

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF ADVERTISING/ PUBLIC RELATIONS

EXAMINING GENERATION Z'S PURCHASE INTENTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF
CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY WHEN DISPLAYED THROUGH BRAND
CAMPAIGNS

RACHEL AUL
SPRING 2020

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Public Relations
with honors in Public Relations

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Denise Bortree
Associate Professor of Advertising/ Public Relations
Honors Advisor & Thesis Supervisor

Bill Zimmerman
Lecturer of Advertising/ Public Relations
Secondary Reader

* Electronic approvals are on file.

ABSTRACT

As the youngest generation, Generation Z offers new insight and demands that marketers and advertisers are aiming to satisfy. Growing up as digital natives, this new generation has evolved into the most diverse and socially accepting generation yet. This research demonstrates that Gen Zers want to see these traits reflected in the brands they purchase. Through analyzing two different examples of Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA) brand campaigns, this study explores how Gen Z reacts to different brands' CSA efforts. By assessing focus group participants' perceptions of CSA campaigns, opinions of the brands and purchase intention, this research will help determine how advertisers and marketers can better cater their brand's advocacy efforts to meet the needs of this developing generation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my honors adviser and thesis supervisor, Dr. Denise Bortree. Without her continued support, patience, direction and extensive knowledge in the world of communications, this thesis would not have been possible.

I'd also like to thank my secondary reader, lecturer Bill Zimmerman. I was fortunate enough to take one of my favorite classes, Public Relations Media and Methods, under his direction. I am grateful for his detailed suggestions and support throughout this past year.

I owe the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications a great deal of thanks. My dedicated academic and career advisors, my passionate professors and all the Communications-sponsored clubs I have been a member of have tremendously impacted my College experience.

I also would like to thank my College for their unbelievable financial support. Especially Janet Klineflter, thank you for awarding me numerous scholarships from our generous donors. I would not be here today without the incredible financial support from the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications.

Thank you Schreyer Honors College for your financial support and the supportive community you've provided me with these last four years. You've given me my best friends and memories I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

To my family, thank you for the unwavering support. Mom and Dad, thank you for listening to me talk about my research and for offering words of encouragement. Andrew and Jake, thanks for being the best brothers and friends I could ask for.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you Penn State. Thanks for giving me the best four years of my life. Thanks for allowing me to find my passions and deepest interests. Thanks for inviting me to always be a part of a wonderful family. We are, forever and always

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, it's especially important for brands to relate to their customers. More than ever before, today's consumers are presented with greater options, easier means of purchasing products and increased access to information. In order for companies to cater to their changing audiences, it's necessary for them to understand consumer behavior.

The integration of social media has supplied consumers with a voice; now, instead of acting as placid receivers of a brand's messaging, customers can participate in discussions about a particular brand.

The youngest generation, born after 1997, has grown up viewing and participating in these interactions. As digital natives, they understand how technology and social media work. Since Gen Z is a diverse and socially accepting group, they want to see the brands they support take a stance on social-political issues. In short, Generation Z wants to connect with their preferred brands on a more personal level. Thus, marketers, advertisers and public relations specialists have started to modify their promotional efforts to meet this changing landscape (Dimock, 2019)

Corporate Social Advocacy, similar to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is a topic many corporations have begun addressing. Unlike traditional advertising, these CSA campaigns highlight a company's values and beliefs, rather than focusing solely on a product (Dodd & Supa, 2014).

As the newest generation, there is limited data surrounding how Generation Z views CSA campaigns. This research will examine this uncharted topic and will help determine how Generation Z interprets corporate social advocacy campaigns. Understanding how CSA campaigns affect Generation Z will assist advertisers and marketers in targeting this demographic by increasing their campaign quality, viewer experience, loyalty and of course, purchase intention. Two popular CSA campaigns, including Nike's "Dream Crazy" campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick and Gillette's "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be" campaign will be analyzed in two focus group settings in order to determine if or how they affect Gen Zs' opinions or purchase intentions.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Modern History of Advertising: Exploring the Digital Transformation

Until the late 20th century, advertising typically focused solely on a product's quality or features. Today, partly due to the emergence of different lifestyles and technologies, advertising and branding have transformed drastically, taking on a more holistic approach. Modern-day ads typically have a stronger focus on consumer experience, brand personality and company values (Scheybani, 2019).

The Emergence of the Digital Age and the Birth of the Newly Independent Consumer:

As the digital age began emerging in the 1970s, for the first time, consumers were presented with the ability to easily conduct their own background research before deciding whether or not to purchase a product (Labrecque et al., 2013). No longer did customers have to rely solely on the limited information that was presented in advertisements, but they could make informed decisions simply by spending a few minutes browsing online. As technology continued to develop, consumers began to gain more power, and the birth of a newly developing power dynamic between companies and consumers emerged (Labrecque et al., 2013). Today, research shows that customers take full advantage of the resources available to them before purchasing a product. For example, in a 2003 study focused on customer buying behavior prior to purchasing an automobile, consumers averaged a total of 19 hours of independent research before determining which car to buy (Klein & Ford, 2003). One can infer that with the rapid development of technologies and social media, that number may be even higher today.

This shifting power dynamic could also explain why consumer trust in advertising has continued to decrease throughout history. Even in the 1930s, *Sales Management* reported a survey where 58% of respondents believed that advertisements were deceitful and exaggerated (Calfee & Ringold, 1994). Today, the amount of trust in advertisements is even lower, with only 33% of individuals reporting that they trust advertising for brand information (“What Brand Information Sources Do People Trust the Most,” 2019). With the creation of online customer reviews and product tutorials on YouTube, why would customers need to heavily rely on advertisements?

Perhaps the increase in CSA campaigns within recent years can be accredited to the growth of consumer knowledge and skepticism (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Companies might not feel the need to spend as much time explaining the use of products because of consumer access to online resources and might understand that consumers want to see companies take a stance on social issues. Whatever the reason, as the digital age progresses, advertisers and marketers have been challenged to think more creatively and generate campaigns focused more on emotions and values.

The Introduction of Social Media:

After the introduction of social media in the early 2000s, the consumer landscape and power dynamic changed again; this time, at an even larger level. Within the last decade, social media has grown tremendously, as seen in figure 1. This growth in social media has enabled consumers to interact with brands, more easily express their opinions and quickly share content published (Labrecque et al., 2013). Now, thanks to social media, regular people can be as noisy

as brands. One recent study shows that this digitally-induced power change is beneficial to both consumers and corporations. Consumers state that they prefer being a part of a community, rather than the obvious target of a traditional marketing campaign (Kunz et al., 2011). Companies, as a result, receive more interaction and attention surrounding their products.

Social media is no longer just recommended to companies as a way to target customers -- it's now crucial. A 2010 survey showed that 91 percent of businesses said they were using social media for marketing practices, and nearly three-fourths of the top 500 retailers were present on at least one form of social media (Stelzner, 2010).

However, social media has not only impacted companies. Social media has aided in the widespread education of social-political issues. Users have a voice in public affairs, are empowered to act on their own behalf when holding authorities accountable, spread democratic ideas internationally and help societies organize and respond to prejudice or inequality (Asamoah, 2019). As a whole, social media can tremendously assist in bringing social-political issues to light.

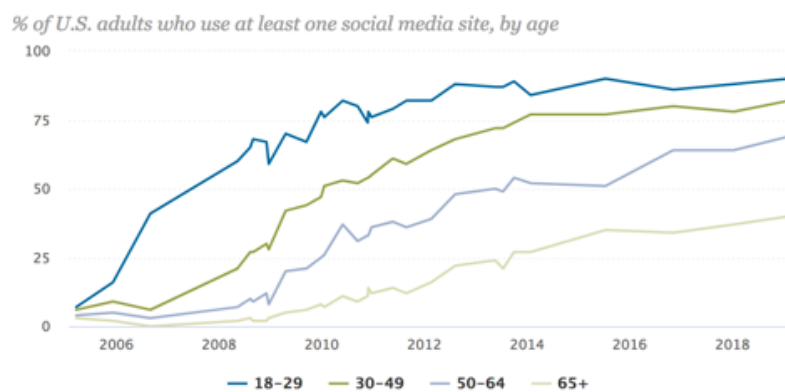


Figure 1. Social Media Growth
(PEW Research Center)

Considering the fact that Facebook alone has over 2.5 billion users, it's no surprise that social media holds so much power. One-in-three people in the world use social media, and more than two-thirds of all internet users use social media (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). It's also important to note how quickly the adoption of social media is taking place. For reference, 79% of US adults have social media today, compared to just 5% in 2005 (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). The majority of social media users are aged 18-29, as seen in figure 2.

Video, in particular, has been a pivotal influencer in the world of social media and advertising alike and perhaps has seen the largest amount of growth. Between the years 2003 - 2011, global online video has grown 339% and time spent viewing increased by nearly 2000% (Kunz et al., 2011).

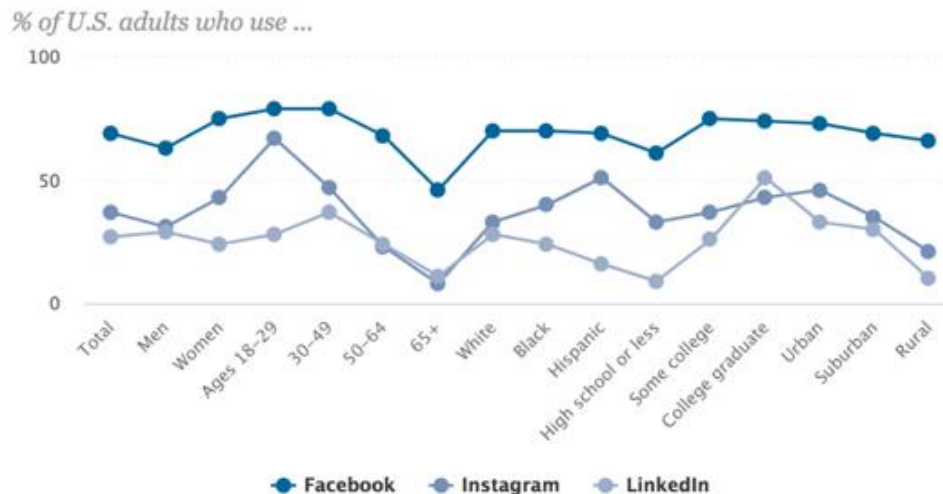


Figure 2. Most Popular Social Media Sites
(PEW Research Center)

Young consumers, such as Millennials and Generation Z, have lost interest in traditional advertising, persuading companies to incorporate social media and digital campaigns into their long-established marketing efforts (Hessekiel, 2018). Thus, it's increasingly important for a brand's advertising, marketing and public relations departments to work together in order to create not just a compelling ad -- but a *positive* experience for the consumer. While digital campaigns and social media have tremendously benefited most companies, creating and publishing brand campaigns can come at a cost. Since social media's foundation relies on user interactivity, brands are susceptible to backlash, negative reviews and potential loss in sales, as observed in the following campaign analyses included in this research.

In summary, the digital age has created a more informed consumer. With the ability to independently research products and participate in social-political discussions online, a shift in young consumer ad preferences naturally nudges brands to consider incorporating these social-political advocacy ideas into their campaigns. Considering the ever-increasing popularity of online videos, many companies have found success in creating CSA campaigns that have gone viral through social media.

Corporate Social Responsibility

As the consumer base evolves, opinions surrounding brands continue to encompass more than just a product; they include opinions of the company as a whole. This trend perhaps can explain why an immense growth in corporate social responsibility has been observed in recent years. Within a four-year period from 2010-2014, CSR reporting increased by 30%, with 7,838 reports of CSR published in 2014 (Chong, 2017).

Defined:

CSR can be defined as “the voluntary actions that a corporation implements as it pursues its mission and fulfills its perceived obligations to stakeholders, including employees, communities, the environment, and society as a whole” (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Typical examples of CSR include companies deciding to volunteer more in their communities, reduce their carbon footprint or donate to charity.

Linking Corporate Social Responsibility with Company Performance:

There’s been a long discussion about whether or not CSR efforts have contributed to positive financial performance. Consumers want to know if CSR efforts are genuine, or if companies are acting philanthropic merely to drive sales. In general, research shows that there is a small, positive correlation between the level of CSR efforts and financial performance. The 2013 Nielsen surveys uncover that consumers expect companies to “deal with societal issues.” In turn, consumers seem to reward companies for this. The survey stated that 50% of respondents said they would pay more money for a good or service if they “gave back to society” (Diehl et al., 2016).

Furthermore, a 2005 study determined that there was a positive link between consumer purchase intention when corporations supported nonprofits that consumers identified with (Cornwell & Coote, 2005). Additionally, an extensive study from Southern Methodist University included analyzing 706 firms across 21 years. The results highlighted that “management quality, financial soundness and social responsibility” continuously made favorable contributions to firms’ financial performances (Duhé, 2009). A final study, including the combined meta-analysis

of 214 studies of CSR and financial performance, again links the two with a small positive correlation (Margolis, et al., 2009).

Why Customers Care about Corporate Social Responsibility Today:

As the digital age progresses, young consumers are becoming accustomed to expressing their opinions and disfavor toward company practices they don't agree with, such as when companies act unethically or unsustainably.

Consequently, this has caused young consumers to cater their buying preferences toward brands that give back to their communities. More than 9 to 10 Millennials would switch brands to one "associated with a cause," according to a 2015 Cone Communications Millennial CSR study ("2015 Cone Communications Millennial CSR Study," 2015). The study also found that Millennials are more likely to adjust their lifestyles to benefit businesses they care about, including spending more money on products, sharing products instead of purchasing or even swapping a larger salary for the opportunity to work for a more responsible company ("Cone Communications Millennial CSR Study," 2015.).

Although Millennials (born between the years 1981-1996 and between the ages of 24-39 in 2020) are the generation older than Generation Z, it is likely that the two generations are close enough in age that they will view CSR efforts similarly (Dimock, 2019). Therefore, one can infer that Gen Z may also be more likely to support a product if the company advocated toward a positive cause.

Corporate Social Advocacy

Often mentioned in the same discussion as corporate social responsibility is corporate social advocacy. Since the terms are similar, it's important to discuss both to distinguish the two. In a general sense, CSA is used to describe when a corporation comments or takes public action on social-political issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014).

Typically, one sees CSA fall under two prominent fields of Public Relations: Strategic Issues Management (SIM) and corporate social responsibility. SIM is defined as blending “strategic business planning, issue monitoring, best-practice standards of corporate responsibility, and dialogic communication needed to foster a supportive climate between each organization and those people,” (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). CSA, according to *Communication Research Reports*, is categorized with three defining characteristics:

- (a) the social-political issues addressed by organizations are divorced from issues of particular relevance to the organization
- (b) engagement in the social-political issues is controversial and serves to potentially isolate organizational stakeholders while simultaneously attracting activist groups
- (c) there is a particularly necessary emphasis on organizational financial outcomes, (Dodd & Supa, 2015).

Thus, examples of CSA could include making statements about gender equality, health care, gun control, reproductive rights, racism and prejudice, minimum wage and more.

Differences:

It's important to note that CSA is different from CSR, as CSR often refers to engaging in social-good initiatives that align with a company's business operations. For example, Starbucks engaging in forest conservation would be considered CSR. Since Starbucks uses a lot of paper products in their day-to-day business needs, this initiative aligns with its business operations. Furthermore, environmental conservation is typically not controversial, nor is it often a social-political issue. Starbucks engaging in environmental CSR would probably not result in boycotts or anger stakeholders (Dodd & Supa, 2014).

However, the Starbucks 2015 controversy surrounding their red holiday cups would be an example of CSA. In 2015, Starbucks opted to create a simple, plain red cup to celebrate a more inclusive holiday season. This quickly prompted backlash from some Christian consumers, who vowed to boycott Starbucks for trying to appeal to non-Christians. President Trump even referred to the event as a "war on Christmas," during one of his campaign rallies (Filloon & Houck, 2018).

While this was a very public CSA effort, subtler efforts can also fall into the realm of CSA. Sticking with Starbucks as an example, their decision to publicly support gay marriage (before it was legalized) is CSA (Dodd & Supa, 2014). On the contrary, Chick-fil-A taking the opposing stance by refusing to support gay marriage can also be categorized as corporate social advocacy. While Chick-fil-A has not publically supported any political agendas on marriage, the CEO has public supported anti-gay marriage initiatives and the company has donated to religious groups against gay marriage.

Advocacy Efforts and Purchase Intention:

Public Relations Research by Dodd explores the notion of CSA consumer purchase intention and the theory of planned behavior. The theory is grounded in the “assumption that human beings usually behave in a sensible manner; that they take account of available information and implicitly or explicitly consider the implications of their actions” (Ajzen, 2005). Furthermore, Dodd highlights the fact that typically people intend to perform a “behavior when they evaluate it positively [attitude toward the behavior], when they experience social pressure to perform it [subjective norms], and when they believe that they have the means and opportunities to do so [perceived behavioral control]” (Ajzen, 2005).

When news spread in 2012 that the CEO of Chick-fil-A opposed gay marriage, the company reported that they experienced record sales - some chains even ran out of food as customers lined up out the door (Pagliery, 2012).

Thus, CSA efforts could very well affect consumer purchase intention, either positively or negatively. Therefore, as recorded in Chapter 6, a focus group was conducted in order to determine if or how purchase intention is affected by CSA, specifically as displayed in brand campaigns.

Corporate Social Advocacy as it Applies to Generation Z

While there's been generous research focused on corporate social responsibility (specifically how Millennials respond to CSR campaigns and whether or not it affects consumer purchase intention), there has not been a lot of research surrounding CSA and purchase intention

with younger consumers. Therefore, this thesis will specifically touch on how Generation Z responds to CSA campaigns.

Gen Z at a Glance:

As the obsession with Millennials dies down, a new generation is becoming subject to the world's attention. This post-Millennial generation is known as Generation Z.

There are currently five generations, known, in order from oldest to youngest, as the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and most recently, Generation Z.

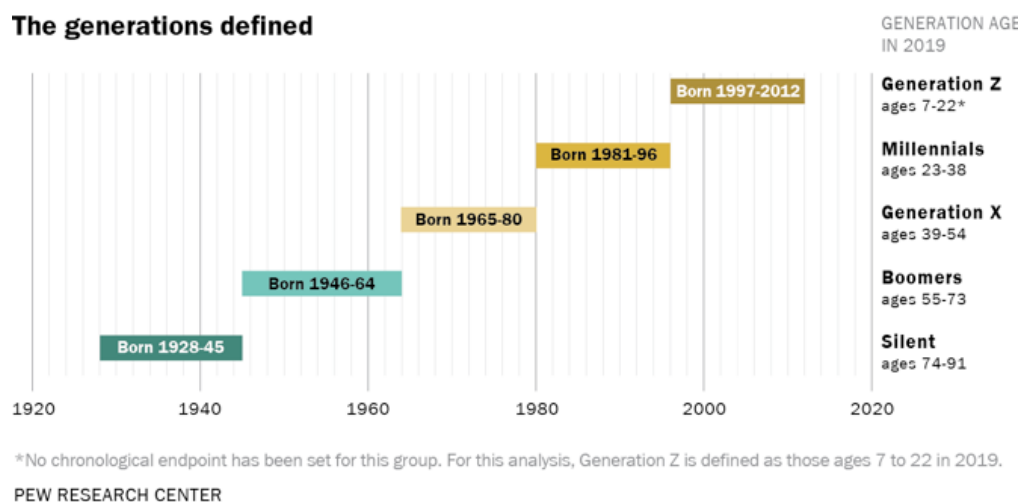


Figure 3. Generations Defined
(PEW Research Center)

According to PEW Research Center and as observed in Figure 3, Generation Z refers to children born in 1997 and onward (Dimock, 2019). As of 2020, there has not been any other generations defined following Generation Z. That makes Gen Z the youngest American generation with the oldest ones turning 23 years old and the youngest ones being born today.

Gen Z is comprised of children, tweens, teens and college students who are unique, passionate, diverse, and perhaps most notably, tech-savvy. Gen Zers were born into the digital age - meaning they are digital natives. Life, as they know it, revolves around technology. Those who are old enough to have social media understand unwritten social media rules, are quick to adopt online trends and have documented a vast portion of their lives online.

Gen Z currently makes up 20% of the U.S. population and 27% of the global population. Starting this year, they now make up approximately 40% of all customers (Hessekiel, 2018). To date, they're the most diverse generation. Fifty-five percent of Gen Zers are Caucasian, 24% are Hispanic, 14% are African-American and 4% are Asian (Bernstein, 2015). Multiracial children are the most rapidly growing youth group in the United States, with over a 4000% increase in multiracial, black and white marriages in the past 30 years and a 1000% increase in Asian-white marriages (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

Generation Z is also currently the most educated generation. The high school dropout rate for Gen Zers today is significantly lower than it was for Millennials in 2002. Furthermore, out of those who were not in high school in 2017, 59% were in college, compared to 53% of Millennials in 2002 and 44% of Gen Xers in 1986 (Fry & Parker, 2018). Funded through part-time jobs and allowances, they are currently contributing \$44 billion to the American economy (Bernstein, 2015). For being so young, they have already managed to gain the attention of marketers and advertisers across the globe.

Gen Z Values and Beliefs:

Generation Z has grown up surrounded by political turmoil and influenced by popular culture. 9/11 occurred when the oldest Gen Zers were in pre-school, and today Gen Zers are faced with headlines reporting the most recent school shooting. Gen Z also experienced the 2016 Presidential Election take social media by storm. They witnessed natural disasters, such as the 2005 Hurricane Katrina, the 2010 Haitian Earthquake, and the 2017 Hurricane Harvey, and then observed how the digital age transformed aid assistance through GoFundMe and through the use of trending hashtags.

Researchers determined that the top values for Generation Z are: Success, Equality, Happiness, Enjoyment, Loyalty, Comfort, Authenticity, Identity, Sharing and Optimism (Dimock, 2019).

Younger generations see increased diversity as good for society

% saying increasing racial and ethnic diversity is a good thing for our society

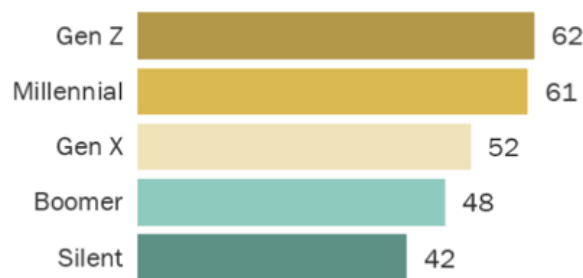


Figure 4. Generation Z Supports Diversity
(PEW Research Center)

As a whole, Generation Z is more accepting than any other generation, as seen in Figure 4. Because Gen Z is so diverse and multicultural, long-standing views on race-relations have shifted. Compared to older generations, Gen Zers and Millennials agree that blacks are treated less fairly than whites are in the United States. Sixty-six percent of white Gen Zers and 62% of Millennials agree, while only 49% of white Boomers and 44% of the Silent Generation do (Parker et al., 2019).

When it comes to gender and sexuality, Gen Z is unsurprisingly the most supportive of gender inclusivity. Fifty-nine percent of Gen Zers agree that forms or online profiles should include more gender options other than “man” or “woman,” compared to 50% of Millennials, 40% of Gen Xers and 32% of the Silent Generation (Fry & Parker, 2018).

Furthermore, a study by *The Boston Consulting Group* revealed that since today’s youth are taught to recycle early on, they care more about the environment and believe “collective action” can make a difference (Forte, 2018). Gen Z, growing up surrounded by discussions of climate change and warnings of global warming, are inspired to save the planet. Seventy-six percent of Gen Zers are concerned about humanity’s negative impact on the planet (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

With the integration of technology and the ease of spreading worldwide information, Gen Z has learned to think globally. Seventy-seven percent of Gen Zers are concerned about children around the world dying of preventable disease and 78% are concerned about world hunger (Fry & Parker, 2018).

Research also shows that younger generations are more philanthropic. Nearly a third of 16-19-year-olds are volunteering, and social entrepreneurship (where individuals develop

solutions to social, cultural or environmental issues) is one of the most popular career choices for young people (Sparks & Honey, 2015).

As evident in the above research, Gen Z is interested in improving society, advocating against discrimination and supporting the environment. The use of social media has made these issues more easily recognized, reported on and understood. Consider the #MeToo movement, for example. In response to sexual harassment and sexual assault allegations aimed at American film producer Harvey Weinstein, the hashtag began trending on Twitter in 2017 and was a notable talking point in the 2018 Oscars (Rainey, 2018). When events gain social media attention, it's easy for Generation Z to participate. Issues that "people will march for, call for real political change, and give money to" are issues Generation Z stand behind (Hessekiel, 2018). This is important when considering the effects of CSA campaigns and whether or not these campaigns can impact Gen Z purchase intention.

Gen Z Purchase Intention:

As a digital native, most Gen Zers who are on social media are all-too-familiar with typical marketing ploys and entertaining advertising campaigns. Furthermore, in the era of "fake news," young people today have become suspicious of information they receive online (Chong, 2017). Thus, this generation is more likely to look past the flashy ads and "question companies' authenticity and true motives" behind each campaign (Chong, 2017).

The doubt digital natives have to traditional advertisements, combined with Gen Z's overwhelming aspirations to positively impact the world, have resulted in a new, immense push for companies to demonstrate their CSA and CSR efforts (Chong, 2017). That's why, as stated

previously, Generation Z may be more likely to support a company or brand linked to a good cause.

There's research to support that theory, too. Seventy-six percent of Gen Zers state they have or would consider purchasing a product to support the cause the brand is partnered with (Hessekiel, 2018). On the contrary, 67% of Gen Zers have stopped buying or would consider stopping it if a company no longer supported their values or acted in a way they didn't agree with (Hessekiel, 2018).

In summary, Generation Z has been molded by the digital age, and has learned to use social media as a tool to participate in political discussions, spread information about natural disasters or environmental concerns and advocate for what they believe in. With this new consumer age group soon dominating the market, it's imperative that marketers and advertisers cater to Gen Z's interests. As consumers seek to participate in philanthropy, they expect companies to do the same in a genuine way. The following CSA campaigns examined in Chapter 3 were selected to be discussed in a focus group setting in order to determine how much Gen Z cares about social and political issues and how willing they are to use their money to prove it.

Chapter 3 EXPLORING CORPORATE SOCIAL ADVOCACY BRAND CAMPAIGNS

NIKE

“Believe in something. Even if that means sacrificing everything.”

Colin Kaepernick’s words echo in the background as Nike’s recent “Dream Crazy” campaign features himself and other diverse athletes performing against their respective adversity. The campaign debuted during the 2018 NFL season opener in order to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the “Just Do It” slogan. The ad went on to be known as “one of the biggest ads of the year - or perhaps, of the past 30 years,” (Pearl, 2018).

The ad instantly became popular. It generated over 65 million views in just five days, and although it only aired a total of 2,909 times on TV, it received 1.54 billion TV impressions (Herson, 2018.)

With the quick attention, however, came controversy. Nike chose to sponsor Kaepernick, despite his controversial history. The former San Francisco 49ers quarterback filed a collusive lawsuit against the NFL in 2017, claiming that his decision to kneel during the national anthem in protest of racial inequality and police brutality resulted in him being banned from the league (Bain, 2018).

The response to this CSA campaign ranged from showing support to extreme boycotts. Alexis McGill Johnson, executive director and co-founder of the Perception Institute, commended the brand for publicly supporting the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Jenifer Lewis, an actress on *Black-ish*, even wore Nike on the Emmy Awards red carpet to demonstrate her support (Bain, 2018).

The ad also took social media by storm. The hashtag #BoycottNike began trending over social media and users began posting photos of themselves destroying their Nike apparel in protest against Nike, Kaepernick and the police brutality movement.

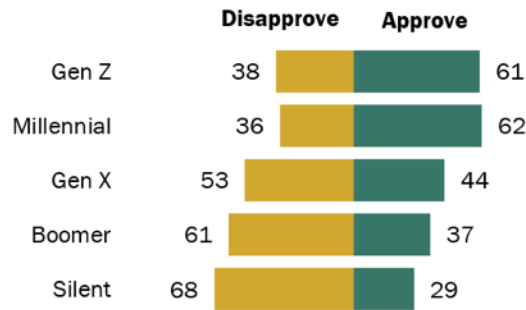
Nonetheless, from a sales standpoint, the campaign was objectively successful. The first three days following the debut of the commercial, online sales increased by 31%. Compared to the previous year, sales during the same weekend time only increased by 17% (Linnane, 2018). This reveals that the CSA efforts from Nike most likely contributed positively to consumer purchase intention.

Questions of Authenticity:

Nike, the global giant that spent over \$3.6 billion dollars on marketing and advertising in 2018, certainly knew what it was doing when it released this campaign (Guttmann, 2019). It was, without a doubt, a calculated move. With two-thirds of Nike's consumers under the age of 35, Nike knew their consumer base would most likely side with Kaepernick, and the release of the campaign would benefit the company more than it would hurt them (Bain, 2018). As previously stated, young consumers today want to see more CSA efforts from the brands they support. Arguably, no company knows that better than Nike. According to PEW research in Figure 5, 61% of Millennials approve of the NFL kneeling protests. For reference, only 29% of the silent generation approve of them (Parker et al., 2019).

Among Gen Z and Millennials, most approve of NFL protests

% saying they ____ of players choosing to kneel during the national anthem as a form of protest



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
 Source: Surveys of U.S. adults ages 18 and older conducted Sept. 24-Oct. 7, 2018, and U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted Sept. 17-Nov. 25, 2018.
 "Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**Figure 5. The Majority of Gen Z Approves of NFL Protests
 (PEW Research Center)**

As with most CSA or CSR campaigns, the risk that consumers won't perceive business efforts as authentic is certainly a possibility. Nike has been scrutinized for flaunting its modern social-political values through the Kaepernick campaign, all while facing a lawsuit for widespread gender discrimination (Bain, 2018) and for donating "half a million dollars through the Nike PAC to the GOP gubernatorial Oregon candidate Knute Buehler" the year before (Blackistone, 2018).

Nike's failure to thoroughly demonstrate their social-political values through all aspects of their business can be extremely detrimental. If consumers view CSA campaigns as a fraud and as merely a way to sneakily gain support, companies risk losing their hard-earned credibility.

In the discussion observed in Chapter 6, members of Generation Z have the opportunity to respond to this campaign and provide feedback on whether they believe it was authentic or not. In turn, this research will help determine why and how CSA ads affect purchase intention.

GILLETTE

On January 13, 2019, Procter & Gamble's Gillette released a CSA campaign titled "The Best Men Can Be," modeled off their well-known previous slogan, "The Best a Man Can Get" ("The Best A Man Can Get," n.d.).

The ad was an attempt to pull the heartstrings of its consumers, all while delivering a serious message about toxic masculinity and gender discrimination. The ad opens by panning through a line of dads, who are all grilling and repeating "boys will be boys." Two children wrestle on the ground. Coverage of the #MeToo movement plays in the background on televisions as men are depicted sexually harassing women. Halfway through the ad, the tone shifts, and men begin breaking up fights, standing up for women and encouraging their sons to "be the best they can be." The ad ends with the words "we are taking action at thebestmencanbe.org. Join us." The website then leads to a written pledge promising to donate at least \$1 million annually the next three years to non-profits focused on assisting men to "achieve their personal best" ("The Best A Man Can Get," n.d.).

The 1 minute and 48-second "short-film," as P&G marketers refer to it, was first uploaded on YouTube and Twitter. While it eventually made its way to online ad spots, the film never made it to television (Neff, 2019). Nonetheless, the film received tremendous reach. Within the first 24 hours alone, the film already had 5 million YouTube views -- with 100,000

likes and a weighty 400,000 dislikes (Hale, 2019). Combined with Twitter, other forms of social media, and various news coverage, the ad had a total of 1.1 million mentions. Compared to the previous day, Gillette received a 214% increase in mentions (Sweeny, 2019). To say the least, the ad made a lasting impression on many viewers.

However, these lasting impressions were not all so positive. In January 2020, the ad on Gillette's YouTube page had 32 million views, 802 thousand likes and 1.5 million dislikes, ranking it 29 on the list of the top 50 most disliked YouTube videos of all-time ("List of most-disliked YouTube videos," 2020).

After noting the strong effort Gillette invested in creating a campaign advocating against gender discrimination, it may be surprising to find that the film received so many dislikes. Overall, fervent reactions were coming from both supporters and opposers. *BrandTotal* reports that 63% of consumer sentiment about the ad on social media was negative, 29% was neutral and a mere 8% was positive (Sweeny, 2019).

Most critiques came from conservatives claiming that the ad was feminist propaganda and a "cultural attack on American men" (Mull, 2019). Men stated that they felt marginalized and attacked instead of inspired. Social media comment sections were flooded with vehement pledges from consumers promising to boycott the brand. Soon after the launch of the campaign, the hashtag #BoycottGillette trended on social media. Consumers participated in these discussions by tweeting pictures of destroyed Gillette products. One consumer went so far as to photograph his Gillette razor in the toilet, as seen in figure 12.

Some researchers speculate that this negative press significantly impacted Gillette financially. Eight months after the release of this campaign, Gillette took an \$8 billion write-down and a net loss of \$5.24 Billion for the second quarter following the release (Naidu, 2019).

However, P&G's response to the write-down was that it was a result of currency devaluation, growing industry competition and a market shifting away from shaving and razors (Naidu, 2019). Most likely, the write-down was probably a combination of the negative sentiment toward the company and a shifting market.

Purchase Intention and Authenticity:

Interestingly, however, Gillette's sales did not fluctuate following the release of the film. Retail sales reported the same number of sales as prior to the campaign launch (Meyersohn, 2019). This perhaps could be due to the equilibrium of the increase in sales from ad supporters and those who boycotted the brand.

In terms of authenticity, Gillette has proven repeatedly that they stand by their campaigns. Five months after the "Best Men Can Be" ad launched, Gillette released another ad depicting a transgender man shaving for the first time. The ad included the phrase "whenever, wherever, however it happens -- your first shave is special" (Grinberg, 2019). This proves that Gillette is continuing to take on social political issues and, regardless of the backlash, is moving forward with their advocacy efforts.

However, it is necessary to note that while Gillette continues to produce CSA campaigns, some consumers still deemed the ad unauthentic, stating they were offended that Gillette was advocating for gender equality while still charging women more for feminine razors, otherwise known as the "pink tax" (Ritschel, 2019). These customers took their anger to Twitter, as shown in figure 11.

Chapter 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to determine how Generation Z reacts and responds to corporate social advocacy campaigns, two focus groups were conducted. This research was conducted to answer two main questions:

RQ1: How does Generation Z react and respond to CSA campaigns?

RQ2: How do CSA campaigns affect purchase intention and perceptions of specific brands?

Question Guide

Below are the questions posed to the participants during the focus groups:

Part 1: Introduction

Q1: Are you familiar with Corporate Social Advocacy, and if so, what it is?

Q2: Would you be less likely to purchase a product if a business doesn't align with your beliefs?

How likely?

Part 2: Response to Campaigns

Nike:

Q3: After viewing Nike's "Dream Crazy" Campaign, what are your first impressions?

Q4: Given the knowledge that Colin Kaepernick sued the NFL, claiming he's been left out of the league for his protests against police brutality, do you think it was a smart move for Nike to sponsor Kaepernick?

Q5: Would any of you personally boycott Nike for this? Why or why not?

Q6: What would it take for you to boycott Nike?

Q7: Are you more or less likely to purchase Nike after viewing this campaign?

Gillette:

Q8: After viewing Gillette's The Best Men Can Be Campaign, what are your first impressions?

Q9: Do you think this topic was a smart idea given the controversy surrounding toxic masculinity?

Q10: Would any of you boycott Gillette for this? Why or why not?

Q11: Does this ad make you feel more or less likely to purchase a Gillette product?

Part 3: Comparisons between Campaigns

RQ12: Which campaign do you think was most successful and why? How effective were they in promoting their "good" image?

Part 4: Generation Z and Purchase Intention

Q13: How do you think our generation, in particular, reacts to these CSA campaigns?

Q14: Compared to older generations, what do you think about our generation's purchase intention?

Q15: Do you think our generation's purchase intention is more or less likely to be affected by CSA campaigns?

Part 5: Conclusions

Q16: After viewing some examples of CSA, do you believe that you're more likely to favor a brand based on their CSA efforts?

Q17: How significantly do you think a CSA campaign would affect your purchase intention?

Q18: Is a CSA campaign more likely to negatively or positively affect your perception about a brand or company?

Q19: How much would a brand have to affect you to make you favor or dislike the brand more or less?

Chapter 5 METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how Generation Z reacts and responds to corporate social advocacy campaigns. More specifically, the study helps uncover how these campaigns affect Gen Z purchase intention and perception of brands. A qualitative approach was used to collect the data through focus group interviews. Focus groups were chosen as the primary source of research because they generate a diverse range of qualitative responses that will assist in categorizing Generation Z's thoughts. Through prompting group interaction and discussion, focus groups are an efficient way to uncover thoughts and attitudes and how they influence behavior.

The focus groups were held on separate days in early February 2020. There were two focus groups with a total of 15 participants. The first focus group had eight participants and the second group had seven participants. Each participant was a Pennsylvania State University Student between the ages of 19-22 years old, therefore a member of Generation Z.

There were nine female participants and six male participants. The focus group was conducted in a private conference room on Pennsylvania State University Park's campus, located in State College, Pennsylvania. The groups lasted about 60-75 minutes each. Food and beverages were served to encourage a relaxed atmosphere and conversation.

The groups were voice recorded solely for the use of the Principle Investigator (PI). No one else besides the PI had access to the recordings or notes from the focus group. Prior to the start of the focus group, the participants signed a waiver to agree to participate in the research study. Participation in the research study was completely voluntary, and members were allowed to leave the discussion at any time. The waiver ensured that all conversation was confidential and would not be discussed after the conclusion of the focus group. Audio files and written notes

taken during the focus group were destroyed following the submission of the thesis. In the thesis, no names or identifiers were included to protect the focus group volunteers.

The questions asked during the focus group can be found in Chapter 4. The questions posed were minimally invasive, and each question was subject to elaboration and editing depending on the conversation during the focus group.

In order to analyze the data collected, both the focus group voice recordings and hand written notes taken during the focus groups were studied multiple times. The two focus groups were compared in order to draw common themes. After identifying commonalities and popular responses between the two focus groups, participant responses that represented these main ideas were selected.

The key themes from the focus groups were then used to generate conclusions about how Generation Z is affected by CSA campaigns.

Chapter 6 FINDINGS

Focus Group #1

Introduction:

Overall, focus group one had a general idea of what corporate social advocacy was. Five out of 8 students admitted to hearing the phrase “corporate social advocacy” before. However, when asked what corporate social advocacy was, all of the participants referred to corporate social responsibility. One participant said that corporate social advocacy was when “a company shows the public that they are doing good things, like working at a food bank or raising money for charity.” Another said that CSA is when “companies try to brag about how much they give back to their communities so people buy their products.”

After distinguishing that corporate social advocacy is often when a company tackles social-political issues, all members said they noticed at least one company do this before. However, no participants could recall any specific examples.

When asked if participants would be less likely to purchase a product if a business doesn’t align with their beliefs, all participants said they most likely would.

The principal investigator then asked the group if they support same-sex marriage. Unanimously, all participants agreed that yes, they did. The PI then asked for a raise of hands to determine how many members eat at Chick-fil-A. Again, all eight participants agreed that they did. When asked how many people had heard that Chick-fil-A does not support same-sex marriage, all eight participants admitted that they did.

Some members stated that they still eat at Chick-fil-A despite disagreeing with Chick-fil-A's social beliefs because "it tastes too good to give up," "it's convenient and sometimes the only option," and "because [they] care about LGBT rights, but it doesn't necessarily affect [them] personally."

Again, the question "would you be less likely to purchase a product if a business doesn't align with your beliefs" was posed again. This time, with the information that 37% of Chick-fil-A's consumer demographic is 18-29-year-olds, the majority of whom support same-sex marriage.

Members responded, "I would view the company less favorably, but I don't know if I would stop buying products from them," "I would probably purchase less of the products, but not entirely stop" and "I think I would only completely stop supporting a company if they *really* messed up - like did something so bad, there was no way they could take it back."

Response to Nike's "Dream Crazy" Campaign:

After viewing the campaign together, the initial reaction from focus group one was overwhelmingly positive. One member said it gave her chills. Another said that "Nike never fails to make everyone feel something. Their ads are always super powerful."

Naturally, the topic of Colin Kaepernick came up. One member said that "the use of Kaepernick in this ad makes it even better." When asked why, he responded "Nike basically is saying a big 'F-you' to everyone who gave up on him. It's the ultimate success story. They're showing that anything is possible if you don't give up."

In asking if choosing to sponsor Kaepernick was smart on Nike's part, most of the group said yes: "Nike knows that Kaepernick has a good story, and they wanted to make money off it." Another replied, "they know that Kaepernick has a lot of supporters - probably more supporters than haters."

However, one person in the group stated that "Nike knew this would be controversial. I know it caused a lot of backlash, and it was probably intentional. They wanted the attention and they got it. It might be smart, but exploiting him for profit might not be the most ethical decision."

Those in the group who were unaware of the backlash Nike received following the release of this campaign were then shown the tweets and photos in figures 7 and 8.

A common consensus in the group was that people were overreacting to the campaign because it wasn't "that big of a deal." One participant said that "older people just like to complain about everything. There's always going to be something they're 'butthurt' about." One member said that she understood why the former marine was offended, but disagreed that cutting up Nike apparel was the correct response to the campaign.

None of the group members said they would boycott Nike for this campaign. In fact, a lot of them said the campaign makes them view Nike more favorably.

"It makes me happy to see Nike taking a stance on a touchy subject like this," said one participant. "I can see where Nike is going with this -- they want their consumers to be proud to wear Nike."

The question of whether or not they were more likely to purchase Nike was posed. All participants stated they wouldn't necessarily be more likely to buy Nike, but they view the brand more favorably: "I wouldn't jump off my couch after watching this and go buy Nike shoes, but I

think maybe subconsciously I would think higher of Nike. Like maybe next time I see Nike I will be like ‘Oh yeah, I forgot how much I like this company.’”

When asked what it would take for participants to boycott Nike, a lot of them didn’t know how to respond. One male said, “Nike is just a brand guys wear a lot. I don’t think that deep into campaigns, so I honestly don’t know if I would ever boycott Nike. I don’t know what they could do that would be so controversial I just couldn’t wear Nike anymore.”

Another member said,

I think I would boycott a brand if I found out they were being intentionally deceitful about their products. For example, I think I’d boycott a brand if I found out they were not being sustainable -- that’s huge for me. If I found out a company was pretending to be sustainable and then were polluting our planet in other areas of their business, I’d be pissed. I’d feel tricked. I would definitely boycott then I think.

The example of TOMS shoes was brought up. For every pair of shoes bought, a pair is donated to someone in need, typically children in Third World countries. However, several news articles brought to light the idea that TOMS is hurting more than it is helping. By giving away free shoes, makers and sellers of shoes in these countries suffer (Taub, 2015). In short, every pair donated actually hurts the developmental goals and communities more than it helps.

“Americans buy the shoes typically because it makes them feel good and feel like they’re making a difference, without realizing it’s hurting these peoples’ economies. After learning that, I boycotted TOMS. I won’t buy from them again,” one participant said.

A lot of the group then agreed, saying they would boycott if they felt tricked or “used for profit.” When told that Nike is facing a lawsuit for gender discrimination and donated \$500,000 to a GOP candidate a year before, the group dynamic shifted slightly.

“Okay, well that’s annoying. I feel like the campaign means a lot less now,” said one participant.

“Now it really just looks like they’re using Kaepernick for profit. That kind of confirmed it,” said another.

Another participant admitted that the new information provided didn’t affect him: “It’s not surprising. I expect this stuff from Nike, and I think all corporations do it. So I don’t think I’m upset enough to boycott. Maybe [I feel] more like a disappointed father after hearing some bad thing that your son did.”

When asked if this new information affected purchase intention or viewpoint on the brand, three participants said yes, it negatively affected their opinion on the Nike brand.

“I feel like after hearing that news, I’m back to having a neutral view. I really liked the campaign and saw Nike favorability, but now it doesn't really mean anything to me,” said one participant.

Another said that she wasn’t as “excited” about the campaign as she was before.

Other members said the news did not affect them, even though they thought Nike was being deceptive:

This news doesn’t make me hate Nike, it just makes me not care about Nike. So this wouldn’t cause me to stop buying from Nike if I was already planning to. If they outright donated money to opposers of the police brutality movement, then I think that’s a different story. I actually don’t think this is that bad though.

In summary, after hearing the news that Nike was facing criticism for supporting a GOP candidate and facing a gender discrimination lawsuit, three people switched their opinion from having a positive view of the Nike brand to viewing the brand negatively. At the conclusion of the discussion, five people viewed Nike favorably, three did not, and none were persuaded enough in either direction to affect their purchase intention.

Response to Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be" Campaign:

Focus group one participants also responded favorably to the Gillette "The Best Men Can Be" campaign. Words such as "powerful," "emotional," "relevant," and "necessary" were used to describe the ad. One male participant described the ad as "bold." When asked why he stated that "it takes guts to release anything relating to the #MeToo movement. Even if it takes the woman's side. It is always going to be controversial."

Another participant liked the ad but thought it was odd that Gillette was advertising a men's product while trying to relate to women. She thought that maybe it was because women (or moms) often do the shopping in the household, and Gillette wanted to appeal to them.

In regards to the topic of toxic masculinity, no one saw a problem or anything controversial in the ad.

After hearing the statistics about how many dislikes the ad received, seeing the tweets surrounding the ad (as shown in figures 10, 11 and 12) and hearing about the company write down, all of the participants seemed moderately surprised.

One participant said she had seen the ad trending on Twitter, but didn't realize it carried so much negativity. Another participant said he vaguely remembered hearing about Gillette "siding with the libs [liberals]," but didn't know it was because of this ad.

The focus group agreed with the tweet by Andrew P Street, shown in figure 10. He writes, "if your masculinity is THAT threatened by an ad that says we should be nicer then you're doing masculinity wrong."

After explaining that a significant portion of the backlash occurred because a lot of Gillette's male consumers felt targeted and threatened instead of inspired, one of the female participants asked the males in the group if they felt offended by the ad.

"Not at all," was the common consensus.

"No, it doesn't offend me. I'm not going to get offended by a razor company telling me not to sexually harass women, but I think I can see why some men would get offended," one male said.

"Yes, the boomers would," another joked.

When asked to expand upon their statements, they said if they grew up in a culture where it was deemed socially acceptable to "make a sex joke with a woman" or "fight a kid you were mad at," they could see why a company "basically telling you what you can or can't do would be annoying."

When asked if the males in the group were more likely to purchase Gillette, they all said no, but they wouldn't boycott Gillette either.

One participant said, "I'm not a Gillette user, so this ad isn't going to affect me. If I was a Gillette user, I would continue to use Gillette, no problem. I'm not going to ditch my brand now for Gillette though just because of this ad."

One female admitted to using men's razors because they were higher quality and cheaper (stemming from a short discussion about the pink tax following the tweet in figure 11). She, however, said she would switch to Gillette after seeing the campaign:

I feel like I'm not really attached to a brand because I use men's razors. I don't really care about the brands -- they don't relate to me. I just buy whatever. But, I will say after watching this ad, I actually would switch to Gillette. I really do agree with what they're doing here.

No one else in the group said they would boycott or be more likely to purchase Gillette because of this ad. However, similar to the Nike campaign, most participants agreed that they view Gillette in a more positive light.

"I like Gillette more than I used to -- actually I probably never really thought about Gillette if we're being honest. But, now I think Gillette's a cool company, so there's that," another male said.

"Would I buy a Gillette product after seeing this ad? No. But maybe in the future if I'm ever going to buy a men's razor, I'll buy Gillette," said one female participant.

When told that Gillette owns Venus, a women's razor brand, the females in the group said this campaign wouldn't make them more likely to purchase it. One elaborated, "It's not the same. When I think of Gillette, I don't think of Venus. I didn't even know Gillette owned Venus. I wouldn't associate the two."

In short, focus group one agreed that although controversial, the campaign overall was well done. They believed that a majority of consumers their age would approve of the campaign

and support Gillette. Out of the eight participants, only one said the CSA campaign affected her purchase intention, making her more likely to buy from the brand.

Comparisons:

When asked what campaign focus group one preferred, five participants said Gillette and three said Nike.

“I think Gillette fits the ‘corporate social advocacy’ topic the best,” one group member said. “Their issue was more controversial -- more social-political too. And they had a nice call to action at the end, saying they would donate to charity.”

Another member agreed: “It seems like Nike was more in it for the profits. Gillette came off as more organic.”

Siding with Nike, one participant said, “I liked Nike better because I think the campaign itself is better done. I think a lot less people are going to get offended over Colin Kaepernick than people are after addressing toxic masculinity in the millions of men in America.”

Another Nike supporter agreed, saying that he was more inclined to view Nike more positively than Gillette after seeing both campaigns.

Generation Z and Purchase Intention:

When asked why the participants enjoy CSA campaigns, one replied “When I see a company advocating for something, that makes me feel good. I like to see companies stand up for what they think is right. It makes it seem like they care about more than just making a profit,” said one participant.

Another chimed in,

I think because our generation is so involved in social media, we are constantly surrounded by ‘woke’ culture. And there’s always this voice in our head reminding us that we need to ‘stay woke’ - that we need to ‘be woke.’ It’s now uncool not to support this liberal-ish, social justice culture on social media.

He added, “and trust me, if you don’t support ‘woke culture’ on social media, you *will* get called out for it.”

“Exactly. We basically have gotten to a point where we expect companies to be doing CSA. That’s where we are in society right now,” said another.

When asked to compare Generation Z’s purchase intention with that of older generations, the group agreed that older generations are more likely to act through their behavior than younger generations.

One member said,

I think older generations would be more likely to boycott. We, on the other hand, don’t see the need. I think we realize the power of social media. If we don’t like a product or don’t agree with a brand, we can post about how horrible it is for thousands to see. That’s going to make a bigger impact than one person deciding to boycott.

Bouncing off this idea, another added, “I think also older generations are more likely to purchase a product that they agree with. Our parents value their dollar and if they see a campaign they really like, they’re going to support the company by buying their products.”

“Personally I think our generation really wants to feel seen. I don’t think any campaign is going to be powerful enough to alter my purchase intention unless I really, really feel affected by it,” another added.

When asked if the participant could think of any campaigns that did alter her purchase intention, she replied, “the Aerie love your body campaign. Knowing they don’t Photoshop and they are super inclusive makes me want to buy from them and support them.”

In short, focus group one believes that Generation Z expects companies to publicly advocate and support social political issues. They believe their generation is less likely to purchase a product or boycott a product, but more likely to share their opinions of a brand on social media.

Conclusions:

When asked if a CSA campaign is more likely to negatively or positively affect their perception of a brand or company, the group generally agreed that a campaign affects them more if it’s negative.

“Say a brand comes out with a really good CSA campaign, like Nike. Cool. That’s great. I like the ad, I like the brand, but I’m not going to do anything about it,” said one participant. “But, if Nike came out with a campaign that was against the Black Lives Matter movement or against a social issue I really cared about, I would be upset. I would not want to purchase Nike.”

Despite the group initially stating their generation would not boycott a brand, the group agreed with the participant. Another member said: “If I’m affected by an ad at all, I think the odds are I’d be turned off by a brand more than I would like it better.”

Another added that “A brand campaign that I disagree with is going to mean more to me than a brand campaign I do agree with. If a company produces an advocacy ad that I really don’t like, yeah, maybe I would consider never buying from them again.”

“Boycott is such a strong word; I feel like that’s such an extreme. But now that I’m considering it, I agree that if a company had an advertisement that really disgusted me, I would never buy their products again -- I guess I would boycott,” said another.

The general conclusion was that a CSA brand campaign would have a stronger impact on an individual if it negatively impacted him or her. The CSA campaigns they did agree with would make them “like” the brand more but not necessarily motivate them to buy more of their products.

Focus Group #2

Introduction:

The second focus group occurred three days following the first one, with seven total participants. Four of them were female and three were male. Overall, the two groups had similar ideas and discussions.

Similar to the first focus group, focus group two defined CSA as “giving back to the community,” “donating money to charity,” and “allowing employees to take time off work to volunteer.”

When the distinction was made between CSA and CSR, all of the group members admitted that they have heard of companies participating in CSA, but could not name any examples.

They also stated they would all be less likely to purchase a product if a business did not align with their beliefs, and more likely to purchase a product if a business did align with their beliefs.

When the Chick-fil-A example was introduced, all members said they support same-sex marriage, and 6 out of 7 participants stated that they still eat at Chick-fil-A. One participant said

My sister is gay, so she stopped eating at Chick-fil-A about two years ago when she found out they donated to anti-gay organizations. To support her, I don't really ever eat at Chick-fil-A anymore. I think the last time I ate it was last summer when I was at a camp, and it was the only option.

Other members admitted that they still eat at Chick-fil-A because they “really enjoy it,” “the company does give back to their communities in a lot of other ways,” and because, similar to the last focus group, “It’s sometimes the only option.”

One participant said,

Chick-fil-A is my favorite fast-food restaurant. I support same-sex marriage, but I do think the media tries to make Chick-fil-A look like this crazy villain. Recently they have really changed their image around, and they’re not anti-gay, they just are a Christian company who doesn’t believe in gay marriage for religious reasons.

When the question “Would you be less likely to purchase a product if a business doesn’t align with your beliefs” was asked again, one participant said it “depended on how serious the issue was and if I was personally affected by it.” The other focus group members agreed.

Response to Nike’s “Dream Crazy” Campaign:

After watching the Dream Crazy ad, the group shared their approval for it, stating it was “like a movie trailer.” One group member said the ad was so inspirational it made him “want to go outside and practice basketball for five hours straight.”

Similar to group one, the topic of Colin Kaepernick came up without being prompted.

“I liked how they used Kaepernick as the face for their ad. It was bold, but Nike always does that kind of stuff,” said one member.

The group agreed overall that sponsoring Kaepernick in the ad was a wise move.

“It definitely gets their idea across,” said one member. “I don’t see a problem with it. They’re being straightforward on where they stand, there’s no gray area and they are advocating for a good cause.”

“I know some people hated it so much they started burning their Nike shoes,” a participant said. The group members who did not already know this seemed shocked and amused. After the PI showed the group the tweets and photos in figures 6 and 7, a discussion started about how “ridiculous” the tweets were.

“So these people are really burning shoes they already purchased? What’s the point of that?” said one participant with a laugh.

“If you’re a conservative and don’t support kneeling for the anthem, I don’t think destroying Nike gear is going to help,” said another. “You’re just giving Nike more attention at that point.”

None of the group participants said they were offended at this campaign or would boycott Nike. Four out of 7 said they would be more inclined to purchase Nike after this.

“I think seeing Nike advocating for social causes makes me more likely to purchase a product. Maybe if I’m in between brands, I’ll go for Nike,” said one.

One of the participants who said the ad did not persuade them to purchase a Nike product mentioned all the other social issues Nike still has:

I like this campaign, don’t get me wrong, but what about the infamous Nike sweatshops? They still pay their overseas workers pennies and treat them poorly. If a company is going to tackle a corporate social advocacy campaign, I think it has to be all-or-nothing.

Another member agreed: “you can’t be a social hero while trying to appease American football lovers, but sweep all your other social issues that Americans don’t typically care about under the rug.”

When asked if this deceitfulness makes them want to boycott Nike, they both said no. “I wouldn’t boycott, it just makes me annoyed. It makes me want to roll my eyes, you know? I feel like at the end of the day you have to realize it’s just a big marketing scheme,” said one. “I guess I’m OK with knowing that.”

Another member added,

Similar to the Chick-fil-A example, I think if I was really personally affected by this campaign and it made me upset I would boycott. Like if the campaign was

against Black Lives Matter and if I was black, that'd probably offend me enough to boycott. Again, this CSA campaign doesn't really affect me on that personal level though. And I feel like having sweatshops doesn't relate to this either.

Following the discussion of controversy surrounding Nike and their CSA efforts, two of the four people who said they were more likely to purchase Nike following the campaign changed their mind.

"I didn't realize everything Nike did that doesn't really align with this campaign. It seems a little like they're trying to make up for everything bad they're known for. It seems less genuine now," said one of the participants who changed their mind.

One of the members who still stated he would buy Nike regardless of their other controversies said he would because "their other controversies don't relate to the Black Lives Matter movement or police brutality. Yeah, I don't agree with the sweatshops, but in my opinion, that's not affecting the way I perceive a really good ad about racial inequality."

In short, two of seven participants stated they'd be more likely to purchase Nike following this campaign. The other five said they were neither more nor less likely to. None reported that they were less likely to purchase Nike following this campaign.

Response to Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be" Campaign:

Before showing the "Best Men Can Be" clip from Gillette, one of the participants exclaimed, "Oh no, not this one. I know why we're talking about this."

Shown through a raise of hands, 2 out of the 7 participants had seen the campaign before, both through Twitter.

The other ones were eagerly excited to see the ad.

After viewing, those who hadn't seen the ad before admitted that they liked it.

"It was really cute. It was wholesome," said one.

"I think it was a powerful message and debuted at a time when a discussion about toxic masculinity needed to happen. I'm glad Gillette did this."

Unlike focus group one, focus group two was able to pick up on the controversy. One member said, "I definitely think this is a great example of CSA. I can also see why we're discussing it. I'm assuming people got offended."

When asked why the member thought that, she expanded by jeering, "Men never want to be told they are wrong."

The participants were still shocked, nonetheless, to hear how much backlash the ad had received and how negatively it affected the company financially.

"It's on the YouTube most disliked videos of all-time list? That's insane," remarked one of the two participants who originally saw the ad on Twitter. "I didn't know it was that popular and had that many dislikes."

The other student who had seen the ad before said he thinks the negativity toward Gillette turned "almost into a meme."

Everyone was disliking the video, everyone was posting negative comments on Reddit. I think a lot of it was directed at the company as a whole, too. I remember people getting mad at Gillette's parent company [Procter & Gamble] for destroying the environment, using palm oil and facing sexual harassment charges

but still trying to advocate for other social and gender issues. It was more than backlash against Gillette -- it was backlash against corporate America I think.

Similar to the Nike discussion, the topic of hypocrisy and deceit found in CSA ads was discussed again. The group members decided that a company should make sure they “clean up” other aspects of their business that might prove they aren’t behaving socially correct. For example, they thought it was slightly dishonest to advocate for gender equality all while charging women more money for pink razors. When asked how they feel about companies acting in ways that do not support their CSA campaigns, participants said they felt “used” and “deceived.”

“When companies advocate for this great cause, then we find out that they don’t actually care about it, it makes me mad, yeah. I feel used. It makes me think they are just in it for the money and don’t actually care about what their customers want,” said one participant.

“Agreed, it’s really manipulative,” said another.

“I think we also need to be realistic, however,” one participant said. “It’s virtually impossible for these huge corporations to have no faults. There’s always going to be some problem that offends someone.”

“If we could just appreciate the ad for what it is, that’d be great. But there’s always that person who has to complain about something,” another replied. “On one hand, it’s nice to expose these companies for sucking, but it also makes it hard to enjoy nice content like this when it comes out.”

All participants agreed that they were not offended by the ad. They also all said they would not boycott the product nor be more inclined to purchase it. However, four participants admitted to being more “upset” that the company as a whole was being deceitful.

One female participant said, “this campaign definitely wants to make me like Gillette better, but hearing that they’re kind of hypocritical is disheartening. I feel like I’m not allowed to enjoy the campaign now.”

“If you just accept the fact that corporate American greed is apparent in all companies, it will be easier to enjoy the campaign,” joked another.

When asked if any members of the group were more skeptical of Gillette following the CSA campaign and discussion, five members agreed.

Interestingly, the common consensus in focus group two was that they were more upset about the hypocrisy in the ad than they were with the actual content. In the end, as shown through a raise of hands, three members of the group viewed Gillette slightly more positively after viewing the campaign and four members viewed Gillette in a more negative way after learning about the perceived hypocrisy. However, they stated their purchase intention was not affected one way nor the other.

Comparisons:

When asked what campaign focus group two preferred, two participants said Gillette and five said Nike.

“I like Nike’s better because Gillette’s didn’t really have anything to do with razors. And I know the ad isn’t supposed to be about razors, but at least with Nike, the ad is about a professional athlete who wears their clothing,” said one participant.

“All around Nike’s ad makes more sense to me,” said another.

One of the members who sided with Gillette said it was because their ad was more creative and unpredictable than Nike's: "I feel like Nike always does these campaigns, it's nothing really new. Also, it wasn't really advocating for much, just showing off Kaepernick. He's the one doing the advocating."

"There's good and bad to both," said another. "They have their downsides, both being that they don't always practice what they preach, but at the end of the day, they're both attempting to bring positive attention to an important issue - and that's what really matters."

Generation Z and Purchase Intention:

Focus group two agreed that their generation is the generation most likely to care about social political issues.

"Since doing CSA campaigns are relatively new, I don't think a lot of older people care about it as much as we do. We kind of grew up with brands advocating for things, so it's normal to us; I think that's why we care about it more," said one participant.

In contrast to focus group one, another member said that "we get offended easier. I know older generations make fun of us for that. We want everything to be politically correct so no one's feelings get hurt. So, yeah, I'd agree that we are more likely than other generations to care about these issues."

Another group member brought up the popularity of "cancel culture" found within Gen Z: "Our generation is quick to 'cancel' someone if we don't agree with them. If a celebrity said something politically incorrect 11 years ago and our generation finds out about it, they're canceled. No questions asked."

Another difference between focus group two was that they thought older generations were more likely to share their opinions about companies on social media.

“Facebook moms are so guilty of this,” said one participant. “They have a bad experience or buy a bad product and next thing you know there’s a four-paragraph post on Facebook about it that you have to scroll through.”

“Generation Z I think is more likely to share a post though, or share that they support or dislike a brand in more natural ways,” said another. “For example, retweeting [a tweet from] a brand they like. Or using a Nike logo as their header on social media or something like that.”

When asked to compare Generation Z’s purchase intention with that of older generations, the group said older generations’ purchase intentions would be more affected by the campaigns.

“Since we are all college students on a budget right now, I think it would be hard for us to change our intent to purchase by these ads. Right now, I’m focused on buying necessities and brands I have always used. Maybe when I have a full-time job, I’ll care more about how ethical a company is,” said one member.

Another one disagreed, saying, “Since we are on a limited income, I think it’s more important to spend our money wisely. We should be valuing what brands we choose, because we don’t get to choose often.”

In summary, focus group two also believes that Generation Z expects companies to publicly advocate and support social political issues. They think older generations are more likely to share an experience about a product on social media, while younger generations are more likely to support a brand more organically. In terms of purchase intention, focus group two agreed that because of Generation Z’s limited income, purchase intention would probably not be too affected.

Conclusions:

Similar to focus group one, when group two was asked if a CSA campaign is more likely to negatively or positively affect their perception of a brand or company, the group generally agreed that a campaign affects them more if it's negative.

“Thinking about the ads we saw, I thought they were really well done and extremely powerful,” one person said. “They were probably some of the best ads I’ve ever seen. But, as soon as I found out about the negative things both companies were doing, I felt that that overshadowed everything else. The feeling of disappointment overpowered the feeling of ‘Wow, this is a good ad.’”

“I agree, I’m more likely to care if it has a bad effect on me,” said another group member.

“Especially if it’s advocating against something I really believe in, that would make me feel stronger than seeing an ad that I love.”

When asked if any of the participants could remember an ad campaign that affected their purchase intention at all, none of the members could recall any.

The general conclusion seemed to be fairly similar to that of group one. If a CSA brand campaign left a negative perception in the young consumer’s mind, it would be more likely to influence their purchase decision more than if the campaign had a positive impact.

Chapter 7 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to determine how Generation Z views CSA campaigns and if CSA campaigns are likely to affect their purchase intention. While initially the groups were unfamiliar with CSA campaigns, after a brief introduction, they all agreed they supported CSA campaigns and agreed they were an integral form of marketing in today's digital age.

Participants were asked twice if they were more likely to purchase a product if a company's values aligned with theirs, once at the beginning and once at the end of the focus group. Both focus groups initially stated that alignment with a company's values and their personal values would make them more likely to purchase from a brand. Similarly, both groups stated if they didn't support a company's values, they would not purchase from that brand.

However, at the conclusion of both focus groups, participants responded that an alignment or misalignment in values between them and a brand would make them like or dislike a brand more or less, but not necessarily affect purchase intention. While they were hesitant to admit that advertising affects their purchase intention, the discussions from the focus groups do point to the fact that their purchase intention would be affected after viewing these CSA campaigns.

Out of the 15 participants, three said that an ad they saw affected their purchase intention in a positive way and made them more likely to buy from that brand. None of the participants said that the ads they saw would make them reject or boycott the brands. Interestingly, however, both groups stated in the focus groups that overall, a negative campaign would affect them more strongly than a positive one. While some members of each focus group did view some

campaigns negatively after hearing about the controversy surrounding the ads, none of them were negatively affected enough to reject the brand entirely.

Gen Z's Response

Consumer Relationships with Advocacy Topics and Brands:

The focus group discussions uncovered some key ideas represented in Generation Z. To begin, it's clear that Gen Z realizes that marketing efforts are intended to financially profit companies. This could be because they have grown up in the digital age, surrounded by social media and exposed to countless media campaigns. Seeing brands advocate for issues through media campaigns is not uncommon to Gen Z. Thus, this may explain why Gen Z is more selective about the kinds of issues that would drive their purchase intention.

For example, participants in group two were more skeptical of Gillette, but were no less likely to stop buying from Gillette, because focus group two expected companies to act slightly unethically. Since they viewed the campaign ultimately as a way to make money, it seemed as if none of the Gen Z participants were offended enough to boycott the brand after realizing P&G could be behaving unethically in other areas of their business.

Additionally, it's apparent that Gen Z is affected differently by CSA campaigns depending on whether or not there's a pre-established relationship between the brand and the customer. Take the Nike "Dream Crazy" campaign, for example. A lot of Gen Zers are familiar with Nike; they've grown up wearing Nike and have probably seen a famous Nike campaign before. They also knew a lot about Nike's controversial past; they were able to recall the controversy surrounding Nike's use of sweat shops. Seeing a Nike ad campaign that isn't too

different from their typical ones would be less likely to affect them than seeing a new campaign from a brand they're not as familiar with, like Gillette's.

Gillette did not have as much of an established relationship with the Gen Zers. None of the participants were using Gillette before the discussion. One participant mentioned he would "continue" using Gillette if he had already purchased it. It's important to note that a consumer with a relatively new relationship with a company would be affected more by a CSA campaign.

That is to say, a CSA campaign may be less effective if the audience already has a strong emotional attachment to the brand. For Nike, a lot of the participants said they enjoyed the campaign and it reaffirmed their positive opinion of the company. Gillette, on the other hand, had a stronger response. For many participants, seeing the ad was their first media exposure to the brand. Two participants actually admitted they would purchase Gillette after viewing the campaign.

Not only is the relationship with the brand important but the relationship with the advocacy topic is as well. As evident in the focus groups, participants stated what would alter their purchase intention the most was how much they felt about a particular issue.

Some examples of issues that resonated with Generation Z are body positivity (mentioned in the Aerie discussion), sustainability, LBGTQA+ rights and aid in Third World countries. As evident in the Gillette ad, gender issues are also a topic Gen Z cares about. The women in the focus group were originally more likely to view the Gillette campaign as positive, while the men, still agreeing overall with the campaign, were able to pick up on the controversy in the campaign quicker.

In other words, the focus groups uncovered that altering purchase intention is more complicated than one might originally imagine. Multiple factors are considered before

purchasing a product. However, with Gen Z specifically, the relationship with the brand and how passionate they are about a certain advocacy topic is a telling sign that their purchase intention is more likely to be swayed in either direction.

After all, that is the whole purpose of corporate social advocacy campaigns. What makes them successful is finding an audience member who cares deeply about the issue, has a neutral or positive view of the brand already and who agrees overall with the campaign message. The degree to which it matches a consumer's preferences will determine how much they react and respond to the campaigns.

Purchase Intention:

A vast majority of the focus group members stated that the ads did not affect their purchase intention. Instead, they claimed that the ads typically altered their image of the brands, or they made them "like" the brand more but not enough to make them buy or boycott the product. However, in focus groups, it's typically difficult to make participants outright admit that their purchase intention is being affected through advertising efforts.

While most were quick to deny the fact that their purchase intention was altered, the evidence from the discussion hint that the ads would, in fact, alter their purchase intention.

For example, the Gen Zers admitted multiple times that they would only be swayed to boycott or buy if it was a topic they were passionate about. As mentioned earlier, some examples of these topics are typical social political issues. However, given that CSA campaigns are rooted in social political issues, it's fair to state that a CSA campaign that resonated with a Gen Zer would alter their purchase intention.

For example, while every focus group participant disagreed with Chick-fil-A's stance on same-sex marriage, only one participant was affected enough to no longer support the business; this was because the participant had an immediate family member who identified as a member of the LGBTQA+ community.

None of the members stated they would boycott Nike or Gillette. However, as previously mentioned, there are specific reasons why they would boycott other brands. Chick-fil-A, TOMS, or any company that lies about their sustainability efforts were some examples. One commonality between these three examples is that they all deal with issues that relate to each individual on a deeply personal level. It was difficult to determine just *how* passionate about a topic the focus group participants had to be in order to consider boycotting, but a general consensus would presume that if they felt personally attached to a form of advocacy, they would be attached enough for a campaign to affect purchase intention.

Nonetheless, there are still other factors that alter purchase intention. Although a majority of focus group members stated CSA campaigns affected them in some way, the quality of a product should not be underestimated. One female participant stated she uses Gillette razors because of the superior quality. Another participant mentioned that Nike is a brand that his fellow peers and him have been wearing for years. Thus, while CSA is important to this Generation, the product themselves need to continue to demonstrate superior quality and performance.

Negative Opinions Cause Stronger Results:

One important finding determined from these focus groups was that a negative opinion of a brand campaign was more likely to affect Gen Z's perception of a brand more than a positive opinion of a campaign. In general, all focus group members liked both the Nike and Gillette campaigns. However, out of 15 individuals, only three said that those campaigns would make them more likely to purchase a Nike or Gillette product (the female in focus group one who said she would switch to a Gillette razor and the two participants in group two who supported the Nike campaign). As mentioned previously, in reality, the campaigns probably affected the Gen Zers purchase intention more than they would like to admit. At the very least, the campaigns confirmed their pre-established positive opinions of the brands.

While none of the members admitted they would boycott specifically Nike or Gillette from their CSA campaigns, all of them did state if a campaign came off as insincere or hypocritical, it would cause them to reconsider purchasing a product from that company again. The example of TOMS was mentioned in focus group one. One member said after learning TOMS was harming economies instead of helping them (as they advertised), he decided to boycott the company. Another admitted that if a company pretended to be environmentally conscious in their advocacy efforts, but were really doing it for monetary gain, it would cause him to boycott. Following the discussion, it was clear that Gen Z consumers don't want to feel tricked or deceived by brand campaigns advocating for a virtuous cause.

In focus group two, there was a discussion about the hypocrisy of Gillette advertising against toxic masculinity all while being guilty of the pink tax. Furthermore, the fact that P&G was facing sexual harassment charges and harming the environment through palm oil production

seemed unethical. Despite this discussion, all participants still stated they would not stop purchasing Gillette if it was a brand they liked, though four members admitted to being more skeptical of the brand following the discussion.

It also might be worth noting that many of the focus group participants viewed each brand individually and did not see a strong connection between partnered brands or parent companies. This can be observed in focus group one, with one member admitting she would never associate Gillette and Venus. Again, in focus group two, many members were upset to hear that P&G was behaving unethically, yet it was not enough to convince them to stop buying from Gillette.

The focus group findings point to the fact that Gen Z consumers are more strongly affected when the hypocrisy is *directly* related to the campaign itself. For example, the two members who stated they were more likely to purchase Nike following the discussion of Nike's unethical behavior said that Nike's behavior did not relate directly to the "Dream Crazy" campaign, thus did not feel like it was necessary to relate the behavior to their purchase intention.

In summary, it's important to understand the way a company presents their campaigns and represents their CSA efforts as a whole can significantly affect Gen Zers – especially if they disagree with the advocacy efforts. Generation Z wants to see companies follow through with their advocacy efforts in all aspects of their business. As consumers, they report feeling deceived and swindled when they learn that a company is hypocritical in their efforts, and focus group members admitted they are more offended by feeling taken advantage of in these campaigns than simply a CSA campaign they don't agree with.

Implications for Practice

Based on the focus group findings, marketers and advertisers should consider several findings from this research when deciding how to target Gen Z consumers.

First, it's important to understand that Gen Z already has more knowledge of marketing and advertising than other generations did at the same age. Advertisers should consider targeting Gen Z with more creative ads since they've been surrounded by an abundance of marketing their whole lives. Additionally, this might mean that brands can spend less time explaining the purpose of their products and more time on advertisements focused on advocacy efforts.

Secondly, it's necessary for marketers and advertisers to understand what issues Gen Z cares about and what makes them care about a particular brand. As discussed in the focus groups, Gen Z expects brands to tackle social political issues. These same issues are typically the ones that Gen Z cares about the most. Generation Z wants to see their favorite brands support causes they are passionate about. If a CSA campaign is successfully able to capture that, it's very likely, based on the focus group discussions, that they will purchase a product from that brand.

On the contrary, CSA campaigns are risky. This research revealed that if a CSA campaign is done incorrectly, the negative consequences can be more impactful than the positive. Gen Z will be more motivated to take action on a brand if they do not agree with the social political stance or how the brand approached the stance in their campaign. Similarly, if a CSA campaign was done favorably, but later Gen Z consumers found out they were acting unethical or felt deceived by the campaign, they will be more likely to boycott. Thus, it's important for brands to not only conduct extensive research to determine what their consumers care about but for brands to also make sure their campaigns are ethical, and their parent companies truly support what they are advocating for.

One difficulty that comes with this new wave of advertising is that it's hard for marketers and advertisers to control who sees their campaigns. With the ability to go viral on social media, any campaign can reach far beyond their targeted demographics. Thus, it's necessary for brands to consider that there will most likely be negative consequences that come with releasing controversial CSA campaigns. It's important to cater advocacy efforts so they appeal to the main consumer base, so even if a brand campaign reaches members outside the target demographic, if done correctly the negative backlash will only strengthen the original campaign and a majority of the brands' supporters.

Limitations and Directions for Further Research

There are several limitations in this research that should be noted. To begin, this research does not show any type of definitive cause and effect relationship between Generation Zs' opinions of CSA campaigns and Generation Zs' purchase intentions. The results of this research cannot be generalized to all members of Generation Z. Fourteen of 15 members in the focus group were Caucasian, and they were all American students at the Pennsylvania State University. Therefore, the research is relevant toward this specific demographic, and not the entirety of Generation Z. It should be mentioned that a larger and more ethnic sample of participants with more diverse ideologies would have created more accurate results. Similarly, including more than two case studies in this research would have provided more accurate results.

More specifically, this research is vastly subjective to each participant. In order to determine how CSA campaigns affect Gen Z purchase intention, it is necessary to understand what each participant is interested in and how certain social political subjects could affect them.

It's also worth noting that discussing topics of high interest to participants will most likely create an inherent bias for each participant. Similarly, group think can often occur during focus groups and should be accounted for.

Furthermore, there are faults within some of the groups' arguments. For example, many members stated they would reject a brand if they found out the CSA efforts were misleading or proven wrong. After providing information that hinted that these campaigns could be misleading or hypocritical, a majority of the participants continued to support the campaign. Again, having a larger number of participants would help reduce these faults.

Additionally, all members stated they would be more strongly affected if an ad was negative, yet none of the participants said they would boycott the particular brands discussed, even though six members viewed the campaigns negatively.

It's also important to note that decision making is affected by a multitude of reasons. The quality of the product, consumer experience, customer interaction and convenience are just a few. While CSA is one aspect that affects purchase intention, it's imperative to realize there are dozens of other factors that play into decision making as well.

Similarly, ads are often more likely to affect purchase intention when they are viewed multiple times. In this research, each participant was only receiving a one-time exposure to the ad. Thus, the results might not be as strong as they would be if this was a continued study that showed the ads multiple times over a given period.

Further research could include sampling a younger demographic, for only the oldest members of Gen Z were interviewed. However, it's important to note that Generation Z as a whole is not responsible for their own income, so purchase intent may not be as accurate as it could be.

Chapter 8 CONCLUSION

As the digital age progresses, the consumer landscape will continue to change. Consumer opinions toward brands are becoming more holistic and companies are striving to meet the needs of this new demand. Corporate social advocacy is a way for brands to do this -- to connect with their consumers on a deeper, more personal level. The new brand campaign is a way for companies to showcase -- and monetize -- their stances on social political issues.

With the previous research conducted, advertisers and marketers can better understand how to target this new generation as they begin to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy.

The focus group discussions uncover a few key takeaways. While the focus group members were not likely to admit it outright, based on the discussion, the CSA campaigns did have an overall positive effect on them that would contribute to a positive purchase intention. Furthermore, it was determined that a campaign may have a stronger impact on a Gen Zer if they did not agree with the advocacy topic or stance the brand took.

Regardless if the CSA campaign affected the participants positively or negatively, as long as it was a topic they were passionate about, their purchase intention was likely to be affected.

Thus, marketers and advertisers should consider that Gen Z is well accustomed to ad campaigns, focus on issues Gen Z cares deeply about, ensure they are siding with a topic the majority of their consumer base approves of and make sure that their campaigns come off as genuine.

In conclusion, these findings emphasize the notion that it is especially important for brands to act carefully when constructing their CSA campaigns. As the newest generation strives

to leave a lasting, positive impact on their world, they want to see the brands they love do the same.

Appendix A
Campaign Photos



Figure 6. Nike's "Dream Crazy" Campaign
(Nike)



Figure 7. Nike Backlash
(Twitter)



Figure 8. Nike Backlash Continued
(Twitter)



Figure 9. Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be" Campaign
(Gillette)



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Follow



The comments under the @Gillette toxic masculinity ad is a living document of how desperately society needs things like the Gillette toxic masculinity ad.

Seriously: if your masculinity is THAT threatened by an ad that says we should be nicer then you're doing masculinity wrong.

7:53 PM - 14 Jan 2019

2,141 Retweets 6,606 Likes



Figure 10. Gillette Ad Sparks Discussion on Social Media
(Twitter)



Figure 11. Gillette's Controversy
(Twitter)



Figure 12. Gillette's Backlash Continued
(Tweet)

Appendix B

Research Consent Form

Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project:

Examining Generation Z's Perceptions of Corporate Social Advocacy as Displayed Through Branding Campaigns

Principal Investigator:

Rachel Aul, undergraduate student, public relations
College of Communications, Penn State University
Local address: 137 H Aly Apt 301, State College, PA 16801
Email: Rachelaul002@gmail.com (412) XXX-XXXX

Advisor:

Denise Bortree, PhD, Assistant Professor, Advertising & PR
College of Communications, Penn State University
Mailing address: 4 Carnegie Building, University Park, PA 16802
Office: 4 Carnegie Building, Email: dsb177@psu.edu (814) 865-1274

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how Generation Z reacts and responds to Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA). The information collected at this Focus Group will provide insight into determining consumer purchase intention resulting from CSA campaigns.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in a focus group where we will discuss CSA and view different digital campaigns.

3. Duration/Time: The focus group will take one hour or less.

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. No identifiable personal data other than your names will be collected, and there will be no way to link your answers to your identity. The session will be recorded on a tape-recorder, stored and secured on the Principal Investigator's computer, which will be password protected. Recordings will be destroyed one year after the session. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from this research, no personally identifiable information will be shared –your individual responses will be reported under fake names (pseudonyms). Only the Principal Investigator listed on this form will have access to the data.

5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Rachel Aul at (412) XXX-XXXX or Rachelaul002@gmail.com with questions or concerns about this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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ACADEMIC VITA

Rachel M. Aul

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University | Schreyer Honors College '20

State College, PA

College of Communications | *Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations*

College of The Liberal Arts | *Minors in Business, Global and International Studies and History*

Paris School of Business

Paris, France

IES Education Abroad Program

January – May 2019

COMMUNICATIONS EXPERIENCE

DISH Networks

Denver, CO

Corporate Communications Intern

May – August 2019

- Executed a project focused on implementing PR tactics to increase Sling TV engagement during summer months
- Wrote news releases, blog posts, media pitches and reactive messaging documents, catered to different audiences
- Developed PR initiatives for brand campaigns, product announcements, and technology updates
- Supported digital and social media strategy for PR announcements; researched and created best practices for implementation across Corporate Communications team and larger Marketing department

DiscernPSU

University Park, PA

Public Relations Intern

August 2017 – Present

- Created and manages DiscernPSU's website featuring student leader interviews, inspirational blogs, and information on upcoming events aimed toward students looking to use their passions in their future careers
- Develops and presents public events featuring keynote speakers within the Penn State community
- Executes several publicity campaigns, including crafting weekly quotes to post via social media, contacting numerous businesses to publicize DiscernPSU events, and hosting an informational booth at the Student Center

Happy Valley Communications

University Park, PA

Consultant and Marketer

January 2018 – Present

- Communicates with local businesses and creates marketing strategies to boost awareness and sales
- Manages social media websites, constructs publicity campaigns, and performs SWOT analysis

Keeping the Hive Alive

University Park, PA

Founder

April 2017

- Hosted an educational event open to all State College residents with aims to inform the public about Colony Collapse Disorder and its implications on our environment
- Devised a marketing campaign for the event, including creating flyers through Canva, passing out 500 bookmarks at the Student Center, and contacting student representatives on campus

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Scholar Advancement Team and SHO TIME Mentor

University Park, PA

Team Member and Orientation Mentor

May 2017 – Present

- Serves as an ambassador for the Honors College, acting as a liaison between administration and the general public
- Engages with incoming scholars over a three-day period consisting of academic and teambuilding events
- Contacted nine incoming honors students and aided them in the transition to college by offering college study advice, time management strategies, and extracurricular suggestions

Lion Ambassadors

University Park, PA

Project Planner and Tour Guide

January 2018 - Present

- Communicates directly with the Penn State Alumni Association to promote the association and strengthen relationships between the student body
- Brainstorms, organizes, and produces university-wide projects to educate and welcome students to Penn State

Italian Village Pizza

Pleasant Hills, PA

Part-time Manager

June 2013 – August 2018

- Oversaw staff, opened and closed the store, managed and ordered inventory, and resolved customer complaints

VOLUNTEERISM: Alter server, youth leader and Fish Fry volunteer at St. Thomas A Becket Church; Hurricane Harvey Houston Mission Trip Volunteer 2018