Understanding the Relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility, Team Identification, and Behavioral Intention with the Mediating Effect of Satisfaction in Korean Professional Baseball League

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to propose and test a theoretical model that explored the relationship among perceived CSR, team identification, and satisfaction, along with behavioral intention in the context of the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) league. The study utilized a total of 523 respondents who attended the KBO league’s playoff games. The result of this study indicated that perceived CSR is positively related to consumers' satisfaction and team identification which in turn affects sports fans’ consumer behavior. In addition, this study highlighted the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between perceived CSR, team identification, and behavioral intention. This study provided a theoretical framework for further developing the role of CSR activities in the sports industry. Finally, sports managers and marketers should focus on specific social issues and environmental causes in the community because CSR activities should deal with these matters for developing the community.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility (CSR); team identification; satisfaction; behavioral intention

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been paid more attention by corporations, so many companies are devoting more efforts to CSR initiatives [1]. An increasing number of corporations have focused on not only financial profits and employees’ work life but also community development and environmental sustainability as CSR activities. Many researchers in the field of management and marketing indicated that companies benefit from CSR initiatives in terms of financial performance [2–5], improvement of brand loyalty [6–8], a positive reputation [9], and increasing purchase behavior [10]. In other words, the company’s CSR activities have positive influences on consumer attitude, awareness, market share, and profitability. Several scholars argued that a sports organization is different from other traditional organizations in terms of the nature and role of CSR [9,11,12]. In this sense, Walker and Kent [13] asserted that “sport industry CSR differs from other contexts as this industry possesses many attributes distinct from those found in other business segments” (p.746). Many researchers in the field of sport management have attempted to identify a significant role of CSR in the sports industry [11–15]. Team identification has been rooted in social identity theory [16], and it has been a well-researched concept in the field of sport management. Similar to the concept of team identification, customer-company identification (CCI) is based on social identity theory, many scholars attempted to examine the relationship between CSR activities and CCI in marketing research [17–20].
CCI in the field of sport management [21–23], limited research has investigated the effect of CSR activities on team identification.

According to Luo and Bhattacharya [24], CSR initiatives play a significant role in improving customer satisfaction, and several researchers reported that CSR associations have a positive effect on customer satisfaction [6,25,26]. Specifically, Walsh and Bartikowski [27] examined how customer satisfaction mediates the effect of CSR on behavioral outcomes. The authors suggested when consumers would perceive CSR activities, they are more like to be satisfied and they are more willing to improve behavior intentions. In contrast, Kim, Magnusen, and Kim [28] argued that satisfaction research in the context of sports is mostly focused on the effect of service quality and game quality on sport consumer satisfaction through a sporting event. Previous CSR research in the field of sport management has not sufficiently found a unique relationship between CSR activities of sports teams and sport consumer satisfaction.

Professional sporting events are developing more and more in the business field, and the role of professional sports teams is essential in society. At this point, this study has several significances in terms of theoretical and practical perspectives. This study seeks to provide a theoretical framework for developing the role of CSR activities in the sports industry. Specifically, this study proposes that perceived CSR activities can play a significant direct and indirect role in the development of sports fans’ behavioral intentions. More specifically, although previous studies in sport management attempt to examine the relationship between CSR activities and behavioral intention [13,29–31], the proposed model of this study considers that the effect of CSR activities on behavioral intention is explained by including a social identity variable (e.g., team identification) and a social exchange variable (e.g., satisfaction). By taking these into consideration, therefore, the study provides a conceptual framework to understand how perceived CSR influences team identification, satisfaction, and behavioral intention processes. Also, this study is to investigate the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between perceived CSR and behavioral intention and team identification and behavioral intention.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Perceived CSR and Team Identification

Brown and Dacin [32] indicated that “Corporate social responsibility associations reflect the organization’s status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations” (p.68). CSR has a positive influence on customers’ cognitive and affective responses, which are related to customers’ loyalty behaviors [32,33]. In terms of the influence of CSR initiatives on consumer attitudes in the field of marketing, several researchers have paid considerable attention to investigating the relationship between CSR initiatives and consumer identification with the company [6,19,20]. Drawing on social identity [16], customer-company identification (CCI) refers to a psychological substrate that brings about deep, committed, and essential relations between customers and companies [18]. Several researchers indicated that the concept of team identification is comparable to CCI in sport management [21–23,34]. Similar to the concept of CCI, team identification is based on social identity theory [16], and team identification is defined as the personal commitment and emotional involvement customers have with a sports team [35]. Several researchers in the field of sport management empirically investigated the relationship between CSR activities and team identification [13,21,36]. The authors found that team identification has played a significant role as a moderator in terms of the context of CSR. From the perspective of identification based on social identity theory, it is necessary to identify how perceived CSR enhances team identification as a psychological attachment to a sports organization in the context of sport. Taking into account the previous literature review presented, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Perceived CSR has a positive effect on team identification.
2.2. Perceived CSR and Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key parameter that has an influence on customer loyalty, customer retention, long-term profitability, and market value [37–40]. Several studies proposed that CSR can affect customer satisfaction [6,24–26]. In addition, Bhattacharya and Sen [18] demonstrated that CSR initiatives are an essential factor of corporate identity that enable customers to identify with the company and are more likely to be more satisfied with an organization’s offerings. Although several scholars have examined the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of spectator sport [41–44], the linkage between CSR and customer satisfaction has not been tested for sports organizations. The lack of empirical evidence of the relationship between CSR and satisfaction makes it necessary to investigate the role of CSR in the context of sports. Therefore, this study posits the following hypothesis:

**H2.** Perceived CSR has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

2.3. Perceived CSR and Behavioral Intention

In the sport management literature, several studies have shown that perception and activities of CSR have a significant impact on sports fans’ behavioral intentions such as revisit, word of mouth, and fans’ attitudes [13,29–31]. Walker and Kent [13] investigated the relationship between CSR activities and fans’ attitudes toward patronage intentions in NFL spectators. The authors found that CSR is positively related to merchandise consumption behaviors and word of mouth. However, Walker and Heere [45] argued that CSR awareness would not have a direct impact on repurchase intention, and CSR awareness does not always lead to sports consumers’ behavioral responses. Therefore, it is necessary to keep searching for the relationship between CSR and consumer behavioral intentions, and a third research hypothesis is proposed:

**H3.** Perceived CSR has a positive effect on behavioral intention.

2.4. Team Identification and Customer Satisfaction

The concept of team identification is based on social identity theory [16] and refers to a sports fan’s psychological connection to their favorite team [46]. Many researchers have found that team identification has a positive influence on sports consumers’ attitudes and have also investigated the relationship between team identification and customer satisfaction [46–49]. The authors found that team identification has a strong influence on satisfaction. The results of previous studies on team identification, [46,50] suggested that sports fans who strongly identify with their teams are more likely to feel satisfied with their teams. Gau, Gailliot, and Brady [51] investigated how team identification influences season ticket holders’ satisfaction with a Major League Baseball franchise. The authors found that highly identified baseball fans have more satisfaction than lowly identified baseball fans. Previous studies focused on the important role of team identification as a predictor, and the level of team identification leads to different levels of satisfaction. Based on the aforementioned literature, a research hypothesis reads as follows:

**H4.** Team identification has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

2.5. Team Identification and Behavioral Intention

Several researchers have pointed out that team identification is a critical predictor which directly influences sports fans’ behavioral intentions [49,52–55]. With regard to behavioral intention as the outcome variable of spectators’ consumption in the context of sport management, Matsuoka et al. [54] indicated attending and watching a sporting event as well as purchasing licensed merchandise products for spectators’ favorite team is defined as behavioral intention. For instance, Madrigal [10] demonstrated when college football fans’ identification with the team increased, they purchased more sponsor products. The finding of this study indicated that strongly identified fans in a sporting event were positively related to purchase intention for licensed merchandise products.
Matsuoka et al. [54] investigated that sports fans who are strongly identified with the team are more likely to attend future games in Japan’s professional soccer league. These authors also found that the interaction of team identification and satisfaction with the team’s performance was significant antecedents in terms of attending future games. In a similar vein, Lee and Kang [53] found that team identification can play an essential role in increasing game attendance for a Korean men’s professional basketball event. Thus, this study hypothesizes as follows:

**H5. Team identification has a positive effect on behavioral intention.**

### 2.6. Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

Many researchers in the field of sport management have found a direct link between customer satisfaction and behavioral intention [43,44,53,56–58]. In this sense, Yoshida and James [44] posited that two different types of satisfaction (i.e., game and service satisfaction) have a positive influence on attending events in terms of spectator sports. Wakefield and Blodgett [43] found that satisfaction has a significant effect on repatronage intentions and customers’ desires to stay in all three leisure settings including football, baseball, and casino. The authors demonstrated that customer satisfaction is an essential element as a significant predictor of sporting event attendance. Customer satisfaction has been paid attention to as the main antecedent of customer loyalty because satisfaction has a positive influence on customer retention and purchase [25,59]. Therefore, based on these ideas about customer satisfaction, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H6. Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on behavioral intention.**

### 2.7. The Mediating Effect of Customer Satisfaction

While some scholars suggested that CSR has a direct influence on customer loyalty [19,49,60]. Martínez, and del Bosque [25] claimed that the CSR effect on customer loyalty would be explained by including the intervention of mediating variables because the theoretical construct is inherent complexity. In a similar vein, marketing researchers have argued that CSR may influence overall corporate evaluation and behavioral outcomes through the mediation of customer satisfaction [6,24]. Furthermore, regarding the effects of CSR on consumer responses and behaviors, Walsh and Bartikowski [27] examined the mediation effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between CSR and two behavioral outcomes such as word of mouth and loyalty intentions. The researchers found that satisfaction has a significant role in the influence of CSR and behavioral intentions as a mediator. Following [6], CSR has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through customer satisfaction, and the authors supported that satisfaction plays a central role in the link between CSR and brand loyalty. The perspectives of three studies emphasize an examination of the mediating role of customer satisfaction on the relationship between CSR and customer behavioral intention. Specifically, consumers would be more satisfied when perceiving the CSR activities of the organizations, and they are more willing to enhance behavior intentions [24,27]. Similar to the concept of team identification, brand identification is based on social identity theory [16], and Bhattacharya and Sen [18] defined brand identification as presenting a consumer’s sense of belonging to a brand. Several scholars in business research suggested that a social identity variable (e.g., identification) could be integrated with a social exchange variable (e.g., satisfaction) in order to explore the meaningful relationship between companies and stakeholders [6,7,18,25]. In addition, similar to an approach of incorporating both identification and customer satisfaction, He et al. [7] also found that brand identification has an indirect influence on brand loyalty through satisfaction. In the context of sport management, however, little research has provided a conceptual model which is integrated the relationship between team identification, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intention as the mediating role of customer satisfaction. It is necessary to identify how team identification indirectly influences behavioral intention through customer satisfaction as a mediator in the context of sport. Therefore, based on the reviewed
literature in terms of the mediating effect of customer satisfaction, a research hypothesis reads as follows:

**H7.** Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between (a) CSR and behavioral intention and (b) team identification and behavioral intention.

All research hypotheses were visualized in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Research Model.](image)

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted in the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) league in the first division games in South Korea. Participation in this survey was voluntary, and participants needed to be 18 years of age or older. The participants for this study were spectators who attended the KBO league’s playoff games in Seoul, South Korea. The respondents of this study were selected using convenience sampling. 660 self-administered questionnaires were distributed with pencils during the two playoff games. About 15 min after the questionnaire distribution, research assistants visited the respondents again and collected the completed questionnaires. The first set of data was collected from 336 spectators. Of these, 38 surveys were unusable, yielding a total of 298 usable responses. The second set of data was collected from 321 spectators. Of these, 27 surveys were unusable, leaving a total of 294 usable responses. For the final sample, the study utilized a total of 523 respondents, which corresponded with a response rate of 79.6%. Demographic information of the spectators was presented in Table 1.

#### Table 1. Demographic information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married or living with a partner</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>less than 25</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34 years old</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44 years old</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54 years old</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 years old and over</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1. Cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Secondary or high school diploma</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some college/university</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate degree or higher</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>1–5</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6–9</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>over 10</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.2. Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of six sections: screen questions, perceived CSR, team identification, customer satisfaction, behavioral intention, and demographic information. The survey included two screening questions to qualify respondents who as sports fans and their awareness of CSR activities of their favorite team. The following screening questions were included at the beginning of the questionnaire: (1) Do you have a favorite professional baseball team? (2) Do you know the corporate social responsibility activities of your favorite team? If respondents answer “YES” to the first question, they can continue to participate in the survey process. As the results of the first and second screening questions, 18 respondents answered “NO” for the first question, and 51 respondents answered “NO” for the second question. Finally, 69 responses were excluded, and a total of 523 were used in analyses. All the scale items in the research model were measured with multiple items adopted from previous studies. 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (7)”, was used for all items. To measure perceived CSR, three items were adopted from Brown and Dacin [32]. Customer satisfaction was measured with three items that were well-established scale by He and Li [6]. Team identification was measured with six items that were adopted from the sport spectator identification scale (SSIS) (Wann and Branscombe [50]. The behavioral intention was measured with a three-item scale adapted from Cronin et al. [57].

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The means and standard deviations from participants that reported that the means of 15 items ranged from 4.30 to 5.09, and standard deviations ranged from 0.94 to 1.21. In order to test normality, skewness, and kurtosis for the items were examined. Skewness absolute values less than 3.0 and Kurtosis absolute values less than 5.0 are considered normally distributed Kline [61]. All skewness (0.19 to 0.65) and kurtosis (−0.7 to 0.1) values for the perceived CSR, team identification, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intention variables were accepted.

##### 4.2. Measurement Model

The psychometric properties of the measurement instruments were analyzed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 2 illustrated factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha (α), the Composite Reliability (CR), and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index for the measurement model. The results indicated an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2$/df = 175.718/84 = 2.09, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.97, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.04, and standardized root mean squared residual [SRMR] = 0.03). Composite reliability (CR) values indicated the internal consistency of the construct of factors, and these indicator values ranged from 0.81 to 0.88, above the acceptable value of 0.7 [37]. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.55 (Team Identification) to 0.67 (Perceived CSR), which all exceed 0.50 as suggested by Fornell and Larcker [62]. Discriminant validity was conducted by comparing the AVE of each construct with squared inter-construct correla-
The result of comparing the AVE of each construct with squared inter-construct correlations suggested acceptable levels of discriminant validity.

Table 2. Factor loadings(λ), composite reliability (CR)and average variance extracted (AVE).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs/Items</th>
<th>λ</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived CSR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite team is doing good things for the community.</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite team actively participates in societal activities.</td>
<td>0.929</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite team is involved in philanthropic activities.</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Identification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends strongly see me as a fan of my favorite team.</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite team wins are very important to me.</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to attend the home games of my favorite team this season.</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a fan of my favorite team is very important to me.</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually display my favorite team’s name or insignia at my place of work, where I live, or on my clothing.</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly follow my favorite team via in-person, media, and the internet.</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am completely satisfied with my favorite team.</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very pleased with my favorite team.</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am absolutely delighted by my favorite team.</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Intention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probability that you will attend another sporting event of my favorite team.</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that you would recommend my favorite team game to a friend.</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you had the opportunity to attend this game again, the probability you would make the same choice.</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. Latent Path Model

The results of the hypothesized structural model were examined in Table 3. Significant standardized path coefficients confirmed significant positive relationships between perceived CSR and team identification (β = 0.37, p < 0.001; H1 supported), and between perceived CSR and customer satisfaction (β = 0.35, p < 0.01; H2 supported). Hypothesis 3 was to related the effect of perceived CSR on behavioral intention; however, hypothesis 3 was not supported (β = 0.09, p= 0.072). Regarding the relationships between team identification and customer satisfaction, the direct path from team identification and customer satisfaction (β = 0.43, p < 0.01; H4 supported). Team identification had a positive impact on behavioral intention (β = 0.33, p < 0.01; H5 supported). Moreover, customer satisfaction was found to have a significant positive effect on behavioral intention (β = 0.34, p < 0.01; H6 supported). Table 3. presents standardized results for the mediating effect of customer satisfaction. A bootstrapping method was conducted to examine the mediating effect of customer satisfaction [63]. Regarding the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between (a) perceived CSR and behavioral intention and (b) team identification and behavioral intention, customer satisfaction was found to play a mediation role in the relationship between team identification and behavioral intention (β = 0.15, p < 0.05). Additionally, the relationship between perceived CSR and behavioral intention was mediated by customer satisfaction (β = 0.11, p < 0.05). These coefficients produced indirect effects with the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval which is based on 500 bootstrap samples confirmed.

Table 3. Standardized Results of the Path Coefficients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesized direct paths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1 Perceive CSR → Team Identification</td>
<td>0.37 **</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Perceive CSR → Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.35 **</td>
<td>7.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3 Perceive CSR $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.43 **</td>
<td>8.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention</td>
<td>0.33 **</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention</td>
<td>0.34 **</td>
<td>5.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesized indirect paths

| H7 Perceive CSR $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention | 0.11 * |
| Team Identification $\rightarrow$ Customer Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Behavioral Intention | 0.15 * |

Note. $B =$ Standardized path coefficients; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to propose and test a theoretical model which explored the relationship among perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR), team identification, and satisfaction, along with behavioral intention.

One of the findings from this study revealed that perceived CSR had a positive influence on team identification. The result indicated that CSR activities can increase team identification which is a sense of attachment to sports teams. The result suggested that CSR activities could be a unique marketing strategy for sports teams and organizations to increase team identification. Although team success is an essential driver of team identification, the team’s CSR activities may also play a significant role in increasing emotional attachment with the team. Sports fans might expect their favorite teams and athletes to be engaged in CSR activities. Therefore, since Korean professional baseball has a local affiliation system, team managers and marketers should implement CSR initiatives in their local community including youth education, mentoring, and family services. In addition, team marketers should focus on communicating CSR programming to fans through a variety of media channels such as CSR reports, press releases, websites, and social media.

By examining the relationship between perceived CSR and customer satisfaction, this study found that perceived CSR is a key antecedent to increasing customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous studies [6,18,25]. He and Li [6] demonstrated that customers are more likely to be satisfied if organizations provide CSR initiatives for developing society. Since Korean society emphasizes competition in terms of cultural background, many team managers have paid attention to team performance and success in order to enhance fans’ satisfaction which is highly related to teams’ performance levels. However, team managers could not control teams’ performance. Therefore, this study suggested that managers should focus more on CSR activities as a controllable effort.

Although several previous studies found that perception and activities of CSR have a significant impact on sports fans’ behavioral intention [13,21,29–31], this study indicated that the direct relationship between perceived CSR and behavioral intention was not significant. One possible explanation for different results is that a cultural difference may exist. Donations from sports stars are more popular than the CSR activities of sports teams in Korea. While many spectators and fans perceived the CSR activities of their favorite team favorably in the current study, they might believe that the athletes’ donations could make more social change than the CSR activities of sports teams. Therefore, team managers and marketers need to be aware that CSR activities led by sports team may have a greater influence on sport consumer behavior.

The positive effect of team identification on customer satisfaction was supported by the structural model results in terms of hypothesis 4. The result indicated that highly identified sports fans for their favorite team are more likely to achieve satisfaction. The finding of their study demonstrated that highly identified sports fans have more positive satisfaction than lowly identified fans. From the result, the important relevance of team identification for customer satisfaction suggested that sports teams should invest to increase team identity (e.g., high-quality merchandise, team logo, team value, and communicating...
Managing team identity may improve team identification, which in turn encourages fans’ satisfaction.

Regarding the effect of team identification on behavioral intentions, the finding of this study indicated that team identification can play a significant role in enhancing behavioral intention. Therefore, in order to increase team identification, team marketers should make opportunities for fans to bond with players (e.g., fan meetings, off-season camp, and participating in community service). The result showed that customer satisfaction had a positive effect on behavioral intention. The findings of the study suggested sports fans’ satisfaction was highly and positively related to behavioral intentions which were based on attending events and word-of-mouth recommendations in the context of sports. Team marketers need to be aware of the significance of fan satisfaction because satisfaction could be essential in fostering the behavioral intention of sports fans.

From a theoretical point of view, this research highlighted the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between perceived CSR, team identification, and behavioral intention. Even though previous studies examined the effect of CSR on behavioral intention by including mediator variables (e.g., trust, commitment, and involvement) in the field of sport management [14], customer satisfaction as a mediator has not explored the relationship between team identification and behavioral intention. The result of the mediating effect showed satisfaction played an essential role in mediating the relationship between team identification and behavioral intentions. This study suggests the relationship between team identification and behavioral intention can be integrated with customer satisfaction in terms of social exchange perspective. Accordingly, this study provided a theoretical framework for confirming the mediating role of satisfaction on the relationship between team identification and behavioral intention.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggested that perceived CSR is a predictor of team identification and sports fans’ satisfaction. Although the result of this study revealed that perceived CSR has no direct influence on behavioral intention, perceived CSR is indirectly related to the consumer behavior of sports fans through team identification and satisfaction. This result indicated that fans are more likely to attach and be satisfied with their favorite team when perceiving the CSR activities of the team. Regarding this indication, the essential relations of both perceived CSR on team identification and perceived CSR on fans’ satisfaction, team managers and marketers should invest more in CSR activities. Additionally, sports organizations and teams should focus on specific social issues and environmental causes in the community because CSR activities should deal with these matters for developing the community. In order to deliver information and messages about unique CSR activities, team marketers should use social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) as communication channels. By understanding and implementing CSR activities, sports organizations, and teams may not only increase their fan base but also create profit.

6. Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study may provide significant implications for academics and practitioners; however, several limitations affected the results. First, the finding in this study may not be generalized due to the limited sample. The participants were selected to conduct the survey from two KBO league playoff games in the context of Korean professional baseball fans. The study did not consider other contexts of sports fans (e.g., professional basketball and soccer). It might limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies need to use a variety of sports contexts and broader sampling to improve generalizability. Future studies should compare professional baseball fans and other sports fans within the same perceived CSR construct. Second, data were collected using cross-sectional study which is the data collection occurred at a single point in time. This sampling technique also limited the generalizability of the finding. This study collected data from playoff games. As a result, 472 (92%) respondents perceived the CSR activities of their favorite team, with items for perceived CSR and team identification having high mean values. Thus,
future studies need to sample different types of games (e.g., regular-season games and post-season games), or employ longitudinal studies to examine how the model develops in different situations. Third, the proposed model of this study considered that the effect of CSR activities on behavioral intention is explained by including a social identity variable (e.g., team identification) and a social exchange variable (e.g., satisfaction). However, other social exchange variables (i.e., trust and commitment) may be included in future studies to provide a comprehensive framework. This study used behavioral intentions as an outcome variable which included two different types of consumer behaviors of sports fans: attending sporting events and word-of-mouth recommendations. In order to better understand sports consumer behaviors, future studies should include separate constructs for attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty.

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