

## **Next Pro Marketing Plan**

Michelle Camacho & Clio Clay

MKTG 3250 - 002

Professor Cindy Fox

5/6/2022

## **Corporate mission**

The Charlotte Football Club (CFC) is launching a new soccer league in 2023 for soccer players who have advanced from the junior MLS Pro team and have the potential to be part of the official MLS team. The program is known as the MLS Next Pro Team. CFC needs help deciding which location in the Carolinas is the best place for their Next Pro Team to be represented in. We choose Columbia, SC as the location to be represented in. The city of Columbia will give us the best opportunity to effectively reach our target audiences which are college students and Hispanic families. We plan to reach college students by implementing a sponsor tent at the University of South Carolina (USC) soccer events and investing in party buses that will transport students from the USC campus to Williams Brice Stadium where the first MLS Next Pro game will take place. We plan to reach Hispanic families by becoming a sponsor for the Main Street Latin Festival right in the heart of Columbia. We also plan to achieve CFC's goal of combating food insecurity in the Carolinas by hosting a food bank competition at the Main Street Latin Festival, where the winner will receive free tickets to the Next Pro game, CFC home game, and merchandise. The combined total of the events, merchandising, and advertising is \$9,933. The first USC soccer game and the Main Street latin festival have always taken place in August, therefore our main events will also take place in August such as the food bank competition and the tent promotions at USC soccer games. The first MLS Next Pro game will take place in the beginning of September. We plan to promote the event through social media and TV advertisements. Through our marketing strategies, we will ensure that our target markets will be motivated to attend our events and attend MLS Next Pro events including Charlotte Football Club events creating a strong connection with fans and community members.

## **Situational Analysis (SWOT)**

The purpose of creating a SWOT analysis for our marketing plan, especially for this project is to identify the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the Charlotte Football Club. Understanding the situation analysis of the Charlotte Football club will help us come up with the best strategy to use when it comes to selecting the right location for the new MLS Next Pro team and the promotional strategy to use.

Starting with the strengths of the Charlotte Football Club, CFC is owned by Tepper sports and entertainment. Tepper sports and entertainment is also the owner of the NFL Carolina Panthers football team and owns the largest stadium in the Carolinas known as the Bank of America stadium. The stadium is located in Charlotte, N.C. which is known as the largest and most populated city in the state of North Carolina. Tepper sports is currently going through \$50 million dollars of soccer-specific renovations to provide the best-in-class experience for Charlotte Football Club fans. The Charlotte Football club has a partnership with several big TV stations which including WSOC-TV, Telemundo Charlotte, and TV-64. Two big companies that currently sponsor the Charlotte Football Club are Ally financial and Bojangles. One of CFC's plans is to attract the Hispanic community as soccer is a very popular sport in Latin America. The Hispanic population in Charlotte, N.C. had been consistently growing over the past few years according to the US Census Bureau. It's also important to note that over the years, Tepper sports has made a huge effort in creating a diversified team for both the Carolina Panthers and the Charlotte Football Club which appeals very much to the Hispanic community.

Some of CFC's weaknesses include not having any big-name players on the team. Many Charlotte sports teams have had trouble drafting or attracting top talent to their sports team. This can cause people to lose interest in the team and feel more inclined to support a sports team with

better and well-known players. Recently this year, the Charlotte Football Club lost its key staff member, Jessica O'Neill. O'Neill was the marketing and communications director for the Charlotte Football Club. This means that the company is going to have to invest time and money to replace O'Neill and find a new director for their marketing and communications department. This is a disadvantage as the Charlotte Football Club is currently going through its first MLS regular season with Tepper Sports. Another weakness to note is that some marketing plans may overlap with Charlotte Football Club and the Carolina panthers events. It's going to be very important for staff members to ensure that the hype of one of the sports teams doesn't overpower or take the attention away from the other sports team.

Some important opportunities are the Charlotte Football Club will have the chance to train their team and receive brand recognition at the Bank of America stadium. Because Tepper Sports has huge capital and recognition, more companies will want to collaborate or partner with Charlotte Football Club especially companies that are located and have their headquarters in the city of Charlotte. According to the US Census Bureau, The city of Charlotte is growing in population each year, and with the increase in population, there is more diversity in nationality that matches CFC's current target audience. It's important to note that another opportunity is that the Charlotte Football club is officially planning to invest in an MLS Next Pro team, this opportunity allows more exposure and recognition, but most importantly, the opportunity to connect with CFC's fans. Lastly, a lone MLS in the area could potentially increase CFC's current fan base especially if the team performs well.

Some threats to the Charlotte Football club include talent retention. For example, if a CFC player gets major recognition for how well they play, they might get pulled to join another soccer team outside of CFC and that is some time to be cautious of. Another important threat to

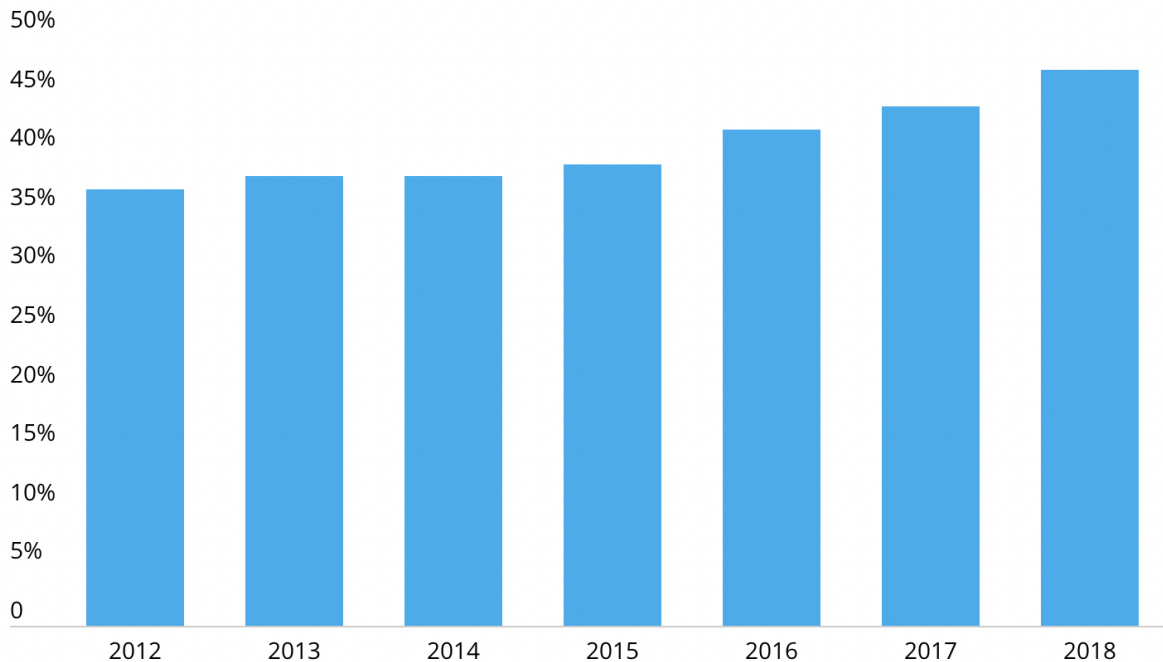
note is that the Charlotte Football club will compete with well-known soccer teams that have a history of winning tournaments. These teams include the LA Galaxy soccer team and D.C. United soccer club. Both teams are planning to play against the Charlotte Football Club this season as well. The Charlotte Football Club is a new team and there's no telling whether they will perform exceptionally well against more experienced teams. If the Charlotte Football Club doesn't perform well, many people will feel unmotivated to purchase tickets and choose to support another team instead.

## **Why Columbia**

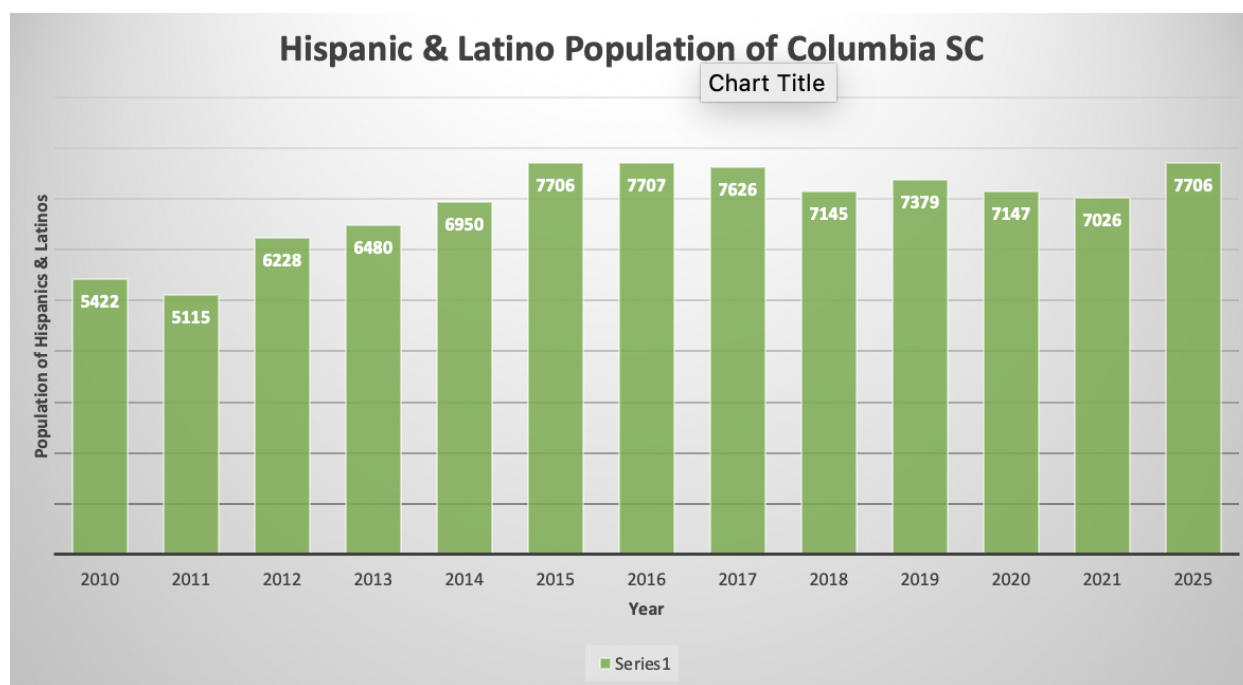
A cross-state unification, a continuously growing Hispanic population, and a stadium equipped to seat over 77,000 people. These are but a few of the reasons my colleague and I chose Columbia South Carolina for the Charlotte Football Club's Next Pro team. (Jessica O'Neill, *The Charlotte Football Club*, 2022.) Located a mere 1 hour and 28 minutes away from Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium, the city provides a unique opportunity for the CFC to "split their team across the Carolinas," while still being close enough for regular meetings and training (Jessica O'Neill, *The Charlotte Football Club*, 2022. )

According to a poll collected by the Nielson Company, 47% of adults in the U.S. have expressed interest in MLS (Nielson Company, 2019.)

## INTEREST GROWTH IN MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER



Additional data gathered from Statista shows that Hispanic and Latino individuals make up the largest percentage of the MLS fanbase (*See section “Target Market.”*) (Lange, 2022.) With a steadily rising population of Hispanic and Latino individuals, Columbia SC offers the chance to “tap into the organic growth” within one of the club’s key demographics (Jessica O’Neill, *The Charlotte Football Club*, 2022.)



In addition to the Hispanic and Latinx demographic, Columbia SC is a direct line to the second most popular age group among MLS fans; 18- 34-year-olds (Lange, 2022). 35,470 of which attend the University of South Carolina. However, the university's largest attraction is the Williams-Brice stadium. The stadium would allow for the Next Pro team to meet or exceed that goal. Located approximately 1 mile away from USC's campus, this stadium has the capacity to seat over 77,000 people and has recently undergone \$22.5 million in renovations. (Anderson, 2020)

While one would need to consider the scheduled USC games, it should be noted that the Columbia Titans would not be the first MLS-affiliated team to share a stadium with a university. For example the LA Galaxy and CSU Dominguez Hills, or the Houston Dynamo and Texas Southern University. Moreover, the university could provide the league with a number of valuable resources. As of 2022, USC is ranked 9th in the country for "Sports Marketing," (Niche,

2020) and 6th in the world for “Sports Management” degrees. (USC, 2017) A nearby Next Pro team would provide students with internship opportunities while allowing the team access to the individuals and facilities that would fast-track the team's growth within the city.

In the spirit of unification and forging new partnerships, my colleague and I chose purple as our team's primary color. This is because purple is the combination of the CFC’s Carolina blue and the crimson red of the USC Game-Cocks. As for our team's secondary color, we chose white used for both teams. The idea is that these colors will create a lasting message of unity. Not only among the teams but the Carolinas as well.

### **SMART Goals**

1. Sell at least 5,000 tickets for the team’s inaugural match.
2. Collect at least 300 non-perishable food items by the end of the “Main Street Latin Fest” weekend.

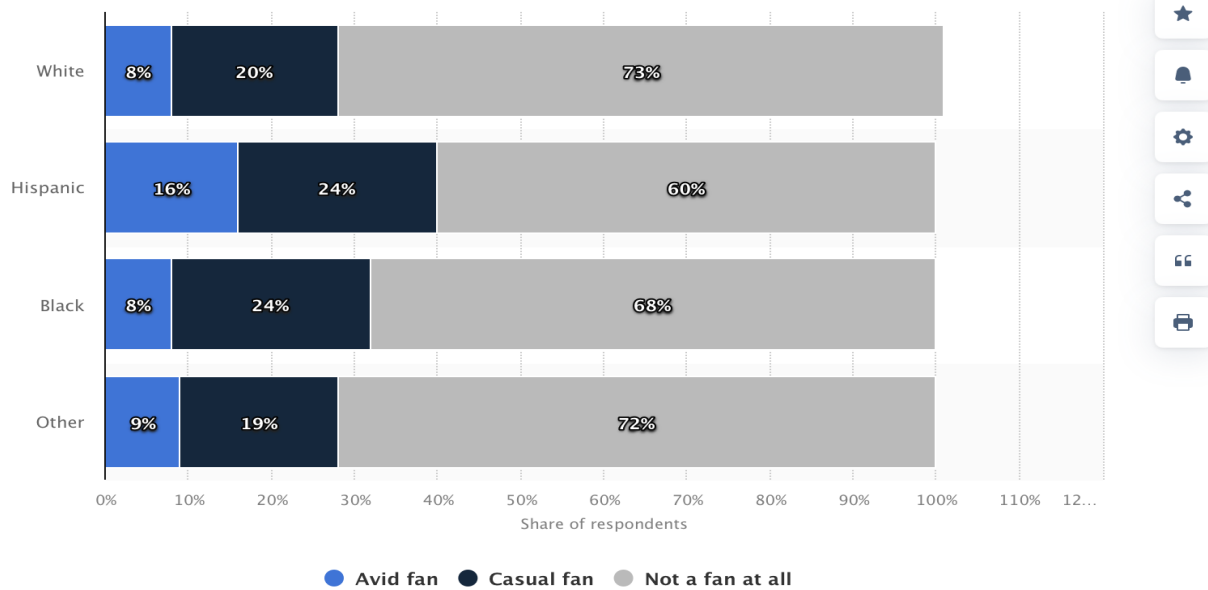
*(See sections “Strategies” and “Controls” for more details)*



## **Target Market**

As we mentioned before, we plan to create an activation program to promote the new MLS Next Pro team (Columbia FC Titans) while helping the Charlotte Football Club achieve its community impact goal by creating a food bank program. With our plan in mind, we have three different target market groups. Our target market groups are Hispanic families, college students, and high school students.

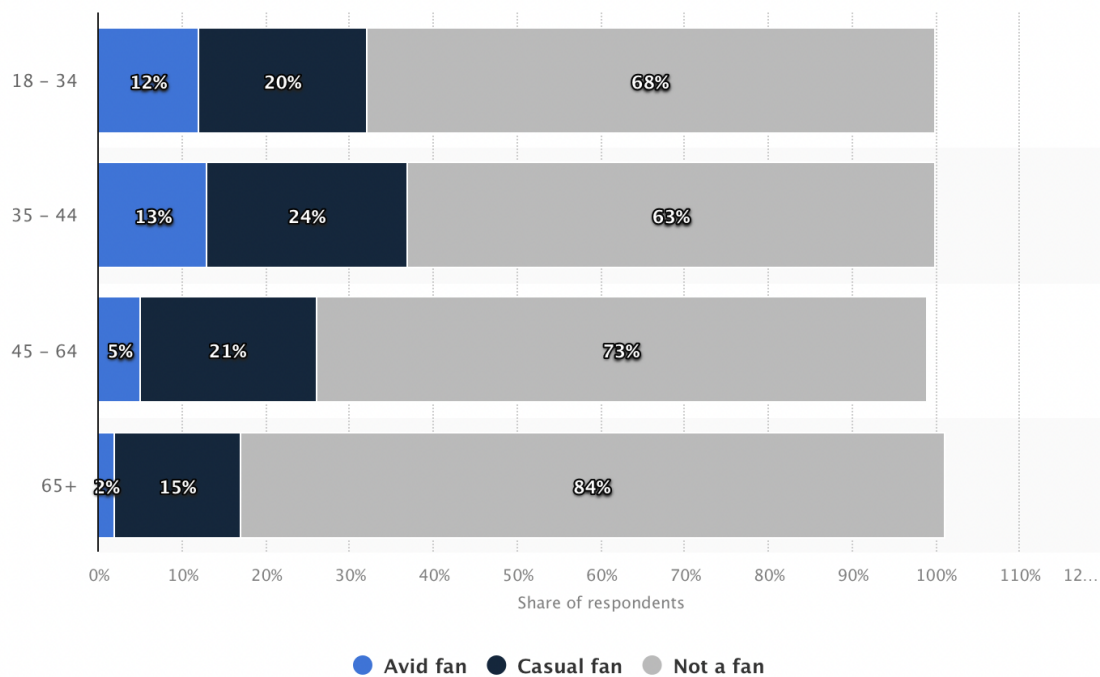
Jessica O'Neill, the former marketing & communications director of CFC mentioned that CFC's current target market is Hispanic. We kept their target market goal in mind while coming up with a strategy which is one of the reasons why Hispanic families are our target market. In 2021, *Morning Consult* conducted a poll to gauge the level of interest in MLS based on participants' ethnicity. According to the results of the poll, Hispanic individuals had the highest overall interest with 24% identifying as a "casual fan" and 16% identifying as an "avid fan."



**Details:** United States; September 13 to 16, 2021; 2,200 respondents; 18 years and older; Online survey

© Statista 2022

In the same survey, participants of varying age groups were asked to indicate their level of interest in MLS. The results showed that 33-44-year-olds had the most interest as 24% identified as a “casual fan” and 16% identified as an “avid fan.”

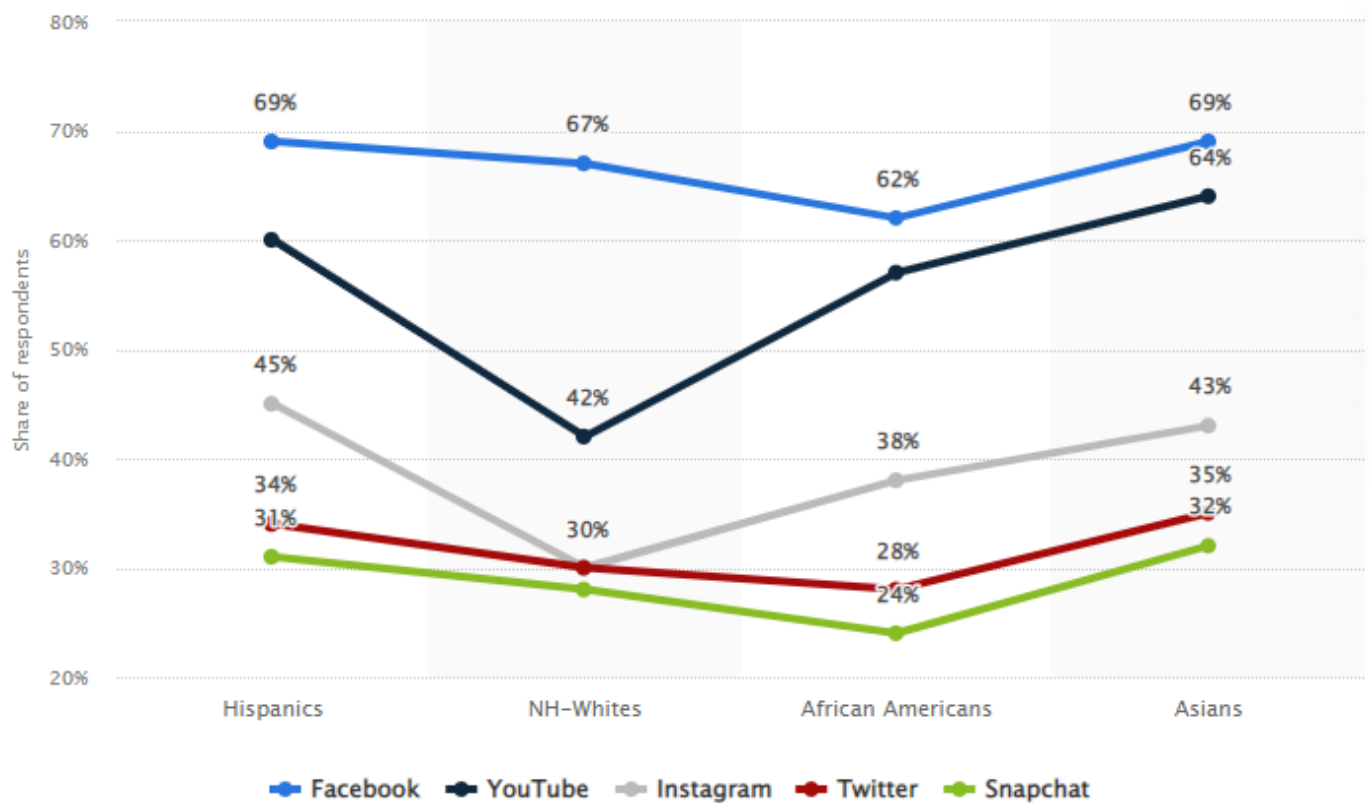


**Details:** United States; September 13 to 16, 2021; 2,200 respondents; 18 years and older;  
Online survey

© Statista 2022

Instead of targeting the entire Hispanic community, we are specifically targeting Hispanic families. The MLS Next Pro Team is only for 18 - 22-year-olds to participate and because of this, we need to make sure that we are also targeting the young adult age group. In terms of this target market goals, Hispanic families are very family-oriented and are loyal to brands that their entire family loves and recommends. Hispanic preferred channels of communication are text messages and other social media communication platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. The top social media platforms the Hispanic community uses the most according to research done by Statistica are Facebook and YouTube.

**Title: Most popular social networks among internet users in the United States as of March 2018, by ethnicity**



**Details:** United States; ThinkNow; March 2018; 1,500 respondents; 18 years and older; Online survey

© Statista 2022

The persona we created to represent this target market is the Rivera Family. The Rivera Family is a family of five who lives in Columbia, SC and are huge soccer fans, and enjoy watching movies together. Mother and Father, Luis and Angelina are from Cuernavaca, Mexico Their oldest son, Bryan is trying out for the University of South Carolina soccer team. The other two children, Ashley and Jessica play for their high school soccer team.

Persona 1: The Rivera Family

NAME

## Rivera Family



### Demographic



Columbia, SC

Married

3 children

2 Males, 3 Females

Nationality: Mexican

### Goals

- Find more family-friendly events.
- Explore more places in Columbia, SC

### Background

The Rivera family lives in Columbia, SC, and is a family of five. The father's name is Luis and the mother's name is Angelina both are from Cuernavaca, Mexico. Their three children were born in the states. Bryan who is 18 years old is the oldest in the family. Bryan hopes to make it into the USC soccer team. Ashley is the middle child and is 17 years old. Jessica is the youngest and she is 16 years old. Both Ashley and Jessica play for their high school soccer team. The family loves to watch movies together and go to soccer games together.

### Motivations

- Soccer and movie fans.
- Love attending sports events.

### Frustrations

- Not many family events in the area.
- Don't like spending too much money.

### Likes



Our second target audience is college students ages 18-22. We also choose college students as our target audience because college students fit the age requirement for the MLS

Next Pro Team which is 18 - 22 years old. The University of South Carolina is located in Columbia, SC and we are planning to use their soccer field for MLS Next Pro sports events. Therefore, we will have college students in close proximity to us. According to simply-analytics, there are 19,159 young adults ages 18-24 who are enrolled as an undergraduate in college in Columbia, SC.

Location	# Total Population, 2021 dem est	# School Enrollment   Enrolled i... ...rgraduate years, 2021 dem est
Columbia, SC	134,049	19,159

Created through Simply Analytics.

The top two methods college students prefer to communicate are through social media and text messages, and following up with email. According to Daily News Business, the top social media platforms used by college students are Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter (Stowers, 2021). In terms of goals, college students want to pass their courses and have a fun college experience by attending events and making friends. We created a persona to represent this target audience, the persona's name is Mike Williams, he is 21 years old and is currently a business major at the University of South Carolina. Mike is a huge fan of soccer and is an assistant soccer coach at a local recreation center. The social media platforms he uses are Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

Persona 2: Mike Williams

NAME

Mike Williams

TYPE

ESTJ



### Goals

- Get a business control specialist internship.
- Pass all of his final exams.
- Buy a new car.

### Background

Mike is currently a student at the University of South Carolina (USC) and is pursuing a Business degree. Mike has played soccer since he was 10 years old and is currently an assistant soccer coach at a recreation center. Mike is very familiar with the Columbia SC area as he has lived there his entire life.

### Demographic

♂ Male 21 years

📍 Columbia, SC

Single

Student

\$12,000 per year

### Motivations

- Wants to meet more friends.
- Want to get straight A's.
- Wants a good job out of college.

### Frustrations

- Not many soccer events in the area.
- Is struggling to get an A in his stats class
- His car keeps breaking down.

### Social Media



### Strategy

We have come up with four strategies for the activation. These strategies will help us target both of our target markets, Hispanic families and college students, and encourage them to participate in our events. The first strategy is to become the main sponsor for the Main Street Latin Festival. This strategy will help us reach the Hispanic community and especially Hispanic families as this is a family-friendly event. The Main Street Latin Festival is endorsed by the city of Columbia, SC and the purpose is to showcase the culture and vitality of the city's Latin community through food, art, dance, and music in a fun, and family-oriented environment. The event takes place in downtown Columbia. Companies such as Nationwide Insurance and Don Q Rum have sponsored the festival in the past and have had success. For example, on the testimony page of the festival's website, Nationwide mentioned that they received 300 names and addresses as a result of setting up a booth at the festival. As the main sponsor of the festival, we will set up multiple booths around the festival that offer mini-games to win mini prizes with CFCs and our MLS Next Pro Team, FC Columbia FC Titans logo on it. There will be other booths where people can purchase CFC merchandise and get free water cups to stay hydrated. Every booth will have information about the MLS Next Pro Team and how to get involved.

The second strategy is to hold a food bank competition at the Main Street Latin Festival. This will fulfill the Charlotte Football Club's goal of combating food insecurity in the Carolinas. Through social media promotions and advertisements, we will let the public know that there will be a food bank competition at the Main Street Latin Festival where people can donate non-perishable food products, and whoever donates the most will win free merchandise and tickets for their family to come to an MLS Next Pro Team tournament game and a Charlotte Football Club game. Second and third place winners will win free merchandise as well. Participants must donate at the music festival where the winners will be announced. The social



media platforms that will be used to promote the food bank competition are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. Because the Charlotte Football Club has a partnership with three local Charlotte stations which are WSOC-TV, Telemundo, and TV64 through these connections we can pay these stations to promote a video advertisement that promotes the music festival and the food bank competition during TV breaks and on new stations in Columbia, SC.

The third strategy is to set up an MLS Next Pro sponsor tent. We also want to specifically set up a tent at the USC tailgate event for the university's first soccer game of the season. This strategy will help us reach out to our college student target audience. People who attend USC's soccer games already have some interest in soccer and it's a perfect way to reach out to more soccer fans. The sponsor tent will include freebies and information about the MLS Next Pro team and how to support or join the team. The public is also able to donate non-perishable food at the sponsor tent booth as all donations will be donated to the local food bank.

The fourth strategy is to have party buses that will transport students from the USC campus to Williams Brice Stadium for the first MLS Next Pro game. All of the MLS Next Pro games will take place at the Williams Brice Stadium at USC. Implementing party buses into our marketing strategy will motivate and encourage college students to come to the games and support. Party buses offer an entertaining and exciting experience for college students to enjoy and they won't have to worry about spending gas money to attend the event. This strategy will help us attract more college students to support and even join the MLS Next Pro Team.

## **Budget**

Events	Cost		Media/Advertising	Cost	
Tailgate/Latin Fest tent	\$ 215.00		Local Television	\$ 35.00	(Cost/thousand)
4 party bus rentals	\$ 5,620.00			* 20	(thousand festival goers)
				\$ 700.00	
Merchandise	Cost				
100 t shirts	\$ 2,900.00				
300 phone/wallet adhesives"	\$ 498.00				

## Timeline

**Marketing Strategy Timeline:  
MLS Next Pro Team -  
COLUMBIA FC TITANS**

## **Controls**

Our first (and most important) SMART goal is to sell 5,000 tickets for our team's inaugural match. This goal is why we chose to target two of the most popular events in the city. Over 20,000 people attend Main Street Latin festival each summer and over 16,000 people attend the USC tailgates. Since these events already target the same individuals as we are, they will provide a multitude of opportunities for us to reach our goal.

In order to reach our second goal of at least 300 donated food items, we will be using a variety of media outlets such as social media and local news. Fortunately for my colleague and me, all Main Street Latin Fest Sponsors receive a special recognition post on the festival's Facebook and Instagram. This Extra exposure will help us penetrate the existing market of festival-goers. While contest participants will make the actual donations at the festival, in order to track our donation progress, participants will be asked to register up to a week before the festival date.

## **Bibliography**

Stowers, J. (2021, November 12). *Improve your social media marketing to college students*. Business News Daily. Retrieved May 5, 2022, from <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5099-college-social-media-marketing.html>

Wallace, A. (2017, September 18). *The game before the game*. The University of South Carolina. Retrieved March 6, 2022, from [https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2017/09/tailgating\\_research.php#.YnWz-\\_PMK3I](https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2017/09/tailgating_research.php#.YnWz-_PMK3I)

*Shirt design lab - design your own T-Shirts & More*. T. (n.d.). Retrieved April 5, 2022, from [https://www.customink.com/ndx/?PK=994800&SK=994800&prefer\\_singles=false#/next/summary/quote](https://www.customink.com/ndx/?PK=994800&SK=994800&prefer_singles=false#/next/summary/quote)

Contact. Main Street Latin Festival. (n.d.). Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <http://www.mainstreetlatinfestivalsc.com/contact/>

Spanberg, E. (2022, March 31). *Charlotte FC to bolster player development with addition of MLS Next Pro team in 2023*. Bizjournals.com. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/news/2022/03/31/charlotte-fc-to-add-mls-next-pro-team-in-2023.html>

## Variable Metadata

Path	MRI-SimmonsLOCAL » ENTERTAINMENT/LEISURE » SPORTS INTERESTS » SPORTS INTERESTS-LAST 12 MONTHS » MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER (MLS)
Definition	ENTERTAINMENT/LEISURE » SPORTS INTERESTS » SPORTS INTERESTS-LAST 12 MONTHS » MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER (MLS)
Source Agency	Simmons Research
Vendor	MRI-Simmons
Dataset	MRI-SimmonsLOCAL

### # Hispanic Or Latino Origin [B03003] | Total population | Hispanic or Latino

2019 (estimate calculated using 2013-2018 data for this variable)

American Community Survey US » Hispanic or Latino Origin » Hispanic Or Latino Origin [B03003]

Total population

B03003

Source Agency	US Census Bureau -- American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2019
Vendor	U.S. Census Bureau
Dataset	American Community Survey
Categories	Race & Ethnicity, Households, Family Type & Marital Status
Tagged	<a href="#">Ethnicity » Hispanic</a> <a href="#">Household Type » Families</a>
Data Source	US Census Bureau American Community Survey Data

dcloninger@postandcourier.com, D. C. (2020, September 14). *South Carolina approves \$22.5 million in renovations to Gamecocks' Football Stadium*. Post and Courier. Retrieved March

2022, from

[https://www.postandcourier.com/sports/south-carolina-approves-22-5-million-in-renovations-to-gamecocks-football-stadium/article\\_d2479db0-6a88-11e9-a504-0b7519d32e2f.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/sports/south-carolina-approves-22-5-million-in-renovations-to-gamecocks-football-stadium/article_d2479db0-6a88-11e9-a504-0b7519d32e2f.html)

Lange, D. (2022, February 16). *Major League Soccer interest in the U.S. by ethnicity 2021*.

Statista. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1097591/mls-level-of-interest-ethnicity/>

Anderson, A. R. (2020, September 4). *An inside look at the \$22 million upgrade to*

*Williams-Brice Stadium*. wltx.com. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from

<https://www.wltx.com/article/sports/williams-brice-stadium-upgrades/101-083a41f6-ec05-4c21-98ff-be0217f81ed2>

*SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT MANAGEMENT*. University of South Carolina. (2017).

Retrieved March 21, 2022, from

[https://sc.edu/study/majors\\_and\\_degrees/sport\\_and\\_entertainment\\_management.php#:~:text=South%20Carolina's%20sport%20and%20entertainment,States%20according%20to%202017%20ShanghaiRankings.](https://sc.edu/study/majors_and_degrees/sport_and_entertainment_management.php#:~:text=South%20Carolina's%20sport%20and%20entertainment,States%20according%20to%202017%20ShanghaiRankings.)

*2022 Best Colleges for Sports Management in South Carolina*. Niche. (2020). Retrieved April

2022, from

<https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/best-colleges-for-sports-management/s/south-carolina/>

*U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: Charlotte City, North Carolina*. US Census Bureau. (2021, July

1). Retrieved May 7, 2022, from

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/charlottecitynorthcarolina/POP060210>

*U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: Columbia City, South Carolina*. US Census Bureau. (2021, July 1). Retrieved May 7, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/columbiacitysouthcarolina>

Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2021, May 27). *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2018*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>

Johnson, J. (2021, April 29). *Topic: Internet usage of Hispanics in the United States*. Statista. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/1867/hispanics-in-the-united-states-internet-usage/#:~:text=An%20estimate%20of%2077%20percent,over%2034%20million%20that%20year.>

Budget Websites:

<https://www.price4limo.com/quotes/results.php?timestamp=20-4-2023&URL=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.partybuscolumbia.com%2F&servicetype=Sporting+Event&passengers=25&month=4&date=20&year=2023&phonenumber=&timefrom=19%3A30&hours=23%3A30&pickup=Columbia%2C+SC&destination=Columbia%2C+SC&agree=1>

[https://www.customink.com/ndx/?PK=994800&SK=994800&prefer\\_singles=false#/next/summary/quote](https://www.customink.com/ndx/?PK=994800&SK=994800&prefer_singles=false#/next/summary/quote)