



INSIGHT REPORT

Fan Experience Benchmark: U.S. Professional Sports

**US CONSUMERS' TV PREFERENCES AND IN-PERSON
EXPERIENCES FOR MLB, MLS, NASCAR, NBA, NFL, NHL, PGA,
USTA, AND WNBA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For seven years in a row, Temkin Group has tracked U.S. consumers' preferences for watching professional sports on TV. This year, we also examined their experience when attending a live sporting event. Here are some highlights from this research:

- NFL is the most dominate sport on TV, but MLB has the highest percentage of fans who attend its games.
- Almost all sports lost TV viewers over the last seven years, with NFL dropping the most. Viewership has declined most dramatically for young adult males.
- NASCAR has the highest level of promoters for its live sporting events, while the NFL has the lowest.
- We evaluated consumer satisfaction across the nine steps that make up a live sporting event journey. Of these steps, parking received the lowest average satisfaction, and ticketing correlated most strongly with fans' likelihood of recommending attending an event to their friends and relatives.
- We include live event scorecards for MLB, MLS, NASCAR, NBA, NFL, NHL, and WNBA.
- Sports teams that want to improve fan experience need to build four competencies: *Purposeful Leadership, Compelling Brand Values, Employee Engagement, and Customer Connectedness.*

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS' TV FANDOM IS ON THE DECLINE

Since 2012, Temkin Group has been surveying U.S. consumers about their preferences for watching eight professional sports on television: baseball (MLB), basketball (NBA), football (NFL), golf (PGA), hockey (NHL), NASCAR, soccer (MLS), and tennis (USTA).¹ This year, we added women's basketball (WNBA) to the survey. When we asked consumers to select the sports that they enjoy watching on TV, we found that:

- **Sports viewership has declined over the last six years.** When we compared the data from this year's study with the results of our 2012 study, we found that six of the eight sports we looked have fewer fans watching today than watched six years ago (see Figures 1 to 3).² Only two sports increased their viewership – MLB and the NHL. The

¹ Data comes from Temkin Group's Consumer Benchmark Surveys – online studies of 10,000 U.S. consumers where quotas are set to closely match the U.S. Census in terms of age, income, ethnicity, and geographic region.

² To more accurately compare TV fans across years, we normalized the data to correct for changes based on age and gender of the respondents across the years.

last year has seen a particularly steep drop in numbers. Only the NHL increased its TV fan base between 2017 and 2018.

- **NFL, the king of TV, declined the most.** The NFL has consistently been, by a wide margin, the most popular sport on television. This year, for example, 50.8% of consumers say they enjoy watching it, compared to MLB – the next most popular sport – at 37.9%. Over the last six years, however, the percentage of consumers who like watching the NFL on TV has declined by 6.8 percentage-points, the largest drop in viewership across all of the sports.
- **Fewer young males are watching sports.** We examined how consumer preferences for watching sports vary across age and gender (see Figure 4). Of all the different segments we looked at, viewership amongst the youngest male adults (ages 18 to 24) declined the most in six out of the eight sports we evaluated. For the other two sports, NASCAR and MLS, this group dropped by the second largest amount.

EXAMINING THE LIVE SPORTING EXPERIENCE

In addition to analyzing sports viewership on TV, this year we also examined the experience fans have when they attend live sporting events. Here's what we found:

- **MLB has the highest percentage of in-person attendees.** In 2018, 19.8% of consumers went to an MLB game, the highest percentage of any of the sports we tracked (see Figure 5). NFL attendance is second highest, with 15.8% of consumers going to at least one game. Interestingly, more than half of MLB's TV fans say that they've attended a game in-person, which is by far the largest ratio for any sport. The NHL has the second highest ratio, with 44% of its TV fans showing up for one of its games. At the other extreme, only 24% of the consumers who like to watch NASCAR on TV actually make it to see a live race.
- **NASCAR has the most promoters.** We asked the consumers who attended in-person sporting events about their experiences and found that NASCAR has the most avid fans.³ Fifty-seven percent of consumers who went to a NASCAR event are "promoters," meaning they are highly likely to recommend attending a NASCAR race to their friends and relatives (see Figure 6). Of all the sports we looked at, the NFL has the lowest percentage of "promoters" with 49%.
- **Parking is the biggest problem.** We asked consumers to rate their experiences across nine stages in a sporting event journey. Unsurprisingly, "watch the game" earned the highest satisfaction rate with 79%. Meanwhile, only 60% of attendees felt satisfied with their parking experience.
- **Ticketing drives promoters.** How satisfied fans feel throughout their journey is highly correlated to whether or not they become "promoters" (see Figure 7). For five of the seven sports we looked at, "selecting and purchasing your tickets" had the strongest correlation to recommending the experience to friends and family. Of these five sports, the WNBA has the highest correlation between ticketing and being a "promoter." The only sports where ticketing not the most strongly correlated to

³ In this study, we did not include consumers who attended in-person PGA and tennis matches.

recommending are the NHL (where “purchasing a souvenir” is most correlated), MLB (where “parking” is most correlated), and the NBA (where “watching the game” is tied with ticketing).

THE BEST AND WORST OF IN-PERSON SPORTING EVENTS

We also examined how satisfied fans of seven sports felt with seven different steps in their in-person journey (see Figures 8 and 9). Here are the results:

- **Ticketing:** MLS delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (78%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (69%).
- **Parking:** WNBA delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (72%), while the MLB and NFL deliver the lowest (53%).
- **Entering the event:** MLS delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (71%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (64%).
- **Finding seats:** MLB delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (75%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (70%).
- **Using the bathroom:** WNBA delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (71%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (60%).
- **Purchasing food:** WNBA delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (72%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (60%).
- **Purchasing souvenirs:** WNBA delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (74%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (61%).
- **Watching the event:** The NHL and MLB deliver the highest levels of satisfaction (83%), while the WNBA delivers the lowest (76%).
- **Leaving the event:** WNBA delivers the highest levels of satisfaction (74%), while the NFL delivers the lowest (61%).

In-Person Scorecards for MLB, MLS, NASCAR, NBA, NFL, NHL, and WNBA

We developed an overview of results for each of the sports. Rather than describe them in more detail here, we recommend that you check out the graphics accompanying this report (see Figures 10 to 16).

THE PATH TO FAN EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE

Although any type of team can improve narrow segments of its fan experience, creating lasting differentiation requires more than just strong ambitions and superficial changes. Our research shows that long-term success requires organizations to gain customer experience maturity by building and sustaining four customer experience competencies (see Figure 17):⁴

⁴ See the Temkin Group report, The Four Customer Experience Core Competencies (January 2013).

- **Purposeful Leadership:** Leaders operate consistently with a clear set of values.
- **Employee Engagement:** Employees are aligned with the goals of the organization.
- **Compelling Brand Values:** Brand promises drive how the organization treats customers.
- **Customer Connectedness:** Customer insights are infused across the organization.

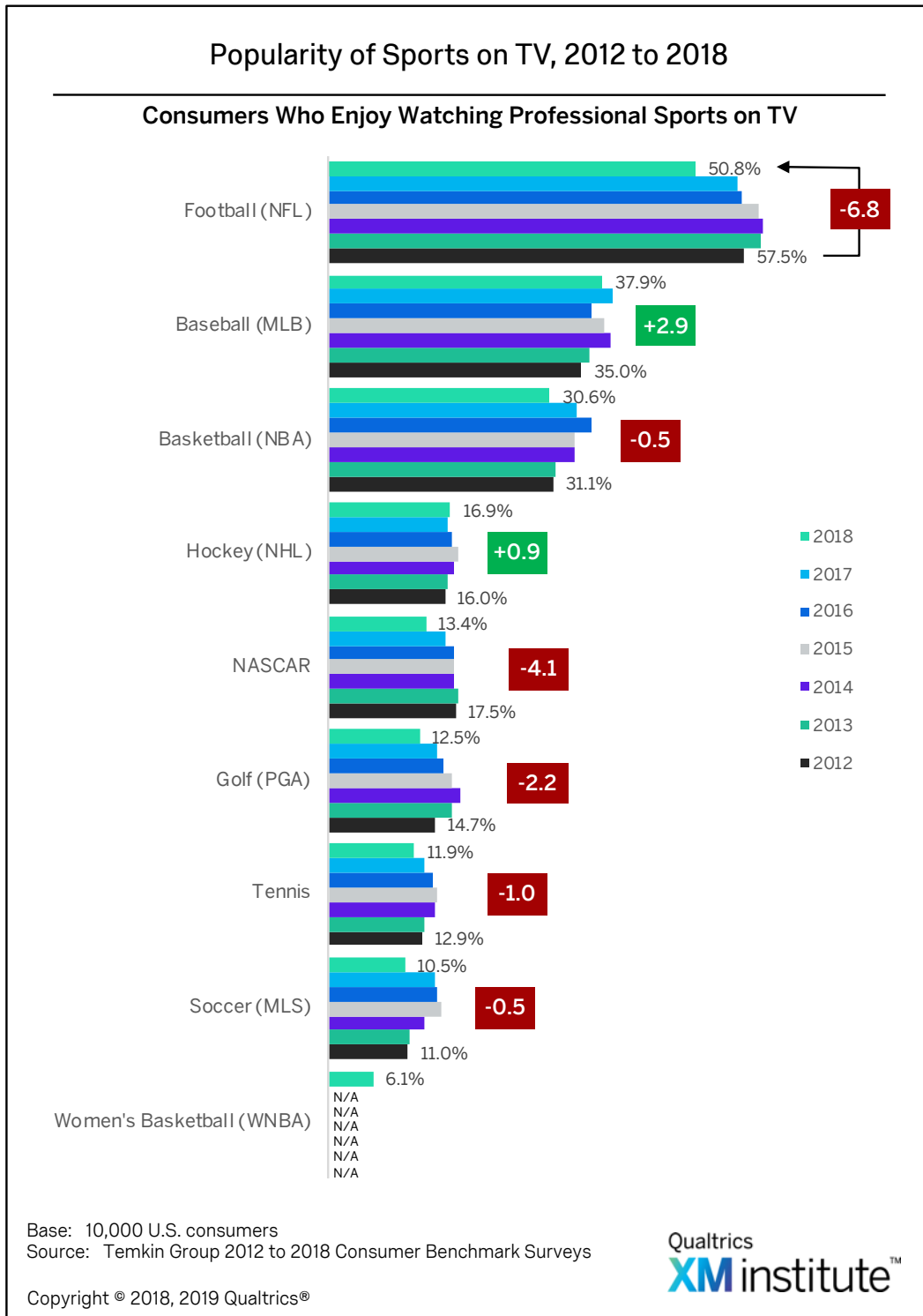


Figure 1

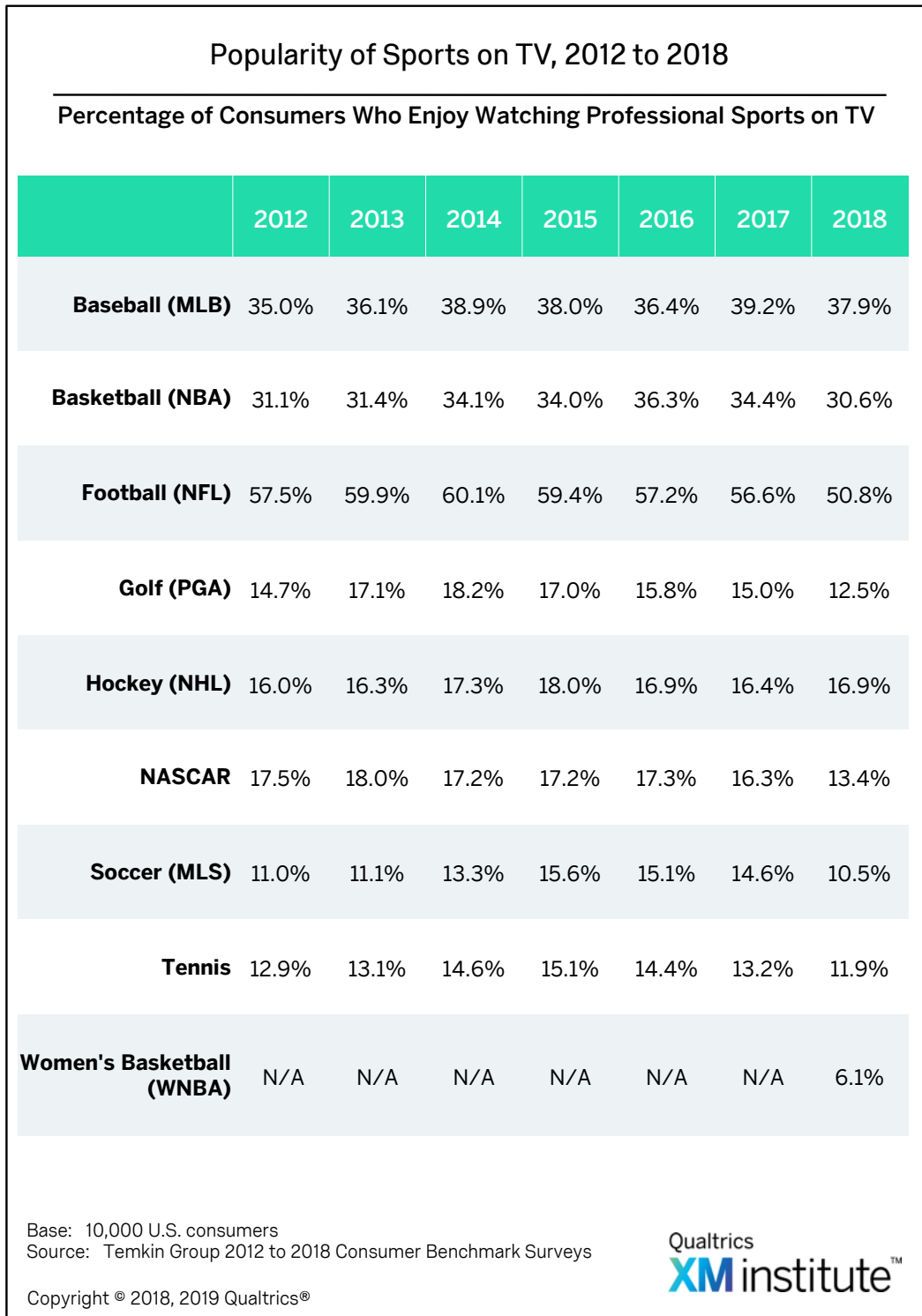


Figure 2

Popularity of Sports on TV By Age and Gender, 2018									
Percentage of Consumers Who Enjoy Watching Professional Sports on TV									
	MLB	NBA	NFL	PGA	NHL	NASCAR	MLS	Tennis	WNBA
18 to 24 male	26%	40%	40%	6%	12%	8%	14%	7%	5%
18 to 24 female	19%	26%	36%	3%	11%	6%	12%	8%	6%
25 to 34 male	53%	57%	56%	15%	24%	16%	23%	15%	10%
25 to 34 female	25%	29%	45%	3%	15%	8%	12%	11%	7%
35 to 44 male	51%	49%	62%	15%	24%	16%	17%	14%	8%
35 to 44 female	24%	25%	42%	3%	10%	10%	7%	12%	6%
45 to 54 male	48%	32%	63%	15%	25%	17%	10%	13%	4%
45 to 54 female	23%	20%	42%	4%	11%	12%	6%	11%	5%
55 to 64 male	53%	30%	64%	21%	26%	21%	11%	14%	6%
55 to 64 female	30%	20%	42%	6%	12%	12%	5%	12%	6%
65 to 74 male	51%	27%	61%	22%	18%	20%	8%	13%	7%
65 to 74 female	30%	15%	36%	11%	9%	13%	4%	12%	4%
75 or older male	51%	27%	62%	29%	18%	17%	7%	13%	6%
75 or older female	27%	16%	34%	11%	7%	4%	3%	10%	4%

Base: 10,000 U.S. consumers
 Source: Temkin Group Q1 2018 Consumer Benchmark Survey

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Figure 3

Popularity of Sports on TV By Age and Gender, 2012 to 2018								
Changes in Consumers Who Enjoy Watching Professional Sports on TV Between 2012 and 2018 (%-points)								
	MLB	NBA	NFL	PGA	NHL	NASCAR	MLS	Tennis
18 to 24 male	-19.9	-10.8	-15.1	-7.8	-3.3	-6.4	-12.3	-5.4
18 to 24 female	+2.2	+1.9	-6.5	-4.7	+0.8	-3.3	-6.7	-0.9
25 to 34 male	-5.3	-3.4	-2.3	-3.6	+0.4	-6.5	-12.9	-2.6
26 to 34 female	+2.4	-1.0	-2.3	-0.4	-2.2	-6.2	-5.5	-0.3
35 to 44 male	+3.6	-3.0	-7.8	-1.4	+3.0	+0.1	+1.7	+1.8
36 to 44 female	+0.7	-1.8	-8.0	-4.2	+0.9	-1.3	+0.1	+2.2
45 to 54 male	0.0	0.0	-10.6	+2.8	+4.2	-4.5	+1.2	+3.6
46 to 54 female	-1.9	-8.0	-2.7	-0.9	-2.4	-1.8	-5.4	-6.6
55 to 64 male	+1.0	-8.8	-1.9	-2.2	+3.5	+1.8	-3.2	-4.0
56 to 64 female	-3.4	-3.7	-2.8	-3.8	-2.1	-1.9	-5.0	-1.3
65 to 74 male	-1.0	-1.0	-6.4	-2.1	-1.5	-2.4	-0.8	-1.8
66 to 74 female	+3.5	-1.8	-4.6	-2.3	+3.2	-1.6	-1.8	-1.7
75 or older male	+3.8	-3.7	-6.3	+1.0	+1.1	+0.7	-1.2	-1.0
75 or older female	-1.8	-6.9	-6.3	-5.8	+0.9	-5.3	-3.3	-1.7

Base: 10,000 U.S. consumers
 Source: Temkin Group 2012 to 2018 Consumer Benchmark Surveys

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Figure 4

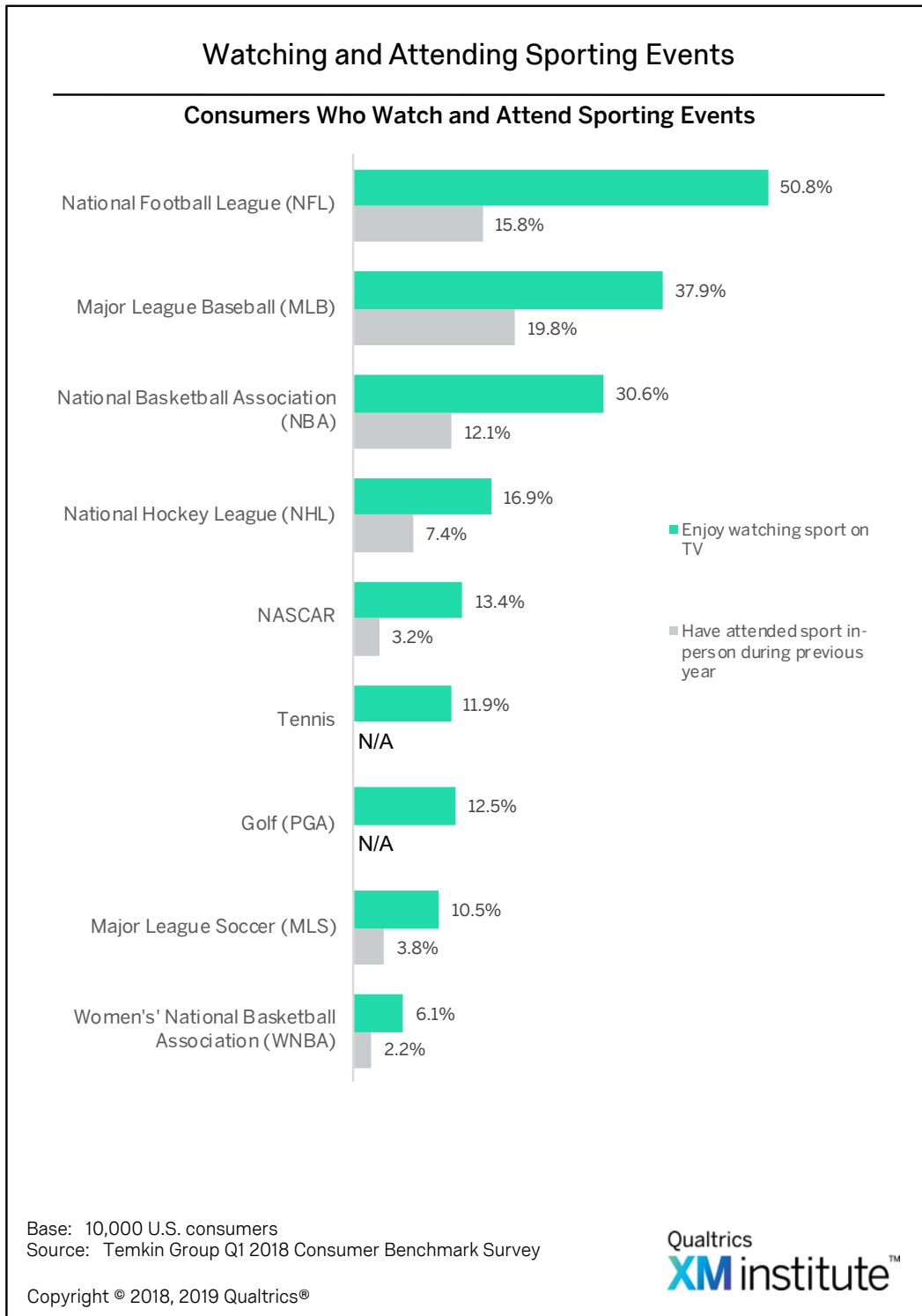


Figure 5

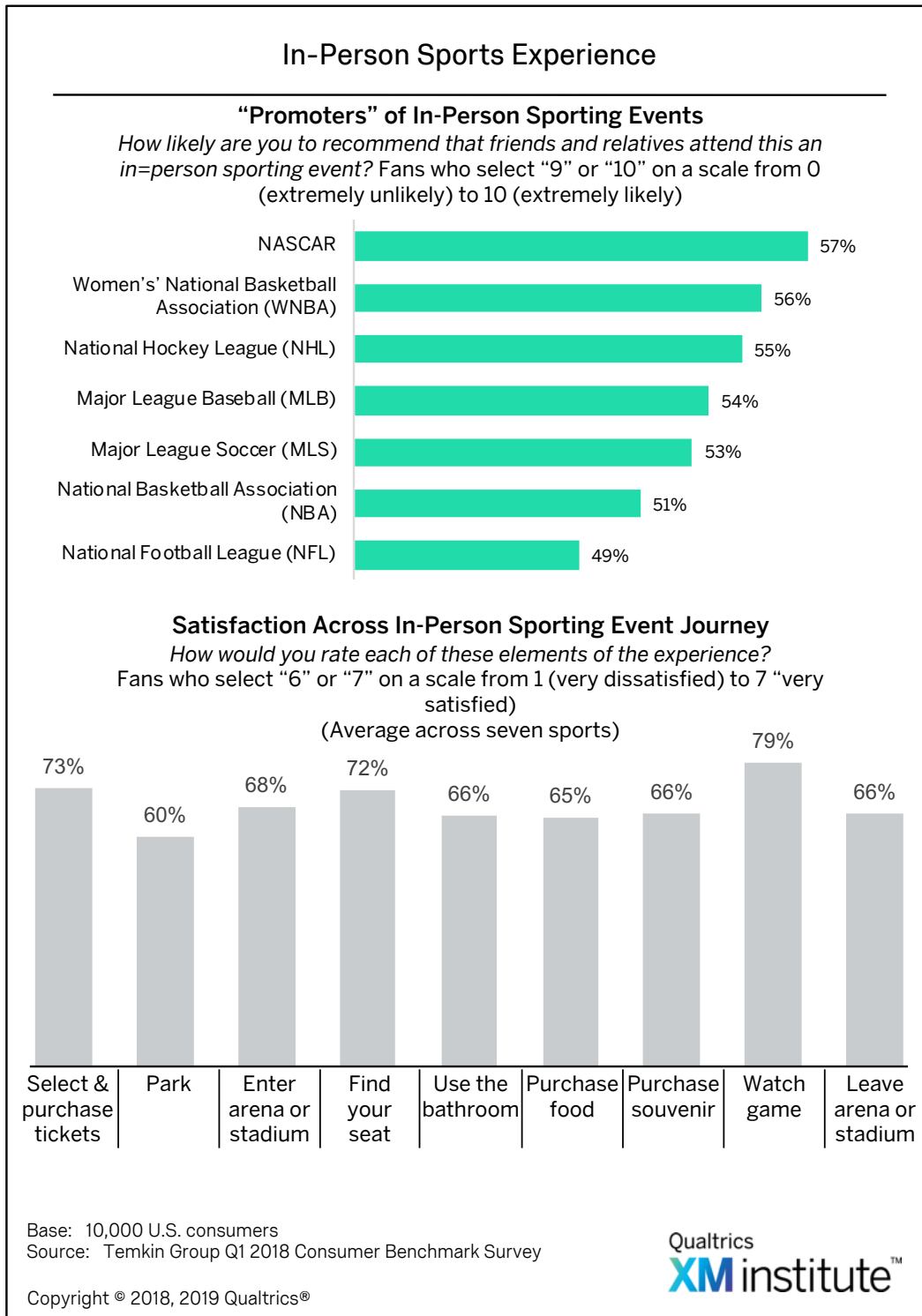


Figure 6

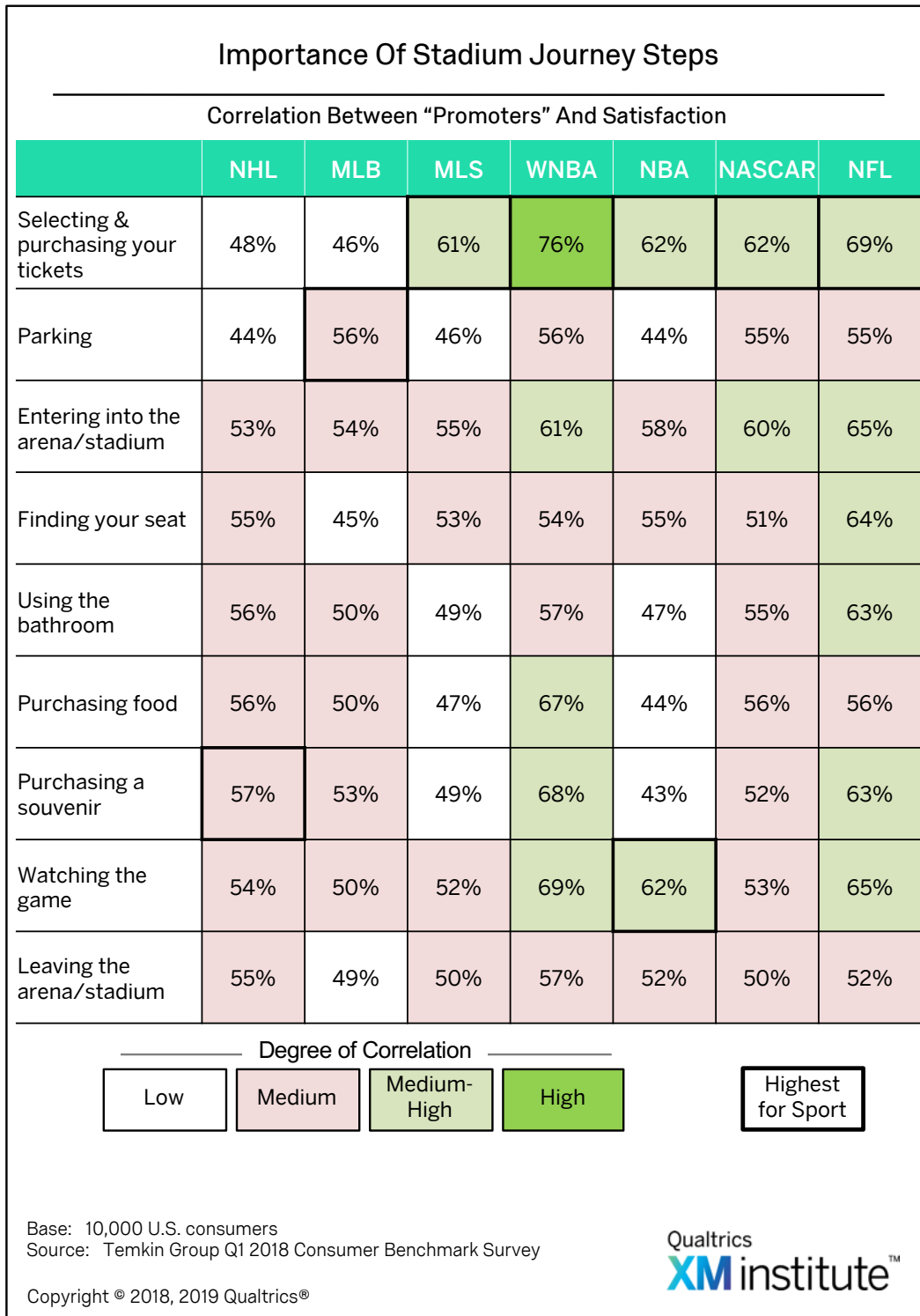


Figure 7

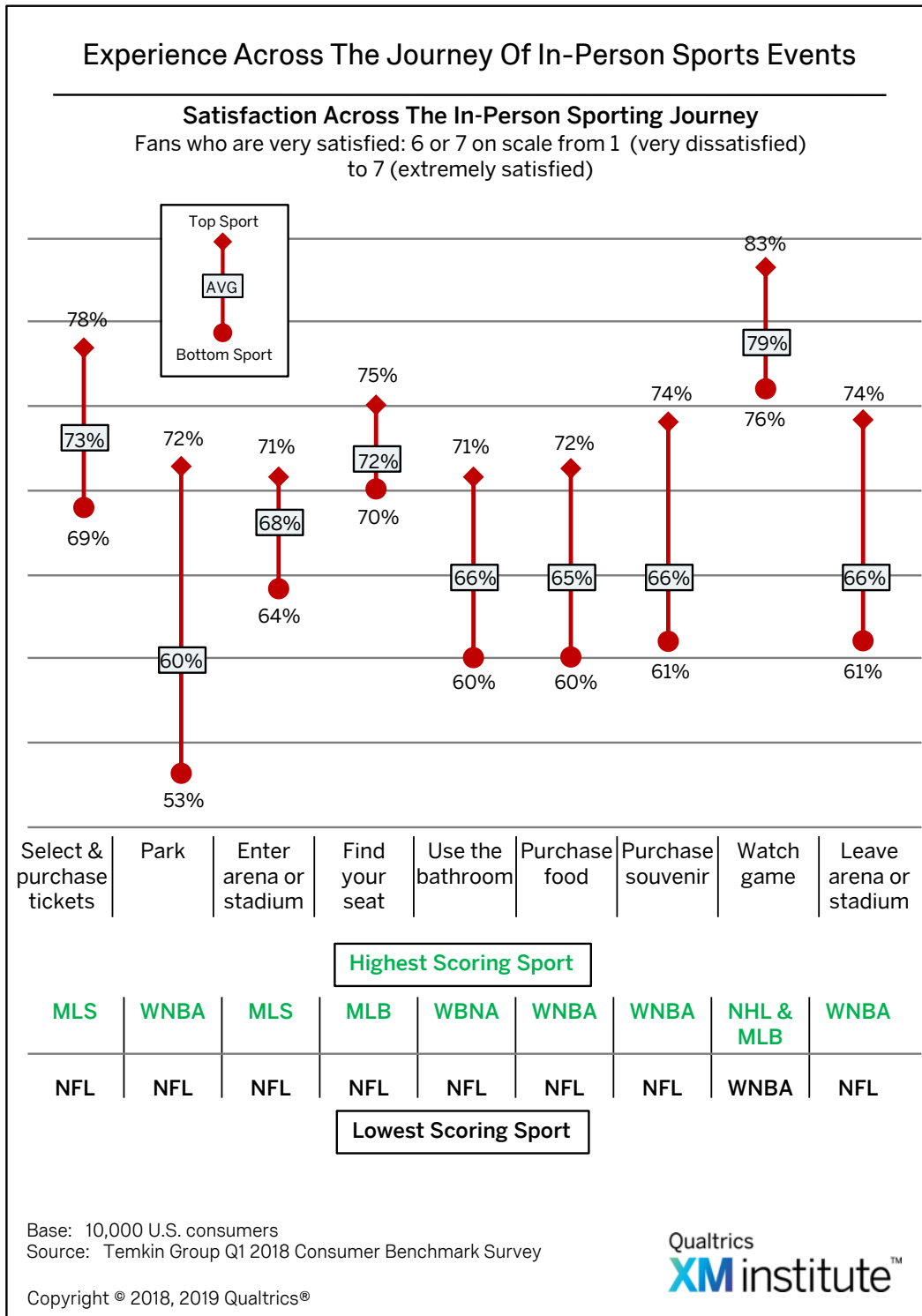


Figure 8

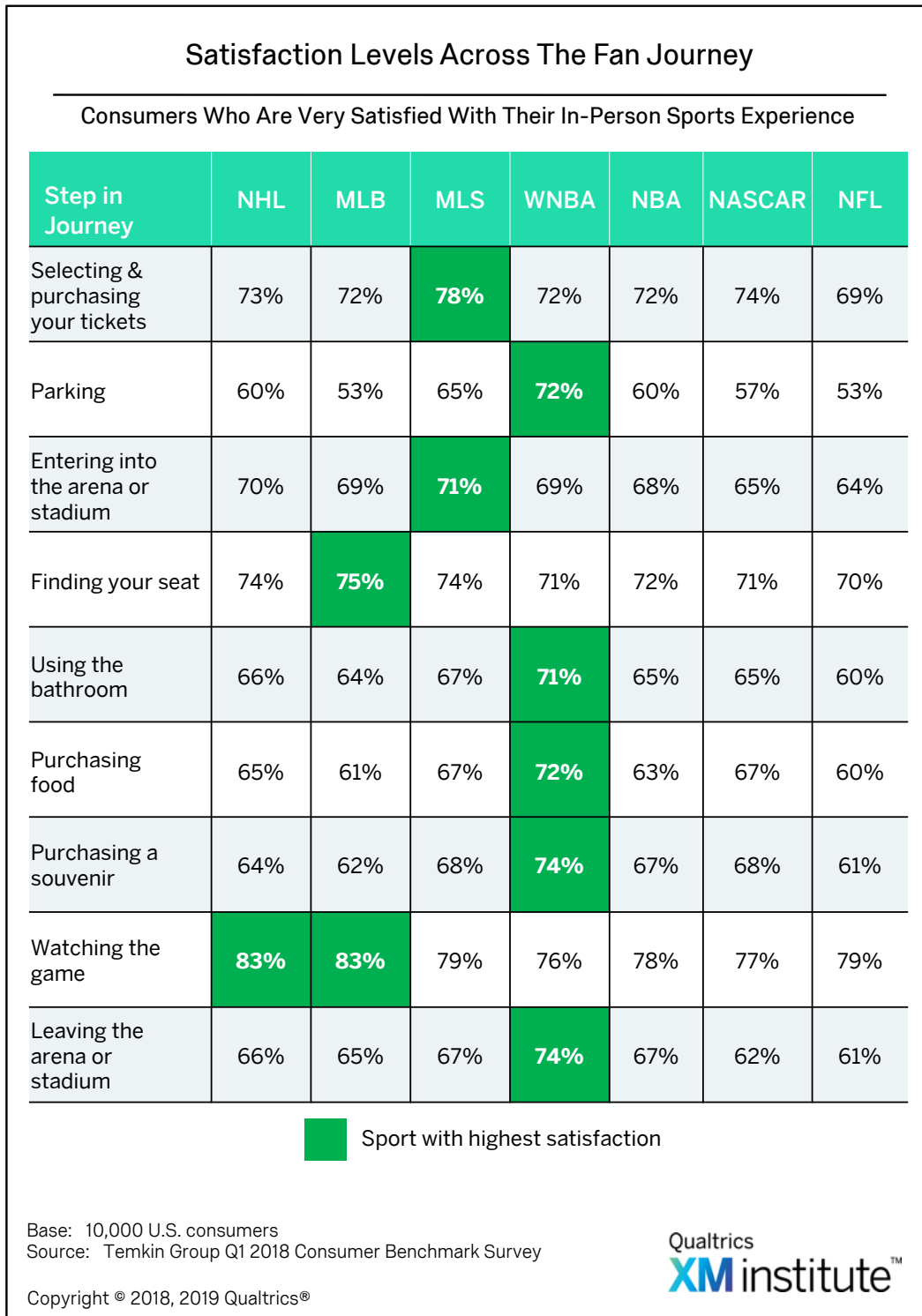


Figure 9

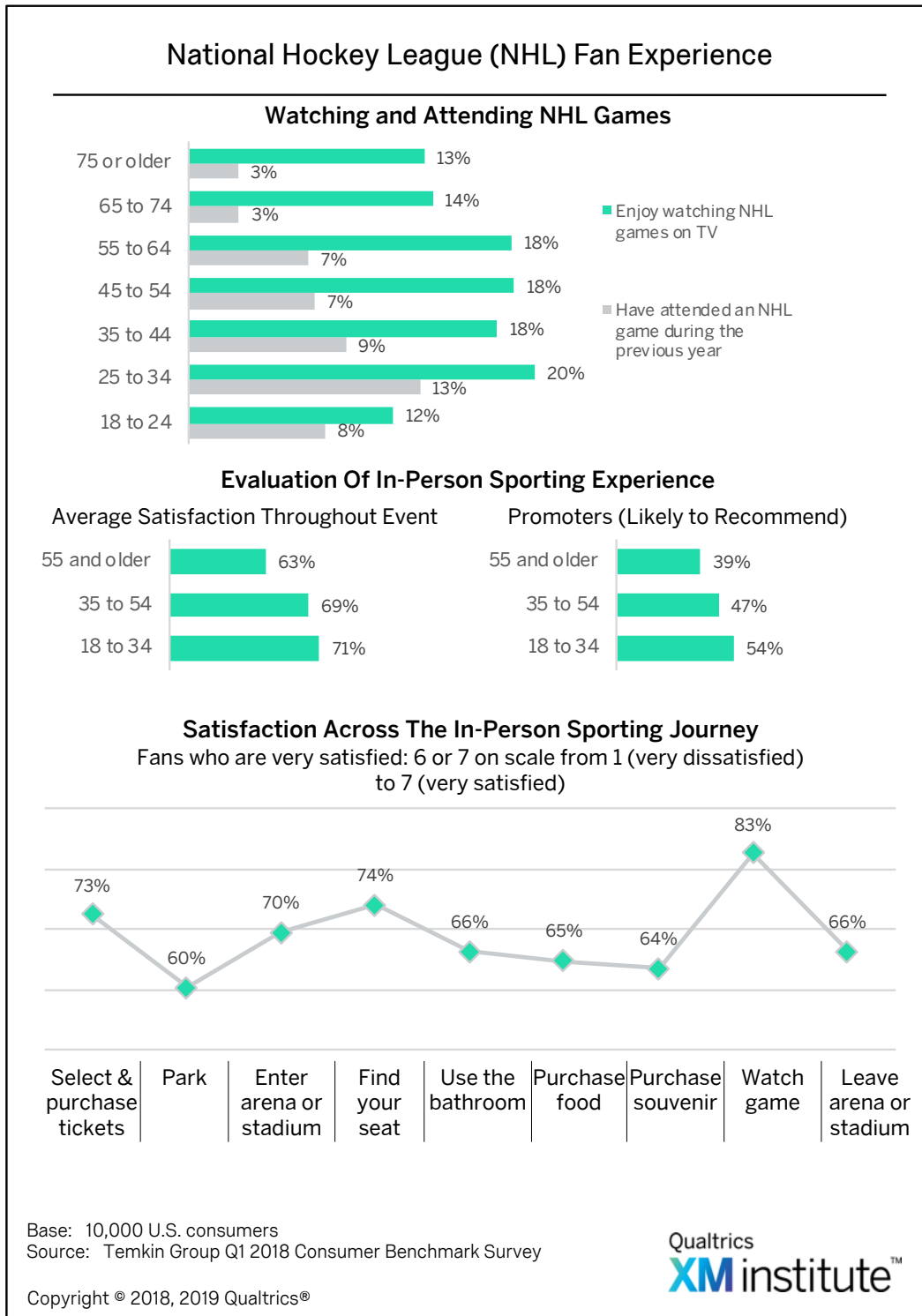


Figure 10

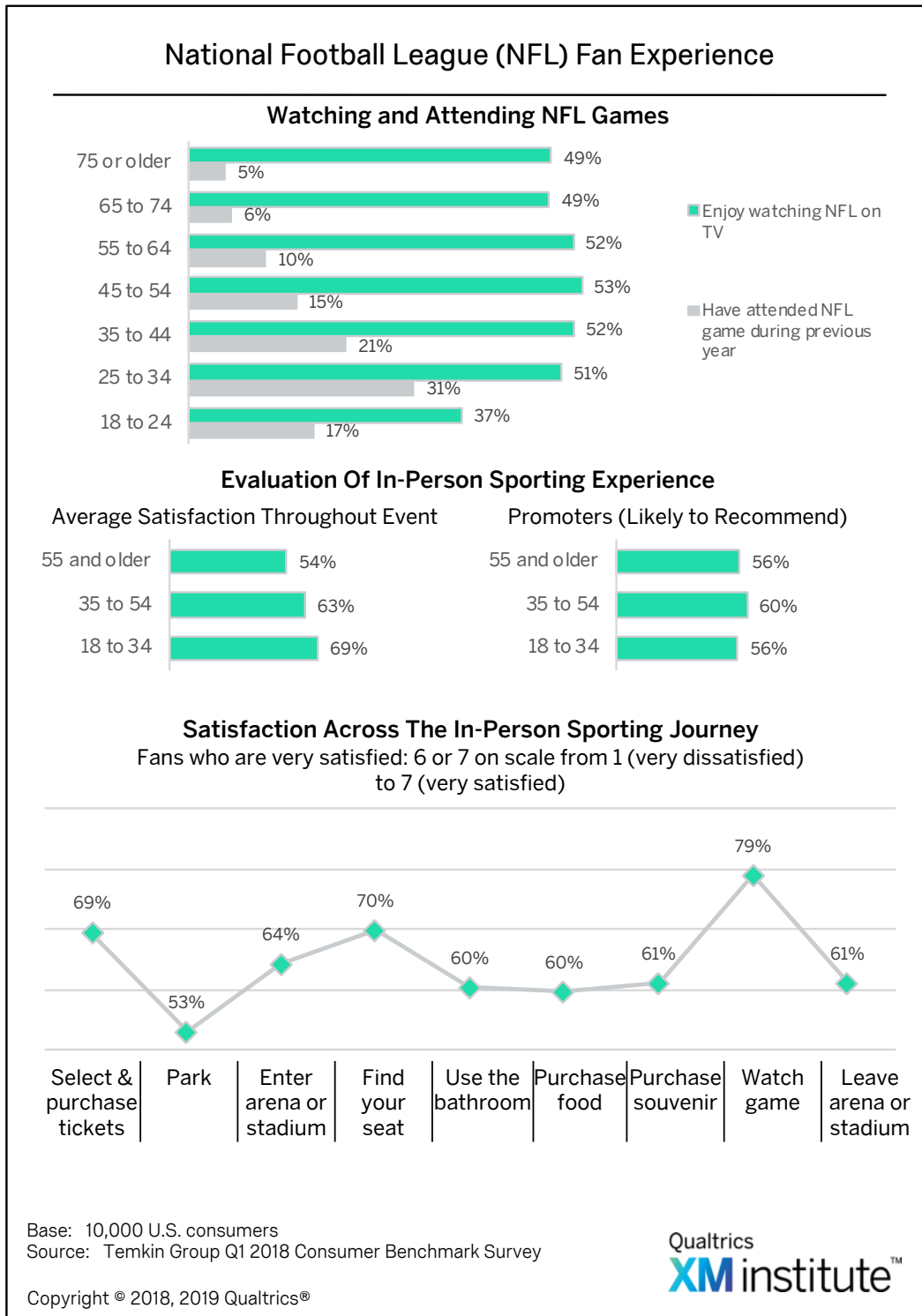


Figure 11

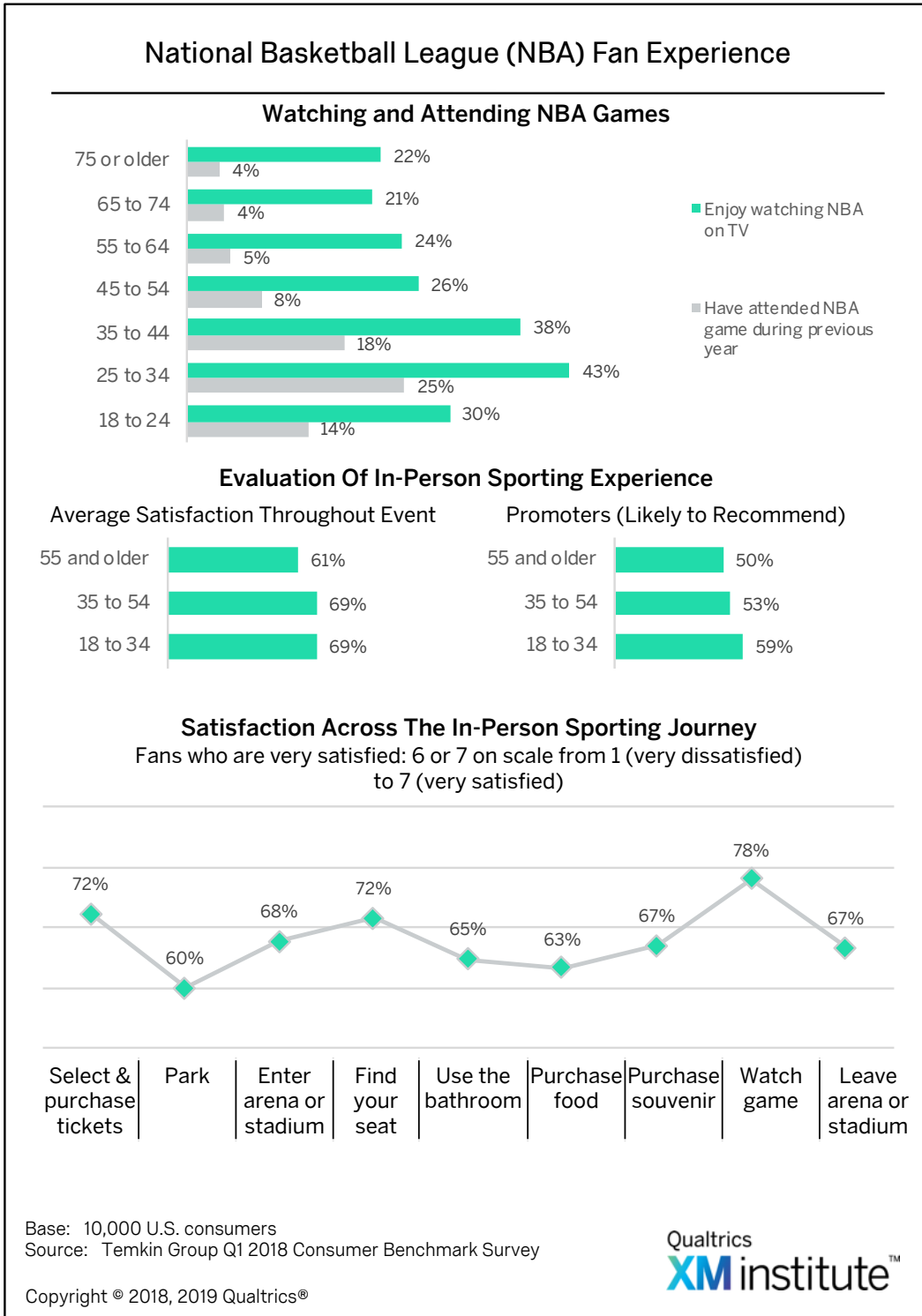


Figure 12

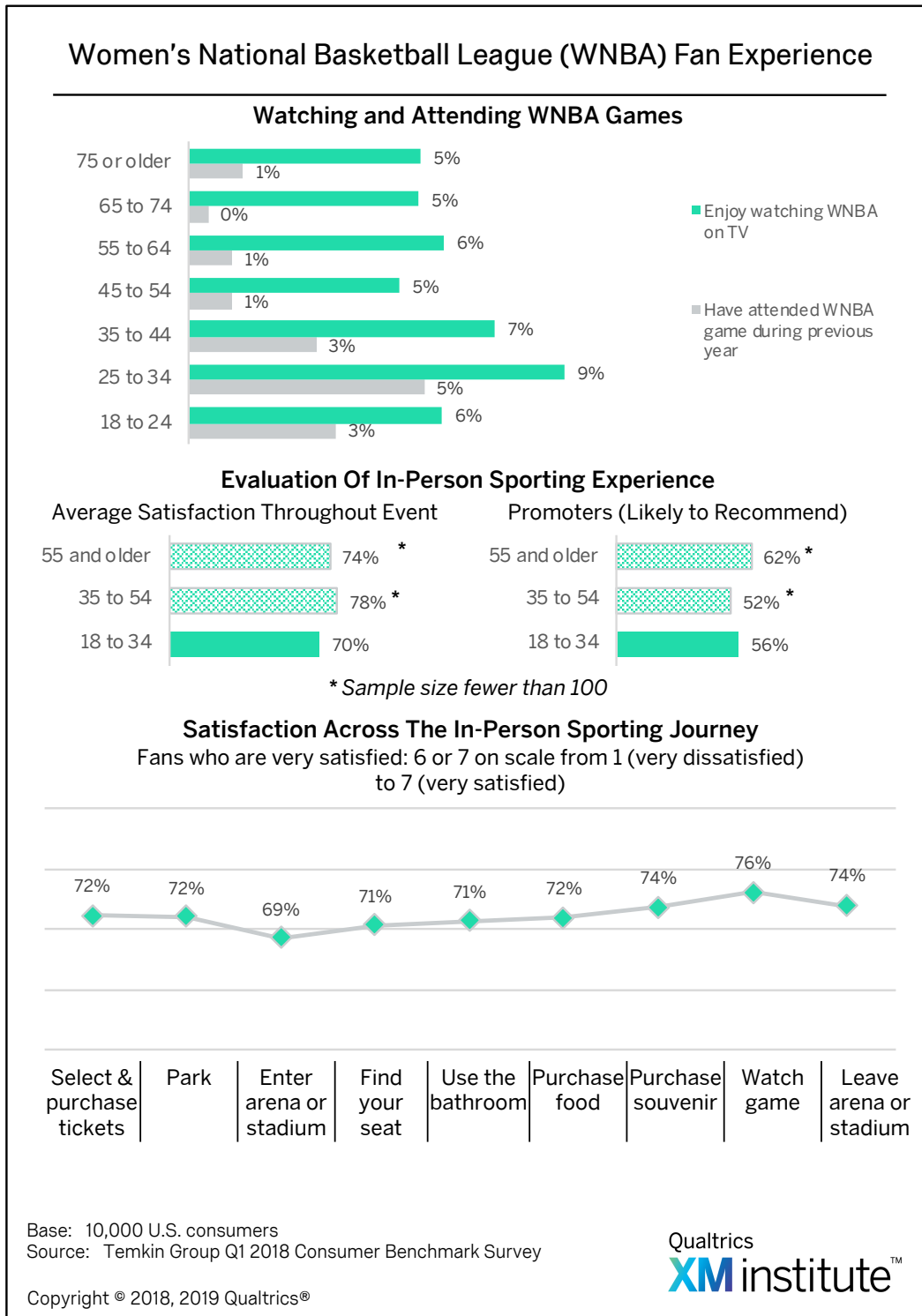


Figure 13

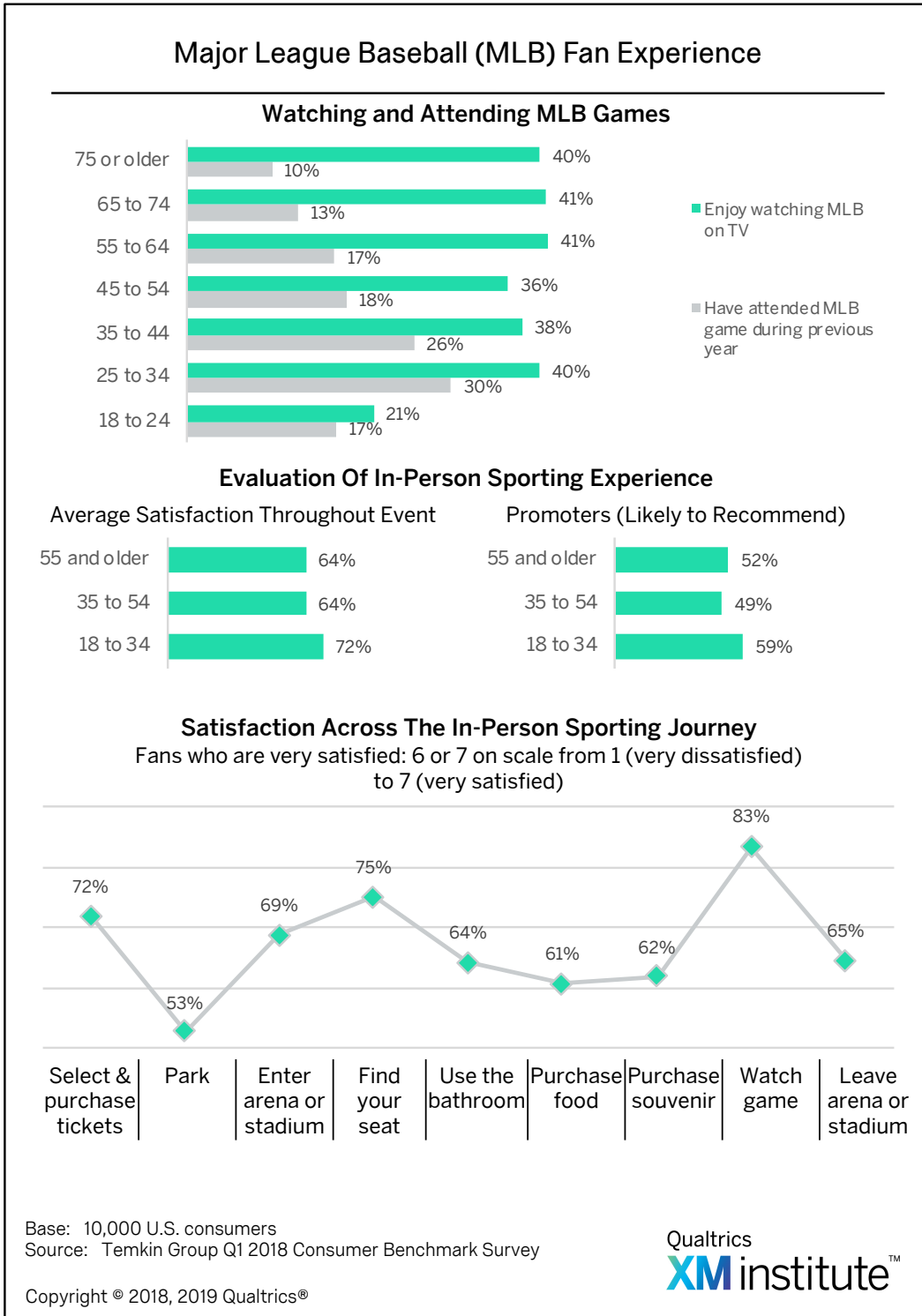


Figure 14

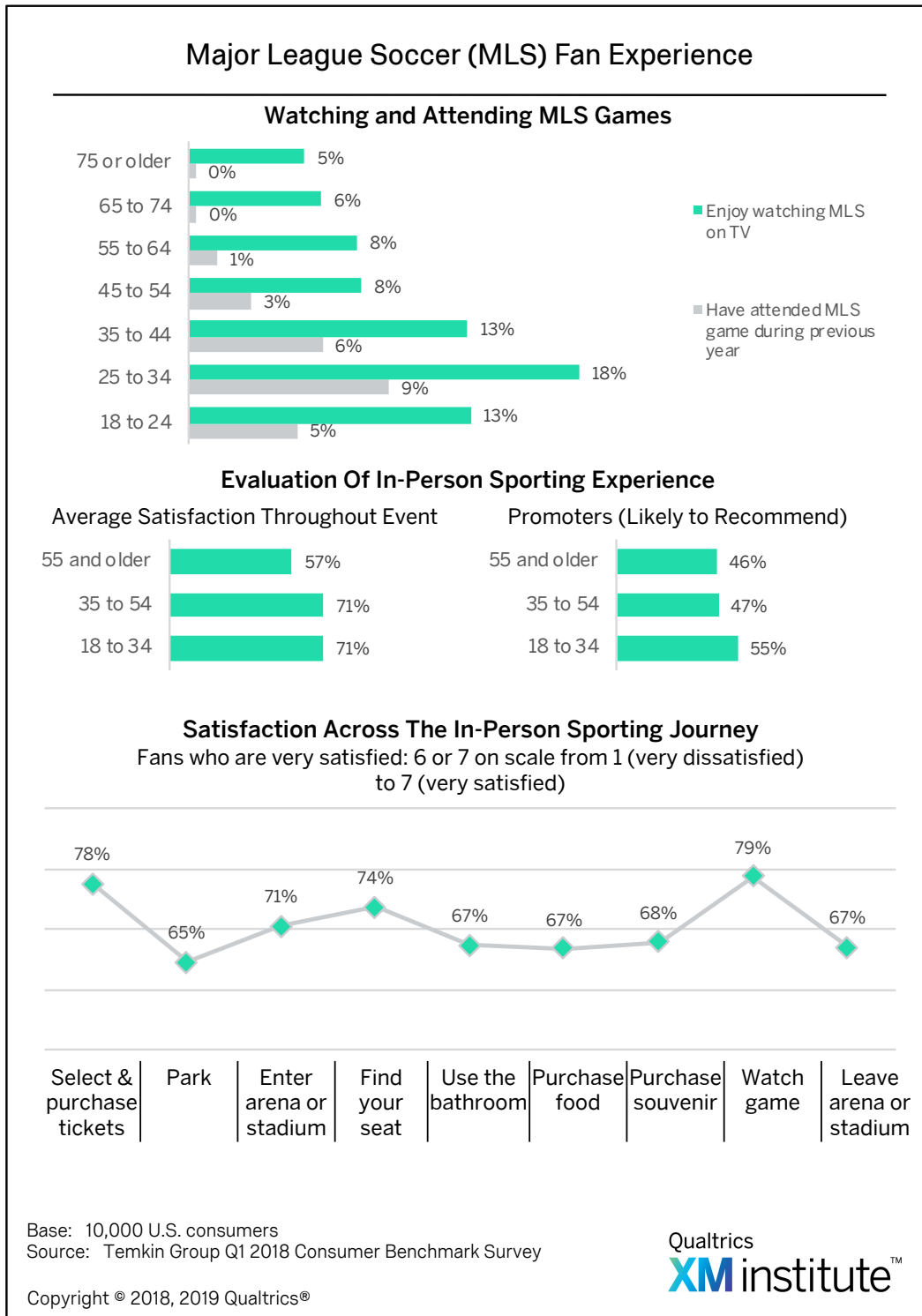


Figure 15

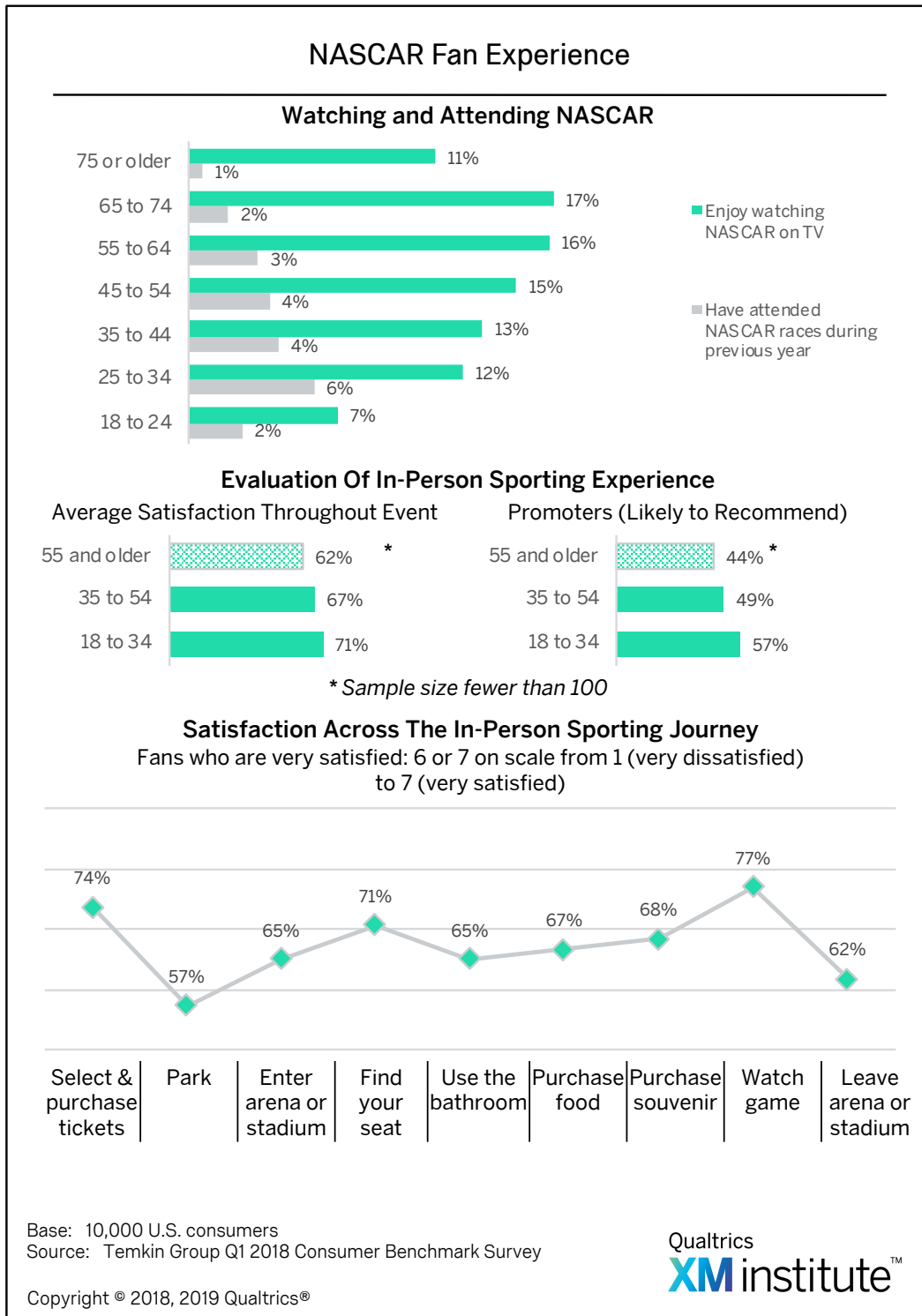


Figure 16

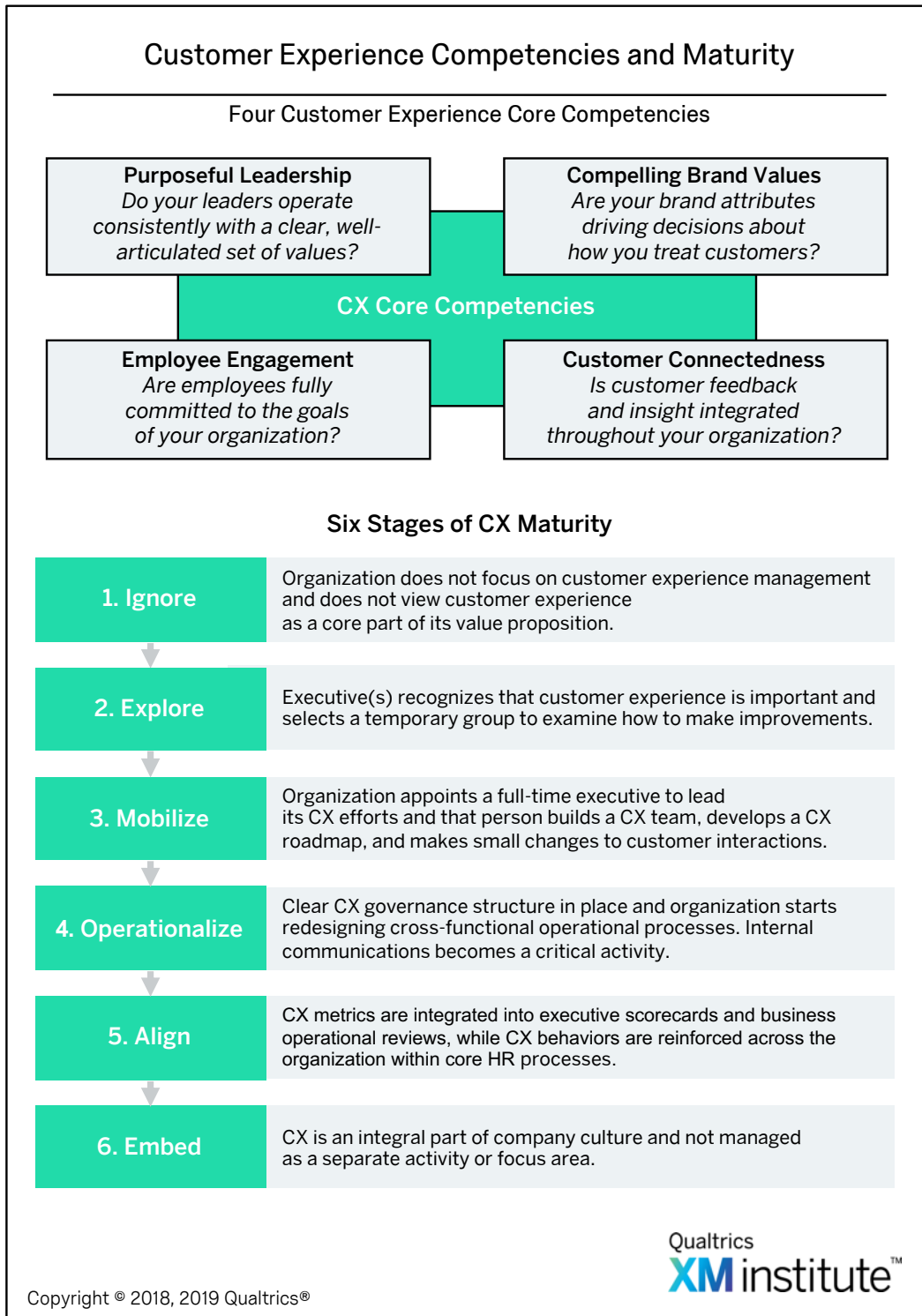


Figure 17