

Harnessing the Power of Social Media in Motorsports



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Project Summary

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Digital Media is a rapidly growing source of fan engagement for sports. By harnessing the power of social media, NASCAR has the opportunity to expand the sport beyond the current audience.

In this project, the Instagram accounts of NASCAR, Hendrick Motorsports, Joe Gibbs Racing, Stewart-Haas Racing, Bubba Wallace, Chase Elliott and Kyle Busch were analyzed alongside additional data from Instagram, TV viewership and a fan survey. This data was analyzed to establish an understanding of the current levels of fan engagement with NASCAR, teams and drivers. Based on this data, suggestions for increasing fan engagement were provided and explained.

The focus areas of this project were on Instagram engagement and the 18-29 year old age group. This focus was determined based on the primary user audience of Instagram and potential growth market for NASCAR.

Statistical Highlights

Instagram Engagement

Achieving a strong engagement rate on official social media platforms is essential for leveraging the full potential of social media to benefit an organization. In the media and entertainment industry, including sports, a good engagement rate on Instagram is considered 4.2%. Engagement rate metrics measure how actively an audience interacts with content on a social media page. To calculate the engagement rate of a social media account, factors such as the number of followers, likes, comments and shares are analyzed. Based on the number of followers and the average likes on its most recent nine posts, NASCAR currently has an engagement rate of 0.23% on Instagram. This indicates that NASCAR needs to increase its social media engagement by approximately 4% to meet the industry standard for a strong engagement rate on Instagram.

TV Viewership

In 2023, NASCAR experienced its least-watched season, with an average television viewership of 2.86 million per race. Ahead of the 2024 season, the Netflix docuseries NASCAR: Full Speed provided fans with behind-the-scenes access to the 2023 championship battle. With nearly 90% of the series' viewers on Netflix being new to the sport, the 34.6% increase in average TV viewership this season is widely attributed to the docuseries. This surge in new audiences presents an opportunity for NASCAR, and its teams and drivers, to capitalize on fresh interest. Leveraging social media can be an effective strategy to engage these new fans and educate them about the sport.

	Instagram Followers 3.1 million	Average TV Viewership 3.85 million	+35%
	Number of Posts 27,000	Highest Viewed Race 5.96 million	+55%
	Average Likes 7,075	Lowest Viewed Race 1.80 million	-53%

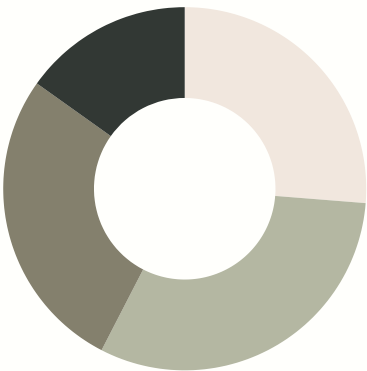
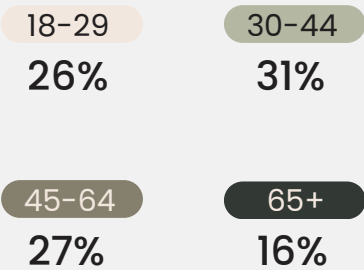
NASCAR Audience Demographics

Gender

Female Male

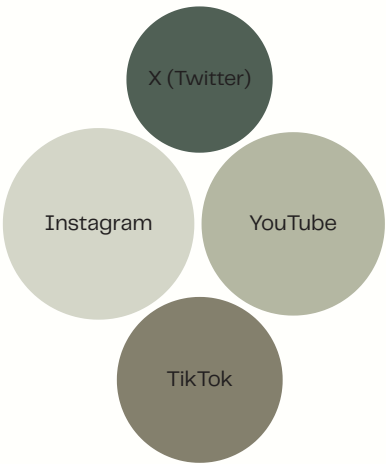
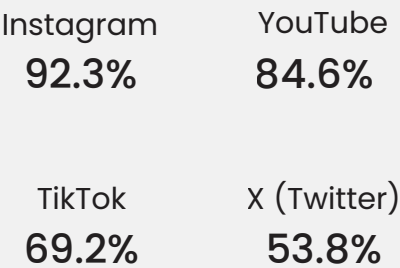


Age



NASCAR 18-29 Age Group Demographics

Most Used Social Media Platforms

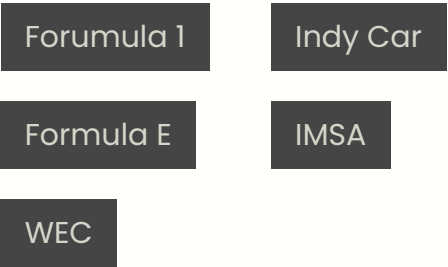


Average Time Spent on Social Media

per week



Other Motorsports Watched



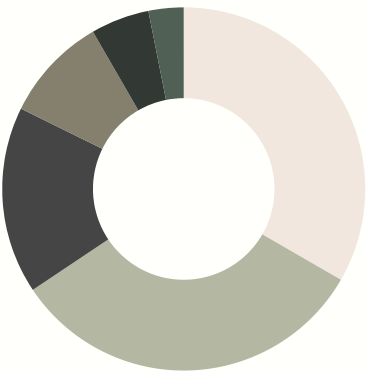
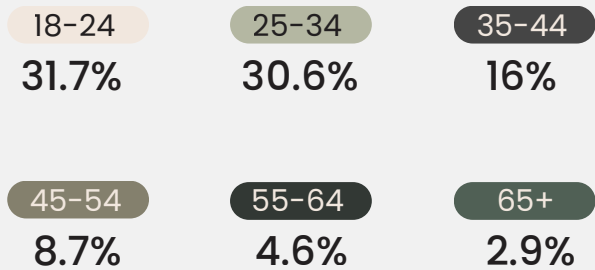
Instagram Demographics

Gender

Female Male



Age



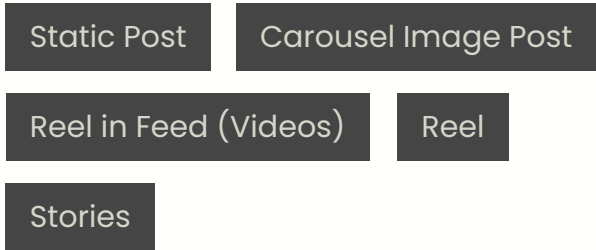
Types of Content



Avg. User Reach

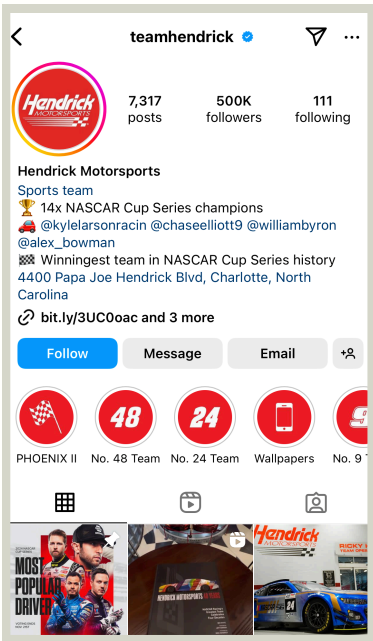
Reel	11,000
Carousel	7,800
Static	5,200

Post Types



Top-Followed Teams in NASCAR on Instagram

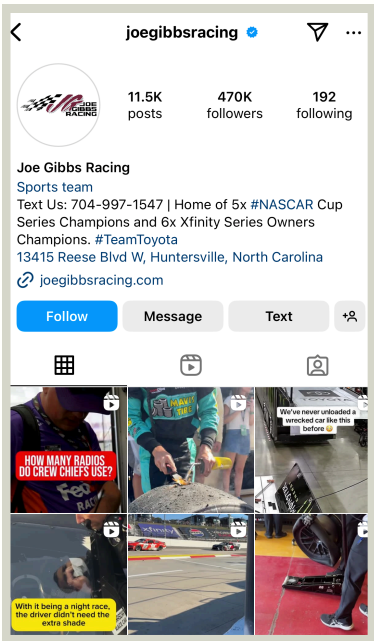
as of Nov. 20



TEAM #1

Hendrick Motorsports

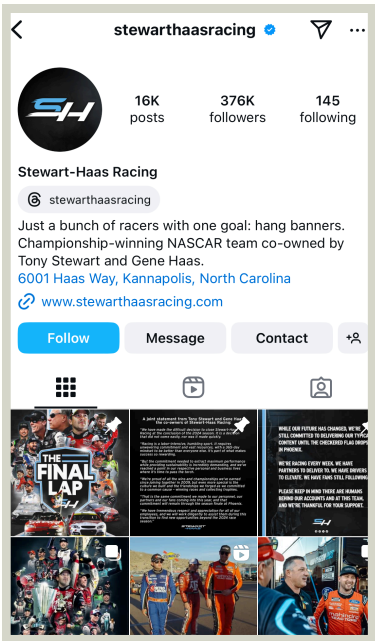
Followers	500k
Posts	7,317
Avg. Likes	2,322
Engagement Rate	0.5%



TEAM #2

Joe Gibbs Racing

Followers	470k
Posts	11.5k
Avg. Likes	1,418
Engagement Rate	0.3%



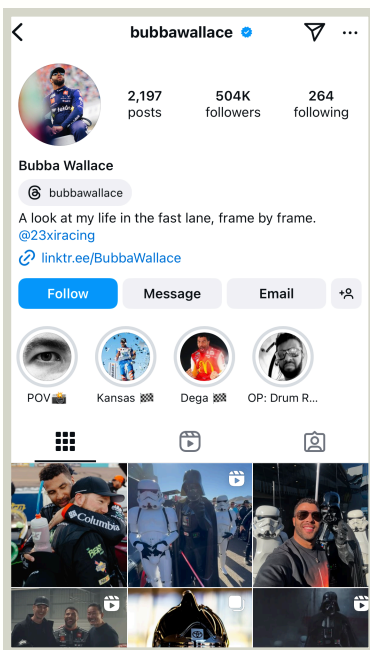
TEAM #3

Stewart-Haas Racing

Followers	376k
Posts	16k
Creation Date	5,114
Engagement Rate	1.4%

Top-Followed Drivers in NASCAR on Instagram

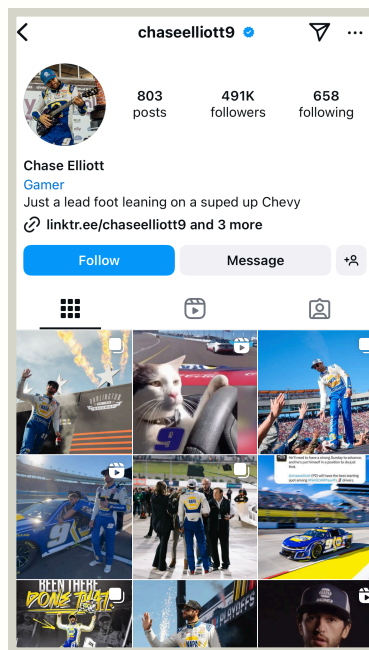
as of Nov. 20



DRIVER #1

Bubba Wallace

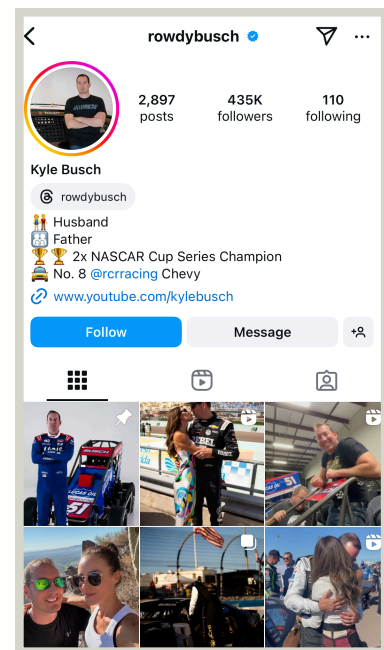
Followers	504k
Posts	2,197
Avg. Likes	16,865
Engagement Rate	3.3%



DRIVER #2

Chase Elliott

Followers	491k
Posts	803
Avg. Likes	15,966
Engagement Rate	3.3%



DRIVER #3

Kyle Busch

Followers	435k
Posts	2,897
Avg. Likes	8,517
Engagement Rate	2.0%

The Social Media Influence

Social media wields significant influence, both positive and negative. In a survey about motorsports and social media, one fan noted that social media “definitely twists the truth sometimes.” Another highlighted the impact of comment sections, explaining how repeated negative statements about a driver can shape their perception. Conversely, a different fan emphasized a positive aspect, stating, “The content posted by drivers in particular gives insight into who they are as people, and leads me to view them as if they were any other regular person.” This underscores the potential for drivers to humanize themselves and positively influence the sport through their social media presence. Notably, 53.8% of surveyed fans reported that social media influences their perceptions or opinions within motorsports.

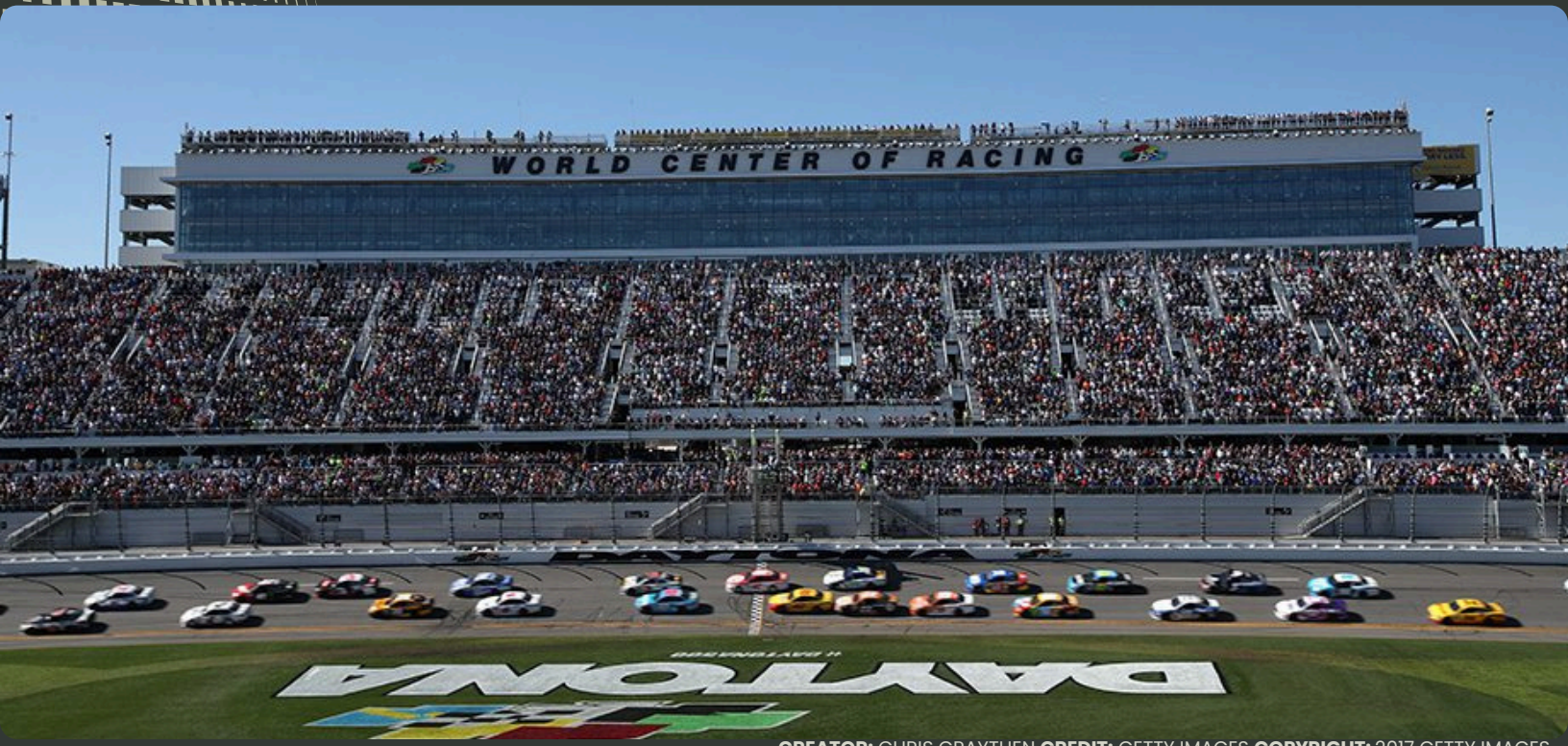
The messages shared on social media—whether from official sources or fans—shape public perception of motorsport series, teams and drivers. Creating a positive and engaging online environment is essential for fostering meaningful connections with fans and promoting the sport. Among fans aged 18–29, 92.3% believe that leveraging social media is vital for the growth of NASCAR and motorsports as a whole.

53.8%

say social media influences their perception or opinion in motorsport

92.3%

say utilizing social media is important for motorsports as a whole





Strategies Currently Used by NASCAR, Teams and Drivers

Variety of Post Types

NASCAR: Of their last nine posts, NASCAR posted six static posts and three reel posts. They did not use any carousel posts. Overall, they are utilizing post variety minimally.

TEAMS: Across the three teams highlighted in this study, they each had different post variety. Team #1 had the best, with four reels, three carousel posts and two static posts. Team #2 had the worst with eight reels and one static post.

DRIVERS: Each driver had fairly good post variety on their last nine posts. Driver #1 had the most balanced post variety with four reels, two carousel posts and three static posts.

Educational & Informational Content

NASCAR: The majority of the last nine posts from NASCAR fall into the informational category. As the series page, they often share informational updates on all aspects of the sport

TEAMS: Some teams choose to share informational and educational content to their Instagram, while others do not. When shared, content is typically educational about the sport and roles on the team.

DRIVERS: For drivers, the main informational posts are not in the images or videos, but rather shared in their captions. Often relating to races or sponsorships.

Collaboration Posts

NASCAR: NASCAR applies collaboration posts often, with seven of their last nine posts utilizing this feature. Most of their collaborations are with other NASCAR entities and broadcast networks.

TEAMS: Of the three teams evaluated, only one, Team #1, utilized collaboration-style posts in their last nine posts. Their one collaboration post was with a sponsor.

DRIVERS: The collaboration feature that Instagram offers is beneficial to drivers, and they often utilize the feature. All three drivers analyzed made frequent collaboration posts, typically with their teams, sponsors and family.

Fun and Personable Content

NASCAR: With arguably the least amount of room for humor within content, NASCAR still highlights fun moments from the past on their Instagram, showing the humorous and fun side of the sport.

TEAMS: Some teams incorporate fun and personable content into their regular posting, and others do not. In this case, Team #1 did the best job incorporating fun moments with the team and keeping up with trends while staying professional.

DRIVERS: On the flip side from NASCAR, drivers have the most room to highlight their personality on their social media. They mainly choose to do so with humor and featuring their family in posts.

Potential New Strategies for NASCAR, Teams and Drivers

➤ Collaborate with Motorsport Influencers

➤ Instagram Broadcast Channels





Collaborate with Motorsport Influencers

NASCAR

With increasing popularity, motorsports influencers have a large platform in the online community of NASCAR fans. By collaborating with influencers, NASCAR can increase their online and social media engagement.

Teams

Teams collaborating with influencers with a dedicated audience within the sport opens the door for fun and personable content with teams and their drivers that fans want to see on their social media feeds.

Drivers

Influencer content is typically more personal, which is also how drivers tend to skew their personal social media as well. A partnership between influencers and drivers allows for unique personable content to be created and shared online, often offering a different perspective than traditional media.



Instagram Broadcast Channels

Teams

Instagram Broadcast Channels are a tool created by Instagram that allows organizations and creators to “directly engage with their followers at scale in real time,” or in other words, a mass group chat with followers. Teams can utilize this feature to share information and engage with their online community. Having a broadcast channel fosters a relationship between teams and fans, allowing fans to feel a part of something bigger.

Drivers

In a similar fashion, drivers utilizing broadcast channels on Instagram would allow for more personable interactions with their fans. Drivers could provide fans with behind the scenes content, funny moments and more to increase engagement with their fan base.



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The Rise of Content Creators

The Purpose of Influencers

With the steady increase of social media usage, the number of social media influencers has been on the rise. A social media influencer can be defined as “a person who is able to generate interest in something by posting about it on social media.” In the world of motorsports, influencers bring a unique voice to the conversation. Influencers have the opportunity to share knowledge about the sport, start conversations surrounding the sport, incorporate humor, build a community around the sport and share unique experiences with followers.

Conclusion

Summary

NASCAR has seen seasons of decreased viewership as a sport for several years. After experiencing their least-watched season of all time in 2023, NASCAR saw an increase in viewership over the 2024 season. Because NASCAR has a below-average engagement rate on Instagram, there is ample opportunity for social media growth. The largest audience on Instagram is 18-24-year-olds, with the second largest being 25-34-year-olds. NASCAR has a primary audience of 30-44 year olds and 45-64-year-olds. Based on these metrics, a large portion of the United States audience remains untapped by NASCAR. By catering to a younger audience on social media, NASCAR has the opportunity to grow the sport on social media, in TV viewership and race attendance, and create legacy fans for the future of the sport. Based on drivers' Instagram engagement rates, fans love personable and fun content that humanizes the sport. In striving to increase fan engagement and appeal to a new audience, the series, teams and drivers can continue to utilize and improve on several of the tactics already in place and introduce new tactics and tools for engagement. Harnessing the power of social media in motorsports is vital to the growth of the sport and the future of fan engagement. As the 11th most popular sport in America, NASCAR has room to expand into the domestic audience, and in the future expand into the global audience as well.

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➤ Drivers Fan Base Social Media Channels





Drivers Fan Base Social Media Channels

Teams

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