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Kids These Days: Corporate Social Responsibility and Generational Influence on Consumer

Intention

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Sport, Exercise, Recreation, Kinesiology

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science in Sports Management

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by

Maya Mathis

December 2020

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Dr. Amanda Greene, Chair

Dr. Natalie L. Smith

Dr. Charles W. Jones

Nikki Stewart

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, millennials, awareness, satisfaction, loyalty

## ABSTRACT

Kids These Days: Corporate Social Responsibility and Generational Influence on Consumer

Intention

by

Maya Mathis

Millennials are known for being a unique generation that places a high value on improving their community. They are also unlike any other generation in that they are harder to market to because they are more aware of common marketing strategies used by companies today. Not only do millennials want to improve the community, but they expect others to do the same. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a popular topic and has gained momentum in research over the years; understanding the relationship between CSR and millennials is important due to the generational shifts. Therefore, this study examines the importance of CSR to different generations and how companies can use that information to gain millennials as loyal consumers. This study examines the following constructs to evaluate CSR from a generational perspective: awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty. Although it is believed that millennials value CSR more than other generations, all generations appear to be aware, satisfied, and loyal.

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## DEDICATION

To my loving family for supporting and encouraging me every step of the way. Thanks for believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself. I love you all.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone on my committee: Dr. Greene, Dr. Smith, Dr. Jones, and Nikki, for guiding me through this process and for being there for me throughout my journey at East Tennessee State University. I truly appreciate each of you.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Millennials are unique in that they hold themselves to a higher standard and genuinely believe that they can improve their community and make a difference in the world (Edwards, 2016). According to Beckman and Noll (2015), millennials are unlike any other generation, and therefore, have to be targeted uniquely because their generation does not buy into the marketing gimmicks that worked on past generations. This new set of values millennials carry can make them more challenging to market to, especially in a technologically advanced society where they want to feel an emotional connection. The opinions of those around them continuously influence their decisions (Edwards, 2016). It is no secret that social media is one of the biggest marketing platforms in today's society; however, marketers are struggling to appeal to consumers in the 19-40-year-old age group (Edwards, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming more and more popular among sport organizations as they realize it is a smart business investment, since it can potentially increase their revenue (King, 2019). With the strong connection to the community that millennials have, corporate social responsibility is an excellent way for companies to market to these consumers and gain loyal customers. CSR has become as much about giving back to the community as it is about improving or maintaining a company's reputation to continue profiting from consumers (King, 2019).

In sport, marketing to millennials through CSR can be seen as a strategy to gain loyal customers that continue to spend their money with a particular organization or brand. Studies show that fans want to connect with a team that connects with the community (Giroux et al., n.d.). However, creating loyal fans takes time, and marketers must take the proper steps to make sure fans go from being aware of an organization to becoming loyal. Creating this loyalty among

millennials is even more challenging due to their tech-savviness and their expectation for marketers to be honest and transparent when trying to reach them (Edwards, 2016). Both CSR and ancillary events are a way to get fans on site in hopes that they will return for the main sporting event. Therefore, this study focuses on determining the importance of awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty related to companies' CSR initiatives and whether or not millennials' perceptions of these CSR initiatives impacts their relationship with organizations. This study explores the relationship between corporate social responsibility and millennials and how their need to improve their community can help marketers' gain an advantage when aiming to influence this generation.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### What is CSR

Corporate social responsibility is viewed as a company's moral obligation to society (Walzel et al., 2018). Although it is not required, it is highly encouraged and can help a company be seen as socially responsible (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). The effort a company puts into improving their community directly impacts whether or not the community members associate with them on a business level. (Montazaeri et al., 2016). Companies use corporate social responsibility for various reasons: to be viewed as socially responsible, to improve brand or reputation, to enhance competitive advantage, to increase visibility, and to have an impact on society (Sung & Lee, 2015). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as stated in Anderson, Dalhquist, and Garver (2018), is "... a continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, the local community, and society at large" (p.15). Philanthropy can be used to intertwine social and economic goals to improve a business and its long-term relationships with consumers (Leventhal, 2012). Creating long-lasting relationships is vital for companies to succeed.

Companies invest in CSR initiatives because it can help maximize sales, improve corporate image, reduce cost, and increase customer loyalty (Alrubaic et al., 2017; Luenendonk, 2016). Creating consumer loyalty is especially crucial among Millennials and Generation Z's (Giroux et al., n.d.). To ensure that they focus on the community, some companies have whole departments dedicated to corporate social responsibility, and by making the public aware of their efforts, companies encourage consumers to show interest in their brands. Companies strive to be viewed as socially conscious, causing them to spend millions on CSR initiatives annually (Luenendonk, 2016). CSR is about what a company does in society and how consumers and

stakeholders view those efforts and how that correlates to a company's profits. (Leventhal, 2012).

### **CSR in Sport**

Sports are universal and play a role in both national and international markets; they unite people despite social and economic barriers (Montazeri et al., 2016). In the past ten years, there have been more papers specific to sport CSR with most of those being in sport management journals from North America and Europe. Most of the CSR research focuses on soccer, basketball, and baseball (Walzel et al., 2018). CSR is a marketing and public relations strategy for teams and helps them gain a competitive advantage against other organizations (Lacey & Hensel, 2016).

Due to their platform, sport organizations are expected to be socially responsible and cautious about the timing of their CSR initiatives and what social issues they address: community development and programs, environmental, labor practices, human rights, and economics (Walzel et al., 2017). Corporate social responsibility is a growing topic in the sports world due to pressure from fans for organizations to engage in initiatives that give back to communities (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). CSR initiatives vary based on the organization and the needs of their region (Lacey & Hensel, 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility can impact fan relationships positively or negatively depending on how organizations meet fan expectations (Lacey & Hensel, 2017). Studies show that fans want to connect with a team that connects with the community and that fans who perceive a higher CSR of a team connect more favorably to that team (Giroux et al., n.d.). Sport CSR can impact society in various ways: education, health, environment, and social and cultural enrichment (Sung & Lee, 2015). According to Sung and Lee (2015), "Sport, a powerful resource

with its positive social contributions, provides unique opportunities by engaging audiences and participants and provoking emotional responses” (p.57). Sports have the influence to make either a positive or negative difference in the community (Walzel et al., 2018). However, when used properly, sport CSR can increase brand visibility, awareness, sales, repeat purchasing, favorability, and advocacy (Lacey & Hensel, 2017).

Millennials put much thought into the non-profit organization they invest their time in and review the organization's website to read the mission statement and find out exactly how donations directly benefit the community. Word of mouth through social media is a great way to reach this generation (Edwards, 2018). Appealing to millennials can be difficult, but due to their strong community presence, professional sports organizations have a better chance to deliver a purposeful message through CSR effectively (Rowe et al., 2018).

### **Using Sports Facilities for CSR Initiatives**

Positively impacting the economy is a form of CSR that benefits sports organizations and their communities (Leventhal, 2012). Various factors play a role in professional sports teams' corporate social responsibility: geographical reach, stakeholder influences, business operations, variations in ownership structures, and management approaches (Rowe et al., 2018). Sports organizations can bring the community closer through youth educational initiatives, community outreach programs, and supporting local organizations (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). Sports organizations have the resources and support to reach many members of their community (Sung & Lee, 2015). Sports organizations also set up foundations with the sole purpose of improving the community: Netball Australia's Confident Girls Foundation, the National Football League's Play 60 program, Arsenal FC's Arsenal in the Community Strategy, and David Beckham's 7 Fund (Rowe et al., 2018).

Corporate Social Responsibility is not only beneficial for the organization but also for the health of the community. Due to their fan base, sports organizations can improve their fans' well-being through CSR initiatives. For example, the Memphis Grizzlies have an initiative called Get Fit with the Grizzlies (Riggin et al., 2019). This initiative helps improve children's fitness and knowledge of health. Hockey Fans In Training (FIT) is a program that took place in Canada. The program encourages overweight or obese hockey fans to live a healthier life. Two teams from the Ontario Hockey League helped with the program as a corporate social responsibility initiative (Riggin et al., 2019). There are three recommendations that organizations should follow to ensure their initiative has a valid long term impact: focus on the most problematic area, frequency, and offer to follow up after the program (Riggin et al., 2019).

### **Use of Charities as a Means of CSR**

Millennials value philanthropic activities from companies. Due to their age, millennials have a lot of spending power; however, non-profit organizations face a challenge when marketing to this generation because of their need to improve the community compared to past generations (Edwards, 2018). Since millennials grew up with advanced technology, they use the internet to stay up to date on the news and world events, which leads them to be very involved in the community (Edwards, 2018). Many well-known organizations have tapped into CSR to appeal to millennials.

Although primarily known for Disney World and the Disney channel, The Walt Disney Company is significantly involved in the community. The following statement can be found on the company website, "We believe social responsibility is a long-term investment that seems to strengthen our operations and competitiveness in the marketplace, enhance risk management, attract and engage talented employees, and maintain our reputation" (The Walt Disney

Company, 2020). The statement demonstrates that the company knows the value of corporate social responsibility from a business perspective. The company also makes consumers aware of their efforts by providing a CSR report on their website. The report lists the various initiatives the organization is involved in and how those align with their values (Holcomb et al., 2010). The Walt Disney company's CSR initiatives relate to their image of being a family brand as they are one of the top companies in the family entertainment industry (Feldner & Berg, 2014). The company's initiatives focus on the following: positively developing children by making kid friendly content, creating safe environments for children, maintaining ethical labor standards and working conditions, improving the environment, and wish granting and other uplifting programs for children in the hospital. The Walt Disney Company also donates to society through cash and in-kind contributions. In 2008, they donated over \$209 to various organizations (Holcomb et al., 2010). The Walt Disney Company has done a lot for the community and plans to do much more.

### **Marketing to Millennials**

Millennials are born between 1980-2000, which means in reference to them throughout this study, their ages could range from 18-40 years, depending on when they took the survey and their birthdate (McDonald, 2015). This generation is unlike any other, which means their values and what influences their attitudes vary. Pew Research collects information on how different generations react to critical issues in society and use generational cohorts to explain how different world events influence each generation's view of the world (Dimock, 2019). Corporate social responsibility is essential when marketing to these consumers (Sung & Lee, 2015).

Millennials are community-minded and strive to make a difference in the world. Their increased interest in community impact compared to past generations causes non-profit organizations to work harder to appeal to them; however, having millennials support is essential

due to their spending power (Edwards, 2018). Research shows that digital media is the best way to reach millennials due to amount of time they spend on social media and the internet. Knowing how to appeal to millennials through social media and well-organized websites is essential when trying to gain their attention (Edwards, 2016).

A company merely letting millennials know that they care by making them aware of their CSR efforts could go a long way (Luenendonk, 2016). For instance, one would assume that due to ESPN's nature, the company would be vocal about their social impact; however, they have been known for keeping their philanthropy quiet. In response to ESPN's quiet philanthropy, Kevin Martinez, ESPN's vice president of corporate citizenship, stated, "There was this kind of interesting perspective: We're a media company but we don't talk about ourselves...Well, wait a minute. This is like 2010. What do you mean you don't talk about yourself? It's a reputation strategy. How do we get new consumers? How do we tell [millennials] that we have purpose, because it's one of their four major value propositions when they decide to do anything? We need to demonstrate that we are like them and that we are promoting those values" (King, 2019). Millennials value honesty and transparency from companies, and are more likely to respond to a message if it meets those criteria (Beckman & Noll, 2015). Successfully marketing to millennials is key to drawing them in as consumers and gaining their trust and loyalty.

### **Millennial Sectors**

Millennials are commonly grouped together as one big generation; however, not all millennials respond the same to various marketing tactics. Therefore, it is important to note that there are differences within this generation. Research acknowledges that millennials can be examined further by breaking down the age groups within the generation (Yim et al., 2020). Studies have found that millennials can be further segmented into "younger millennials" and



“older millennials” due to their response patterns. Some studies show a significant difference in younger millennials responses when compared to older millennials, which shows that millennials are different, even within their own generation (Migacz & Petrick, 2018; Garikapati et al., 2016). Millennials maintain uniqueness within their generation.

### **Marketing Gimmicks**

Millennials are more challenging to wow because they do not buy into marketing gimmicks due to their marketing savviness and prefer messages that appeal to their emotions (Beckman & Noll, 2015; Edwards, 2018). Marketers use various techniques to appeal to a variety of consumers. Tactics vary based on the target audience and what is appealing to them. Marketing to millennials has been challenging due to their uniqueness. (Edwards, 2016). Having access to numerous amounts of information via the internet, millennials are more aware of marketing gimmicks than past generations. It is harder to persuade them to buy a product because they do not trust advertisements (Edwards, 2016). Marketing strategies such as emails, pop up advertisements, flashing items, links to sponsors, mandatory software downloads, and un-closable browser windows are not the best way to appeal to millennials (Page & Williams, 2011; Smith, 2011). They do not constantly check their emails, but instead prefer checking social media to provide them with important information (Page & Williams, 2011). Millennials find pop up advertisements annoying due to the fact that it disrupts them from whatever they are currently working on. In fact, millennials are less likely to visit the site of a pop up advertisement due to their annoyance at the ad (Smith, 2011). Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand what techniques appeal to millennials.

## **Leaders of Sports Organizations CSR**

Over the years, the interest in sport CSR has grown. Professional sports teams have begun to emphasize their community outreach programs as a strategic investment. (Walzel et al., 2018). To show their commitment level, sports organizations have renamed their community relations departments to social responsibility and added CSR to the executives' titles over these initiatives. The NBA was the first league to do so with the NFL following their lead five years later. A few years later the MLB and NHL added social responsibility in their executives' titles (King, 2019).

With the restructuring of community relations to social responsibility, many teams hired or promoted executives who had worked in social responsibility outside of the sports industry (King, 2019). For example, Kim Davis is the Executive Vice President of Social Impact, Growth Initiatives, and Legislative Affairs for the NHL. Before joining the NHL team, Davis headed CSR for advisory firm Teneo and was the managing director at JP Morgan Chase. Melanie LeGrande is the head of social responsibility for the MLB. She was previously involved in social responsibility at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a \$6.5 billion foundation. Kathy Behrens is the Executive Vice President of Social Responsibility and Player Programs for the NBA. She is responsible for starting NBA Cares about 15 years ago (King, 2019). NBA Cares helps improve both player and league image while also positively impacting the community. The organization donated over \$230 million to charities and participated in over 2 million hours of community service (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). Behrens is also responsible for creating the NBA Green Program, which she worked on with both the NBA's former and current commissioner. (Hershkowitz, 2017). Before working for the NBA, she was the head of the New York Cares

(King, 2019). Hiring professionals outside of sports shows that social responsibility is not a sport-specific concept, but rather a smart business strategy.

Although social responsibility is great for the community, it is still about business for organizations. According to Kevin Martinez, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship for ESPN, "It's not just a community outreach or public affairs or corporate giving job. It is a strategic piece of business. It's still the 'Do good, do right' of the 1990s and 2000s, but it's much more entrepreneurial, innovative and integrated than ever before" (King, 2019). Corporate social responsibility uses concerning sports are the following: brand marketing, sales, community relations, philanthropy, player programs, youth development, exposure to sports, and to bail out a company in times of trouble (King, 2019). According to Melanie LeGrande, "Sometimes people will say this function is not revenue generating...Some people still feel that way. It's a battle sometimes across teams, leagues and companies to make sure they understand that it is a business imperative and it does impact the bottom line. In the end, a lot of times your brand reputation, your affinity, your fan engagement, has to do with what you do on the ground in the community. And what that does is directly proportional with how you do with your revenues" (King, 2019).

### **CSR in NASCAR**

Despite their efforts, senior-level sport executives recently gave NASCAR a score of C- on a survey about their perception of how important giving back to the community is to each league (King, 2019). The nature of the sport could be hurting their perception of how concerned with the environment NASCAR is, which could damage how the community sees them regarding corporate social responsibility. An article in the New York Times discusses how people have criticized NASCAR for claiming to be environmentally friendly since its focus is on

cars driving in circles and burning numerous gas (Belson, 2011). Therefore, it is especially crucial in NASCAR's case to make their consumers aware of their CSR initiatives.

NASCAR exhibits corporate social responsibility through its foundation, The NASCAR Foundation; it is a registered 501c(3) public non-profit organization. Through their foundation, NASCAR has helped over 1.4 million children and given \$36 million to children in need. The NASCAR Foundation has four programs: Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award, Speediatrics Children's Fund, Activity Sheets, and Speediatrics Fit Kits. The activity sheets are printable activities for kids to do at home, and the fit kits are to help kids have fun and be active outside during these times of social distancing. The foundation also gives an award, the Humanitarian Award, in which the proceeds go to benefit the winner's charity. The Children's fund helps support organizations that focus on providing medical and health care services to kids. The foundation also has three annual events: Over the Edge, Taste of the 24, and High Speed Hold em. The foundation also partners with racers to help them with their charities.

There was a survey given to over 2,000 senior-level sports executives across both college and professional sports. The survey was given in August 2019 by Turnkey Intelligence. The first question focused on what the executives believe is the most critical role of sports. Based on the survey results, executives believe that sports' primary purpose is to entertain people and bring them together (King, 2019).

The next question focused on how the executives perceived the commitment level to give back to the community of the following leagues: NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, PGA Tour, NFL, and NASCAR. The community refers to both America and Canada. The participants were asked to give each league a letter grade A through F. The NBA received the highest grade with a B, and NASCAR received the lowest with a C- (King, 2019).

To make a comparison, Turnkey compared the results of the survey they gave the executives with a survey they gave fans in 2018 in which they were asked the same question about their perception of how important giving back to the community is to each league. It is interesting because the fans' opinions are different from the executives. Compared to the executive's results, the fans seem to view the leagues as more involved in the community. The executives ranked NASCAR last with a C- while the fans ranked them in first place with a B+ grade (King, 2019).

**Awareness.** Awareness is critical when it comes to corporate social responsibility and can be an obstacle organizations have to face. It is uncommon for people to go out of their way to look for information on organizations' CSR initiatives (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). Sometimes there is an information gap between the company and consumer. Some companies may feel that putting their efforts on social media or in public would lessen the value of their efforts; however, how can consumers reward a company for something that is not public information? (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013). Making consumers aware of CSR efforts, allows organizations to be viewed as honest, trustworthy, and ethical, and consumers will be willing to reward them for this behavior (Lacey & Hensel, 2016). As stated in the above literature, millennials greatly value giving back to the community and look to invest their money in companies that make an effort to improve the community. Therefore, when marketing to millennials, making them aware of corporate social responsibility efforts is key to gaining them as a customer. The level of awareness concerning CSR initiatives determines a consumers' ability to respond and reward a company for their efforts. It is hard for consumers to support an organization correctly and for organizations to maximize their profit if their customers are not aware of their CSR efforts (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013).

**Satisfaction.** Satisfaction can be analyzed in various ways, depending on the situation and product. According to Oliver (1999), satisfaction can be defined as “an evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations...and the actual performance of the product” (Tse & Wilton, 1988, p.204; Oliver, 1980). Based on this definition, satisfaction would depend on the consumers' expectations versus the product's reality. However, satisfaction can also be viewed as a "pleasurable fulfillment" because the consumer purchases the product simply to fulfill a need, desire, or goal. Although these two definitions are slightly different, the overall concept is the same: consumers determine satisfaction based on their perception of the product. As stated in the above paragraph, simply satisfying a consumer does not make them loyal, but it is a start. According to Martinez and Bosque (2013), "The academic literature has suggested that if customers are satisfied with their chosen brands, increasingly they will be inclined to re-purchase its products or services and finally become loyal customers exhibiting strong customer goodwill" (p.91). Therefore, the goal is to make the customer happy and meet their needs in hopes that they will return and, over time, become a loyal customer.

Satisfying millennials is more difficult for marketers compared to their experiences with past generations. Due to their set of personal values, it takes more for marketing strategies to appeal to them. They want to feel an emotional connection to a brand that they invest their money in (Edwards, 2018). Research has shown that 91% of millennials are willing to switch brands if they find a brand with a better cause (Anderson et al., 2018).

**Loyalty.** Customer loyalty is defined in various ways and is known for working in conjunction with customer satisfaction. According to Tellis (1988), "Generally, loyalty has been and continues to be defined in some circles as repeat purchasing frequency or relative volume of same-brand purchasing.” However, Jones and Sasser (1995) argue that satisfying a customer

does not necessarily make them loyal. The customer must be continually satisfied with that same company in order to build loyalty. Researchers found that 85%-95% of consumers are satisfied in the automobile industry, but only 30%-40% purchase the same make or model again (Oliver, 1997). This research shows that one-time satisfaction does not result in a loyal customer. Martinez and Bosque (2013) state the importance of continuously meeting customer needs to build meaningful relationships with them. In particular, creating loyal customers that are millennials is a challenge in today's society. Learning how to keep a customer that is quick to judge and willing to move on to the next best thing is vital for companies trying to reach millennials.

### **Ancillary Events at Bristol Motor Speedway**

Using sports venues for ancillary events is popular among professional sports organizations due to the huge size of their facilities. Hosting other events can be both a great source of revenue and a way to get potential consumers on site (Parrish et al., 2014). For example, Bristol Motor Speedway not only hosts NASCAR races, but the following events: concerts, short track races, college football games, ice skating, car shows, Jurassic Quest for kids, business meetings, weddings, and Speedway in Lights. (L. Owen, personal communication, September 24, 2020). These various events appeal to consumers of all ages and are a great way to get various demographics on site at BMS. The goal is that consumers will enjoy themselves so much at an ancillary event that they will come back for BMS's main events, which are races.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were considered for this study:

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference between generation and attendance at CSR initiatives located at a professional sport venue?

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference between generation and “caring about sport CSR”?

Research Question 3

Which strategies are most impactful when marketing to Millennials for CSR events?

Research Question 4

Would the addition of ancillary events/ items impact the relationship between different generations and their attendance at larger CSR initiatives at a professional sport venue?



### **Chapter 3. Methods**

Many sports organizations have a charity that they are involved in or sponsor. Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS) in Bristol, TN has Speedway Children's Charities (SCC), which is part of their CSR initiative. Bristol Motor Speedway and the other seven SMI tracks owned by Speedway Motorsports, Inc. are involved with this charity. Speedway Children's Charities is a non-profit organization aimed at raising funds for hundreds of non-profit organizations to help provide all kids equal opportunities. Each chapter of the charity deals with specific issues based on the needs of their community. Since 1982, Speedway Children's Charities has given over \$58.3 million to various organizations across the country (Speedway Children's Charities, n.a.). Each track has its own events to raise money for the charity. For instance, Speedway in Lights is a light show held at Bristol Motor Speedway annually to collect funds to go to Speedway Children's Charities. The show begins in mid-November and runs through early January. BMS charges \$15 per car on the weekdays and \$20 per car on the weekends. In 2018, about 36,000 cars attended the show, and the proceeds went to SCC. (B. Holleman, personal communication, September 5, 2019).

Data was obtained from Speedway Children's Charities. To better understand millennials, their view on the importance of corporate social responsibility and how that impacts their perception of sports organizations, a survey was created on IPADS and given to Speedway in Lights attendees at Bristol Motor Speedway. The data from the surveys was then uploaded to an online program, Harvest Your Data. This program is research software that is password protected. Data was then uploaded to the researcher's device, and converted to IBM-SPSS 25. A sports researcher was consulted during the creation of the Speedway in Lights survey. The survey was modified from several CSR approved survey tools within the sports industry (Brown

& Dacin, 1997; Cronin et al., 2000; Martinez & Bosque, 2013; Morgana & Hunt, 1994; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). A team of trained study staff collected data onsite during three high traffic nights at BMS'S annual Speedway in Lights event. Due to the number of cars that come to Speedway in Lights, there is typically a wait time to enter. The customers sit in their cars outside the gate and are either sitting still or barely moving. During this time, the study staff walked up to cars and waved to get the customers attention. Upon the customer rolling down the window, the staff proceeded to ask them to participate in the survey. Only those ages 18 and up were allowed to participate in the survey to allow the researcher to compare and contrast the results between millennials and non-millennials. The researcher did not require each respondent to answer every question, although it was encouraged to maximize results.

There were 287 respondents, and the sample was made up of 152 women and 135 men. Within the sample, there were 211 millennials and 76 non-millennials. In order to better understand the demographics of the attendees, participants were also asked their gender. Then the results were broken down by age group in order to distinguish between the different generations. Figure 1 lists the number of participants that responded to the survey and broke it down by age and gender.

Figure 1

*Survey Participants by Age and Gender*

<i>Age</i>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<i>18-22</i>	57	52
<i>23-30</i>	26	33
<i>31-40</i>	21	22
<i>41-50</i>	17	20
<i>51-60</i>	8	15
<i>&gt;61</i>	6	10

## **The Survey**

To better understand consumer decisions to attend Speedway in Lights, attendees were asked various questions about attendance rate, convenience, communication methods, corporate social responsibility, etc. The main focus of this survey was to determine how the following in relation to CSR impacted millennials' perception of sports organizations: awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty. It was determined that the most acceptable way to gain knowledge on these three concepts was to include a Likert scale on the survey. Participants were asked a series of questions at the end of the survey and rated the answers on a scale from 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: somewhat disagree 4: neither agree nor disagree, 5: somewhat agree, 6: agree, -7: strongly agree. The Likert scale questions were asked in addition to other survey questions that were either, yes or no, or check all that apply. Awareness was measured using three items adapted from Greene et al. (2020). Satisfaction was measured using four items from Cronin et al., (2000) and Martinez and Bosque (2013). Loyalty was measured using two items adapted from Martinez & Bosque (2013), Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002), and Zeithaml et al. (1996). Yes, or

no questions were determined to have no added value to the study and are therefore not listed. See the Appendix for survey questions.

### **Analysis**

IBM-SPSS 25 was used to perform frequency distributions, cross-tabs, and an ANOVA. Due to the type of survey questions asked, descriptives will also be used to analyze the data. Frequency distributions were carried out for each survey question relating to attendance rates, convenience, and CSR associations. Yes, or no questions were labeled 1 or 2, respectively. Cross-tabs were used to further analyze attendance rates and group size and demographics. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare multiple satisfaction questions with multiple variables. In order to examine where the significant difference was, a Bonferroni Post-Hoc was used. Since this was an exploratory study, descriptive statistics were the primary source used to evaluate the data. Therefore, the results were explained in terms of the trends found throughout this study. The trends focus on comparing millennials' responses with other generations' responses and looked at how their answers varied. These differences from a generational standpoint allowed the researcher to determine possible methods to further engage the younger population of consumers and allow room for more in depth statistical research.

## Chapter 4. Results

The following graphs represent the results of the questions that were most beneficial in determining millennials' attendance and motivation.

### Cross-Tabs

Table 1

*How Many Times Have You Attended an Event at Bristol Motor Speedway?*

<u>Age</u>	<i>Attendance at Bristol Motor Speedway events</i>			
	<u>1-2</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>&gt;6</u>
<u>18-22</u>	46.4%	37.3%		16.3%
<u>23-30</u>	18.1%	23.8%	<u>Drop off!</u>	30%
<u>31-40</u>	11.8%	19%		22.2%
<u>41-50</u>	11%	10.4%		17.4%
<u>51-60</u>	4.7%	7.4%		
<u>&gt;60</u>	7.8%	1.4%		

Table 2

*How Many People Are in Your Group at This Event?*

<u>Age</u>	<i>Group size at Speedway in Lights</i>		
	<u>1-3</u>	<u>4-6</u>	<u>7-9</u>
<u>18-22</u>	59	37	6
<u>23-30</u>	25	28	2
<u>31-40</u>	15	21	6
<u>41-50</u>	16	17	4
<u>51-60</u>	10	9	2
<u>&gt;60</u>	10	4	2

The results show that millennials are on BMS property more than BMS management initially thought. This generation makes up the youngest consumers and is on the property significantly more than the older generations. 76.3% of consumers that attended BMS events 1-2 times are millennials compared to 23.5% of non-millennials. 80.1% of consumers that attended BMS events 3-4 times are millennials compared to 19.2% of non-millennials.

Statistics show that the average respondent attended with one other person, as the average group size was 1.7. According to Table 2, millennials are more likely to attend Speedway In Lights in groups as a social event. However, 74.1% of respondents that attended Speedway In Lights 4-6 times were millennials compared to 25.9% of non-millennials. This shows that millennials are more likely to attend Speedway In Lights compared to other generations.

Table 3

*What Channels of Communication Do You Use MOST to Gather Information About Local/Leisure/Charitable Events?*

*Channels of Communication*

<i>Social Media</i>	71%
<i>Free Stuff</i>	32.9%
<i>Billboard</i>	26.9%
<i>Email</i>	25.8%
<i>T-shirts</i>	23.7%
<i>Flyers</i>	18.7%
<i>Poster</i>	13.1%
<i>Yard Sign</i>	8.8%

Table 4

*Ancillary Events/Items*

<b>Event</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>Free stuff</b>	167 / 21.5%	Millennials – 89 / 53.2% Non-Millennials – 78 / 46.7%
<b>Concert</b>	142 / 18.3%	Millennials – 82 / 57.7% Non-Millennials – 60 / 42.3%
<b>Bonfire</b>	121 / 15.5%	Millennials – 72 / 59.5% Non-Millennials – 34 / 28.1%
<b>Movie night</b>	109 / 14%	Millennials – 67 / 61.5% Non-Millennials – 42 / 38.5%
<b>Cookout</b>	92 / 11.8%	Millennials – 51 / 55.4% Non-Millennials – 44.5%
<b>Sport team night</b>	59 / 7.6%	Millennials – 39 / 66% Non-Millennials – 20 / 33.8%
<b>A social group in the community EVENT</b>	49 / 6.3%	Millennials – 28 / 57.1% Non-Millennials – 21 / 42.8%

<b>An academic or social group from educational institution</b>	30 / 3.8%	Millennials – 21 / 70%
<b>EVENT</b>		Non-millennials– 9 / 30
<b>Other</b>	9 / 1.1%	Split evenly

Participants were asked what ancillary events would motivate them to come to BMS. 21.5% of participants ranked free stuff as their top motive. Within that, 53.2 % were millennials, while 46.7% were non-millennials. The second-ranked choice was 18.3 % of the votes for a concert. Within that, 57.7% were millennials, while 42.6% were non-millennials. There was no significant difference in the motives between younger and older generations.

### ANOVA

Table 5

#### *Awareness*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Significant or not</b>
I am aware that Bristol Motor Speedway directs part of its budget to donations to social causes	F(217,222)=3.902, P<.05	Significant difference lies between: 18-22 year olds and >61, with millennials being significantly more aware
To what degree are you aware that Bristol Motor Speedway gives back to the community	F(229,234)=5.704, p<.05	Significant difference lies between: 18-22 year olds and 23-30 year olds 18-22 year olds and 31-40 year old 18-22 year olds and 51-60 year olds
I am aware that Speedway Children’s Charities directs part of its budget to donations for social causes	F(111,101)=1.117, p=.287	ns

Table 6

*Satisfaction*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Significant or not</b>
Going to Events at Bristol Motor Speedway is great	F(117,106)=.694, p=.973	ns
Going to Speedway in Lights is great	F(119,112)=.976,p=.553	ns
My choice to come to Bristol Motor Speedway was a wise one	F(233,238)=1.896, p=.096	ns
My choice to come to Speedway in Lights was a wise one	F(115,115)=1.036, p=.425	ns
I think I did the right thing when I purchased tickets to Bristol Motor Speedway	F(110, 102)=.913, p=.681	ns
I think I did the right thing when I purchased tickets to Speedway in Lights	F(114,101)=.979, p=.545	ns
It is nice to go to Bristol Motor Speedway	F(115,104)=1.006, p=.488	ns
It is nice to go to Speedway in Lights	F(121,108)=37.433,p=.000 *outlier	ns

Table 7

*Loyalty*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Significant or not</b>
I usually use Bristol Motor Speedway as my first choice compared to other tracks	F(109,107)=.885, p=.738	ns
I usually use Speedway Children's Charities as my first choice compared to other charities	F(216,101)=.862, p=.759	ns
I usually use Speedway in Lights as my first choice compared to other light shows	F(105,106)=1.139, p=.253	ns



I would recommend Bristol Motor Speedway if someone asked my advice	F(118,114)=.756, p=.934	ns
I would recommend Speedway Children's Charities if somebody asked my advice	F(110,100)=1.082, p=.345	ns
I would recommend Speedway in Lights if somebody asked my advice	F(114,110)=.773, p=.913	ns

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the results of Likert scale questions relating to awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty with multiple variables. The ANOVA determines whether or not there were any significant differences for each question. A significant difference is a p value of <.05 or less. Questions that showed a significant difference were then further analyzed using a Bonferroni Post-Hoc to determine within which age groups there was a significant difference.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

Millennials are at the age where they make a substantial financial impact on the economy (Cudmore, Patton, Ng, & McClure, 2010). Therefore, not knowing how to target them or merely ignoring them could be detrimental to a business's success. Researchers have discovered that this generation is more challenging to market to for various reasons, among those being their set of values and the drive they have to want to improve the community around them (Edwards, 2018). Therefore, corporate social responsibility could be an effective marketing strategy when trying to appeal to millennial consumers. The survey results show that millennials value CSR, and they are more aware of companies CSR efforts than management originally thought. Our results are in line with what Leuenedonk (2016) says, in which it was mentioned that simply making millennials aware of CSR efforts could greatly benefit a company. Learning more about what events millennials attend and the best ways to market to them could be beneficial for companies.

The following was a research question: Is there a significant difference between attendance and generation at CSR initiatives located at a Professional Sports Venue?

This study compared attendance rates of millennials to non-millennials at Speedway in Lights, a CSR event held at Bristol Motor Speedway. Based on the results, millennials are on site at BMS more than assumed. The survey results show that, 73.5% of participants were millennials. Seeing as how this is almost 2/3 of the participants, this shows that millennials support Speedway Children's Charities through the Speedway in Lights event. Although we do not currently know millennials attendance at other SCC events, BMS can focus on appealing to millennials at Speedway in Lights. It is important to market to millennials properly while on site so that they will want to come back for other events. Future research can be conducted at other SCC events to compare attendance rates of both millennials and non-millennials.

The following was a research question: Is there a significant difference between generation and “caring about CSR”?

Many studies show that millennials care more about CSR than past generations. Therefore, this study also examined the difference between generation in relation to caring about sport organizations CSR efforts. Research by Edwards (2018) shows that millennials care more about CSR than past generations; however, our results show that there was no difference among the generations and how they felt about sports CSR. However, it is important to note that 73.5% of respondents were millennials, which suggests that CSR is important to this generation as well. Appealing to millennials values could be key for sports organizations when trying to market to millennials, which many organizations are trying to use to their advantage.

The following was a research question: Which strategies are most impactful when marketing to millennials for CSR events?

Sports organizations use various marketing tactics to appeal to consumers. However, some techniques work better on some generations than on others. This study explored what channels of communication were best for reaching millennials. To no surprise, social media was the top choice by respondents, followed by free stuff. Our results are in line with (Page & Williams, 2011), which shows that social media is currently one of the most popular methods used to reach this generation. It is interesting that free stuff was a top choice on two questions, therefore, it is important to note that free stuff could be an effective way to appeal to millennials consumers.

The following was a research question: Would the addition of ancillary events/ items impact the relationship between different generations and their attendance at larger CSR initiatives at a professional sport venue?

Motivating millennials to attend sporting events is something marketers are looking to improve. Therefore, this study evaluated what ancillary events or items would motivate respondents to attend CSR initiatives at a professional sports venue. The results, which are in line with Parrish et al. (2014) show that ancillary events would in fact motivate millennials to be on site at BMS. Respondents could choose from numerous events and items; however, free stuff, concerts, and bonfires were the top three choices by respondents. Sports organizations could use this information to their advantage. For example, in an effort to gain more millennial consumers, maybe Bristol Motor Speedway and Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) could hand out free t-shirts to the first 100-200 guests at Speedway in Lights or give out free hot chocolate for customers to enjoy as they watch the lights. Ancillary events/items at CSR events could be a great way for sports organizations to appeal to millennials.

### **Awareness**

Awareness is a crucial factor when determining whether or not consumers even choose to reward a company for their CSR initiatives. Consumers must first be aware of those efforts before deciding to invest their funds in an organization (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013). The results show a significant difference with the statement: I am aware that Bristol Motor Speedway directs part of its budget to donations to social causes. The significant difference lied between 18-22 year olds and >61 year olds, with millennials being significantly more aware. The results also showed a significant difference with the statement: To what degree are you aware that Bristol Motor Speedway gives back to the community. The significant difference lied between 18-22 year olds and 23-30 year olds, 18-22 and 31-40 year olds, and 18-22 year olds and 51-60 year olds. This results show that millennials ages 18-22 are significantly more aware than other generations. Our research is in line with (Edwards, 2018) in which it was expressed that

awareness it a key factor for gaining millennials attention. However, the overall mean was close to 6 on the Likert scale, which shows that both millennials and non-millennials agree that they are aware of Bristol Motor Speedway's and Speedway Children's Charities community efforts. Since there was a significant difference amongst millennials and non-millennials, our research is also in line with Leventhal (2012), which states that part of corporate social responsibility is how consumers view the efforts of organizations.

### **Satisfaction**

Satisfaction is an essential element for marketers and is a way to determine whether or not consumers are happy with the service they received from an organization. It is the final step before gaining a loyal consumer (Oliver, 1997). The satisfaction questions explored the satisfaction level of both millennials and non-millennials through a series of questions on a Likert scale. The results show that there was no significant difference among generations. The overall mean was around a 6.5 on the Likert scale, which means that, in general, respondents agree that they were satisfied with both Bristol Motor Speedway and Speedway in Lights. If BMS and SCC continue to satisfy their customers, then they are on their way to having loyal consumers as stated in Martinez and Bosque (2013). Also, since millennials are the majority of the respondents, the results show that they seem to be just as satisfied as other generations, which contradicts Edwards (2018), which suggests that it is harder to appeal to millennials.

### **Loyalty**

Loyalty is vital as it shows the commitment level of consumers to a particular brand or organization. Loyal consumers frequently spend their funds with the same business; therefore, creating steady revenue for that particular company (Martinez & Bosque, 2013). Based on the survey results, 60% of participants would choose Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) as their

first choice compared to other charities. Also, 71% of participants would choose Speedway in Lights as their primary light show compared to other charity organizations' light shows. These results show that consumers are committed to Speedway in Lights and have good intentions for supporting their charities. Based on the survey results, 79% of participants claimed they would recommend Bristol Motor Speedway if someone asked for their advice. We found no significant difference among generation and loyalty. However, due to the fact that both Speedway Children's Charities and Bristol Motor Speedway have loyal consumers, our results are in line with (Montazeri et al., 2016) which states that consumers that relate to a company's CSR initiative will respond favorably to that organization.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

This study analyzed the results of a survey focused on evaluating the importance of corporate social responsibility across generations and how that impacts their perception of sport organizations by examining the following concepts: awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty in relation to companies' corporate social responsibility efforts. Although various age groups participated in the survey, millennials were the main focus. Persons both under and over 40 were surveyed in order to compare the difference between millennials and non-millennials in relation to CSR and perception. Millennials are definitely a unique generation and that was displayed in their responses. The CSR associations: awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty provided feedback on all generations.

### **Implications**

The purpose of the data collected from this survey was to create a baseline data set for the Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) in order for them to better understand their consumers. Before the study, Speedway Children's Charities had no market research on how millennials were consuming the CSR event, Speedway in Lights. SCC could not appropriately target their audience because they were not sure about exactly who that was. The assumption was that most consumers were parents with kids, but results show that more millennials attend the event than assumed.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that due to the age of millennials, it is possible that some attended Speedway in Lights with their parents. Although there was a question about whom respondents attended the light show with, the survey was not designed to distinguish which millennials came with friends or which ones came with parents.

This study is specific to Speedway in Lights and does not involve data from any other sport organizations CSR event. It would be interesting to determine which SCC events consumers are aware of and how they perceive those particular events. Also, it would be interesting to see which events consumers feel are most beneficial for the community.

Also, due to the nature of this study, not all sources are from a scholarly article. Some of the information required current information from organizations websites in regards to their current policies and corporate social responsibility initiatives. However, all websites were necessary to provide the most accurate and relevant information.

### **Future Research**

Due to this being the first set of data of its kind for Speedway Children's Charities, a more in-depth study would need to be performed to see if knowing this information positively impacted SCC's attendance with millennials and if this carried over to their attendance at BMS events. A more detailed follow-up survey could be given in a year, or two and results from the two surveys could be compared.

Also, a deeper dive into generational differences in reference to the research questions would be interesting. For instance, there currently are not a lot of studies focused on ancillary events motivating generations to attend CSR initiatives specifically at professional sports venues. A study evolving around this particular topic could be both interesting and unique. The results of that study could be significant in learning what motivates millennials to attend CSR events specifically and could help sports marketers appeal to that generation.



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## APPENDIX: Survey

“Check all that apply”

Which of the following would most likely communicate information to you about events at Bristol Motor Speedway?

- a. Flyers
- b. Yard sign
- c. Billboard
- d. Social media
- e. Poster
- f. Email
- g. T-shirts
- h. Free stuff

Which of the following would motivate you to attend Speedway in Lights?

- i. Bonfire
- j. Concert
- k. Movie night
- l. Cookout
- m. Sport team night
- n. A social group in the community EVENT
- o. An academic or social group from educational institution EVENT

Likert Scale: 1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-somewhat disagree 4-neither agree nor disagree 5-somewhat agree 6-agree 7-strongly agree

Awareness:

To what degree are you aware that Bristol Motor Speedway gives back to the community

I am aware that Bristol Motor Speedway directs part of its budget to donations to social causes

I am aware that Speedway Children's Charities directs part of its budget to donations to social causes

Satisfaction:

Going to Speedway in Lights is great

My choice to come to Bristol Motor Speedway was a wise one

My choice to come to Speedway in Lights was a wise one

I think I did the right thing when I purchased tickets to Bristol Motor Speedway

I think I did the right thing when I purchased tickets to Speedway in Lights

It is nice to go to Bristol Motor Speedway

It is nice to go to Speedway in Lights

Loyalty:

I usually use Bristol Motor Speedway as my first choice compared to other tracks

I usually use Speedway Children's Charities as my first choice compared to other charities

I usually use Speedway in Lights as my first choice compared to other light shows

I shall continue considering Bristol Motor Speedway as my main track in the next few years

I shall continue considering Speedway in Lights as my main light show in the next few years

I would recommend Bristol Motor Speedway if somebody asked my advice

I would recommend Speedway Children's Charities if somebody asked my advice

I would recommend Speedway in Lights if somebody asked my advice

VITA

MAYA MATHIS

Education: M.S. Sport Management, East Tennessee State University, Johnson  
City, TN, Fall 2020  
B.S. Education, Concentration Exercise Science, East Tennessee  
State University, Johnson City, TN, 2018

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, School of  
Graduate Studies, 2018-2020  
Ticket Office Representative, Bristol Motor Speedway, 2019

Internship: T2 Fitness, Chattanooga, TN, Summer 2018  
Van Wagner Sport and Entertainment, Johnson City, TN,  
Fall 2018