Master's Thesis of Global Sport Management

The Influence of Issue Involvement on Fan's Response toward Professional Team's Black Lives Matter Initiatives
- The moderating effect of team identification -

NFL 프로팀의 BLM 캠페인에서
이슈 관여도가 팬의 반응에 미치는 영향

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Abstract

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According to a recent Nielsen report (2020), approximately three−quarters of sports fans believe that athletes had an important impact on the Black Lives Matter (hereafter BLM) movement. As society has evolved, the public is expecting organizations to show their commitment to voice up for social injustice issues that are heavily intertwined in the current days, which scholars defined as corporate social advocacy (CSA) (Dodd & Supa, 2015; Edelman, 2020).

To keep up with these expectations, not only athletes but also many professional teams have begun showing their support for BLM as CSA initiative. For example, athletes and teams displayed BLM slogans or allowed players to promote social justice messages on their uniforms (Wallace, 2020). Nevertheless, since past research mainly focused on the individual level of activism, there is a research gap in sports activism and CSA literature regarding professional teams acting as newly−emerged agents for social advocacy in sports.

Moreover, there has been limited empirical research investigating the perceptions of fans toward social justice issues.

Therefore, the research aims to extend the existing literature by examining the influence of its factors in organizational activism to better understand the fan response toward professional teams' CSA efforts. Previous studies highlighted the importance of individual characteristics in interpreting responses toward social justice campaigns (Mudrick et al., 2019; Seaton et al., 2021). To be specific, fan characteristics such as issue involvement and team identification have been identified as significant factors in predicting fans' perception of athletes taking a certain stance toward social issues (Arif, 2022; Lee & Moon, 2021; Ogiso et al., 2022).

A total of 218 subjects who are aware of the NFL team's BLM initiative for the last three years and currently living in the U.S. were recruited through an online survey. Measures of issue involvement (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006), team identification (Robinson & Trail, 2005), and attitude toward the team's CSA (Rodgers, 2003) were adapted from the previous literature. A confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify the criteria of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity

Most findings of this research aligned with the aforementioned studies presented in the literature review. First, issue involvement positively influenced the attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns. Secondly, fans who have a higher attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns revealed more intention to recommend their team to others. Third, people showed less negative behavioral responses when they held a positive attitude toward the team's

CSA initiatives. Lastly, the effects of issue involvement on the attitude toward the team's campaigns were stronger for those who had low team identification compared to the fan with high team identification.

The findings of this research shed light on the effects of the professional team's CSA campaign that may have on fans' attitudes. This research will contribute to our understanding of the underlying role of sports in cultural discourses that drive fans' behaviors regarding social justice issues in sports. For the practical implication, the finding of this study will be arguably valuable for professional teams when planning to take organizational decisions regarding sociopolitical issues.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Study Background

There is a strong belief among sports fans that sports has to remain free from politics because sports was considered an apolitical outlet for entertainment, which should be aside from political and social discourses (Coakley, 2015; Wakefield & Zimmerman, 2020; Butterworth, 2021). However, sports nowadays became a platform where athletes can engage in political "fightback" in the public sphere (Bryant, 2018; Moore, 2017) and potentially may reinforce public messages about social issues and remedies for those problems (Thorson & Serazio, 2018). Many researchers already admitted the closely intertwined relationship between sport and politics (Allison, 1986, 1993; Carrington, 2010; Boardley et al., 2015).

Since sports are taking significant importance in our society, many athletes these days began to show no hesitance in stepping up to express their personal opinions toward social issues and this phenomenon is called 'athlete activism' (Agyemang et al., 2010; Cunningham et al., 2021). Athletes' engagement with activism behaviors has been present for a long time in the sports field and gained lots of attention from the media and public. According to a recent Nielsen report (2020), approximately three-quarters of sports fans believe that athletes are an important influence in the

Black Lives Matter (hereafter BLM) movement. With the prevalent discourse regarding social justice issues around the world, public and sports fans have increasingly recognized sports as a means of steering social change and as a method for responding to diverse social problems (Agyemang et al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2021; Evans et al., 2020). Nowadays, sports become a path to arouse attention toward overlooked issues in our daily life. From this perspective, Ogiso and colleagues (2022) also argued that exposure to racial advocacy in sports can be an opportunity for the public to learn beliefs and values through get exposed to these matters. In the context of such societal roles of sports, athletes have started to show their advocacy toward social justice issues to raise awareness among publics even if they had to face significant social/financial crisis (Kaufman, 2008).

The most recent cases regarding athlete activism in sports that gained tremendous attention from academia was the U.S. national anthem kneeling protests during the 2016−2017 National Football League (NFL) season (Coombs et al., 2020; Boykoff et al., 2020; Kim et al.,2020). Colin Kaepernick, a former San Francisco 49ers quarterback, took a knee during the playing of the national anthem before games last season expressing his resistance in order to spotlight racial inequality and police brutality. However, his protests received tremendous attention from the media and other football players and precipitated a discussion in the United States about athlete activism (Lee & Cunningham, 2019). Moreover, due to the

contentious nature of the public commentary, NFL released an official statement that prohibits players from kneeling or protesting during the national anthem (Masisak, 2017).

With this reemergence of athlete activism in the mid−2010s, the iconic wave of athlete activism has stormed the sporting world unprecedently. Since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, public discourses about racial inequality have sparked again in U.S. societies and even spread out worldwide (Maqbool, 2020). However, this time, not only athletes but also many professional teams and leagues have shown action for BLM initiatives and took stance on this issue organizationally to support their players. Leagues such as MLB, NBA, and NHL held moments of silence, displayed slogans opposing racism, or allowed players to promote social justice messages on their uniforms to remain in the public eye of this social justice issue (Wallace, 2020). This incident provided not only the athletes but also the teams and league officials with a new avenue to interact with their fans and take part to ensure the issue of police violence against Blacks in America (Cunningham et al., 2021).

Unsurprisingly, the manifestation of activism in sports has received a wide range of responses (Seaton et al., 2022; Sanderson et al., 2012). Some of sports fans advocated and even asked for their players to leverage their social status to serve as voices of influence (King, 2017; Washington, 2017). Moreover, even though Kaepernick faced a deluge of criticism from the media, his jersey

was the top-selling jersey in the NFL (Heitner,2016). On the other hand, there were also some groups of fans who viewed taking a knee during the national anthem as unpatriotic action, and these fans often revealed intense resentment by refusing to patronize their teams that endorsed or allowed such player's protests (Cash, 2020). For those reasons, previous literature pointed out the risk of taking stance on social issues which may lead to undesirable consequences (Brown & Sheridan, 2020). For example, Watanabe and Soebbing (2019) found the presence of significant declines in attendance after protests. Therefore, it can be considered as a situation of risk management situation to the team that has to be dealt with their fans' response toward athlete activism and it should be reckoned with before implementing advocacy actions or campaigns (Anderson, 2020).

These mixed responses can be attributed to the characteristics of NFL fans that determine how they would react to athlete activism (Intravia et al., 2020). Previous literature indicated that characteristics of fans such as individuals' existing issue involvement (Ogiso et al., 2022) and team identification (Arif, 2022) play a significant factor in predicting fan's perception toward athletes taking a certain position in controversial topics. For example, when a topic holds personal significance or relevance for themselves, an individual is more likely to be involved with and take a stronger position on the topic, while those who do not tend to show a less favorable attitude are not (O'Keefe, 1990). Upon this

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background, this study investigates fans' responses toward professional teams' social advocacy by applying the concept of corporate social advocacy to the professional sports context.

1.2. Significance of Research

Although activism in sports is not a new phenomenon, it is necessary to focus on the shifting trend that even organizational stakeholders such as professional teams are also participating and supporting this movement officially. In the past, activism in sports mainly stemmed from the individual level. Thus, there is a need to investigate the effect of organizational engagements of professional teams in sports activism because they are increasingly acting as a pivotal role in professional leagues for raising awareness about social injustice issues. Since past research on activism in sports mainly focused on the individual level of activism, there is a research gap in activism and CSA literature about organizational engagement of professional teams in social advocacy campaigns. Moreover, there is a scarce number of empirical research investigating the characteristics of fans regarding their attitudinal process of such events and they were mainly conducted in qualitative methods. It is important to examine the influence of fan characteristics since fans may respond differentially toward their team's social advocacy initiatives due to their involvement with the issues, or their identification with teams. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand its impact on fan responses toward social

justice campaigns held during the season.

Moreover, scholars have debated where should the field of sport management be headed with its unique characteristics that can be differentiated from other fields (Agha & Dixon, 2021; Cunningham et al., 2021; Koba et al., 2021; Odio, 2021; Patatas et al., 2021 Rascher et al., 2021). However, most of the previous research has focused on the sport product and the relationship between sports, consumers, organizations, athletes, and fans. Thus, there is an urgent need to diversify the topics of sport management field and shed light on the role of sports and athletes that can play a significant role in shaping cultural discourse and encouraging positive social change for justice in our society. Girginov (2010) argued that "These types of cultural studies are essential to sport management because they shift the focus of research from discussion only about what makes people participate in sports, watch sports or how organizational structures are designed, but to understand the underlying cultural processes that drive and facilitate people's and organizations behaviors in sport." By answering the call for research from previous research, scholars will be able to explore the unnoticed area in sports management literature that has to be considered to gain a deeper understanding of professional sports and their fans. This study will eventually lead to new horizons of ways to profound our understanding of sports fans that are fundamental to the growth of scholarship that is culturally sensitive and allows for the accommodation of multiple

cultures, viewpoints, and values in sports.

Thus, based on this research background and the increasing significance of social justice issues in sports, investigating the fan's response to the team's social advocacy campaign will contribute to a better understanding of the responses of fans in sports activism literature. Moreover, understanding the influence of fan characteristics on attitude toward a team's social advocacy behaviors will be beneficial for sports management and CSA literature by providing insight for making appropriate decisions to maximize the social justice campaign's potential outcomes.

1.3. Purpose of Research

The main objective of this research is to investigate fans' response toward the professional team's social advocacy initiatives, more specifically, its mechanism of the attitudinal process via mediating role of attitude toward the team's social advocacy behaviors. Therefore, to achieve its research objective, this study investigates the influence of issue involvement on their attitude toward CSA behaviors with the moderating effect of team identification on fan responses to the team's BLM initiatives.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Activism in Sports

2.1.1) Backgrounds of Athlete Activism Waves

Sports has a long historical relationship with athletes stepping up for social justice issues. As determined by Edwards (2016), the history of activism in American sports can be stemmed from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the present mainly regarding racial equality. He argued that athlete activism is categorized into four different stages.

In the first wave, which began from 1900 to 1945, many athletes such as Jesse Owens, and Fritz Pollard made a voice for recognition and legitimacy of Black athletes' participation in sports. From 1945 to the early 1960s, the second wave was the era that desegregation of existing racial discrimination was held in professional leagues (i.e., the MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL) to include at least one Black player (Cooper et al., 2019). The third wave (i.e., 1964-1970) was largely fueled by the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of the Black Power Movement with Black athlete—activists such as Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Bill Russell, and Kareem Abdul—Jabba who sought to eradicate discrimination by engaging in various protests, boycotts, and other activities (Wiggins, 1992, Agyemang et al., 2020). The "Black Power" salute of Tommie Smith and John Carlos who were American 200 meters medalists in

the 1968 Mexico City Olympics bowed their heads and raised their fists with black gloves on the podium is the most famous protest regarding athlete activism (Boykoff, 2014, 2017).

However, athlete activism at the end of the 20th century notably decreased in the following decades and several scholars discussed many reasons to explain this period of stagnation (Agyemang, Singer & DeLorme, 2010; Cunningham & Regan, 2012; Powell, 2008). First of all, societal efforts have aimed to ease the inappropriate power structures that have long existed in sports (Cooper et al., 2009). Moreover, as the commercialization trend has begun to partner with athletes and leagues, Black athletes had more barriers making their voice to social justice issues since it can be a fatal damage to their economic success that can potentially jeopardize their sponsorships and endorsement contracts (Agyemang, 2012; Crowley, 1999; Houck, 2012; Johnson & Roediger, 2000). Moreover, the public and media heavily denounced introducing political messages into sports and this led athletes to avoid voicing up for contentious topics that may have negative impact on their images and sponsors (Cunningham & Regan, 2012). Thus, many athletes refrained from engaging in political and social issues at the end of the 20th century. Even Michael Jordan, one of the most marketable athletes during this time, refused to engage in political matters on multiple occasions, stating that "Republicans buy sneakers too" (Wallace, 2020).

Nevertheless, the resurgence of a fourth wave of athlete

activism in the United States began during the 2010s (Edwards, 2016). This wave placed an emphasis on bringing attention to the public through influential sports stars such as Venus Williams, LeBron James, and Colin Kaepernick to fight against repeated incidents of violence perpetrated on Black individuals by police officers. The Black Lives Matter movement was first emerged in 2013 as #BlackLivesMatter after George Zimmerman's murder of Trayvon Martin (Rickford & King, 2016). The engagement of high-profile Black athletes sparked a resurgence of activism within sports, especially on social media (Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015). Athletes became not hesitant to disclose their opinions for social justice issues, particularly during the rise of the BLM movement, in efforts to initiate important conversations via social media (Warren, 2021). Regarding this most recent wave of activism among sports actors in the BLM era, public commentary has found various responses to activism ranging from support and encouragement to death threats (Frederick et al., 2017; Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015). Given that the intersection of politics and sport can be met with agitation and controversy (Kaufman, 2008), responses commonly seemed to discredit activist athletes' efforts or distance commenters from activists (Frederick et al., 2017; Sanderson et al., 2016).

2.1.2) Emergence of New Agent for Social Justice Issue

Although the long history of interventions from organizational and media gatekeepers, many athletes these days sought their cause for social justice by utilizing social media (Sheffer & Schultz, 2013). However, it entered a stunning turnaround in the summer of 2020 as professional teams and league organizations decided to release advocacy statements that they will also support BLM via their official websites. They also decided to launch social justice initiatives at the organizational level. It has extended to an international campaign by league officials and teams during the spring and summer of 2020, showing solidarity against structural racism in sports (TePoel & Nauright, 2021). For example, the NFL released a short video of commissioner Roger Goodell admitting that the league has made wrong decisions in how it has dealt with NFL player protests of police brutality and systemic racism over the past few years. "We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest," he said. "We, the National Football League, believe black lives matter." This dramatic change in decision opposes the long history of those stakeholders' previous decisions that prohibited athletes to show their political stance in sports. Moreover, the NBA and WNBA put the Black Lives Matter slogan on their courts, with official statements that will be more committed to securing racial diversity and inclusion policy in their employment and business administrations (Bell & Funk, 2022).

This campaign hasn't been limited to just North America, various sports leagues such as English Premier League, Bundesliga, and Indian Premier League around Europe and Asia have shown solidarity to show their support of this movement as well.

Athletes and professional teams' collective decision to show support for their social justice issues to multiple audiences - team owners, league officials, media entities, fans, and the society at large - are demanding societal change for racial injustice (TePoel & Nauright, 2021). Moreover, in August 2020, another killing incident of a black man by police brutality, Jacob Blake Jr., who was killed while his three young sons sat waiting and watching for their father in the street. This tragedy aroused another need for solidarity among Milwaukee Bucks NBA players who decided to boycott their playoff game against Orlando Magic. Many other professional teams in MLB, MLS, and the WNBA also decided to cancel or postpone games to be part of Buck's messages (Mahoney & Reynolds 2020). As we can see from the previous literature, there has been a drastic transition in actors of sports activism from individual athletes to collective stakeholders. This clearly shows that even though professional teams have become one of the new and also the main agents for supporting social justice issues in the sports context. Most of the past research focus were on athletes themselves, not teams nor league committee. Therefore, focusing on the team as an important actor for social advocacy campaigns is essential to better understand its influence on fan groups.

2.2. Corporate Social Advocacy in Sports

2.2.1) Professional Team's Corporate Social Advocacy

This shift from individual support to a professional team's participation in social justice issues may be explained by the scope of corporate social advocacy (CSA). Corporate social advocacy refers to "aligning corporate with a controversial issue outside their normal sphere of CSR (corporate social responsibility) interest" (Dodd & Supa, 2015). The concept of CSA has become a more common notion these days due to the increasing public's expectations and demands for organizations to take stances on controversial sociopolitical issues (e.g., gun control, LGBTQ rights, or restrictions on immigration). This enabled organizations to engage with the public about the issues and to gain legitimacy by making a deeper connection with the public and the larger society (Austin et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2014, 2015; Gaither et al., 2018; Parcha & Westerman, 2020; Rim et al., 2020; Wettstein & Baur, 2016).

To follow this trend, many corporates have rapidly adapted to use social justice campaign communication as a powerful means to engage with their target groups by clarifying their stance on significant social issues (Gaither et al.,2018). In the same context, it could be also applied to sports especially in managing a professional team. As the public has become increasingly aware of social justice issues in their daily lives (Edelman, 2020), sport-related stakeholders also had to consider showing their stance on

social justice issues to meet the societal expectations of their fans. Since there has been extant literature about professional teams' CSR activities in the field of sport management, their CSA activities can be another unexplored area where sport management researchers would have to put their efforts to attract or maintain their fan groups (Cunningham et al., 2021).

Although CSA may be considered a concept derived from CSR in that the two concepts are tangentially related (Kotler & Lee, 2004), it has a distinctive difference from CSR because CSA accounts for controversial sociopolitical issues while CSR doesn't. CSR is likely to focus on the issues that are indisputable matters among the public (Carroll, 1991). This nature of CSR helps an organization to build a positive image from a wide range of stakeholders since this encompasses ethical and philanthropic responsibilities (Brown & Dacin, 1997). On the other hand, CSA usually involves highly controversial and even polarized issues and CSA activities usually take stance on one side toward a specific topic that speaks for one group of stakeholders but alienates another group at the same time (Dodd & Supa, 2014). This double-edged sword feature of CSA may results in boycott or support from the public which risks leaving stakeholders aside but also a chance that may attract new groups of people (Austin et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2014; 2015; Park & Jiang, 2020; Rim et al., 2020).

2.2.2) Influence of Fan Characteristics on the Team's CSA campaign

Previous literature regarding CSR has argued that organizations' CSR activities can lead the pQublic to entail positive attitudes toward the company, perceived identity, and intention to support the company (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; David, Kline, & Dai, 2005; Kim & Choi, 2012). Nevertheless, in terms of CSA, previous scholars acknowledged the divisive characteristics of CSA and examined how the public response varied due to their individual differences (Austin et al., 2019, Parcha et al., 2020). Smith (2019) showed that individuals who displayed higher levels of nationalism would respond with more negative emotions to activism behaviors in sports. This research suggests that the response of fans was different depending on the levels of fans' characteristics like nationalism, patriotism, smugness, etc. (Smith, 2019). According to the previous literature, in response to social advocacy, the public can be categorized into groups based on their attitudes and behavioral intentions: boycotters or supporters (Copeland, 2013; Dodd & Supa, 2014; Parry, 2017).

In the context of sports, Seaton and colleagues (2022) explored the diverse responses from fan by identifying four types of typical responses that social media users showed in reaction to the team's CSA messages. This study pointed out fan expression and identity as a means of understanding patterns within these conversations. Moreover, there was another research arguing that the effect of the BLM protests on consumer demand should be

directly related to the degree to which fans support the purported goal of the activism campaigns (Sperling & Vandegrift, 2022). Based on this previous literature, it is crucial for scholars to consider the individual characteristics of those fan groups to better understand the fan response toward professional teams' CSA efforts.

2.3. Issue Involvement

2.3.1) Role of Issue Involvement

Understanding the relationship between the issue and the perception of CSA is a very important factor to predict fans' responses toward professional teams' CSA campaigns. Previous literature examined outcomes of this relationship at the campaign level which reputation, organization-public relationships, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth intention are determined depending on differential perceptions toward CSA (Abitbol et al., 2018; Browning et al., 2020; Dodd & Supa, 2014; Leonidou et al., 2017). Due to the essential dichotomous nature of CSA campaigns, these efforts inevitably brought ambivalent responses from publics either by strengthening or undermining their attitude toward the organization (Browning et al., 2020; Ciszek & Logan, 2018; Park, 2021; Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020). One potential explanation for these differential outcomes may come in the form of how indivi52duals are involved in the team's social advocacy behaviors. This study adopts involvement theory to achieve an understanding of fans'

responses toward the team's CSA campaigns. Involvement theory demonstrates that a person's involvement with an object of interest is a determinant of how the person's expectations are formed, and the object is evaluated (Olson et al., 1996). Also, it also explained how beliefs and expectations for objects of interest can be affected by the level of involvement with the object (Tajfel, 1978).

Involvement can be referred to as the degree of commitment regarding an object, action, or experience (Gross & Brown, 2008), and perceived personal relevance (Kyle & Chick, 2002). As noted by Zaichkowsky (1985), involvement is "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interest". The level of involvement can be determined by individual identification with the object of interest. In addition, the level of involvement can act as an important moderator that explains the relationships between the variables within the behavioral decisions of individuals (Poiesz & Bont, 1995). Therefore, examining how much fans are involved with issues that their team's CSA promoting can be an important variable to predict their evaluation of social justice initiatives. Thus, issue involvement was considered as an indispensable variable for the professional team's CSA campaigns in this study.

Issue involvement refers to the extent to which the degree of the perceived connection between the individual and an issue is determined by the personal salience of the issue, and how it is

integral to personal value (Pfau et al., 2010; Costley, 1988). Similarly, Grau and Folse (2007) outlined it as "the degree to which consumers find the cause personally relevant to them." The personal relevance of an issue could derive from previous experience with the specific cause or the self-identity of an individual.

Finch and his colleagues (2015) identified issue involvement as one of the main factors for stakeholders' judgment of an organization's CSA. Within marketing and consumer research, involvement was also identified as one of the critical factors in a communication process (Antil, 1984; Krugman, 1966). This process can be explained by Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) that issue involvement can be an effective predictor for an individual's attitude formation and decision-making process. From this perspective, scholars found that individuals who are highly involved with an issue are expected to engage and process information more extensively due to the message that stimulated their attention and interest (Grau & Folse, 2007; Kim, 2014). Highly involved consumers analyze advocacy in detail while reflecting on prior knowledge about the issue, to evaluate the validity of the message regarding an issue. In contrast, individuals that are less involved with the issue consider other cues regarding their information processing that is usually not related to the issue itself (Petty et al., 1983). Thus, in line with this argument, the issue involvement of fans can be considered one of the

important factors that have to be considered to explore the impacts of an organization's CSA activities.

2.3.2) Conceptualization of Issue Involvement: Salience and Position

Although the role of issue involvement has gained wide ranges of attention from related research, most of the previous studies have approached the concept of this factor from a broad standpoint that may not be able to fully cover the topics of the CSA context. It is important in this study to further understand the complex nature of issue involvement due to the dinstinctive features of CSA context. For this reason, Li and colleagues suggested employing two dimensions of issue involvement to understand the effect on fans' perceptions toward professional team actions for social issues rather than using a unitary approach. To achieve its research objective, this study assessed the effects of issue involvement from a specific aspect: cognitive involvement.

Cognitive involvement pertains to an individual's level of engagement and relevance concerning the content of a message, particularly emphasizing the analytical or cognitive dimensions of a particular issue. This concept is interconnected with various other concepts that have been extensively studied, such as information sufficiency, levels of knowledge, and personal support (Kahlor, 2010; McKeever et al., 2016).

Research in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has investigated the concept of cognitive involvement. However, previous CSR research has often measured cognitive involvement by combining indicators of issue salience (i.e., the issue's importance to the individual) with measures of issue position (i.e., the individual's support for the issue) (Lee & Ahn, 2013; Lee, O'Donnell, & Hust, 2019). While this operationalization has been commonly used and validated in CSR studies, it is important to differentiate between issue salience and issue position, particularly in the context of Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA). For instance, in the case of a controversial social issue, an individual may pay significant attention to the matter because they support it, while another may display great concern about the issue due to complete disapproval of the situation. Considering that how individuals perceive an issue has been identified as a crucial factor influencing consumer behavior towards CSA (Austin et al., 2019), measuring cognitive involvement separately from the perspectives of issue salience and issue position can offer substantial advantages when examining fans' perceptions of a professional team's CSA campaigns.

Thus, this study will employ further dimensions of issue salience and position for issue involvement to appropriately explore the effect of fan's issue involvement on the attitude toward the professional team's CSA initiatives.

2.4. Team Identification

2.4.1) Social Identity Theory

Team identification is one of the most important factors that can predict fans' responses toward CSA campaigns of the professional team. In the context of CSA on a professional team, team identification can be described and further understood based on the social identity theory (Tajfel, Brown, & Turner, 1979). Tajfel (1982) defined social identity as "the individual's knowledge that belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership." Thus, social identity theory elucidates how individuals tend to categorize themselves and others within various social groups such as sports fans, political groups, or organizational members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Social identity theory focuses on the way individuals perceive and categorize themselves based on their social and personal identities (Burleson, 2003). This theory emphasizes the ideas of in-group and out-group relations and views identity as a function of the "value and emotional attachment placed on a particular group membership" (Burleson, 2003). Social identity theory posits that "(1) one socially identifies with a group when they perceive feelings of belonging with the group; (2) social identification occurs through categorization of other groups; and (3) as one identifies with a group, one tends to take on the attitudes and actions of the group" (Billings, 2014).

Sports functions as a target of social identification as fans form strong connections with other sports fans through symbols, traditions, and, rituals associated with the team. Sports fans who identify with a specific team are more likely to have positive attitudes toward fans of the same team and be more critical of rival teams and organizations (Billings, 2014). These in-group and out-group comparisons allow fans to cultivate stronger identities and differentiate themselves. Most importantly, the behavioral assimilation of fans who identify with sports teams is seen through the internalization of values and emotions shared by the group (Billings, 2014). To ensure group identification, many highly identified members will adopt the beliefs and behaviors of their team and are likely to replicate these behaviors and attitudes (Aiyla, 2022). Related research indicated that individuals who strongly associate themselves with specific social groups are prone to exhibit in-group favoritism (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Thus, it is likely for fans who are highly identified teams to show support and internalize what their teams are promoting through social justice campaigns. For this reason, it is crucial to consider social identity theory as a way to further understand the perceptions of fans.

2.4.2) Role of Team Identification

One of the most important factors of social identity theory is the idea of team identification. Defined as "the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sports organization" (Guo et al., 2019). Team identification has an important role in understanding the fan's attitude toward the professional team's CSA campaigns. As noted, social identity plays an important role in shaping the fan's response when professional teams take a stance on social issues.

Previous research in sports has stemmed primarily from the belief that highly identified and dedicated fans can ensure a direct impact on the economic success of teams and leagues (Foster & Hyatt, 2007). Since team identification has received much attention from various fields such as psychology and sport management literature, past research showed that team identification is one of the key factors that can generate psychological responses (Wakefield & Wann, 2006; Wann & Polk, 2007) and behavioral responses (Janssen & Huang, 2008; Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007; Matsuoka, Chelladurai, & Harada, 2003). For instance, Arif (2022) showed that fans with higher levels of team identification supported the ideas and opinions of the teams they follow regarding the Black Lives Matter Movement. This study investigated the role of team identification on basketball fan attitudes toward social media posts regarding a political issue, specifically the Black Lives Matter movement. Results of this research showed that fans who identify

strongly with certain players and teams are more likely to show support for politically involved Instagram posts shared by the aforementioned entities. Additionally, sports fans are more likely to gain knowledge and information regarding events shared via social media by athletes and teams. Consequently, in this study, fans responded positively to the question "Sports teams are qualified to share their opinions on political topics." Moreover, highly identified fans see teams as credible sources of news and information and perceive this information as more valid. As a result, this process led their fans to internalize this information and it can positively influence future opinions, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes (Chung & Cho, 2017). Extant literature suggests that highly identified fans are more likely to have positive attitudes toward their group (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003). Thus, in the sports context, this implies that the level of identification with a team is also likely to influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward a CSA initiative.

2.5. The Influence of Team Identification on the Relationship Between Issue Involvement and Attitude

2.5.1) Stakeholder Theory

Concerning the interrelationships between fans, team, and issue, this study employs stakeholder theory as a theoretical framework to investigate how fans deal with their identification with the team and their attitude toward the team depending on the level of their issue involvement.

This study goes beyond examining potential linear relationships and takes a step further by exploring the moderating effect of team identification factors on the relationship between issue involvement and fans' attitudes toward a professional team's CSA campaign message from the perspective of stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the relationships between organizations and stakeholders through various strategies, highlighting the organization's value (Reiter, 2016). It underscores the significance of categorizing stakeholders into meaningful groups to understand how different stakeholder groups influence business operations (Rowley, 1997).

According to stakeholder theory, CSA can serve as an effective strategy that helps establish and strengthen relationships with certain stakeholder groups while disengaging from those whose values no longer align with the organization (Gaither et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that taking a clear stance on political and social issues can have both positive and negative consequences

for corporations (Austin et al., 2019). Advocating for a cause can enhance loyalty among like-minded individuals and attract new stakeholders who share similar ideologies but were previously uninvolved (King, 2008). However, such advocacy can also invite criticism, boycotts, and protests, leading to the alienation of existing stakeholder groups whose beliefs may not align with the organization (Dodd, 2018). This previous finding suggests that fans will have to evaluate and decide how to handle the situation when their teams are supporting the issues they agree or not. during the season. According to the previous literature, fans who are agreed to their team's CSA will have more supportive responses especially when they are highly identified with the teams. This will enhance their beliefs and values to be affirmed by the actions of their supporting team, eventually leading to a favorable attitude toward the team's CSA initiatives. Highly identified fans will consider their team's actions as a way to strengthen their in-group values than less identified fans.

Thus, using issue involvement and team identification factors as the crucial characteristics of fans, this study examines the moderating effects of team identification on issue involvement and their attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns.

2.5.2) Interrelationship of Fan's Characteristics

Mudrick and colleagues (2019) explained shifts in response towards athletes who support political opinions that differ from that of a fan. When the opinions of fans and athletes aligned, Mudrick et al. (2019) found that fans were significantly more likely to affect their attitudes in a positive direction. Similarly, increased levels of player identification and strengthened para-social relationships also led fans to engage more with the athlete they identify with.

Certainly, sports fans often form relationships with players and teams and achieve a state of balance as a result of the associated positive sentiments. However, given that sports and politics involve affecting distinct entities, it is reasonable to suggest that the interaction of contrasting ideals could alter a fan's attitude toward an athlete. In other words, if an individual holds an athlete in high regard, yet that athlete is linked with something that is perceived as of low value (Dean, 1999), the fan of that team may be in a state of imbalance. So, it is of interest to assess the variance in attitudes and behavioral intentions of fans when they are exposed to the social justice campaigns like the BLM movements recently. It remains unexplored how the public would react based on their issue involvement and team identification when the team holds a stance on controversial issues that are in accordance with their beliefs.

2.6. Outcomes of CSA Perception

Despite the increasing public demand for CSA, Rim et al. (2020) argued that the public's responses to CSA can be polarizing due to the characteristics of CSA. CSA can result in a team boycott or team advocacy based on individuals 'values on the issue. In other words, teams can obtain important public support from CSA when their values on social issues are consistent with that of their key public. Research has shown that the public is more likely to perform patronage behaviors when the organizations' stance on an issue is consistent with theirs, such as advocacy behaviors (Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug, 2015). CSR research has focused on positive word of mouth (PWOM), which refers to the public's willingness to talk positively about products, services, or brands (Tong & Wong, 2014). PWOM has been considered a more trustworthy source compared to other information sources because PWOM is shared and disseminated by an individual without their interests (Chu & Kim, 2018). Such advantage drives organizations to invest a substantial amount of resources to increase publics' PWOM (Chu, Chen, & Sung, 2016). Researchers have found that the public's positive attitudes toward organizations' prosocial activities, such as CSR, are positively associated with their PWOM (Kim et al., 2017; Plewa et al., 2015).

Despite efforts to demonstrate their values through CSR or CSA, individuals do not always positively respond to such efforts (Abitbol et al., 2018). Previous research has demonstrated that negative

attitudes towards organizations' corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts can also lead to increased boycott behaviors (Uhrich et al., 2004). In the context of CSA research, scholars have also found that teams' advocacy actions can contribute to boycotts (Abitbol et al., 2018; Rim et al., 2020). For instance, Rim et al. (2020) discovered that conservative individuals were more likely to recommend boycotting Starbucks and Budweiser when these companies took a stance on President Trump's immigration ban in 2017. While some segments of the public may offer substantial support, others may display negative attitudes and engage in behaviors such as recommending boycotts on social media platforms (Wang & Siegl, 2018).

The current study adds to this body of literature by testing the relationships in the context of CSA. The current study examines issue involvement and team identification of fans and also adds positive and negative WOM intention as other behavioral intentions based on previous literature that has found a relationship between the attitudes and people's intention to talk positively or negatively about an organization (Cheng et al., 2006; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014).

2.7. Research Model and Hypothesis

2.7.1) Research Model

Based on the extant literature review and empirical evidence discussed specifically in the literature review section, a research model was proposed. The research model depicts the effects of issue involvement on fan's positive word-of-mouth and boycott intention as a result of attitude toward the team's social advocacy.

More specifically, team identification was examined to investigate its moderating role between the issue involvement and attitudes toward the team' CSA. Figure 1. shows the overall research model of this study in detail.

Figure 1 Research Model.
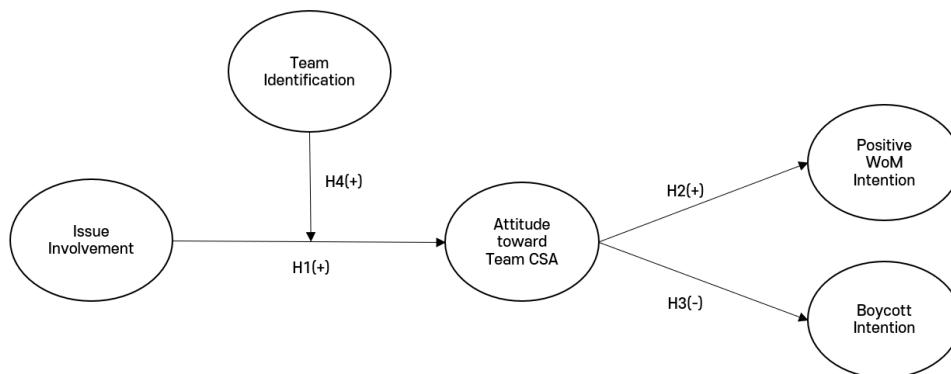
2.7.2) Research Hypotheses

To test and justify the proposed research model, research hypotheses were formulated based on the preceding theoretical background and empirical evidence discussed in the literature review section. The following research hypotheses postulate a causal model explicating the relationships among issue involvement, team identification, attitude toward the team's BLM campaigns, and fan response (i.e., positive word-of-mouth and boycott intention). Thus, for this study, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Issue Involvement will positively influence the attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns.

H2: An attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns will positively influence positive word-of-mouth intention.

H3: An attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns will negatively influence the boycott intention.

H4: Team identification will have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns.

Chapter 3. Method

This section explains the methods used to test the proposed research model and hypotheses. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of characteristics of fans on attitude toward Team CSA and the resulting impact on positive/negative word-of-mouth intention. To achieve this objective, the following methodological steps were used.

3.1. Participants and Data Collection

The target population for this study was individuals aged more than 18 years old who have heard or known about the NFL team's BLM campaigns for the last three years. In addition, political orientation was also divided into three groups (e.g., Democratic, Republican, and Independent). Demographic characteristics were not restricted and considered appropriate as the primary objective of the study was to develop an initial understanding of the population and examine the causal relationships among the proposed variables (Calder et al., 1981).

Data collection was obtained using convenience sampling through Prolific online panel recruitment services between 2023.02.01~2023.02.05. Based on the advantages suggested by Tan and Teo (2000), an online survey was conducted as such sampling technique is inexpensive and can elicit faster responses as the questionnaire can be completed at anytime, anywhere. In

addition, participants involved in the study participated voluntarily and completed the survey in a self-administered manner.

3.2. Item Development

Survey questionnaire items were developed based on extant previous literature with an iterative procedure of expert and scholarly review to ensure survey questionnaire items accurately represented and measured the proposed variables. All variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale since seven scale points best accommodate for response error (Krosnick & Fabrigar, 1997) and higher scores represent that the participant showed stronger agreement towards the stated question. The survey questionnaire consisted of questions associated with all the variables. Lastly, the survey questionnaire needed to be pretested to ensure all survey items were appropriate in measuring the intended variables. Thus, a pilot test was conducted to identify potential problems associated with the questionnaire design and based on the feedback, was further revised and finalized.

3.2.1) Independent Variables

Issue Involvement was measured by two conceptual dimensions as issue salience and issue position on a 7-point semantic-differential scale. Issue salience was measured through six items adapted from Becker-Olsen et al. (2006). Participants were asked to "indicate the degree to which you feel relevance toward the

Black Lives Matter movement is…" followed by issue salience items. Items include "Does not matter to me-Matters to me," and "Nonessential- Essential." Issue position was measured through four items. Participants were asked to "indicate the degree to which you posit yourself toward the Black Lives Matter movement that it is …" followed by issue position items. Issue position items include "Not beneficial to society-Beneficial to society," "Harmful to society- Benign to society," "Negative-Positive," and "Undesirable-Desirable."

3.2.2) Moderating Variable

Team Identification was measured by a four-item scale adapted from Robinson and Trail (2005). Items include "I consider myself to be a "real" fan of this team," "I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of this team," "I am a committed fan of this team," and "Being a fan of this team is very important to me." Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree).

3.2.3) Dependent Variables

Attitudes toward Team CSA were measured by the average of four semantic differential items ranging from -3 to 3, "Would you say that your team taking a stance to support the Black Lives Matter movement would be…." The terms used were "Unfavorable-Favorable," "Negative-Positive," "Bad-Good,"

and "Dislike-Like." The average for the respondent was used to ensure that all the psychosocial variables were in a comparable -3 to 3 metrics.

Positive Word of Mouth measure items were utilized from the previous literature (Zeithaml et al., 1996). The original scale was designed for positive word-of-mouth about brands, thus slight modifications were made to the items to align them with the present study's context. The three items include "I will spread positive word of mouth about my team to others", "I will recommend my team to those close to me", and "I will spread positive information about my team." Scale items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree).

Boycott intention was measured by a three-item scale adapted from Nalzlida et al. (2018). Items include "I will boycott this team," "I would discourage others to support this team," and "I want to boycott this team." Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree).

3.2.4) Covariates

We also controlled for the politicization of sport, as previous studies have suggested that political orientation can influence the effectiveness of CSA (Austin et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2014; Furman et al., 2020). Items were measured by a three-item scale

adapted from Thorson et al. (2018). Items include "It is appropriate for athletes/teams to speak publicly about political subjects," "Professional sports teams should prohibit athletes from publicly discussing politics," "I am a committed fan of this team," and "Sports and politics should not mix." Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree).

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

To carry out the objective of the study and to test the proposed research model and hypotheses, the statistical program AMOS 25.0 and SPSS 26.0 were employed to analyze the collected data. Data analysis followed four main statistical analyses in a systematic procedure. The description of each analysis is explained in order.

3.3.1) Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarize the general characteristics of a given data set, thus descriptive analysis allows for a better understanding of each measured variable and highlights potential relationships among the variables. In this study, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to find the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of each measured variable.

3.3.2) Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis assesses the reliability of the survey questionnaire and tests whether the survey items used were coherent and accurately measured the variable of interest. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the survey responses and test scale reliability based on the average inter-item correlation. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommended a minimum alpha coefficient of 0.70 to be considered an acceptable level of consistency, while values below 0.5 are often considered unacceptable.

3.3.3) Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) tests the reliability and validity of the measurement model, assessing whether the data collected fit the proposed model as intended. More specifically, convergent and discriminant validity tests are used to assess the construct validity of the measurement model (Joreskog, 1966). Convergent validity indicates the internal consistency for each variable and how well each variable is explained by its indicators, this can be assessed by Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Hair et al., (2009) reliability is obtained when CR values are greater than 0.7 and AVE values greater than 0.5 are considered acceptable. Additionally, discriminant validity compares the amount of variance among each variable to indicate that the different constructs proposed in the

measurement model are unrelated. Discriminant validity is considered achieved when the square root of the AVE value is greater than the correlations between each variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

3.3.4) Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis is a multivariate, hypothesis−driven statistical technique used to verify the proposed structural model (Bryne, 2011). In this study, SEM is used to test the proposed hypotheses, by showing the relationships among the multiple variables proposed in the research model. To achieve this, the structural model is first evaluated for the goodness of fit, then individual paths within the structural model are evaluated to examine the degree to which the interrelationships among the variables exist.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1. Respondent Demographics

A total of 240 participants completed the questionnaire, of which 22 invalid responses were detected and eliminated. Thus, the remaining 218 responses represented the final data set and were carried out for data analysis.

The basic demographics of respondents were measured through six major items including gender, age, education, race, income, and political affiliation. In the aggregate sample, 106 (48.6%) of the respondents were male and 112 (51.4%) female. The age group of 20-29 (27.1%) was the highest group among other age groups and around 70% of the respondents' education was a bachelor's degree or higher. Majority of participants' race was White/Caucasian(77.5%) which resembled the real fan group of NFL. Economic status was measured by monthly income with approximately 70% of the sample with a monthly income of $4000 or less, while approximately 30.3% earned $5000 or more. 43.1% of participants were considering themselves as Democrats for their political affiliation, while Republicans were 24.3%. Detailed information on the demographic information of respondents is demonstrated in table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Category	Items	n	%
Gender	Male	106	48.6
	Female	112	51.4
Age	Under 20	1	0.5
	20-29	37	17.0
	30-39	59	27.1
	40-49	51	23.4
	50-59	44	20.2
	More than 59	26	11.9
Education	Some high schools or less	0	0.0
	High school diploma or GED	15	6.9
	Some college, but no degree	37	17.0
	Associate or technical degree	21	9.6
	Bachelor's degree	104	47.7
	Master's Degree	28	12.8
	Graduate or professional degree (Ph.D., JD, etc.)	13	6.0
Race	Asian	11	5.0
	Black/African American	24	11.0
	Hispanic/Latino	7	3.2
	Native American/ American Indian	1	0.5
	White/Caucasian	169	77.5
	Others	6	2.8
Income	Less than $1000	16	7.3
	More than $1000 and less than $2000	33	15.1
	More than $2000 and less than $3000	35	16.1
	More than $3000 and less than $4000	47	21.6
	More than $4000 and less than $5000	21	9.6
	More than $5000	66	30.3
Political Affiliation	Democrats	94	43.1
	Republicans	53	24.3
	Independent	66	30.3
	Another Party	2	0.9
	No preference	3	1.4

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics by questionnaire items were acquired including 6 items of issue involvement, 4 items of team identification, 4 items of attitudes toward team's CSA, 3 items each for positive word of mouth and boycott intention, and 3 items for the politicization of sport. All items except issue involvement and attitudes toward team's CSA were measured using a 7-point Likert scale and others were measured using a -3 to 3 semantic scale for the measurement. The results of means and standard deviations indicated that, for the issue involvement, respondents showed mean scores of 0.49 (SD ±1.62). For attitudes toward the team's CSA mean scores were -1.01 (SD ±1.77). For the fan responses, respondents tended to have a high level of positive word-of-mouth intentions with mean scores of 5.07 (SD ±1.46), while boycott intention was measured at 1.71 (SD ±1.07). Lastly, for the team identification, respondents tended to evaluate measurement items very highly with mean scores of 5.57 (SD ±1.10).

In addition, the normality of each variable was examined by skewness and kurtosis analysis. The absolute value is recommended to be less than 3 for skewness and 7 for kurtosis. All values proved to be less than the recommended value, thus measurement items used in this study suffice data normality. Detailed information on descriptive statistics of measurement items is demonstrated in table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Issue Involvement	-3	3	.49	1.62	-.53	-.64
2. Attitude toward the team's CSA	-3	3	-1.01	1.77	.69	-.49
3. Positive Word of Mouth	1	7	5.07	1.46	-.70	.05
4. Boycott Intention	1	6	1.71	1.07	2.00	4.27
5. Politicization of Sport	1	7	3.47	1.84	.28	-1.07
6. Team Identification	2	7	5.57	1.10	-.85	.57

4.3. Reliability Test

In addition, to test the reliability of the measurement, Cronbach's α coefficient was adopted. All values were above 0.7, exceeding the standard level of internal consistency proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Values ranged from 0.91 being the lowest for politicization of sport and team identification and 0.98 being the highest for attitude toward the team's CSA.

Table 3. Reliability Test of Measurement Items

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's a
1. Issue Involvement	6	.95
2. Attitude toward the team's CSA	4	.98
3. Positive Word of Mouth	3	.96
4. Boycott Intention	3	.94
5. Politicization of Sport	3	.91
6. Team Identification	4	.91

4.3. Correlation Analysis

To test the correlation between the variables, correlation analysis was conducted. In general, it is recommended to have a correlation coefficient that is less than 0.80 to avoid the multicollinearity issues between measured variables. All variables showed a coefficient value less than recommend value but except the relationship between issue involvement and attitude

toward the team's CSA showing a value of 0.84. Previous research also suggested that values less than 0.85 (Kline,1998) and even 0.90 (Lim et al., 2021) are acceptable to use for the validated research findings. Thus, it has been proven that all variables are adequate for the following analysis.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Issue Involvement	1				
2. Attitude toward the team's CSA	.84***	1			
3. Positive Word of Mouth	.56***	.67***	1		
4. Boycott Intention	-43***	-.57***	-.49***	1	
5. Politicization of Sport	-.63***	-.61***	-.41***	.37***	1

4.5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

4.5.1) Model Fit Test

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement model, with statistical tests carried out to determine model fit. In general, the recommended value for $\chi 2$/df is 3.0 or less; for CFI and TLI 0.9 or higher; while a recommended good-fit for SRMR and RMSEA are values less than 0.1 and 0.08 respectively (Byrne, 2011; Hair et al., 2009; McIver & Carmines, 1981). Results of CFA for this current study confirmed model fit, thus indicating that the proposed model was plausible for analysis. Detailed information on goodness of fit indices for the measurement model is demonstrated in table 5.

Table 5. Goodness of Fit Indices for Measurement Model

$\chi 2$	df	Normed $\chi 2$	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
335.083	142	2.360	.9661	.968	.079	.034

4.5.2) Discriminant Validity Test

To establish discriminant validity, the AVE was calculated, as the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and tested to confirm the value for each variable was higher than any correlation coefficient with every other variable in the model. Confirmation of discriminant validity demonstrates that all measured constructs in the model are significantly different except the issue involvement and attitude toward the team's CSA. Although it does not fit with

the recommend standard of discriminant validity, it has been proven to be acceptable in the previous correlation analysis, which is another established way to test it. Thus, this research has suggested that discriminant validity has been established (Gefen, Straub, & Bourdreau, 2000). Results are outlined in table 6.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Test of Constructs

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Issue Involvement	**.56**				
2. Attitude toward the team's CSA	.71	**.86**			
3. Positive Word of Mouth	.31	.45	**.81**		
4. Boycott Intention	.18	.32	.24	**.84**	
5. Politicization of Sport	.40	.37	.17	.14	**.52**

4.5.3) Convergent Validity Test

In order to determine liability of the model, reliability and validity tests were carried out. Reliability was estimated using composite reliability, with results showing that all variables were above the recommended 0.7 level (Hair et al., 2009). Convergent validity was achieved as the average extracted variances (AVE) values were above the 0.5 level indicating that more than half of the variances observed would be accounted for by the hypothesized variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). CFA confirmed that all AVE values and factor loadings showed greater values than the recommended 0.5 (Hair et al., 2009) demonstrating all constructs in the measurement model displayed adequate convergent validity.

Table 7. Reliability and Validity Test of Constructs

Latent Variable	Item	λ	Composite Reliability	AVE
ISSUE	ISSUE1	.94	.88	.56
	ISSUE2	.95		
	ISSUE3	.75		
	ISSUE4	.95		
	ISSUE5	91		
	ISSUE6	84		
ATT	ATT1	.98	.96	.86
	ATT2	.98		
	ATT3	.98		
	ATT4	.96		
PWOM	PWOM1	.96	.93	.81
	PWOM2	.94		
	PWOM3	.96		
BOY	BOY1	.98	.94	.84
	BOY2	.88		
	BOY3	.92		
POL	POL1	.91	.73	.52
	POL2	.89		
	POL3	.86		
TEAM	TEAM1	.89	.87	.64
	TEAM2	.91		
	TEAM3	.88		
	TEAM4	.77		

4.6. Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was adopted to measure the structural model and identify the interrelationships among issue involvement, attitude toward team's CSA, positive word-of-mouth, boycott intention, team identification, and politicization of sport.
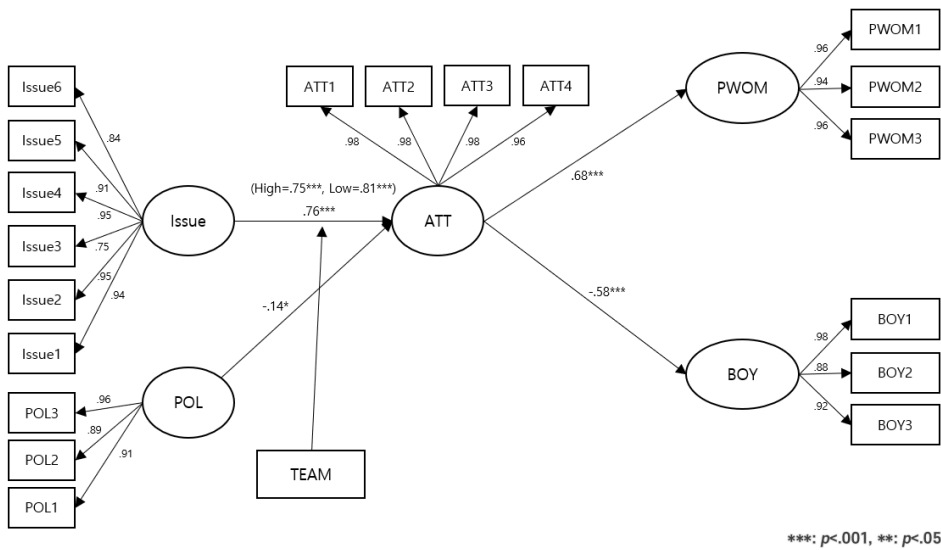
4.6.1) Model Fit Test

Overall goodness of fit for the structural model was examined to ensure data adequately fit the proposed model. Results showed that normed $\chi 2$ was 2.339 which was within the suggested value of less than or equal to 3 (McIver & Carmines, 1981) CFI and TLI reported 0.961 and 0.967 respectively; while values for RMSEA and SRMR showed 0.079 and 0.064 which all indicated good model fit (Byrne, 2011; Hair et al., 2009; McIver & Carmines, 1981). The results are displayed in Table 8.

χ^2	df	Normed χ^2	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
343.859	147	2.339	0.961	0.967	0.079	0.064

Table 8. Goodness of Fit

4.6.2) Path Coefficients for Structural Model

Analysis of the path coefficients was conducted to test the research model for each variable by calculating standardized path coefficients, standard error, t-value and p-value.

First, the structural path between issue involvement and attitude toward the team's CSA has been examined. The result showed that issue involvement (β=0.759, p < .001) positively influenced the attitude toward the team's CSA.

Secondly, the structural path between attitude toward the team's CSA and positive word of mouth intention has been examined. The finding indicated that attitude toward the team's CSA (β=0.678, p < .001) positively influenced positive word of mouth intentions.

Lastly, the structural path between attitude toward team's CSA and boycott has been examined. The result also showed that there is a negative influence on the boycott intention (β=-0.578, p < .001).

The results of the interrelationships among the variables mentioned above was consistent with the structural model without control variable. By considering control variables, it can be

beneficial to draw more plausible interpretations of the results as control variables enable researchers to elaborate their findings since parameter estimates will be adequately considered and explain the relationship between the variables in well-mannered by eradicating any ambushed bias that may affect the finding the study (Bentain et al., 2005; Cheung & Lau, 2007; Singh & Sharma, 2016; Williams et al., 2009). Thus, the politicization of sport was treated as control variable and it showed a negative influence ($\beta=-0.137$, $p < .01$) on the attitude toward the team's CSA. This result suggests that fans who think sport should not be mixed with politics tend to evaluate the efforts of the team's CSA initiatives as negative.

Thus, under the control variable, H1, H2, and H3 has been accepted as proposed in the literature review. Detailed information of path coefficients can be found in table 9.

Table 9. Standardized Path Coefficients for Structural Model

Structural Path	Path Coefficient	S.E.	t.	p.	Hypothesis
Issue -> ATT	0.759	0.057	13.985	***	Accepted
ATT -> PWOM	0.678	0.045	12.537	***	Accepted
ATT -> BOY	-0.578	0.037	-10.106	***	Accepted
POL -> ATT	-0.137	0.052	-2.617	**	

***: $p<.001$, **: $p<.01$

4.6.3) Moderating Effects of Team Identification

This research conducted a multigroup analysis to examine the moderating effects of team identification on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward team's CSA. The groups were distinguished into two groups based on the mean value of participant's team identification responses. A 114 out of 218 participants were categorized into groups as high level of team identification, while others, 104 participants, were allocated to the group with low team identification.

Before testing the moderating role of team identification on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward team's CSA, invariance test has to be conducted. This testing assesses the equivalence of a construct across groups and demonstrates that a construct has the same meaning to those groups. Previous literature emphasized the need to consider measurement invariance because it is a prerequisite to comparing group means(Jager, Putnick & Bornstein, 2017; Bornstein, 1995). The invariance test of this study showed that equivalency between high and low group of team identification is confirmed. Thus, suggesting that it is plausible to conduct path coefficients analysis for structural models with moderating variable.

Model	$\chi 2$	df	p
Unconstrained Model	561.630	96	***
Measurement Weight Model	579.217	82	***
Comparison Test	Δ17.587	14	.226

Table 10. Invariance Test for Research Model

After testing the path coefficients for the research model to examine the moderating role of team identification on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward the team's CSA. The result indicated that there was a significant moderating effect ($\Delta \chi^2$ (1)=4.311 p<.038) of team identification. However, as opposed to expectation, the group with low team identification (β=0.812) had a stronger influence than the group with high team identification. It suggests that team identification has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward the team's CSA. Thus, H4 was not accepted according to the result outcomes.

Path	$\Delta \chi^2$ Test	Team Identification	Path Coefficient	Hypothesis
Issue -> Attitude	$\Delta \chi^2$(1)=4.311 p<.038*	High	.757	Not Accepted
		Low	.812	

Table 11. Summary of Path Coefficients for Research Model

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. General Discussion

It is becoming more common for athletes to open their personal beliefs and opinions to their fans and the public. An increasing number of athletes started to perceive their role as leaders for the community and leverage their sporting platform to highlight the public issue they care about in their daily lives (Agyemang et al., 2020). Thus, it is inevitable for their teams to deal with this situation whether they support or not about the issues because of multifaceted reasons. One of the reasons may be the public pressures created by social movements and it makes many sport organizations to be part of it by showing stance (Hensmans, 2003). As we could see from the 2020-2021 season, there is always a potential voice of call from their athletes or even from their fans to show their commitment and actions toward social justice issues. Yet, despite these phenomena in the sports, there has been limited discussion among the previous literature (Coakley, 2015). Moreover, since most sports activism research has been qualitative in nature (Kaufman, 2008; Agyemang et al., 2020; Flores, 2022), this study sought to use quantitative methods to explore the fan's evaluation and attitude toward the professional team's social justice campaigns. Upon this background, this study attempted to provide insightful findings to develop a suitable understanding of

their supporting fans and potential fan groups among the public.

The main purpose of the current study was to explore the fans' responses toward professional teams' BLM initiatives in terms of their intrinsic characteristics. To be specific, this study aimed to explore the influence of issue involvement of fans on the attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns. Furthermore, the study attempted to examine the influence of team identification on the relationship between issue involvement and the attitude toward the team's CSA. Since these variables are indispensable factors when considering the nature of social justice campaigns in professional sports, this study contributed to the understanding of fan perceptions toward their team's CSA initiatives. Detailed explanations regarding the finding of this research are discussed below.

Most findings of this research aligned with the aforementioned studies presented in the literature review. First, issue involvement positively influenced the attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns. As previous literature argued that people who are highly involved with a cause hold strong and positive perceptions toward the cause and it leads the fans to possess favorable attitudes toward an organization's actions for the cause (Haley, 1996; Haley, Kim & Lee, 2008; Lu et al., 2015). According to the findings, the result showed that people are likely to show a higher attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns when they were more involved with the BLM issues. Thus, it suggests that it is important to

consider whether their fan groups or even the public take great interest in the issues that teams are going to promote in advance. This finding is significant point to consider particularly in the sport activism and CSA literature as engagement with the supporting issue is the most critical factor that determines the evaluation and attitude of fans toward the professional team's initiatives. In addition, the professional teams' CSA campaigns can be a tool for fans with high involvement in a cause to strengthen their certainty about evaluating their team's decision to support the cause which helps their fans to form and shape their opinions about the social justice initiatives (Lu et al., 2015). The result of this finding confirms that a fan's involvement with an issue is a critical determinant of how the team's campaign is evaluated and the person's expectations are formed. Thus, based on this research finding, it will be critical for professional team managers to clearly understand their fan characteristics and whether most of them will show support for their campaign or not.

Secondly, this research hypothesized that the attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns will influence fans' positive word-of-mouth intention based on the previous literature (Abitbol et al., 2018; Rim et al., 2020). It is critical to draw positive behavioral responses from fan groups because taking a stance on controversial issues is considered a double-edged sword that may harm the reputation of the team (Austin et al., 2019). Thus, this study explored the effect of attitude toward the team's CSA on PWOM

intention to investigate the behavioral response of fans. The results of the study showed that fans who have a higher attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns revealed more intention to recommend their team to others. This finding is in line with previous literature that the public's positive attitudes toward organizations' prosocial activities are positively associated with their PWOM (Kim et al., 2017; Plewa et al., 2015). It is evident that formulating a favorable attitude toward what their teams are promoting is an important process to bring beneficial behavioral responses from their fans. It shows that professional teams' CSA campaigns may be able to draw patronage behavior from their fans when their efforts on social issues are favorably evaluated. Moreover, CSA campaigns can be a powerful tool to drive the public's PWOM toward teams by shaping positive reputations among fans. Thus, this result indicates that formulating a strategic approach that can enhance positive attitude formation toward the team's efforts regarding social justice issues can increase positive attitudes toward the team's CSA campaigns among fans.

Third, this study also examined the additional behavioral response which is boycott intention along with the PWOM intentions to investigate the negative outcomes of fans. The results of this current study were also consistent with the previous research (Li et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). The finding indicated that people showed less negative behavioral responses when they held a positive attitude toward the team's CSA initiatives. This result

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suggests that drawing a positive attitude from fans will be one of the most important factors to cope with possible negative responses when planning CSA campaigns in the professional sports context. Due to the divisive nature of CSA campaigns and social justice issues (Austin et al., 2019; Parcha & Westerman, 2020), it is significant to understand how the team could deal with the fan groups who are opposed of the team's stance. It has been examined that when the organization was perceived to be psychologically closed to the individual, it led them to have a higher buycott intention and the lower boycott intention (Xu et al., 2022). Thus, to mitigate the potential negative influence of implementing social justice campaigns, formulating a positive attitude toward the team's CSA among fan will be the most important point for the professional teams. It can be achieved by several approaches and detailed managerial aspects will be mentioned in the following chapter.

Lastly, this research examined the moderating effect of team identification on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward the team's CSA. Previous literature in CSA and activism mainly highlighted the crucial role of issue involvement when discussing evaluation and perceptions regarding the company and individual's action. However, this study posits that the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to their team which is widely called team identification has to be examined in this research in order to genuinely develop our understanding of the

unique characteristics of the professional sports domain. Thus, this study hypothesized that team identification will have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between issue involvement and attitude toward the NFL team's BLM campaigns. However, surprisingly, the result indicated that the effects of issue involvement on the attitude toward the team's campaigns were stronger for those who had low team identification compared to the fan with high team identification. This research finding contradicts the previous findings that highly identified fans will show more support for their in-group's CSA initiatives (Arif, 2022; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). This finding contrasted with the previous literature can be explained by several attributed reasons as in fact, up to date this study was the first to examine the impact of CSA campaigns in the sports context. This result can be assumed that some fans are prone to consume sporting content itself without considering the social realities of Black athletes (Smith, 2009). To be specific, this study suggests that fans who are highly identified with their supporting teams are more likely to focus on the performance or achievement aspects of their team rather than the subsidiary activities such as ceremony events and campaigns, etc. According to Seaton et al. (2022), it was revealed that fans have hierarchical considerations when responding to the activism of teams and leagues. Thus, it can be explained that highly identified fans, compared to the less identified fans, may not concern much what their teams are promoting for social justice issues. On the

other hand, the result of this study showed that less‐identified fans show a more favorable attitude toward the team's CSA initiatives than highly identified fan groups. This result indicates that CSA campaigns may serve as a bridge that can connect the existing deviated fans or attract potential fans. Furthermore, it may work as a catalyst for them to approve their team's action when it advocates a social issue that they are supportive of. King (2008) also pointed out that the efforts for social movement will be helpful in attracting a new stakeholder group who shares similar ideologies but was not engaged with the organization previously. Thus, this finding suggests the role of sport as a tool to arouse social awareness among wider audiences through the platforms of sporting entities by emphasizing the value that such individuals place through activism in professional sports (Butterworth, 2021; Seaton et al., 2022).

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1. General Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of fan characteristics on the attitude toward the team's CSA initiatives, and furthermore, explored their behavioral responses. In spite of an increasing number of social justice issues in sports, there has been limited research in the sport management literature regarding the resurgence of sports activism in professional sports these days. Upon this background, the current study sought to fill in the gap and extend the sports activism literature by not only focusing on the individual athletes but also the social advocacy from the organizational level of teams. As Sanderson and colleagues (2016) also called for the need to examine organizational messages about social advocacy instead of those solely communicated by individual athletes, this study strived to reflect the current activism trends in professional sports. Moreover, this study employed the quantitative approach to understand the relationship between the fan characteristics and the campaigns, while most research was mainly conducted in qualitative methods (Agyemang et al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2021). Therefore, based on extant theoretical background and empirical analysis, this research showed insightful findings that contribute to the literature of sport management and CSA literature. The overall results of the study are as follows.

The individual characteristics of fans had a significant effect on the attitude toward the team's CSA. First of all, issue involvement, examined as a crucial determinant factor in this study, showed a positive influence on attitude formation. This result suggests that fans' involvement with the issue should be considered when predicting the outcomes of professional team's social advocacy campaigns such as the BLM movement. On the other hand, team identification negatively moderated the relationship between issue involvement and the attitude toward the team's CSA campaigns. According to the finding, fans with low team identity showed higher attitudes toward the team's CSA compared to the highly identified fans. Although this result was not consistent with the prediction, it indicates the insightful findings that, in terms of CSA campaigns, fans will show a significantly different attitude degree depending on the level of their team identification. Thus, it is crucial to understand that when professional teams are promoting campaigns that include social advocacy features, there is a possibility that outcomes of such campaigns may show totally different potential outcomes compared to the traditional CSR efforts of teams.

Secondly, this study examined the behavioral responses of fans stemming from the attitude toward the team's CSA. The result of this study showed that a favorable attitude toward the team positively influenced the positive word-of-mouth intention of the fan and negatively influenced the boycott intention. This result also aligned with the extant literature arguing that a favorable attitude

toward the team's efforts leads to positive behavioral intentions of fans and decreases the negative outcomes at the same time. Thus, it emphasizes the need to formulate a positive attitude among their fans to eventually ends up with satisfying outcomes that professional teams expected.

6.2. Theoretical and Managerial Implication

The current study contributes to the body of knowledge on sports activism by theoretically and empirically examining its impact on fan responses. From a theoretical perspective, this research is one of the first studies to apply CSA concepts in the sport management context. In the communication and management literature, corporate social advocacy (CSA) has been actively investigated to understand the public's response toward the social advocacy of many corporations (Austin et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2014, 2015; Rim et al., 2020). However, past studies discussing activism in sports were mainly focused on individual athletes (Agyemang et al., 2012, 2020; Cunningham et al., 2021; Edwards, 2016), thus, this research sought to explore its context in the engagement at the organizational level of activism in sports. There has been a scarce number of researches in the sport management literature discussing the potential impact when teams are promoting social justice campaigns that are controversial among the public. This research opens up an avenue for future research to examine fan's perceptions toward professional team's CSA initiatives.

Moreover, this research answered calls for research (Sanderson et al., 2016) by examining organizational messages that touch upon activism, as opposed to that solely communicated by individual athletes and this will emphasize further considerations for public processing of organizational messaging in the area between activism and fandom research. As there are limited studies that have empirically examined CSA and political issues in sports (Kim & Overton, 2020; Gaither et al., 2018), this study will provide new insights and expand the existing sport management literature through a lens of CSA. In the context of sports, this study will be beneficial to expand our understanding of how a fan's individual characteristics such as issue involvement, team identification, and politicization of sports may affect the perception of a team's campaigns from various perspectives.

For the practical implication, the finding of this study will be arguably valuable for professional teams when planning to take organizational decisions regarding sociopolitical issues. In the current trend of social justice issues in professional sports, protests by athletes are inevitably increasing (Edwards, 2016) and sports teams and organizations will have to consider proactive management strategies that address the need for social change to achieve support from the public. Thus, with these findings from the research, this research expects that professional teams will be able to adopt suitable management strategies by effectively dealing with the specific characteristics of their fan groups.

6.3. Limitation and Future Studies

Concerning the limitation of this research, there are several points to consider for future studies to further investigate the impact of professional team's CSA campaigns.

First, this research did not consider other potential predictors of attitude toward the team's CSA. This research mainly focused on the fan-centric approach to understand the attitude formation of fans toward the team's CSA initiatives while there are also other possible factors besides the characteristics of fans themselves. Future studies will be beneficial to explore the characteristics of the campaign itself to examine the genuine effect of CSA initiatives on fan responses.

Second, this study did not empirically analyze the demographic information of respondents while this may provide insightful implications to the sport management literature. Several studies highlighted the importance of race, political affiliation, etc. when determining the impact of an organization's taking stance on political issues. Thus, future studies may be able to contribute to the understanding of their fan groups by investigating the demographic information of the respondents.

Third, since this study only focused on the Black Lives Matter movement for the questionnaire, there is a lack of generalizability for the other campaigns of professional teams. Although case studies allow for an in-depth understanding of phenomena in our society, the result of this study may not apply to other case

scenarios. Thus, investigating the crucial role of the professional team's CSA initiatives by including diverse CSA campaigns and adding issue-specific factors that can exclusively influence them would be worthwhile to explore in future studies.

Lastly, this study collected data from the participants who are currently supporting their NFL professional teams. This participant recruitment approach led the participants to reveal a high level of team identification in general with mean scores of 5.57 (SD ±1.10). Future studies are needed to compare whether the result of this study is consistent with the current study and combining these results may shed light on the profound understanding of fan responses toward the professional team's CSA campaigns and provide important cues for future research and extends our knowledge to the sport management academia.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Welcome to the research study!

We are interested in understanding fan behavior regarding the NFL team's campaign. For this study, you will be asked to answer questions about it. Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 5 mins to complete. You will receive an incentive for your participation and our participation in this research is voluntary.
You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study.
The principal investigator of this study is Junho Kim / jhkim9515@snu.ac.kr.
By clicking the button below, you acknowledge:

Your participation in the study is voluntary.
You are 18 years of age.
You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

We are planning to recruit participants who are fans of the National Football League(NFL) team for the last three years.

If you check answer 'No' for this page's question, your participation will be automatically terminated and your participation will be rejected.

① I consent, begin the study
② I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

1. Are you fan of the NFL team?

③　Yes　② No

2. Which NFL team do you consider yourself as a fan of or follow on a regular basis? (ex: Denver Broncos)
Answer:

3. In the last year, which of the following activities have you done related to your supporting team? (Select All)

① Attended NFL games

② Worn an item of clothing with NFL team's logo

③ Read an article about NFL teams

④ Talked about NFL games with someone after days

⑤ Watched NFL games on television

⑥ Posted about NFL on social media

Please type in your unique Prolific ID presented by Prolific for your compensation.
Answer:

Please answer the question while thinking of your position toward Black Lives Matter movement in general.

"The Black Lives Matter movement is _____." (-3 to 3)

Undesirable	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Desirable
Not beneficial to society	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Beneficial to society
Harmful to Society	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Benign to society
Negative	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Positive
Insignificant	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Significant
Means nothing to me	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Means a lot to me

Please answer the question while thinking of your supporting team in the NFL.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. Being a fan of my team is very important to me.

    ① Strongly disagree

    ② Disagree

    ③ Somewhat disagree

    ④ Neither agree nor disagree

    ⑤ Somewhat agree

    ⑥ Agree

    ⑦ Strongly agree

2. I am a committed fan of my team.

    ① Strongly disagree

    ② Disagree

    ③ Somewhat disagree

    ④ Neither agree nor disagree

    ⑤ Somewhat agree

    ⑥ Agree

    ⑦ Strongly agree

3. I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of my team.

    ① Strongly disagree

    ② Disagree

    ③ Somewhat disagree

    ④ Neither agree nor disagree

    ⑤ Somewhat agree

    ⑥ Agree

    ⑦ Strongly agree

4. I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of my team.

    ① Strongly disagree

    ② Disagree

    ③ Somewhat disagree

    ④ Neither agree nor disagree

⑤　Somewhat agree

⑥　Agree

⑦　Strongly agree

Please answer the question while imagining that...

"Your team are supporting the Black Lives Matter movement by promoting several campaigns (ex. official statement about supporting BLM, putting BLM banners & slogans on the pitch or uniforms , etc.)"

Indicate the degree to which you have about the question.

<u>**If your team supports BLM campaign, what attitude would you feel toward the team's campaign?**</u>

Unfavorable	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Favorable
Negative	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Positive
Bad	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Good
Dislike	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3	Like

Please answer the question while imagining that...

"Your team are supporting the Black Lives Matter movement by promoting several campaigns (ex. official statement about supporting BLM, putting BLM banners & slogans on the pitch or uniforms , etc.)"

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. I will boycott my team.
    ① Strongly disagree
    ② Disagree
    ③ Somewhat disagree
    ④ Neither agree nor disagree
    ⑤ Somewhat agree
    ⑥ Agree
    ⑦ Strongly agree

2. I would discourage others to support my team.
    ① Strongly disagree
    ② Disagree
    ③ Somewhat disagree
    ④ Neither agree nor disagree
    ⑤ Somewhat agree
    ⑥ Agree
    ⑦ Strongly agree

3. I want to boycott my team.
    ① Strongly disagree
    ② Disagree
    ③ Somewhat disagree
    ④ Neither agree nor disagree
    ⑤ Somewhat agree
    ⑥ Agree
    ⑦ Strongly agree

Please answer the question while imagining that...

"Your team are supporting the Black Lives Matter movement by promoting several campaigns (ex. official statement about supporting BLM, putting BLM banners & slogans on the pitch or uniforms , etc.)"

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. I will spread positive things about my team to others.
- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

2. I will recommend my team to those close to me.
- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

3. I will spread positive information about my team.
- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. It is not appropriate for athletes/teams to speak publicly about political subjects.

- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

2. Professional sports teams should prohibit athletes from publicly discussing politics.

- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

3. Sports and politics should not mix.

- ① Strongly disagree
- ② Disagree
- ③ Somewhat disagree
- ④ Neither agree nor disagree
- ⑤ Somewhat agree
- ⑥ Agree
- ⑦ Strongly agree

1. What is your gender?

① Male   ② Female

2. What is your age group?

① Under 20   ② 20-29   ③ 30-39   ④ 40-49   ⑤ 50-59 ⑥ More than 59

3. What is your highest level of education you have completed?

① Some high school or less ② High school diploma or GED ③ Some college, but no degree   ④ Associates or technical degree ⑤ Bachelor's degree   ⑤ Master   ⑥ Graduate or professional degree (MA,MS, MBA, Phd, JD, MD, DDS etc.) ⑦ Prefer not to answer

4. What is your Race?

① White/Caucasian ② Black/African American ③ Hispanic/Latino ④ Native American/American Indian ⑤ Asian ⑥ Others

5. What is your Monthly average income

① Less than 1000$
② More than 1000$ and less than 2000$
③ More than 2000$ and less than 3000$
④ More than 3000$ and less than 4000$
⑤ More than 4000$ and less than 5000$
⑥ More than 5000$

7. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a:
① Democrats
② Republicans
③ Independent
④ Another Party
⑤No preference

8. Do you consider yourself to be:
① Very conservative
② Somewhat conservative

③ Moderate

④ Somewhat liberal

⑤ Very liberal

When you finish the survey you will be returned to Prolific.

You need to use this unique Completion Code to prove you completed the survey.

Completetion Code: C1B89BF5

Abstract in Korean

본 연구는 프로스포츠 팀들의 조직적 차원에서의 사회적 정의 캠페인이 팬들이 이를 인식하는 데에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지 살펴봄으로써 날이 갈수록 증가하고 있는 프로스포츠 팀들의 사회적 정의 캠페인의 영향력을 규명하는 데에 있다. 선행 연구들은 개인적 특성이 사회정의 캠페인에 대한 반응을 해석하는 데 중요하다고 강조했으며 (Mudrick et al., 2019; Seaton et al., 2021). 특히 이슈 관여도와 팀동일시 정도와 같은 팬들의 특성은 프로스포츠 선수들이 사회문제에 대한 입장을 대외적으로 표명할 때 팬들의 인식에 영향을 미치는 중요한 요소로 확인되었다 (Arif, 2022; Lee & Moon, 2021; Ogiso et al., 2022).

2020년 닐슨 보고서에 따르면 과반수의 스포츠 팬들은 Black Lives Matter (이하 BLM) 캠페인에 있어 프로스포츠 선수들이 핵심적인 역할을 한다고 인지하는 것으로 나타났다. 사회가 급변함에 따라 대중들은 현재 사회에서 주목받고 있는 사회적 정의 문제에 대한 높은 관심을 가지며, 본인이 소비하고 지지하는 브랜드나 기업이 이러한 문제에 함께 동참하여 목소리를 내줬으면 하는 트렌드가 생기고 있으며, 이를 학계에서는 기업의 사회적 지지 (CSA) (Dodd & Supa, 2015; Edelman, 2020)라고 정의하고 있다.

이러한 사회적 기대에 부응하기 위해 이제는 프로스포츠 선수뿐만 아니라 많은 프로 팀들도 CSA 캠페인의 일환으로 BLM에 대한 지지를 리그 차원에서 적극적으로 표명하기 시작했으며, 이는 전세계 각지에서 동참하는 하나의 큰 캠페인으로 거듭난 현상으로서 학술적으로 접근해볼

필요성이 대두되고 있다. 그러나 이전까지의 선행 연구는 주로 선수 개인이 사회적 이슈에 대한 입장을 표명하였을 때에만 한정되어 있었기에 최근 몇 년간 프로 팀들이 실제로 사회적 이슈에 대한 캠페인의 새롭게 등장한 주체로서 이에 대한 연구가 스포츠 경영학 분야에서는 아직 연구가 부족한 실정이다.

이를 위해 미국에 거주하고 있는 NFL 팀의 팬들을 대상으로 BLM 캠페인을 인지하고 있는 대상자를 온라인 설문 조사를 통해 모집하였으며 수집된 설문 230부 중 불성실한 응답 및 연구 대상에 포함되지 않는 18부를 제외한 218부의 설문지를 최종분석에 사용하였다. 설문 내용은 이슈 관여도, 팀동일시 수준, 프로팀의 CSA에 대한 태도, 보이콧 의도, 긍정적 구전의도, 스포츠의 정치화 인식에 대한 문항으로 구성하였다. 자료처리는 SPSS와 AMOS 프로그램을 활용하여 기술통계분석, 신뢰도 분석, 타당도 분석, 확인적 요인분석, 구조방정식 분석(SEM)을 실시하였다. 자료분석을 통해 도출된 연구 결과는 선행 연구들과 대부분 부합했으며 그 결과는 다음과 같다.

첫째, 이슈 관여도는 NFL 팀의 BLM 캠페인에 대한 태도에 정적으로 영향을 미쳤다. 둘째, 팀의 CSA 캠페인에 대한 태도가 높은 팬들은 다른 사람들에게 본인이 지지하는 팀을 추천할 의도가 더 높은 것으로 나타났다. 셋째, 팬들은 팀의 BLM 캠페인에 대한 긍정적인 태도를 가질 때 부정적인 반응을 덜 나타냈음을 알 수 있었다. 마지막으로, 이슈 관여도의 효과는 팀동일시 수준이 낮은 팬들에게서 팀 동일시 수준이 높은 팬들보다 더 강하게 나타났다.

본 연구의 결과는 프로 팀의 CSA 캠페인이 팬들의 어떠한 반응을 미치는 살펴보았다는 점에서 의의가 있으며, 본 연구를 통해 스포츠가 사회의 문화적 담론에 미치는 영향을 살펴봄으로써 앞으로 더욱 급증한

사회적 이슈에 대해 프로스포츠 팬들이 어떻게 인식할 것인지에 대한 이해를 깊이 하는 데에 기여할 수 있을 것이다. 실무적으로도 본 연구는 프로 팀들이 사회정치적 문제에 관한 의사 결정을 내릴 때 참고할 수 있는 인사이트를 제공해줄 수 있을 것이라 기대된다.