by the individual who has the connection through the group identity, mostly through electronic media. Fans are identified by the group that has a strong affection and identification for the team, athlete and sport, being a hot consumer who seeks to reflect their identification as part of their personality. Flaneurs are categorised by postmodern spectators, commonly following their team on cold media such as television and the internet, keeping a distance from affectionate fans. They tend not to be extremely loyal, changing clubs and sports to new interests that bring excitement and new sensations.

The emotional narrative contributes to the connection between spectators and sports, bringing an emotional connection through storytelling, information and an opportunity to fill the gap between an individual who is being presented to the sport, and the universe involved in it. Documentary series such as *Drive to Survive*, movies such as *Rush (2013)*, and series such as *Senna (2024)* increase the fan conversion through narrative elements of adventure, rivalry, ascension/descension, sacrifice, and the hero archetype, in which emotional connections are built through identification and make viewers become fans (Soble and Lowes, 2024).

More than ever, engaging fans is a way to ensure their loyalty, bonding the audience with racing drivers and teams in a more meaningful and deep connection. The significant rise of streaming channels, such as Netflix, has gone beyond races and integrated the sport and fans through the human side narrative. After *Drive to Survive* was launched, Formula 1 has become “the major sports league on the planet in terms of followers acquired” on social media, growing from 40% to 49.1m. The engagement

also increased, from 74% to 1.5bn, compared to other popular sports. The number of fans watching has also improved; in 2020, the increase was 48% in comparison with 2019 (Duarte Fernandes, J. 2023). Through these numbers, it is possible to interpret how emotional narratives and immersive storytelling can lead viewers from awareness to allegiance, applying the fan conversion and increasing the fan loyalty.

2.4.2 How do *Drive to Survive*, *Senna* (2024), and *Rush* (2013) boost engagement and sports advocacy?

Sport advocacy goes beyond the common behaviour of watching, purchasing, and following a favourite team, athlete, or sport; it involves advocating, defending, sharing, recommending, interacting and influencing others to enter the same universe of interest. Hence, to achieve sports advocacy for its fans, it is important to have their allegiance, which consists of “internally stable and consistent evaluation of a relationship with a team” (James and Funk, 2001). Allegiant fans have a strong relationship with their teams and favourite athletes, being biased and deeply engaged, having a frequency in consuming their teams' information, and resistance to changing their emotional connection, even in the face of negative experiences or information caused by their team or athlete (James and Funk, 2001).

Consequently, contents like *Drive to Survive* contribute to fans' advocacy because of the perception of proximity generated through the show. Fans find themselves in a position of intimacy with drivers and teams, seeing the preparation process, failures, suffering, strategies, happiness, family interactions, and more. The audience engagement occurs across different platforms, such as social media, Netflix shows, live racing, interviews post-racing and pre-racing, and more, which contributes to an immersive experience and consequently engaged fans (Charalambidou, 2024). As a result of the symbiotic relationship between digital content, the sport, and fans, after *Drive to Survive*, the audience grew by 48% in the first year of the show (Duarte Fernandes, 2023).

Moreover, *Rush* (2013) and *Senna* (2024) are biographical narratives which connect the fan with the sport itself through its history, legacy, and culture. The narrative encompasses tragedy, overcoming challenges, rivalry, heroism, and a strong idea of the ideal behind the helmet, establishing expectations for fans about what they will find

in the current teams and drivers, and providing a background to the sport's beliefs. Ultimately, these narratives reinforce the symbolic and emotional pillars of the sport, serving to educate fans about what Formula 1 represents. Consequently, this results in fans with solid advocacy and allegiance affinity, who will defend the sport's legacy and purpose in the future, finding meaning in the individual and overall narrative.

2.5 Long-term Loyalty and the Role of Emotional Narratives

2.5.1 Loyalty based on emotional connection and belonging

Fans' Loyalty in the sports context plays a specific role, mostly related to emotional attachment. According to Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler (2008), a fan is defined as someone who self-identifies as a supporter of a particular sport, athlete or team, being categorised into different levels of attachment. Bauer et. al (2008) analyse Fan Loyalty as an important factor of the fan-team relationship, distinguishing it into the Attitudinal Dimension and the Behavioural Dimension. The Attitudinal Dimension is a psychological commitment, being understood by "inner attachment, persistence over time and resistance to criticism", while the Behavioural Dimension is the concept of Fan Behaviour, in which the fan will follow their team online, attend the events, purchase the items, and wear the symbol which represents their support. Ultimately, loyal fans are both emotionally and psychologically attached to their team, sport or athlete, manifesting through consumption, advocacy, and a deeply emotional engagement.

According to Mastromartino, Wang, Suggs, Hollenbeck, and Zhang (2020), in the sport context, the identification into a fan community occurs through fostering the "sense of positivity, sense of collective unity, sense of inclusiveness, social opportunities, and perception of knowledgeable community member". Through the feeling of belonging to the community, an increase in self-esteem and a sense of trust is noticed. The interaction within the community goes beyond attendance in events and matches, but also in the digital community, Instagram pages, WhatsApp groups, and the shared experience of following the same series and watching the same movie, contributing to the perception of being part of something bigger than the individual (Mastromartino et. al, 2020).

Emotional narrative embedded in audiovisual content contributes to the development of fans' loyalty. The storytelling engages them and naturally transports the audience through the connection with the agents involved in the sport, holding attention, creating imagery, and bonding their feelings, increasing identification (Soble and Lowes, 2024). Moreover, *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)*, and *Senna (2024)* foster a sentimental attachment by combining behind-the-scenes access, the perspectives of drivers and managers, and biographical storytelling. These narratives, aligned with the passion of sports fans' groups, characterised by "patterns and orders of repetitive acts" and share the sentiment of "us against them", intensify loyalty for the team, athlete or the sport itself (Mueller and Sutherland, 2010). As a result, fans become loyal through a sense of belonging, fostered by immersive narrative experiences, identification with supporter communities, and shared passion for the sport.

Formula 1 has found a way to connect with Millennials and Generation Z by providing more than just the sport itself, and Liberty Media has been investing in immersive experiences, exploring the potential of key Formula 1 characters across different media. The emotional storytelling embodied in audiovisual productions has driven fans to a territory where they build meaning, belonging, and, consequently, loyalty.

2.5.2 The Strategic Value of Emotional Narratives to Retain New Fans

Analysing the strategic value of Storytelling, the emotional narrative transports fans psychologically to the content, strengthening their emotions and imagery (Green and Brock, 2000). Consequently, the audience becomes involved with the athlete's life story, the team's legacy and goals, and the sport's heritage. This emotional engagement is the third step to loyalty, which is involved in the escalating commitment, the level where a "stronger psychological connection" is established (Funk and James, 2001). Fans with an emotional attachment to a brand, in this case, interpreted as the key Formula characters, "develop an often interaction" such as a repetitive and constant consumption of material related to the sport, having a positive perception of what has been consumed, developing "affectively laden memories", tending to seek greater proximity to the sport, and finally evolving to a strong and retained relationship with the brand (Macinnis and Park, 2005).

The biggest difference embodied in the sport content is the longitudinal engagement, as history is still being made every year. *Rush (2013) and Senna (2024)* depicted legendary racing drivers from the past, but the sport's record, legacy, and statistics remain alive in the competition; moreover, some tracks and teams remain the same from that time, highlighting a strong correlation between history and the current season. Nevertheless, *Drive to Survive* releases a new season every year; additionally, the current racing season throughout the year allows fans to follow the athletes and teams' chosen narratives. This facilitated access to storytelling increases the affinity to the character and positively impacts the fandom, fostering social identity and long-term loyalty (Soble and Lowes, 2024).

Furthermore, engaged fans tend to consume, recommend, and foster loyalty in the community. According to James and Funk (2001), Allegiant fans remain even after deception, frustration, and other factors that could have threatened their interest and emotional attachment. The fan retention through the consistent time dedicated to the character (team, athlete, or sport) increases the engagement, impacting its lifetime value. An Allegiant fan has more inclination to "purchase the ticket, merchandise, and attendance at a sports event, watching the team every Sunday", in the Formula 1 context, they will watch other audiovisual productions, follow the official accounts on social media, share the content in the community they are part of, and share the experience with others who don't know about the sport, forming a new fan progressing from awareness to loyalty through the immersive experience (James and Funk, 2001).

2.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the literature review illustrates that Formula 1 and Liberty Media have been fostering the interests of Generation Z and Millennials through audiovisual content, social media, and the sport itself, not only to increase the audience base but also to remain relevant, strengthen emotional connections, and build long-term loyalty. This research addresses narrative transportation, identification and hero-villain archetypes in sports' audiovisual productions as key factors in building loyalty between fans and the sport. Additionally, productions such as *Drive to Survive* show the public the behind-the-scenes, revealing drivers and professionals as human beings, facilitating empathy and identification. The productions also bring rivalries are used as

dramatic fuel, intensifying the emotional engagement. Although at times the shows may also over-dramatise the situations, forcing rivalries and fights, creating discomfort among fans who are into the sport and can identify the “exaggeration”. This narrative's strategies are enhanced because of the digital age, in which fans can follow drivers on social media, watch movies and series to enhance the experience, resulting in a feeling of proximity with the key characters of the sport. However, the research study has identified gaps in understanding how storytelling aspects influence fan engagement at different stages, as mentioned in the PCM model by James and Funk (2001). Moreover, there is a lack of qualitative investigations of how emotional connections in Formula 1 are reflected in loyalty and allegiance through the identification driven by audiovisual content. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to exploring this gap and analysing young adult fans' perception of the correlation between sports productions and their engagement with Formula 1. The Literature Review contributes to the methodology, offering a comprehensive understanding of the Formula 1 universe, its fans, and audiovisual productions, highlighting the importance of adopting an interpretivist approach to investigate individual fan perceptions of Formula 1-related content and its role in their long-term relationship with the sport, from awareness to loyalty. The studies discussed in the chapter are crucial to the design of the semi-structured interview questions and the thematic framework for analysis, with the PCM model grounding the research objectives.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The literature review provided a substantial and constructive background for this research, but also identified gaps, allowing this study to explore one of them and contribute to the field of sport marketing. Moreover, this research aims to investigate the power of story in Formula 1, understanding how emotional narratives increase fan engagement among Gen Z and Millennials. To assess these findings, the qualitative research will be conducted in accordance with Creswell's (2009) conceptualisation, "research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretations that researchers propose for their studies". This research is motivated to answer the following questions: "How do the Emotional Narratives in *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)* and *Senna (2024)* impact the attraction, engagement, and loyalty among Generation Z and Millennials' fans to Formula 1?" and the subquestions: 1. How do the emotional narratives driven by the audiovisual productions (*Drive to Survive*, *Rush [2013]*, and *Senna [2024]*) contribute to the awareness of Generation Z and Millennials in Formula 1? 2. In what ways are emotions provoked through these narratives to foster emotional connection with Formula 1, its drivers, and the associated brands? 3. How do these emotional connections evolve into active participation, including consuming primary and additional content, engaging on social media, following the sport on television or at live events, and purchasing licensed products? 4. "How do the emotional narratives affect their long-term engagement and advocacy with the sport?".

The research onion model, developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023), guided the selection of an appropriate research strategy, considering philosophical assumptions, ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (what constitutes credible research), and axiology (the role of values and ethics). Finally, this chapter will discuss the research objectives through techniques and approaches based on the insights from the framework "The Psychological Continuum Model: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding an Individual's Psychological Connection to Sport" by Daniel C. Funk and Jeff James (2001), and will conclude with the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to analyse how Generation Z and Millennials are attracted to Formula 1 through audiovisual productions and their emotional narratives. It follows the research methodology proposed by Creswell (2009), which involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. The primary objective of this study is to examine the sports marketing strategies employed in “*Rush (2013)*”, “*Senna (2024)*”, and “*Drive to Survive*” and their impact on fan engagement among younger audiences. Therefore, the literature review provides an overview of the objectives and establishes a foundation for the study, aiming to answer the research question.

Moreover, the research builds on the customer/fan engagement framework, aiming to assess how the public develops engagement with Formula 1 and its athletes and teams over time. Through data analysis and interpretation, this study will investigate “the fan’s path”, following the engagement levels described by Funk and James (2001): awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance. This research adopts a qualitative approach, including interviews with Formula 1 fans around the world, and aims to provide a solid reflection on the impact of these productions on the younger audience, intending to accomplish the following research objectives:

1. Investigate how the emotional narratives driven by the audiovisual productions (*Drive to Survive*, *Rush [2013]*, and *Senna [2024]*) contribute to the awareness and interest of Generation Z and Millennials in the Formula 1 universe.
2. Analyse how emotions are provoked through these narratives to foster emotional connection with Formula 1, its drivers, and the associated brands.
3. Comprehend how these emotional connections evolve into active participation, including consuming primary and additional content, engaging on social media, following the sport on television or at live events, and purchasing licensed products.
4. Explore how emotional involvement with audiovisual content contributes to the development of advocacy, particularly through digital interactions.
5. Analyse how the emotional relationship established through audiovisual content promotes long-term fan loyalty to Formula 1.

3.3 Proposed Research Methodology

Aiming to identify the fan connections grounded in Formula 1's audiovisual emotional narratives, the author has used Saunders *et al.*'s research onion as guidance for the chosen Qualitative Methodology. The research onion is a diagram to illustrate and organise the numerous factors of the research, which are compounded by the peripheral layer of philosophy, followed by the second layer of approaches, the third layer of strategies, the fourth layer of choices, the fifth layer of time horizons, and finally the central layer of techniques and procedures (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Moving forward, following layer by layer, the research will design a strong understanding of the topic in a critical and organised flow of ideas and studies, outlining the philosophy that will justify the methodological choice, making the research more credible (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

3.4 Research Philosophy, Approaches and Strategy

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2017), the research philosophy is a system of beliefs which guides the researcher, influencing their choice and convictions, such as ontologies and epistemologies. Moreover, Quinlan (2011) agrees that the philosophical framework underpins all research, influencing how the researcher sees the world. To achieve the best results, it is necessary to fit the research into the appropriate process developed by the researcher to achieve the study's purpose (Quinlan, 2011). According to Saunders *et al.* (2023), aiming to develop and underpin the research, understanding the Ontology, Axiology, and Epistemology approaches is the foundation of the study's conduct.

Ontology is understood as the "study of being". Through the Ontological lens, the researcher needs to study the reality components (Scotland, 2012). According to Saunders *et al.* (2023), it refers to the way that the research will be conducted, being perceived as objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism means that social phenomena exist independently of factors that form society and go beyond human rationality, while Constructionism is the knowledge gained through social construction, by experience, relationships and social contexts (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, Epistemology is concerned with answering "How can we know what we know?", "What is considered acceptable knowledge?", "What constitutes good quality data?"

(Saunders *et al.*, 2023). It means the epistemological approach is concerned with the nature of knowledge and “how we know what we know” (Creswell, 2009).

3.4.1 Interpretivist and positivist approaches

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), Epistemology is positioned as Positivist and Interpretivist. A positivistic approach is based on data collected, which is related to quantitative methods influenced by interpretation (Bryman, 2011). While in Ontology the positivist approach is a universalism of one true and ordered thing, in epistemology it is an “observational and measurable facts, numbers, law-like generalisation, and causal explanations as contribution” (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

On the other hand, the interpretivism approach is the answer to the gaps not covered by the positivism, such as data which people are not separate from their social context, a strict structure that ignores other possible findings, biased researchers who are only observers, and the capture of single measures which can mislead the result (Collis and Hussey, 2021). This subjectivist approach aims to achieve richer results through “focus on individuals, lived experiences, and cultural artefacts”, being understood as a qualitative method (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, to the research objectives, which are to investigate the individuals and subjective perceptions of Formula 1 fans of the mentioned audiovisual contents, interpretivism appears as the ideal philosophy for research. Moreover, the study aims to identify through individual perceptions and experiences the impact of the contents on the developing fan engagement, agreeing with the inductive idea proposed by Creswell’s (2009), which interpretivism “leads the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas”.

3.4.2 Qualitative and quantitative research methods

This study aims to explore the recent impact of sports audiovisual content on streaming and its influence on Millennials and Generation Z, with a focus on understanding the effect on sports audience, interest, and consumption as engaged fans. Moreover, this research will explore the journey from unknown to fan loyalty, focusing on fans’ relationships and their perception of the sport. To assess this

analysis, an exploratory study aims to examine recent phenomena through flexible methods to investigate the research question objectives (Stevens *et al.*, 2013).

Moreover, the selection of the research approach is based on the understanding of the best strategy to achieve the aim of the study. According to Gray, Williamson, Karp and Dalphin (2007), quantitative studies “use numbers to describe what exists”, being considered more reliable and easier to be re-created by other studies by researchers who intend to investigate deeply the assumptions of their results. The quantitative research is divided into four types: Experimental research, which aims to establish the connection between the “dependent variable and independent variable”; Correlational Designs, which is the analysis of the influences of change caused by one variable which affects the other; Descriptive research, which aims to “describe population, situation, and phenomenon and the characteristics which are more concerned with ‘what, where, and when’”; and Case Study, which is a practical test of hypotheses on person or group to analyse and investigate situations and phenomena (Ghanad, 2023). Ultimately, quantitative research is an approach that minimises bias and relies on deductive reasoning to test theories and hypotheses (Creswell, 2009).

In contrast, qualitative research is based on words rather than numbers, emphasising an inductive approach and generation of theories, embodied by the concept of interpretative individuals' experiences and perceptions about the world (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Moreover, qualitative research is applied in small samples, aiming to analyse contexts and events, focused on a specific purpose and opportunities to explore particular topics (Gerring, 2017). Nevertheless, according to Rupp (1994), the research possesses three forms to collect data: “(1) In-depth, open-ended interviews, (2) direct observations, and (3) written words”, reaffirming the focus on answering “why” through the understanding of the individual. However, the qualitative researcher has to be aware of providing reliability, validity and triangulation in terms of credibility of the study. Moreover, Rupp (1994) illustrates that the method has some weaknesses, such as the data analysis, as a consequence of the process through interpretation instead of numbers, which can be ambiguous and confusing; the second weakness is the “absence of analytic induction”, which means the identification of oppositions and negations; the third is the “absence of an overall process model”, which means it depends on the approach and the context in each research. Although

Rupp (1994) points out the negative factors of qualitative research, the research can minimise the risk through transcription and thematic coding, becoming more credible.

Concluding, the qualitative research is more aligned with the study's purpose, as it aims to explore the interests of Generation Z and Millennials in Formula 1, understanding how productions such as *Rush (2013)*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Drive to Survive* are fostering their interest in the sport. Therefore, through an analysis of their perception, feelings, fan behaviours, and experiences, it is possible to draw the impact of the storytelling narrative on their attraction to the sport. Ultimately, the qualitative method is appropriate because it can collect the complexity of emotional experiences and sports narratives, using interviews to illustrate the engagement trajectory.

3.4.3 Inductive and deductive research

Following the research “onion”, the next layer covers the inductive and deductive research approach. Inductive reasoning is associated with qualitative research and begins with the particular analysis of observations, contexts and interests to build concepts and theories. On the other hand, deductive reasoning is conceptualised as moving from the general to the particular understanding by conducting theory, hypotheses, and tests to reach a result, aligning with the quantitative approach (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018). According to Azungah (2018), the inductive approach has a process to analyse the data, such as “organising both interview and documentary data”, enabling the researcher to analyse the raw data codes in paragraphs, speeches, expressions and experiences, which can be studied and applied flexibly going “back and forth” over the data as much as necessary. Considering that this research aims to analyse sports fans' perception and their relationship building with the sport through the audiovisual content, the inductive research seems more appropriate, because it is understood as a social scientific method which analyses the phenomena in social life (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). In addition, the inductive approach allowed the researcher to collect information through the interpretation of interviews, applying open-ended questions to the participants to enrich the data that emerged from the broad pattern of themes (Creswell, 2009).

3.5 Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interviews

To assess the points of view and perceptions of younger sports consumers, this research employed qualitative interviews, emphasising “greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on interviewees’ perspectives” (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Adopting an interpretivist methodology, the study considered the factors which make humans individually different, with various motivations, experiences, and social and cultural backgrounds, enabling the researcher to interpret the interview through the lens of uniqueness, aiming to “describe the reality given the assumptions and beliefs of the interpretivist researcher” (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Qualitative interviewing aims to collect what interviewees perceive as relevant and important through a structured, semi-structured or unstructured interview.

According to Petrescu, Lazar, Cioban, and Doroftei (2017), a structured interview is based on template questions which should be followed strictly, while an unstructured interview is conducted through oral communication, such as a focus group, which has a topic and they discuss it, being dynamic and with a stimulating ambient for insights. However, this study opted to adopt a semi-structured interview, guided by a list of questions to be covered, but open to following participants' insights and thoughts. This flexibility enriches the data collection process (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The semi-structured interview is understood as flexible and focused on a unique experience of the interviewee, adapting itself during the conversation to gain as much crucial information as possible, but also having a list of questions to maintain the interview on the path toward the objectives of the research question (Naz, Gulab, and Aslam, 2022). In conclusion, the research objectives aim to comprehend emotional perceptions and the development of fan engagement from an individual's perspective, which aligns with the strengths of the semi-structured interview method.

3.5.1 Online Interview

As previously discussed, the research followed a predefined set of questions designed to collect enriched data and address the research objectives, while keeping the interviewer on course and enabling interviewees to express their thoughts freely (Blandford, 2013). Seeking to collect a diverse range of data, the interview occurred online through Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams, because it promotes

inclusivity while avoiding the costs of travel and site location. Online interviews also increase the range of options, enabling information collection in different countries (Oliffe, J., Kelly, M., Monster, G., and Ko, W., 2021). According to De Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari (2021), online interviews have challenges such as a lack of technological experience and proper equipment by the interviewer and participant, video and audio quality, internet speed, unexpected problems with hardware and software, and distractions. However, these issues can be overcome by previous testing and preparation, and are considered minor risks compared to the advantages, such as broader geographical scope, more options for interviewees, and support from software in data collection (De Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari, 2021).

3.6 Population and Sampling

The qualitative research aims to develop “a depth understanding rather than a breadth”, prioritising insights and experiences to reach further learning in the study (Boddy, 2016). However, to create rich research, it is necessary to follow the right sample strategy definition, such as opportunistic sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling, or theoretical sampling (Czernek-Marszalek and McCabe, 2024).

This study followed the purposive (judgment) sampling, which consists of a consideration that “certain categories of individuals are important and justifiable” (Czernek-Marszalek and McCabe, 2024). In the case of this study, the criteria are men or women who were born between 1986 and 2012, covering Millennials (Byon and Yim, 2020) and Generation Z (Voracek, 2021), who regularly watch Formula 1 and have watched at least one of the three audiovisual productions covered by this study (*Senna [2024]*, *Rush [2013]* and *Drive to Survive*).

According to Hogan *et al.* (2009), small samples are preferable for collecting rich data, since the researcher adopts an analytic approach to examine in depth each interview to extract the feelings, experiences and reasons of the participant, contrasting with the quantitative approach, which is associated with large samples focused on generalisation. As a result, this research selected 10 participants from India, Brazil, Spain, Paraguay, Belgium, Ireland, France, and Romania. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), snowball sampling is suitable for this research because it begins with a small, relevant group of people or

an individual, and then, through their referrals and suggestions, additional contacts are established with more potential participants. This technique was appropriate given the intention to explore the international range of Formula 1 fans. As an international student with a multicultural network, the researcher received referrals through personal contacts on social media platforms and WhatsApp. Participants' details are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Participants' Information

<p>Interviewee 1</p> <p>Male</p> <p>India</p> <p>Born: 2002</p>	<p>Interviewee 2</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Brazil</p> <p>Born: 1998</p>
<p>Interviewee 3</p> <p>Female</p> <p>Spain</p> <p>Born: 2000</p>	<p>Interviewee 4</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Paraguay</p> <p>Born: 1993</p>
<p>Interviewee 5</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Brazil</p> <p>Born: 1994</p>	<p>Interviewee 6</p> <p>Female</p> <p>Belgium</p> <p>Born: 2000</p>
<p>Interviewee 7</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Ireland</p> <p>Born: 1997</p>	<p>Interviewee 8</p> <p>Female</p> <p>Ireland</p> <p>Born: 1999</p>
<p>Interviewee 9</p> <p>Female</p> <p>France</p> <p>Born: 2001</p>	<p>Interviewee 10</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Romania</p> <p>Born: 1990</p>

3.7 Analysing Qualitative Data

Aiming to analyse the data and categorise it into meaningful outcomes, this research adopted Thematic Analysis to identify, analyse, and report the themes of the emotional narratives and their impact on younger Formula 1 fans. Bryman and Bell (2011) explain that “the theme is more or less the same as a code”, which allows the researcher to analyse responses and organise them into coherent topics to answer the research question and its objectives.

Following Naeem, Ozuem, Howell and Rafagni (2023) guidelines for qualitative thematic analysis, six steps were applied during the process of writing: (1) *transcription and familiarisation with the data*, (2) *selection of keywords and quotations*, (3) *coding*, (4) *theming*, (5) *interpretation*, and (6) *development of a conceptual model*.

In detail, the researcher started transcribing each interview and highlighting the key information. The researcher then spent considerable time understanding the ideas and thoughts. Subsequently, the coding process was applied, which means the quotes and keywords were organised in blocks of context, perspective, way of thinking, and experience categories. After that, the codes were separated into themes to illustrate the analysed phenomenon. Moreover, the themes were described and analysed in a chronological sequence to reach the research objectives and to illustrate the fan journey from unknowing to fan passion. Finally, the researcher presented his interpretation of the findings and the overall set of personal experiences derived from the learning gained from the set of interviews. From this analysis, further questions acknowledged limitations and further research directions were proposed (Creswell, 2009).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This research process adhered to the “Ethical Guidelines and Procedures for Research Involving Human Participants” of the National College of Ireland. According to Collis and Hussey (2021), research aims to maintain professionalism and respect for everyone involved, following the ethical standards of the university, particularly during interviews. In addition, the study aimed to avoid the four most common issues:

(1) harm to participants, (2) lack of informed consent, (3) invasion of privacy, and (4) deception (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Moreover, the online interview required careful attention to issues such as confidentiality, informed consent and data access, and security and storage (Oliffe, J., Kelly, M., Monster, G., and Ko, W., 2021) of all participants from the initial contact to the safe storage of the data after the research conclusion. All participants received an email explaining the research and interview purpose, containing a document with a consent form which needed to be signed before the interview. Furthermore, at the beginning of each interview, the study's motivations were reiterated, and interviewees were informed that the recording had begun and reminded of their right to withdraw at any time, without any consequence.

3.9 Limitations

The study involved a small sample of 10 participants, mostly from Western countries and one from Asia. Although the aim was to gain deeper insights into the perceptions of Formula 1 fans' engagement worldwide, the researcher was unable to include participants from Africa, North America, Central America, Oceania, and other parts of Asia, resulting in a sample that is biased towards Western culture. Furthermore, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), the thematic analysis involves a degree of researcher subjectivity interpretation, which may have influenced the bias of perspective. Finally, with more time and resources, the researcher would have had broader samples and other productions that should have impacted engagement, as well as a deeper analysis of social media and Formula 1's official streaming.

4 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present findings interpreted from the ten interviews collected between 10 July 2025 and 17 July 2025, and to discuss the insights in line with the data analysis previously explained in the methodology chapter. This section is also informed by the understanding gained from the Literature Review, particularly regarding the emotional narratives and their impact on young fans through the aspects of transport and identification. In addition, the behind-the-scenes productions and historical content foster emotional engagement. Moreover, by adopting the PCM model (James and Funk, 2001), this research explores the engagement levels from awareness to loyalty, their increase through the productions *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Rush (2013)*.

Furthermore, the interviews were conducted following the semi-structured method to adapt the interview to each participant to extract as much information as possible. This also involved applying an interpretivist approach to identify individual perceptions and experiences of Formula 1 fans, and adopting the inductive method to analyse the social phenomenon of digital content on streaming and social media as a catalyst for fan allegiance. The participants' insights were divided into thematic groups, which were analysed and discussed in relation to the research objectives.

4.2 Qualitative Research Findings

The interviews were insightful and thorough, and the questions and their related sub-questions provided rich data to explore the objectives and answer the research question and its objectives. The research included 6 men and 4 women born between 1986 and 2012 who identified themselves as Formula 1 fans and had watched at least one of the three pieces of content addressed in this study. Moreover, 90% had a previous interest in the sport before the productions, and 10% developed an interest through the related Formula 1 content. Furthermore, all of the participants expressed the importance of the *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Rush (2013)* to the sport, and how crucial these productions have been for attracting new fans to the sport. Participants also recommended the productions to friends, family, and partners as a

gateway to Formula 1. Additionally, 100% of the participants highlighted the productions as important to offer an extra experience beyond the race, such as technical learning, a business point of view, personal storytelling, and a historical sports background. Finally, 90% of interviewees assured their commitment to Formula 1 in the future, seeking to watch more audiovisual content and attend races. However, one participant shared that she is not trying to increase her involvement and is letting it “arise naturally”, but she is also waiting for the second season of *Drive to Survive*, planning to watch *Formula 1: The movie*, and intends to attend a race in the future.

4.2.1 First Floor: Awareness

Objective 1. *Investigate how the emotional narratives driven by the audiovisual productions (Drive to Survive, Rush [2013], and Senna [2024]) contribute to the awareness and interest of Generation Z and Millennials in the Formula 1 universe.*

In this part, the author examines the collected data and highlights insights into participants' initial experiences with Formula 1 and the audiovisual productions studied in the research, following James and Funk's (2001) PCM model, where Awareness is the first level of involvement.

4.2.1.1 First Formula 1 Memory

The interview was built on the perspective of the fans' level, starting from the first time they were introduced to the sport, resulting in 90% of respondents pointing out that they had memories since childhood. 70% of the interviewees were influenced by their family or friends, 20% developed an interest by themselves while watching the race on TV, and only one interviewee started through the influence of *Drive to Survive*. However, all of them shared the same opinion that the Formula 1 related content has been important for attracting and introduce new fans to the sport through bringing storytelling which goes beyond the race: “*I do think the show (Drive to Survive) really is a great way to bring in new fans who've never looked at the races as anything rather than cars been around in circles*” (Interviewee [IV] 8).

4.2.1.2 Curiosity Sparked

Moving forward on the awareness level, the interview collected different reasons regarding what sparked the participants' interest in the sport. Each one has an individual experience that ignited their attraction. Some of them were kept by the sports characteristics, such as IV 1, who was thrilled by the competitiveness and speed. The IV 4 shared that he had always been interested in cars, and in 1998, during the competition between Schumacher and Hakkinen, the rivalry, overtaking, the sound, and the engines were brilliant in his childhood mind, even though he didn't fully understand what was happening. Moreover, the IV 7 highlighted the sound of the older cars and the fact that in the late 90s and early 00s, Formula 1 had an Irish team on the Grid, called Jordan, and because of this, his family started to watch the sport and support the national representation.

Furthermore, the IV 6 mentioned that the social experience with friends was the first motivation and then the noise of the engines. Finally, the most different interest came from the IV 8, which pointed out drivers' backstories and drama storytelling as the crucial factor of her attraction through the show *Drive to Survive*: “*They're like, you know, how intense it was. You'd find yourself watching it [...] and 'oh my god, who's gonna win?' Or, like, when they were doing their time (qualifying), you're like, 'oh my gosh', like you genuinely felt on edge.*”

In conclusion, the individual experiences of the participants were shaped in different ways, sharing some similarities and others completely different, but all of them communicate the importance of the excitement of the competitive sports' aura, becoming amazed by the battles, iconic car sounds and with remarkable drivers at that time. The participants describe the feeling of being transported into the sports, having their attention captured by the noise, the imagery of thrilling battles, and the excitement and adrenaline, as described by Soble and Lowes (2024). Other participants discussed the identification, such as IV 7's connection with the Irish team and the driver, and the memory of the IV 3's family supporting Fernando Alonso. The documentary *Drive to Survive* sparked a surge in transportation and identification in the IV 8, as she explains her emotional rollercoaster while watching it for the first time, a clear example of narrative transportation, exemplifying the narrative transportation and emotional immersion by Green and Brock (2000).

4.2.1.3 The role of the audiovisual productions and their importance

During the interviews, participants shared their perceptions of the analysed productions in this study, highlighting the importance of their role in the understanding.

Drive to survive: The Netflix documentary was by far the most frequently mentioned, having been watched by all interviewees. Even though most of the participants already had a background with Formula 1, they highlighted how the content increased their connection with the sport. The aspects behind the scenes and the humanisation of the sport, such as the relationships between drivers, team principals and team workers, were reinforced by IV 3. Moreover, the documentary explains the complexities of the sport, covering the sport management, technical insights, financial aspects, negotiations, strategies and more. The IV 1 emphasised the importance of the content to introduce himself to the cultural and historical parts of the sport: *“Some of the tracks are very historic and hold cultural value as well. Like, for example, say about Imola in Italy, it's an F1 weekend is celebrated like a festival over there among the Ferrari fans”*. Moreover, IV 1 pointed out that after it, he started to watch every season consistently, while IV 5 said that *Drive to Survive* was important to rekindle his interest in the sport, being an important motivation to watch all the qualifying and races. In addition, the IV 8 had the first experience with Formula 1 because of the documentary, which had sparked her curiosity and consequently led her to watch some races, illustrating the emotional narratives as a mechanism to foster attachment mentioned by Soble and Lowes (2024).

The drama storytelling was mentioned for the IV 8, which enriches the backstories of the sport. This point of view was mostly shared by all the participants, such as the drama between drives and also its teamwork, but the individuals' perceptions of the sports and pressures, and their emotions and how they manage them in a competitive context: *“I like the competitive aspect of it. [...] when you see a driver that never won, win for the first time, and you know the emotions that kind of make you bring out, there are a lot of emotions in sport, I think, in general. And that's always very interesting (IV 9)”*. However, the IV 7 said that the production made him get disillusioned, because of the overdramatisation and the uncovered side of the politics, revealing how drivers *“are not allowed to say whatever they want to say for fear of losing their seat because it's seen as like a big taboo”*, which broke the romantic part of the Formula 1, Carter

(2013), explained that, when he explains how over dramatisation narratives blurs the reality. Moreover, IV 4 acknowledge the importance of *Drive to Survive* to attract new audience, and also to make Formula 1 become popular nowadays and reach great audiences' rating, but in his opinion the production is "too fictional" and does not fairly represent the category or the sport, and because of that he didn't feel engaged with.

Senna/Rush: Moreover, the movie *Rush* (2013), released in 2013, and the series *Senna* (2024), released in 2024, were watched by 50% of the interviewees. But, only 40% of the participants watched all three productions studied by this research. *Senna* (2024) and *Rush* (2013) are historical content, while *Senna* (2024) represents the life and career of Ayrton Senna, a former Brazilian Formula 1 driver and three-time world champion who died in an accident during the race of Ímola in 1994, and *Rush* (2013) portrays the life and career of Niki Lauda, a former Formula driver and also three-time world champion, and James Hunt, a former driver and one-time world champion. Macinnis and Park (2005) highlight the importance of emotional memory in developing long-term loyalty, and both narratives represent strong emotional storytelling. During the interview, participants who watched both contents expressed joy in learning about 70s and 90s drivers and how the sport was at that time. They expressed the feeling of deepening in the sports universe through learning the old eras, the IV 5 illustrates saying: "*both become champions and a driver to remember in history, and how these productions engage with the audience, to understand what Senna's name is or what Niki means (to the legacy of the sport). It's good, you know, engages you and becomes even more fun after seeing those productions*".

In addition, it is emphasised that the wild competition and the danger of the sport bring an immersion into the history for the viewer (Charalambidou, 2024). However, some participants highlighted some issues in the movie *Rush* (2013), such as the fact that Niki Lauda and James Hunt had always been friends since Formula 3 (Formula 1's academy), but in the movie it was represented as a long-time unfriendly rivalry until the end of Hunt's career, following the participants insights, Boyle and Haynes (2009) pointed out the consequences of fabricated rivalries such as integrity harm and emotional dissociation. Apart from that, the movie was loved by all of the participants. The IV 7 mentioned after his criticism that he "*I liked the depth of the characters in Rush. I really liked how they didn't make them as, like, these superheroes. They made*

them human. I really, really like that because everyone forgets that a lot of, like, sports stars, especially, are actually human”.

4.2.2 Second Floor: Attraction

Objective 2: *Analyse how emotions are provoked through these narratives to foster an emotional connection with Formula 1, its drivers, and the associated brands.*

This section aims to deeply explore the second floor of fans' involvement, based on Funk and James' (2001) model, which explains that a fan at this level starts to acknowledge their favourite sport or team. According to the authors, there exist four reasons which may lead a fan from the attraction level to attachment, strengthening their connection, which is still weak at this stage. However, it is on track to a durable and long-term relationship.

Funk and James (2001) identified four reasons, the first: “hedonic motives”, such as the desire for entertainment through dramas, athletes' skills and performance, and the aesthetic quality of the sport. Moreover, the feeling of transportation by escaping reality and the excitement generated by the sports experience. Second: the “Psychological features of a social situation”, such as the tradition inherited by the family, and the need to belong in the local community through identification by supporting the same team or liking the same sport. Additionally, the transportation and identification are achieved through the glory and happiness of the supported team or athlete's success. Third: the “Physical features”, which are achieved by attending events like football stadiums or Formula 1 races, closeness via technology, and the clubs', drivers', and managers' commitment to providing great service and professionalism. The fourth factor is the “situational factor”, such as special events, merchandise promotions and price discounts.

Furthermore, the interviews provided data to discuss the experiences of Millennials and Generation Z fans in terms of attraction, understanding their motivations, and the influence of the analysed productions and emotional storytelling on enhancing fans' attraction.

4.2.2.1 Narrative emotional moments

Exploring the attraction floor (James & Funk, 2001), participants were asked if they recalled any moment or scene in the productions that provoked strong emotions. Thus, this understanding aligns with what is discussed in the PCM model, where emotional connection is an important means of engagement. Moreover, all the interviewees shared at least one scene or episode that brought strong feelings. Focusing on the series *Senna (2024)*, the IV described the story as “inspiring”, mentioning the storytelling of the “*rising star from Brazil climbing his way of fighting his way up to the top pinnacle of motorsport, was very inspiring and humbling to watch*”, being complemented by the IV 4, who said that the fatal accident in Imola was emotionally impactful.

Focusing on the movie *Rush (2013)*, IV 2 highlighted a strong emotional scene of the rain, where Niki Lauda decided to quit the race because of the high risk of driving in dangerous conditions; he preferred to stay safe and live life with his wife rather than the championship. Also, the IV 4 and IV 7 commented on the scene when Lauda first met his wife, and how a person who didn't possess the physical stereotypes of a Formula 1 driver, being considered ugly, was stimulated by “*proving people wrong*” and masterfully drove her car, and that is one of the movie's core messages, which made viewers connected with the character.

Finally, *Drive to Survive* had the most mentions from the interviewees, which covered accidents, title battles, retirements, drivers moving to different teams, and the race overview. Hence, Grosjean's accident was the most mentioned, IV 6 highlighted how the moment was dramatically captured, which evoked a strong emotion in her. The IV 7 remembered that while Roman Grosjean was “*literally fighting for his life*”, the production combined these scenes with those of the race winner Sergio Perez, who was “*fighting for his career*”. This scene was well produced, and the IV 5 pointed out the tension during the race, in which drivers, team staff, stewards and everyone involved were worried, but he came out of the fire alive, and the interviewee felt relieved.

Overall, the interviewees' responses support the theories of transportation and identification, drawing viewers into the productions and emotionally connecting them

with the narrative. This reflects the narrative transportation theory by Green and Brock (2000), which describes the power of emotional storytelling to immerse viewers in fictional narratives through mirrors of real-life feelings and experiences. After capturing the fans' attention, it is necessary to delve deeper into the sport's various aspects, such as affection for the team, drivers, or the sport itself, and ultimately lead them to understand the sport's values and perception.

4.2.2.2 Identification with heroes

Moving forward, the interviewer asked if the participants had a favourite driver, team or narrative, aiming to determine how identification connections are formed through feelings of represented identity, goals and perspective, making fans feel accomplished by others' achievements.

Except for the IV 6 and IV 8, all of the interviewees had a favourite driver. However, IV 8 mentioned that all the individual stories on *Drive to Survive* are interesting and engaging, and she also likes the famous teams such as Ferrari, Mercedes and McLaren. IV 6 expressed how funny the ex-Haas team principal, Gunther Steiner, was, but she only knew that because of the documentary. Moreover, Max Verstappen was mentioned twice, by IV 1 and IV 5, described as a great and bold driver. Lewis Hamilton was the most mentioned, 40% of the participants chose him as their favourite. They cited his ability as a driver, the fact that he is one of the greatest drivers of all time with 7 world championship titles, and his background as the only black driver in history, who came from a poor family, unlike the other drivers. Charles Leclerc, the Ferrari racing driver, was mentioned once by IV 3, who shared that the connection and empathy came from the show *Drive to Survive*, she said: "*I think I really felt a connection with Charles Leclerc, not because I feel like him, but I don't know it touched something in me [...] I feel like he puts a lot of pressure on himself*". IV 9 mentioned Pierre Gasly, because both are French. Finally, IV 7 said Niki Lauda, especially because of his story through the movie *Rush (2013)*, which ignited his curiosity to search more about his life story and career. IV 4 named Lewis as his current favourite driver, but Michael Schumacher is his biggest idol in the sport, because of the time when he was a child, cheering for Schumacher's wins. He also mentioned Felipe Massa, because both are from South America, and in 2008 the participant stood

following Ferrari after Schumacher's retirement, and Massa had an unbelievable season, which was ruined by losing the title in the last race of the season.

In conclusion, it is evident that everyone has their own reasons for creating a connection, some by the historical background and others through the audiovisual productions, concurring with Wood and Burkhalter (2023), in which fans' engagement develops across different platforms interactions. The immersive experience of the movie, series and documentary fostered empathy and connection by revealing the human being behind the driver's helmet (Giorgio *et al.*, 2024). IV 7 argued that Lewis Hamilton lost some of his support because he wasn't on *Drive to Survive*, and this created a distance to him, while other drivers from small teams, like Yuki Tsunoda, showed their hard work and caught his empathy and good feelings. When the fan has the opportunity to attach to the humanised side of the hero, they are more likely to build a connection.

4.2.2.3 Narrative arcs impact the sports' perception

The last question within the Attraction's topic aimed to collect how the storytelling of *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)* changed the fans' perception about Formula 1. Moreover, 80% of the participants had a concise answer that the productions changed or enriched their perception or knowledge about the sport. However, 2 interviewees said that the productions didn't change their perceptions, but analysing the full conversation both highlighted new knowledges gained through the production which deepened their experience, such as empathy with drivers from the back of the grid, and also the history of Formula 1 and legends drivers and their era (Ayrton Senna, Niki Lauda, and James Hunt).

Furthermore, the majority of the participants mentioned the gain of understanding about the sport beyond the races, "*what the actual training takes to be a driver. But then the insights and all the technical data and the money spent and all that, the combination of those both created something to understand the whole, the whole thing (IV 10)*". In addition, the historical background, historical and current rivalries, the evolution of security, the business part of the sport, the importance of training and qualifications, and the humanised side of the sport, such as the pressure on drivers

and workers' shoulders, agreeing with Shah and Williams, (2024) who argued about the sense of intimacy and understanding of the sport through *Drive to Survive*.

Fans who had little contact with the sport or no knowledge of it began to watch more races, including the full weekend qualification, and became more interested in the technical aspects of the competition after watching the Productions. In conclusion, the experience of all the fans was increased, and the sport became more than “*cars driving around (IV 8)*”, fostering the fascination with the whole Formula 1 universe.

4.2.3 Third Floor: Attachment

Objective 3. *Comprehend how these emotional connections evolve into active participation, including consuming primary and additional content, engaging on social media, following the sport on television or at live events, and purchasing licensed products.*

Furthermore, this level is the evolution of the attraction, where the sport starts to have “intrinsic importance for an individual” (James and Funk, 2001), strengthening the bond between the fan and the key characters, especially on a psychological and physical level. The PCM model by Funk and James (2001) suggests that fans increase the importance of the sport, deepen their knowledge, and become more consistent in their interest. Fans also start to pursue others who share the same interest or at least, seek ways to increase their consumption and contact with this universe. This section analyses how the participants were influenced by *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)* and *Senna (2024)* to seek more content and experience beyond the races.

4.2.3.1 Content consumption and social media interaction

Aiming to comprehend the fans' behaviours, it was asked if, after watching the content, they started to follow drivers, teams, profiles and content related to Formula 1. This aspect goes beyond the influence of the productions, depending on the personality and individuality of each participant. However, it can be concluded that everyone was impacted in some way. The IV 10 expressed that he doesn't follow something in particular, but his “For You” page on Instagram or Facebook has been showing content related to the sport, and he tends to watch. Moreover, 40% of participants follow

drivers, teams, or influencers on social media, watch additional content on YouTube, or listen to podcasts, but they are unsure whether they started after watching the productions. However, in a way, it was a natural evolution of interest in being more immersed in the sport. Therefore, 50% of participants agree that they are consuming more content and interacting on social media after watching the productions. IV 1 highlighted that he “*got very much invested in this sport with more time, so I started following, uh, almost every driver on social media and their teams as well*”. Likewise, IV 2 and IV 5 follow more content, including drivers and “*faces behind the scenes*”. IV 8, who began watching Formula 1 because of *Drive to Survive*, started to follow a few drivers and teams to understand their human side and the sport's context.

In conclusion, although some participants acknowledge their attachment to the sport is independent of the productions, they understand everything as part of a bigger picture, which transports them into the Formula 1, positively enhancing their experience and engagement (Green and Brock, 2000). On the other hand, participants who perceive the productions as most impactful are responsible and tend to pursue additional experiences on social media and other platforms. They show more interest in the human side of the sport, even though the competition and technical aspects are still important, but the empathy and identification with key characters are relevant for their immersion as fans. Byon and Yin (2020) address the sense of belonging and fan engagement through online platforms, such as Social Media and streaming, among Generation Z and Millennials. Increasing the immersion and experience of consuming sports across multiplatforms, as stated by Giorgio *et al.* (2024).

4.2.3.2 Watching races

As mentioned before, at the level of attachment, consistency is crucial for fostering engagement and emotional bonding. The interviewees were asked if they began following more races after watching *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)*, and *Senna (2024)*. Moreover, 40% of the participants said they would watch the races even if the productions didn't exist, because they were already fans before, and the productions are complementary options to follow the sport. However, IV 10 pointed out: “*because of the Drive to Survive, and because people around me started talking about it, the community grew bigger [...] I need to watch the race, because tomorrow we're going to talk at work about this, so it helped in a way*”. According to him, the Formula 1

community grew due to the content, and now has more people watching and commenting, which makes him more motivated to follow the sport.

Nevertheless, 60% of the interviewees confirmed that they started watching more races after the productions. IV 7 said that he was encouraged to buy a sports channel package on his TV, specifically to watch Formula 1. According to the IV 9, who had never watched Formula 1 before *Drive to Survive*, the content sparked her interest, and now she often spends time watching races. Finally, IV 1 used to watch only race weekends, but now he follows the full Formula 1 weekend, equally for IV 5, who said, “*After that (the contents), I eagerly waited for qualifying to see how the grid would build up. So yeah, that helped to, you know, not miss any opportunity to see the cars on track*”. In agreement, Charalambidou (2024) highlighted the increase in sports interest and engagement after the streaming productions.

4.2.3.3 Merchandising purchase and race attendance

Following the PCM model, direct experience (race attendance), intensity, and personal relevance (for example, purchasing products) are part of the “formation of a stable psychological connection” (Funk and James, 2001). Among the participants in the study, 70% have at least purchased one item related to Formula 1, while 30% have never bought anything related to it. However, the IV 10 mentioned that he is considering buying merchandise, such shoes, and IV 5 said “*It's cool to have one, but I will one day, I don't know when, or maybe next season, whatever, but I will try to buy, like, a t shirt or even a cap*”. Therefore, the majority who had purchased highlighted their acquisitions, which included hats, t-shirts, jackets, stickers, a remote control car, Lego toys, and Formula 1 games and shared the intention to buy more, demonstrating, while Bauer *et al.* (2008) highlight a shift from the attitudinal dimension to the behavioural dimension. Moreover, 20% of the participants have attended a race. However, all of the participants wish to have this experience one day; this topic will be further explored in the section on behavioural loyalty.

4.2.4 Fourth Floor: Allegiance

Objective 4. *Explore how emotional involvement with audiovisual content contributes to the development of advocacy, particularly through digital interactions.*

According to the PCM model, allegiance is the final stage, where the loyal and devoted fan adopts attitudes to strengthen their connections with athletes, teams and the sport (Funk and James, 2001). However, to examine this stage more comprehensively, the fourth floor will be divided into allegiance and behavioural loyalty. The first will explore fans' sense of belonging and advocacy.

4.2.4.1 Recommending F1 content

Focusing on the productions, *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Rush (2013)*, participants were asked if they had ever recommended the productions to someone, and 100% said they had done so at least once. IV 1 shared that he tries to convince his friends who watch other sports to start F1 through the contents “*I urge them to watch first go and watch Drive to Survive. There you are going to gain some knowledge about this sport, then start watching it*”, and IV 5 exchanges experiences and opinions with his brother, who started watching Formula 1 because of the contents, and now he is watching the sport and everything else. The IV 10 brought that now the people who he suggested the productions are coming to him to talk about episodes, races, and suggest other productions, “*they even came to me. Oh, yeah, I know you used to watch F1, but I've seen a documentary. What do you think about it? So it happened kind of like backwards*”. In conclusion, the spontaneity of suggesting these contents works as a validation through word of mouth. Creating a sense of responsibility and confidence between those who suggest and those who experiment, strengthens the connection with the sport once the fan sees themselves as part of its universe. Mastromino *et al.* (2020) emphasise the importance of a sense of responsibility among the fan community, which fosters a sense of collectiveness and inclusiveness.

4.2.4.2 Online community participation

Aiming to portray the participants' digital activities related to Formula 1 and their allegiance attitudes, it was asked if they are part of any community, forum or group. The majority, 70%, answered that they are not involved in any digital community. However, 30% said that they are part of such groups. The IV 1 and the IV 2 are in a WhatsApp group with other Formula 1 fans, and the IV 4 goes beyond, he is part of a telegram group where exclusive contents is shared: “*they put news there, photos that you are not seeing, like on websites and so on. You know, like fan photos that aren't*

the circuit and so on” and also in forums of discussions. Moreover, IV 6 are not in any WhatsApp group or forum, but she is part of the McLarens’ Instagram group chat, an official community for McLaren’s fans ruled by the team.

Ultimately, all of the participants are part of a small community or group in real life, composed of friends or family, where they discuss races, content and their personal opinions. This behaviour is important to foster the sense of belonging, even though the biggest part of the participants don’t discuss on the internet, they like to defend their opinions, favourite driver, favourite team, scenes and quality of the movies, series, and documentaries among the group where they feel comfortable, enhancing the immersion in the fan experience (Mastromartino et. al, 2020).

4.2.4.3 Posting on social media

Through the question of whether the participants have ever posted spontaneously on their social media about Formula 1, the researcher intends to analyse the impact of the sport on their behaviour, reflected in their willingness to self-awareness as Formula 1 fans and this aspect of their personality on the internet, agreeing with Byon and Yim (2020) and Voracek (2021) who explained Generation Z and Millennials personality on internet. As a result, 80% of the interviewees reported posting content, such as reels, reposts of official publications, and pictures of themselves watching the race. IV 3 perfectly represents this fan allegiance and self-identification, she has *“a picture with a jacket and I posted, you know?! I reposted some Lewis’s post, or maybe if someone won, I posted that, or stories watching the races. Yes, for sure, because it’s a big part of my life”*. However, IV 9 and IV 10 never posted anything, but both expressed themselves as low-profile and rarely use social media.

4.2.5 Fourth Floor: Behavioural Loyalty

Objective 5. *Analyse how the emotional relationship established through audiovisual content promotes long-term fan loyalty to Formula 1.*

This section concludes the chapter by exploring the second part of the fourth floor: behavioural loyalty. The section goes through consistency, long-term, and a strong sense of belonging, exploring the elements through the PCM model (Funk and James,

2001). The model suggests that emotional involvement is characterised by all these traits, mentioning increased self-awareness as a factor and proactive efforts in moving toward opportunities that will strengthen the connection to the sport.

4.2.5.1 Consistency in following F1

The consistency and persistence involved in watching and following the sport over time are reflected in overcoming changes, and the spontaneous decision to remain engaged in its interest. As a result of the question about participants' interest and continuing to follow Formula 1 in the future, 100% have expressed their commitment and wish to remain engaged with motorsport. The IV 1 stated that he “*definitely (sees himself following the sport in the future), until my very last breath. It's a thing that you pass to the kids*”. The IV 7 equally aims to pass his interest to his future children, and the IV 5 agrees it will be an interest for the rest of his life. However, the IV 3 pointed out that only an official attitude from Formula 1, which “*goes against my core values*”, can change this scenery. The IV 8, who is the latest one to become closer to the sport, affirms that she has plans, such as attending races and watching the sport, as well as future productions, but it has to be something natural and not an imposition under self-imposed obligation. Finally, this reinforcement of interest reveals a perception of the sport's importance and its impact on their lives, which means that self-determination strengthens the resilience against potential changes in circumstances. Macinnis and Park (2005) argue that emotional attachment through affection, passion and connection results in higher loyalty by customers to the brands (the sport).

4.2.5.2 Future intentions and wishes

Exploring the future intentions of each interviewee reflects a strong sense of long-term engagement and loyalty. Moreover, 80% of participants reported that they are waiting for the release of upcoming content, but 20% stated they are not currently waiting for new productions because they believe they have already watched everything available. However, both are open to consuming new movies, series and documentaries in the future. In addition, IV 9 highlighted that she “*really likes sports and watching documentaries and, you know, kind of seeing what's behind the scene like. So it's always very curious about this all the time*”. A thought that is shared for all the fans, including the latest one, the IV 8. Hence, all participants expressed their wish

to attend a race in the future, even those who have already attended. The IV 3 highlighted that *“I hope I can. Yeah, it's a dream. I would love to go to as many races as I can. I've tried to go to Barcelona, but couldn't. And my dad and I have a dream of going to Monaco!”*. In conclusion, this dream is for a closer connection to the sport, primarily physical presence to feel, listen, and fully experience. In the long term, it will result in a deeply emotional engagement being represented as an important part of the personality (Funk and James, 2001).

4.2.5.3 Sense of belonging

To conclude the participants' profile, they were asked to describe themselves as fans. These questions aimed to analyse their self-awareness and emotional involvement with Formula 1, in accordance with the PCM model, where behavioural loyalty is based on self-awareness of their relationship with the sport, continuous involvement and the long-term commitment expressed through routine behaviours. The result was some fans' positioning as “passionate” and “hard fans”, expressing their strong interest and emotional connection with Formula 1. Bauer *et al.* (2008) argue that an important part of being a fan is the ability to self-identify as one. Others were more rational, pointing out that they are long-term fans who will always watch it, such as the IV 3 who made both statements *“I'm a passionate fan, but not crazy one, like, I won't lose my dignity over it, like many people do on the internet. But yeah, I'm pretty passionate. I feel like I have a deep connection with it”*. Some of the interviewees were humble, saying they are “casual fans” and “starters”, but also making sure that when they have time, they watch races and audiovisual productions.

Overall, agreeing with Soble and Lowes (2024), the productions positively impacted participants' attraction to and engagement, teaching them new knowledge, introducing the sport, going beyond the race, deepening the experience, rekindling interest, and also offering a more historical background through the honouring of former drivers. In addition, the mix of contact with the fan by audiovisual contents, races, and digital presence motivates fans to remain interested, and fosters the Sport throughout the sport fans group, catching new fans and inserting them into the universe, with different types of narratives, emotions and purpose, creating an interest beyond sport competitiveness and connecting them with the human side, the business, and a range of stories under the representativeness of the Formula 1 (Charalambidou, 2024).

4.3 Limitations

Despite the data collected, the consistent results of the interviews, and the support of the existing literature, this study has limitations. Due to the limited time to develop this study, the sample of interviewees was small and restricted by the range of fans' profiles.

In future research, it is recommended to categorise participants into: (1) those who have never watched Formula 1 before the audiovisual contents; (2) those who had previous experience and were re-engaged through the audiovisual productions; and (3) those who were already active fans and the productions were just additional content. Consequently, having an equal number of participants in each group will allow a deeper understanding of Formula 1's fan engagement among Generation Z and Millennials.

The study was also limited to three pieces of content (Drive to Survive, Rush [2013], and Senna [2024]); future research should explore other productions, focusing on newer streaming content.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Overview

This research investigated the impact of emotional narratives in audiovisual productions, specifically in *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Rush (2013)*, and their influence on Formula 1 fan engagement among Generation Z and Millennials. Throughout the Literature Review, the humanisation of the sport was explored, portraying athletes as human rather than “superheroes” (Shah and Williams, 2024), shifting fans emotional connections through empathy and identification (Bordwell *et al.*, 2020; Soble and Lowes, 2024), while also exposing the vulnerable side of the sport and educating them about its complexity (Brown, 2015).

Moreover, the study highlights the essential mechanism for deep engagement, transportation and identification. Transportation integrates attention, imagination, and feeling within the narrative's experience. As a result, they become likely to absorb the core message of the storytelling and, consequently, are easily persuaded (Green and Brock, 2000). Therefore, storytelling is often perceived as a representation of real experience. Identification occurs when the audience perceives their identity, goals, and life perspective embodied in the key character (driver, team, or story) (Cohen, 2001). Both mechanisms foster the development of emotional connection and contribute to the growth of loyalty (Soble and Lowes, 2024).

Furthermore, the behaviours of Generation Z and Millennials as consumers were examined in the research. Both generations are digitally connected and driven by technology, seeking interactive communication, immersive experience and a sense of belonging to a Formula 1 community (Byon and Yim, 2020; Voracek, 2021). The documentary *Drive to Survive* offers the behind-the-scenes and shines a spotlight on aspects of the sport that traditional broadcasts do not usually provide (Charalambidou, 2024). *Senna (2024)* and *Rush (2013)* add historical context and background knowledge about the sport, enriching its legacy and inspiration. These factors result in an increased attraction and consumption of the sport across different media platforms (Giorgio *et al.* 2024).

Finally, the concept of a fan was examined through the research. Giulianotti (2002) defines fans into four categories, in which Supporters have a traditional relationship with the team and sport, and a deep sentiment for it. Followers have the connection because of the group that they self-recognise as their representation, which is more likely to happen through online media. The fans are a group with strong identification and affection for the key characters of the sport. And the last one, Flâneurs, is the traditional viewer who keeps a distance from emotional involvement and has a cold relationship with the sport. Moreover, Funk and James (2001) explore the levels of fan connection, being categorised within Awareness, Attraction, Attachment, and Allegiance. The study of these levels guided the research with the interviewees. The findings through the objective examination are highlighted into four main insights to answer the research question “How do the Emotional Narratives in *Drive to Survive*, *Rush (2013)* and *Senna (2024)* impact the attraction, engagement, and loyalty among Generation Z and Millennials’ fans to Formula 1?” and its subquestions. (1) The emotional narratives as catalysts for interest. (2) From emotional involvement to behavioural engagement and sense of belonging. (3) Building long-term loyalty through storytelling beyond the race weekend. (4) The diversity of motivations and profiles among Formula 1 fans.

5.2 The emotional narratives as catalysts for interest

The interview revealed that only one participant had her interest sparked by the audiovisual production; however, all the participants emphasised the importance of *Drive to Survive*, *Senna (2024)*, and *Rush (2013)* in promoting more options to engage with Formula 1 and deepen their experience. Aspects such as athletes' humanisation, emphasising their vulnerability and human side instead of the traditional hero archetype, are explored in behind-the-scenes and biographical movies, strengthening fans' connection and enthusiasm while promoting a new perspective on Formula 1 (Whannel, 2002). This effect consists of narrative transportation (Green and Brock, 2000), which impacts emotional engagement by creating an immersive narrative integrating their attention, curiosity and emotions. Moreover, Identification (Cohen, 2001) is ignited when fans perceive their identity, goals, and perspectives reflected in the key character's narrative, bonding the fan with their human side.

5.3 From emotional involvement to behavioural engagement and sense of belonging

The interviews highlighted that the emotional impact of the productions on individual behaviours and engagement, such as watching content more than once, searching for more information about drivers, teams, and races, and becoming more consistent in the grand prix calendar (Palermo and Delaine, 2023). All participants have shared Formula 1 content on Instagram more than once, even though most of them are not part of the digital community. Instead, the participants have a common in-person experience with friends or family with whom they share the joy, resulting in strengthening the personal bond with Formula 1. This process aligns with the stage of attachment by Funk and James (2001), which describes the emotional connection of the self-identification as a fan through consistent interaction with the sport universe. Macinnis and Park (2005) reinforce that long-term loyalty is built through frequent interaction, consistency in brand consumption, and a positive perception, leading to good memories and consequently a strong connection.

5.4 Building long-term loyalty through storytelling beyond the race weekend

Drawing on the insights gained from interviews, the participants showed a loyalty that goes beyond the Formula 1 race itself, extending to the next seasons of *Drive to Survive*, the new Formula 1 movie, and other related content. In addition, this interest highlights the power of emotional storytelling, which embodies themes of resilience, rivalries, cultural aspects, interpersonal relations within the sport, and a professional and technical side (Wood and Burkhalter, 2023). This connection is explored in the allegiance study of Funk and James (2001), where the commitment to the sport evolves into consistent loyalty. Bauer *et al.* (2008) and Brown (2015) reinforce the importance of emotional loyalty as the foundation of long-term fans.

5.5 The diversity of motivations and profiles among Formula 1 fans.

Throughout the interviews, participants pointed out that motivations to follow Formula 1 vary among Generation Z and Millennials. While some of them valorise aspects such

as historical and bibliographical narratives, others prefer the visual aesthetic, technology, behind-the-scenes, and the trajectory of drivers and teams. This diversity reflects the range of interests of the new generation, expecting narratives that address different needs and aims. Giulianotti (2002) supports the view of different approaches and fans' profiles, and Charalambidou (2024) highlights the engagement across other platforms, which promotes a participative and immersive experience.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for future research

Throughout this research, several recommendations were suggested; however, it is important to reiterate and expand them. This study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the interest of Generation Z and Millennials by understanding their perceptions, emotions, behaviours and experiences. In the future, quantitative research will complement this topic with a large sample, aiming to describe the fans, their situation, the emotional storytelling phenomenon, and the public characteristics (Ghanad, 2023). This would complement the “why” collected in this study to the “what, where, and when”.

Moreover, other qualitative research can be applied to this topic, broadening the number of participants and categorising them into three groups defined by different levels of knowledge and relation with the sport, while also exploring a wide range of nationalities and genders, allowing for cross-analysis of the information to identify patterns of interest. Furthermore, a longitudinal analysis can be designed to follow fans' interest over time, measuring whether the impact of emotional narratives had a proportional increase or decrease.

Subsequently, a cross-sport comparison is indicated between sports, analysing the same effects of the emotional storytelling in soccer, basketball, eSport, and American Football fans, comparing the efficiency between the profile of fans and their motivation. While also analysing the current growth of this type of audiovisual production on Netflix, and finally measuring their efficiency in developing engagement, merchandising purchases, and boosting matchday attendance.

Ultimately, an investigation focused on the influence of streaming content and social media on merchandise consumption. Through this exploration, it would be possible to examine the existing emotional connection generated by both media types and how the sport, teams, athletes and commercial partners are exploring this mechanism to increase their sales.

6.2 Recommendations for professionals

6.2.1 Fan engagement

Aiming to strengthen fan engagement, Formula 1 teams and organisations should explore the increased interest of Generation Z and Millennials in a story beyond the competition itself. By focusing on the long-term narrative arc of drivers and teams, and adopting a personalised approach, fans would develop a deeper connection through the sport and the team's official media. Moreover, fans can increase their participation by suggesting content ideas, while also enhancing their sense of belonging through interaction.

6.2.2 Fan experience

Furthermore, the fan experience would be enhanced through immersive technology-driven approaches, integrating mobile app features, streaming platforms' tools, and virtual reality technology, which will allow fans to gain a new perspective of races, social media content, and audiovisual productions. Additionally, the team can expand their content to include the daily routine in the factory, conversations with engineers, technical explanations, and a space to answer fans' questions. The optimisation of these actions would result in a customer understanding enrichment and emotional bond.

6.2.3 Fan loyalty development

Finally, fan loyalty will be boosted through offering easy access to official merchandise, official communities administered by the teams or drivers' staff, and exclusive packages with branded items. Correspondingly, premium experiences can be designed, offering a special experience to those who complete the full engagement circle, following related social media, watching races, consuming audiovisual content, and attending the race weekend. In conclusion, rewarding fans who have shown consistent engagement by delivering exclusive benefits and close interaction with the related key character of the sport would result in casual fans becoming long-term customers.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Participant Consent Form

This template is designed primarily for those doing qualitative interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non-sensitive topics.

The form would be different in the case of focus groups or quantitative research. If conducting research with vulnerable populations and / or sensitive topics please see Research Ethics Committee website for further details.

The points listed on the template below are for illustration only. You may alter the wording to suit your project as you see fit.

A consent form is not simply about a person giving you permission to involve them in research, it is an agreement between the researcher and the research participant outlining the roles and responsibilities they are taking towards one another throughout the whole of the research process.

The researcher should retain one copy of the consent form signed by both themselves and the participant. The participant should also be given a copy of the consent form as a record of what they have signed up to.

Even if a person has signed a consent form consent should still be re-established at the point of doing the interview.

Template

Formula 1 and the Power of Story: Emotional Narratives and Fan Engagement among Gen Z and Millennials

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves a recorded interview, where I will be asked questions about my experiences, perceptions, and emotional engagement with Formula 1, particularly to the audiovisual productions Drive to Survive, Rush, and Senna.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in dissertations and published papers.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be securely stored on the researcher's personal, password-protected computer, accessible only to the researcher, and will be retained until the exam board confirms the final result of the dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

Date

8.2 Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

Theme: First Floor: Awareness

Question: How were you first introduced to the Formula 1?

Question: Do you remember what sparked your interest in the sport?

Question: Have ever you watched Drive to Survive, Rush and/or Senna? How were your interest influenced by them?

Question: What aspects of these productions do you consider as more interesting? For example: the racing teams, races or emotional narratives

Theme: Second Floor: Attraction

Question: When you were watching the productions, can you recall any moment or scene that provoked strong emotions in you? How would you describe that experience?

Question: Did you feel emotionally connected to any specific racing driver, team, or narrative presented in the contents?

Question: After watching the content, have you started to perceive the F1 differently?

Theme: Third Floor: Attachment

Question: After watching the content, have you started following any racing driver, team, influencer, or F1 channel on social media? Are you currently following any podcast, YouTuber or F1 blog?

Question: Have you started to watch more races than you did before?

Question: Have you started to purchase more products related to F1? Such as t-shirts, hats, games, tickets, toys and more?

Theme: Fourth Floor: Allegiance

Question: Have you ever recommended any of this content to a friend or someone else?

Question: Are you part of any Formula 1 community? Such as a WhatsApp Group, forum or other?

Question: Have you ever defended your favourite driver or team on the internet?

Question: Have you ever posted any content on your social media related to F1?

Theme: Fourth Floor: Behavioural Loyalty

Question: Do you see yourself continuing to follow Formula 1 in the future?

Question: Are you currently waiting for the release of any new movie or series?

Question: Do you plan to attend any Formula 1 races or live events in the future?

Question: How do you describe yourself as a Formula 1 fan? Do you think these audiovisual productions had a crucial impact on your loyalty to the sport?