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Comcast and the Generations of CSR, and Stakeholders

When googling for news about Comcast, it is safe to say that a lot of it was not good. Comcast are repeat offenders on a plethora of lists about the worst companies in America. Two of the articles that I found both paint Comcast in a negative light. The first article is one that appeared on the Washington Post. The article is titled, “Comcast sued by Denver sports network for antitrust violation”. The channel that sued Comcast is called Altitude Sports and Entertainment, which is based in Denver and airs the Denver Nuggets’ games. Altitude Sports and Entertainment filed a claim in the Colorado district court claiming that Comcast was using its market power to coerce the small television channel into terms that would drive it out of business. According to the lawsuit, Comcast provides service to about half of the people in Denver, so Altitude Sports and Entertainment claims that this fact gives Comcast too much market power when it comes to setting the prices. Since this altercation began, many Denver residents with Comcast have not been able to watch some of their favorite local sports, which led to Colorado’s governor asking Altitude Sports and Entertainment to agree to Comcast’s deal. Altitude claims that Comcast is breaking antitrust laws by lowering its payments to the network and by removing Altitude from its basic cable package. Comcast claims that Altitude is a little-watched network that is driving the price of subscription up for all viewers. The second article that appeared on CBS news, it is titled, “2020 Democrats urge DNC to call for Comcast probe of ‘toxic culture’ at NBC”. This short article is about how four Democratic presidential nominees called on the Democratic National Committee to demand Comcast to conduct an investigation into the “toxic culture” of the company which allowed sexual harassment and abuse of workers. The four nominees that sent the letter were Cory Booker, Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren. The letter was directed towards the Chairman of the DNC, Top Perez. The article then goes on to explain an instance where former “Today” co-host Matt Lauer was fired in 2017 after being accused of inappropriate sexual behavior by one of his employees. The woman, Brooke Nevils claims that Lauer raped her in a hotel room during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia. The article’s closing states how although an internal investigation found Comcast executives not fat fault, the four presidential nominees pushed Comcast to do more in securing the workplace in their subsidiary, NBC. Both of the articles are similar in the fact that they are specifically stating the ways in which Comcast can be more socially responsible to their stakeholders. Both articles recognize that the actions that Comcast is taking accepts many different groups of people, and although there may be a little bit of overlap, the articles focus on two different stakeholders which leads to a focus on two different CSR concepts.

For, “Comcast sued by Denver sports network for antitrust violation”, the key concept that relates to this story are the generations of CSR. The generation that is most applicable to this article is the first generation of CSR, which focuses on maximizing profits for the corporation, without breaking the law. This is relatable because the article revolves around a lawsuit that, if Comcast is found guilty of, will play a major role in the way that corporations attempt to maximize profits. Comcast is being accused of breaking the law in order to maximize profits, which goes in direct discordance to what Milton Frieddman said corporations should do, maximize profits while conforming to the basic rules of society. When thinking about how corporate social responsibility has changed over the years, anti trust laws have always been set in place to check the power of the biggest corporations. If Comcast is found guilty of breaking anti trust laws, they will also be violating the first generation of corporate social responsibility because they will be found guilty of attempting to maximize profits in a way that is not conforming with the basic rules, or laws, of the society. First generation of CSR is relevant to this story because it is the building blocks of a socially responsible company, and if Comcast loses the suit, it will put a huge dent in the public’s perception about how socially responsible of a corporation they really are. For the second article, “2020 Democrats urge DNC to call for Comcast probe of "toxic culture" at NBC”, the concept that relates are stakeholders and stakeholder theory. Although this article focuses on NBC, Comcast is heavily involved because own NBC, and they are a huge corporation with a diverse amount of stakeholders which are affected when Comcast takes action. The stakeholders who are affected most by the toxic workplace environment are the employees. The article goes into detail about several instances where the workplace was rampant with sexual harassment, up to the point where an NBC worker of high profile was accuded of raping an employee. This shows how one of the major stakeholders in this situation are the employees, but the article makes not of other stakeholders involved in this situation, not only employees. The article points out that another group of stakeholders is the general public, since four of the potential presidential nominees got involved and sent a letter to Comcast, this became very mainstream news, so the general public became a major stakeholder also because the public knows how big Comcast is as a company and if this goes unchecked it will make the general public see Comcast in a more negative light.

Both of the stories have different implications that have the potential of damaging Comcast’s image of a socially responsible corporation. One lesson to be learned from the, “Comcast sued by Denver sports network for antitrust violation” is that although Comcast is much bigger and has more pull than Altitude network, this does not mean that they can just walk over them, because first generation CSR is meant to be a driving force so that companies do not break the law when they are attempting to maximize their profits. This is important for the future of Comcast because as was mentioned before, they are already a company which is not seen in the most positive light, and if they are found guilty of breaking anti trust laws, their image will be hurt even more. What is interesting about this story though is that although Comcast is always target of customer complaints, a lot of times the customers are forced to stay with them because there are no other telecommunications that can compete with them. In a more general sense, although Comcast shrugged off the lawsuit as irrelevant, it shows the marketplace that those corporations that are not as powerful will force the bigger corporations to act more socially responsible by continuously keeping them in check. Both stories are important to Comcast and the heavily conglomerated telecommunication industry as a corporation and an industry for two different reasons. The first article focused on whether or not Comcast was breaking antitrust laws, which is an area where the telecommunication industry is heavily criticized because of the fact there is not a lot of competition among brands since it is normal for companies to divide certain areas up so they are the only provider. The second article is important for Comcast in a different way, because it mentions a theme that has been extremely prevalent over the last couple of years, sexual misconduct and abuse in the entertainment industry. The article goes into detail about a culture of sexual harassment in the entertainment industry. Because Comcast is such a big company, four of the potential Democratic nominees for president have spoken up and asked the company to take action, this will lead to other companies taking issues of similar importance more seriously because they are under the scope of mainstream media now that this case has seen the light. Comcast is a huge corporation that has been scrutinized heavily in the past, and now because of the reasons stated in the aforementioned articles they will have to step up their game when it comes to being a socially responsible company because more people than ever are keeping an eye on them.