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ABSTRACT

Corporate social advocacy (CSA) has become more prominent as companies continue taking stands on politically charged social issues. This study examines emotions and issue involvement as antecedents of theory of planned behavior variables (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) to predict CSA response behaviors. A survey ($N = 373$) was conducted to examine the public's response to a recent CSA example – Nike's ad campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

The headline of an *Adweek* article published in November 2014 read, 'The new Corporate Social Responsibility: Company stances on controversial issues.' The article described how well-known companies, such as Amazon, Ben & Jerry's, Papa John's, and more, have made public declarations about their stance on a controversial social–political issue – a trend that has become increasingly commonplace (Dodd, 2014). Four years later, public relations scholars widely label this as corporate social advocacy (CSA) (Abitbol et al., 2018; Dodd, 2018; Dodd & Supa, 2014, 2015), as companies continue to take a more purpose-driven approach to their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives by taking stands on politically charged social–justice issues. Some notable examples from 2018 alone include Dick's Sporting Goods, Toms, and Delta with gun control; Airbnb with immigration; Lyft with the recent travel ban; and Nike with regard to freedom of expression.

While scholars have found that CSA can impact consumers' purchase intention (Dodd & Supa, 2015) and that the proliferation of companies investing in resources and taking risks to take public stances on issues has shifted our traditional understanding and expectations of businesses in a democratic society (Dodd, 2018), CSR communication scholarship has not widely examined recent CSA examples beyond case study analyses. Using arguments from the theory of planned behavior (TPB), this study breaks new ground by exploring how emotions and issue involvement predict human behaviors such as

communication behaviors and financial behaviors. Based on Bae's (2008) arguments, this study specifically examines emotions and issue involvement as antecedents of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (PBC), and aims to enhance the explanatory power of the theory in predicting behavioral intentions.

While CSR communication literature has widely examined individuals' attitudes toward a company and/or CSR issue, as well as individuals' behavioral intentions in response to various types of CSR messages, this study aims to examine attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding the newer concept of CSA – a company's decision to take a stance on an issue. The major theoretical contributions of this paper are determining whether the TPB applies to communication and purchase intention behaviors about a recent CSA example (Nike's ad campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick), and testing the TPB with two antecedents (emotions and issue involvement) about a real-world issue with other contextual factors at play to determine the impact of CSA. Furthermore, this study advances CSA scholarship and offers an example of how a company took a stance as a social advocate to address an important social–political issue, thus offering insight for other companies and strategic communications professionals.

Literature review

Corporate social advocacy and Nike's ad campaign

On 3 September 2018, Nike launched its 30th anniversary 'Just Do It' campaign featuring former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick. The advertisement showed a black-and-white image of Kaepernick with text that read, 'Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.' The campaign was quickly deemed Nike's 'most controversial move yet' (Draper et al., 2018) because of Nike's decision to feature Kaepernick, who was known as a polarizing public figure because of his decision starting in 2016 to not stand for the national anthem in a protest movement in the NFL against racial injustice and police brutality.

Nike's campaign immediately garnered national media attention, and discussions about the campaign went viral on social media, attracting more than 1 million responses on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook just hours after the partnership was announced (Draper et al., 2018). Hashtags such as #BoycottNike quickly emerged from those who were critical of the campaign. Images of people burning Nike apparel also went viral, and reactions 'have been heated and sharply split down political lines' (Bain, 2018). Until recently, some have argued that major companies try to avoid taking stances that could make customers angry, especially about socio-political issues (Draper et al., 2018). However, Nike's decision to support Kaepernick is in line with an increasing number of companies that are taking stances on social issues, or engaging in what scholars call corporate social advocacy.

CSA is a public relations function in which firms and/or their CEOs 'align themselves with a controversial social-political issue outside their normal sphere of CSR interest' (Dodd & Supa, 2015, p. 288). While it has long been known that corporations have a responsibility to society and strive to meet societal expectations to legitimize their existence (Dodd, 2018), companies traditionally have opted to engage in non-controversial issues. While CSA has gained traction as its own theoretical framework, some scholars have argued that CSA derived as a form of CSR and that the two concepts are tangentially related

(Kotler & Lee, 2004). However, Dodd (2018) argues that 'CSA has emerged alongside shifting societal expectations about the roles and responsibilities of business and government' (p. 223). That is, companies are increasingly seeking to influence government by taking public stances on issues that become part of a larger conversation. As the public has increasingly expected more from companies than a good business strategy, companies have engaged in a variety of socially responsible activities (Bortree, 2014) but have now been confronting social injustice issues by engaging in political and social issues (Ciszek & Logan, 2018; Logan, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016; Wettstein & Baur, 2016). Companies have engaged in CSA by aligning their campaign messaging with their stance on social issues and using campaign communication as a powerful communication channel to engage in significant social issues (Gaither et al., 2018).

Nike has previously said that it 'supports athletes and their right to freedom of expression on issues that are of great importance to our society' (Bain, 2018). However, the decision to take a stance on such a politically charged issue risks alienating countless consumers who feel that Kaepernick's national anthem protests are disrespectful and do not support Nike for making him the face of its brand. Ciszek and Logan (2018) also indicated that companies' political stances on controversial issues can result in alienating certain publics. However, it can be argued that Nike's decision to take a stance actually garnered more support than criticism (Boren, 2018) and led to increased sales (Martinez, 2018) in response to the campaign – a finding supported by scholarship that has determined that corporate social advocacy can have a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions (Dodd & Supa, 2014, 2015). Based on theoretical arguments about CSA and the real-life events that occurred in response to Nike's 30th anniversary campaign, this study aims to further examine the TPB as the underpinning for consumer purchase intentions and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions and the role of emotions and issue involvement in the process.

The theory of planned behavior

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) is a theoretical model that explains motivational and informational influences on behavioral intentions. According to the model, attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC (independent variables) are associated with an individual's behavior through intentions (dependent variable). The TPB has been widely applied in research that seeks to predict how people will behave based on their pre-existing attitudes and behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981). Attitudes refer to people's evaluations of a given behavior. Subjective norms refer to people's belief that certain people or groups think that they should or should not engage in certain behaviors. PBC refers to the extent to which people feel they have the means and opportunities to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 2005). In general, people intend to perform a behavior when they evaluate it positively, when they feel social pressure to perform the behavior, and when they perceive that they are able to perform it. Previous research employing the TPB has found that behavioral intentions, which are the dependent variable in the theoretical model, can be good predictors of actual behaviors (Sheppard et al., 1988).

Previous CSR communication research has used the TPB to model consumer behavior in many studies, including purchases made from companies with CSR efforts (Cheng et al., 2005, 2006; Hyllegard et al., 2012; Yan et al., 2012). Yan et al. (2012) investigated

an apparel brand with a heavily advertised social responsibility effort and found that consumers who believed that the company had credibility were more likely to purchase products. Hyllegard et al. (2012) found that CSR messaging on hang-tags increased consumers' intent to purchase clothing. In order to find out what builds trust in a company that would lead to purchase intentions, Kang and Hustvedt (2014) employed the theory and found that companies who were socially responsible by giving back to the community directly affected consumer trust, attitudes, and their intentions to not only purchase goods, but to spread positive WOM about the corporation. Relevant to this study, research conducted by Diddi and Niehm (2017) proposed that retail apparel brands should integrate CSR-related information in their strategic marketing activities to increase consumer awareness of socially responsible business practices in order to boost brand image among consumers. Also, Dodd and Supa (2014, 2015) applied the TPB in two studies that examined the impact of CSA on purchase intention regarding two different socio-political issues.

The current study adds to this body of literature by testing the model in the context of CSA. In the current study, attitude refers to the degree to which an individual has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation about Nike's decision to take a stance on a social issue, or to engage in CSA. Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures an individual has to engage in WOM communication or purchase Nike's products, and PBC refers to the individual's perception of the extent to which he/she has control to make decisions about these behaviors. The current study examines purchase intention as part of the original TPB model and also adds positive and negative WOM intention as other behavioral intentions based on previous literature that has found a relationship between the attitudes, subjective norms, PBC, and people's intention to talk positively or negatively about a company (Cheng et al., 2006; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014). Based on arguments from the TPB, this study hypothesizes the following:

H1: CSA attitudes will be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H1a) and purchase intention (H1b) regarding the company and negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H1c) regarding the company.

H2: Normative pressures will be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H2a) and purchase intention (H2b) and negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H2c) regarding the company.

H3: PBC will be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H3a) and purchase intention (H3b) and negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H3c) regarding the company.

Emotions

Research has indicated that emotions predict individuals' attitudes and behaviors in social issues (Höijer, 2010; Lecheler et al., 2015; Nabi, 2003, 2018; Roeser, 2012) such as in determining moral judgment and how individuals should behave (Roeser, 2012), in determining support for climate change (Nabi et al., 2018; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2014), and in influencing public opinion about immigration (Lecheler et al., 2015).

While a stream of research has focused on social issue topics like climate change and immigration, Bae (2008) examined the role of emotional responses as a predictor of issue

involvement with an entertainment-education show. Bae (2008) found that components of emotional responses served as predictors of issue involvement and that issue involvement had a strong effect on attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. Specifically, sympathy and empathy positively predicted issue involvement and subsequently, highly involved individuals perceived more social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior, felt more perceived expectations of significant others, and higher levels of PBC.

Emotions also have been examined as a factor influencing consumers' perceptions toward companies and their CSR communication efforts. O'Connor et al. (2008) examined what attributes members of a frequently targeted consumer perceived as important for CSR and found that individuals expressed stronger connections with companies that support an issue with which they have an emotional link. While previous studies indicated that CSR activities are rationally evaluated (Carroll, 1979; Marx, 1992), O'Connor et al. (2008) argued that emotion also becomes an important factor when participants evaluate CSR communication.

CSR communication research has also examined consumers' perceptions toward emotional and rational appeals (Andreu et al., 2015; Grimmer & Bingham, 2013; Singh & Del Bosque, 2008). In general, these articles found that consumers respond to CSR communication differently depending on message appeals, CSR initiatives, and personal relevance to the issue. For example, Andreu et al. (2015) demonstrated that emotionally appealing messages are more effective when the issue is less relevant to individuals, and subsequently, individuals' elaboration is low. The literature suggests that emotions are important predictors and factors to understand individuals' attitudes and behaviors. However, the role of emotions in developing the public's perception about companies' CSR efforts has not been widely examined, and no research to our knowledge has examined emotions specifically in the context of CSA.

Based on arguments from previous literature that has examined emotions as a predictor to CSR outcomes, the current study tests two polarized emotions as potential predictors to the TPB model. More specifically, this study adopts the sufficiency assumption (Fishbein et al., 2001), which argues that 'the effects of all forms of interventions (communication or otherwise) on behavioral intentions must occur indirectly through attitudes, norms, and PBC' (McKeever & McKeever, 2017, p. 1060). Therefore, H4 and H5 propose the following:

> **H4:** The relationship between negative emotions and CSA behavior responses regarding the company will be fully mediated by attitudes (H4a), normative pressure (H4b), and PBC (H4c).

> **H5:** The relationship between positive emotions and CSA behavior responses regarding the company will be fully mediated by attitudes (H5a), normative pressure (H5b), and PBC (H5c).

Issue involvement

Issue involvement refers to 'the extent to which an individual believes an issue is of intrinsic importance or has significant consequences for his/her own life' (Bae, 2008, p. 21). Hallahan (2001) noted that issue involvement is an 'individual's predisposition to pay attention to and communicate about a topic' (p. 35). Issue involvement has

been examined in various domains as a factor influenced by message framing (Lundy, 2006), a predictor influencing attitude and behavior (Bae, 2008), and a moderator between message frames and attitude (de Graaf et al., 2015). de Graaf et al. (2015) tested the effects of message framing on attitudes, intentions, and behavior toward responsible drinking, examining the moderating role of issue involvement. de Graaf et al. (2015) demonstrated that a gain-frame results in positive attitudes and intentions among participants with low issue involvement while participants with high issue involvement showed more positive attitudes and intentions for a loss-frame.

In CSR communication, issue involvement has been considered as an important motivational factor for individuals to take action regarding an issue. When an issue or problem is relevant and important to them, consumers' issue involvement increases, and often it leads to consumer activism (Heath & Douglas, 1990). Golob et al. (2008) explored how individuals' values and issue involvement influence their CSR expectations. Arguing that examining involvement and expectation is linked to attitudes, Golob et al. (2008) demonstrated that consumers with high issue involvement expect more CSR in the ethical–philanthropic dimension rather than legal and economic dimensions. Dhanesh and Nekmat (2019) examined various CSR message types and found that thematic messages are more effective than episodic messages with highly involved publics. These studies offer key insights about the role of issue involvement, but the variable has not been widely examined in the context of CSA. Based on arguments from previous literature about the role of issue involvement, the current study tests issue involvement as another potential predictor to the TPB model:

H6: The relationship between issue involvement and CSA behavior responses regarding the company will be fully mediated by attitudes (H6a), normative pressure (H6b), and PBC (H6c).

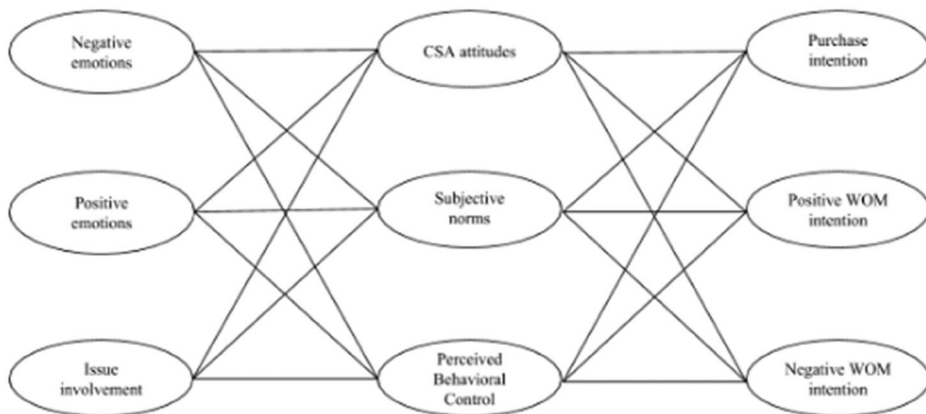Figure 1 offers a proposed hypothesis model.

Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

Method

Participants and procedures

To explore this study's hypotheses, an online survey was conducted through Qualtrics. To be eligible to participate in the study, respondents were required to be U.S. residents who indicated that they had previously heard about Nike's recent 30th anniversary campaign, which featured American football player and civil rights activist Colin Kaepernick as the face of its new global advertising campaign.

Participants (N=373) were recruited and compensated by working with Qualtrics, Inc. Qualtrics provides online survey software to academics and also has a panel management service in which the company recruits and compensates a target population for participating in research. The researchers worked with Qualtrics to obtain a pool of respondents that matched the demographic profiles found in U.S. census data. Thus, quotas were set based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, and political party. Table 1 provides participant characteristics for the final sample. Before launching the full study, a

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for key demographics.

Variable	N	%
Age		
18–44 years	143	38.3
45–64 years	107	28.7
65 years and over	123	33.0
Gender		
Male	208	55.8
Female	161	43.2
Other	2	0.5
Prefer not to answer	2	0.5
Race		
White or Caucasian	312	83.6
Black or African-American	36	9.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	1.3
Asian	13	3.5
Multi-racial	7	1.9
Education		
Some high school, but did not finish	8	2.1
Completed high school	87	23.3
Some college, but did not finish	88	23.6
Two-year college degree	54	14.5
Four-year college degree	76	20.4
Completed Masters or professional degree	39	10.5
Doctoral degree or advanced graduate work	2	0.5
Income		
Under $25,000	92	24.7
$25,000–$39,999	65	17.4
$40,000–$49,999	35	9.4
$50,000–$74,999	65	17.4
$75,000–$99,999	52	13.9
$100,000–$124,999	29	7.8
$125,000–$149,999	12	3.2
$150,000–$199,999	14	3.8
$200,000 or more	9	2.4
Political Affiliation Democrat	130	34.9
Republican	112	30.0
Independent	122	32.7
No preference	7	1.9
Other	2	0.5

pretest ($N = 75$) was conducted with a Qualtrics sample with the same demographic quotas to test survey flow and item wording. Based on pretest results, item wording was improved for clarity. Pretest participants were not included in the final sample. A university institutional review board approved all procedures and protocols prior to data collection.

Measures

After opting into the survey and indicating that they had heard about Nike's 30th anniversary campaign, participants were asked to answer questions that examined the following measures: emotions, issue involvement, attitudes toward Nike's CSA efforts (hereafter known as 'CSA attitudes'), subjective norms, PBC, WOM intention, and purchase intention. They also answered basic demographic questions. A unique set of items were constructed for the TPB variables based on Ajzen's (2006) guidelines for TPB questionnaire design. While the items are still adapted from previously validated scales, they were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis prior to inclusion in subsequent analyses. For each of the measures below, items demonstrated an acceptable degree of internal consistency when subjected to reliability analysis; thus, the items were summed and averaged to create a composite measure. Reliability statistics for each measure are provided below.

Emotions

Following scholars such as Jin (2010) who adapted items from Izard's (1993) Differential Emotions Scale (Fredrickson et al., 2003), this study asked participants the following: How do you feel about Nike taking a stance on a social issue? A series of items were listed including two polarized sets of emotions: (1) angry, irritated, annoyed and (2) hopeful, encouraged, optimistic. Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale where 1, none of this emotion and 7, a great deal of this emotion. A separate scale was formed for negative emotions ($M = 3.24$, SD = 2.27, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$) and positive emotions ($M = 3.64$, SD = 2.32, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.98$).

Issue involvement was measured by adopting 11 seven-point items from Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) using a semantic differential scale. Some example items include 'unimportant/important,' 'of no concern/of concern to me,' and 'means nothing to me/means a lot to me' ($M = 4.07$, SD = 1.99, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.98$).

Attitudes toward Nike's CSA efforts was measured using five items following scholars who developed the theory of reasoned action, TPB, and the reasoned action approach (Ajzen, 2013; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). More specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1, strongly disagree, and 7, strongly agree) with statements such as: 'supporting Nike's decision to take a stance on an issue it cares about is important' and 'Nike should make an effort to support issues the company cares about' ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 2.01$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.97$).

Subjective norms was measured using six items following scholars who developed the theory of reasoned action, TPB, and the reasoned action approach (Ajzen, 2013; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1, strongly disagree, and 7, strongly agree) with statements such as: 'most people whose opinions I value would approve of me supporting Nike's decision to take a stance

on this issue' and 'generally, I want to do what people who are important to me think I should do' (*M* = 3.83, SD = 1.54, Cronbach's *α* = 0.88).

PBC was measured using four items following scholars who developed the theory of reasoned action, TPB, and the reasoned action approach (see e.g. Ajzen, 2013; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1, strongly disagree, and 7, strongly agree) with statements such as: 'I have complete control over whether or not I choose to support Nike's decision to take a stance on this issue' and 'I am confident that if I wanted to, I could support Nike's decision to take a stance on all social issues' (*M* = 5.58, SD = 1.27, Cronbach's *α* = 0.74).

WOM intention was measured using six items to measure both positive and negative WOM intentions. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1, strongly disagree, and 7, strongly agree) with statements such as: 'I would recommend Nike to others,' and 'I would say negative things about Nike to other people.' A separate scale was formed for negative WOM intentions (*M* = 3.28, SD = 2.13, Cronbach's *α* = 0.95) and positive WOM intentions (*M* = 4.17, SD = 2.13, Cronbach's *α* = 0.99).

Purchase intention was measured by adapting three items from Dodd and Supa (2015). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree (1, strongly disagree, and 7, strongly agree) with the following statements: 'I would be very likely to buy Nike's product in the near future' and 'I am enthusiastic about the possibility of buying Nike's products' (*M* = 3.54, SD = 2.12, Cronbach's *α* = 0.96).

Data analysis

To examine the model in the current data and test the proposed hypotheses, structural equation modeling (SEM) via Mplus 7.4 using maximum likelihood estimation (ML) was performed. The whole model was also tested with bootstrapping for mediation analyses.

A preliminary analysis on the normality of data showed that the shape of distribution may not be severely non-normal as the absolute value of skewness of all variables did not exceed 3 and the absolute value of kurtosis of all variables did not exceed 10 (Kline, 2016). A full measurement model with all latent variables was tested via confirmatory factor analysis. The latent variables are negative emotions, positive emotions, issue involvement, CSA attitudes, subjective norms, PBC, purchase intention, negative word of mouth, and positive word of mouth. The error terms were correlated, and two free parameters were set in the model estimation suggested by the model modification indices. Correlated measurement errors in the CFA model suggested the associated indicators also measure something else in common in addition to the latent variables they are designed to measure. In the questionnaire, the correlated item errors were due to similar wording in these items. A root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) range from 0.05 to 0.08, a comparative fit index (CFI) close to 0.90 or 0.95, and a standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) <0.08 indicates close fit (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016). The measurement model showed an acceptable model fit with $\chi^2(741)$ = 2, 200.73, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.07 (90% CI [0.07, 0.08]), CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, and SRMR = 0.06.

Results

The SEM model fits the current data well as model fit indices suggested below: $\chi^2(753) = 2364.47$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.08 (90% CI [0.07, 0.08]), CFI = 0.92, TFI = 0.92, and SRMR = 0.07. The model was further tested by using bootstrapping = 5000 in order to obtain a 95% confidence interval for indirect effects. Model fit indices indicated a slightly improved model: $\chi^2(744) = 2294.22$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = 0.08 (90% CI [0.07, 0.08]), CFI = 0.93, TFI = 0.92, and SRMR = 0.07 (see Figure 2).

H1 predicted that CSA attitudes would be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H1a) and purchase intention (H1b) and negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H1c) regarding the company. As shown in Figure 2, CSA attitudes were significantly positively associated with positive WOM intention ($\beta = 0.72$, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.64$, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$), and significantly negatively associated with negative WOM intention ($\beta = -0.60$, SE = 0.10, $p < .001$). Therefore, H1 was supported.

H2 predicted that subjective norms would be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H2a) and purchase intention (H2b), while negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H2c) regarding the company. As shown in Figure 2, subjective norms were significantly positively associated with positive WOM intention ($\beta = 0.24$, SE = 0.06, $p < .001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.31$, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$), and significantly positively associated with negative WOM intention ($\beta = 0.40$, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$). H2a and H2b were supported, while H2c was not supported.

H3 predicted that PBC would be positively associated with positive WOM intention (H3a) and purchase intention (H3b), while negatively associated with negative WOM intention (H3c) regarding the company. There was not a significant positive association between PBC and positive WOM intention ($\beta = 0.07$, SE = 0.05, $p = .112$) or purchase intention ($\beta = -0.04$, SE = 0.05, $p = .340$). There was no significant relationship between PBC and negative WOM intention. Therefore, H3 was not supported.
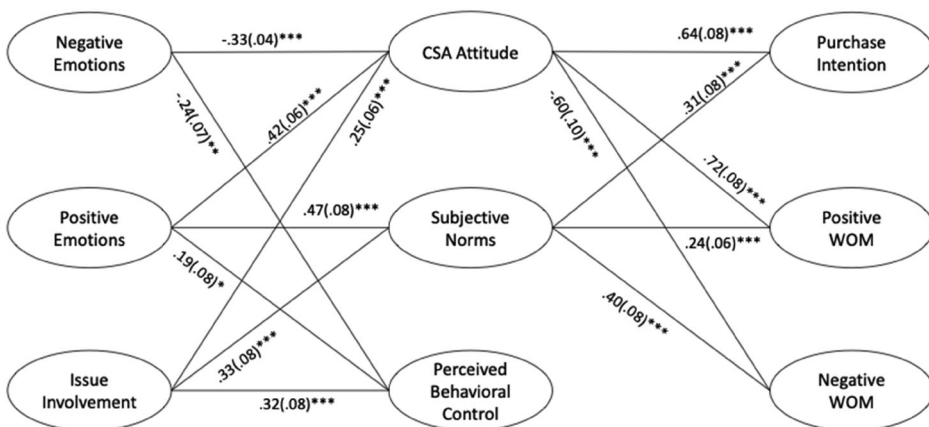
Figure 2. SEM model testing using bootstrapped 5000 samples with 95% CI. Note. Displayed values are standardized coefficients and standardized errors. Non-significant paths have been removed from the displayed model. *$p< .05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$.

Table 2. Standardized indirect effects through the hypothesized mediators with 5000 bootstrapped samples to generate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Indirect effect	Point estimate	95% CI
Relationships mediated by CSA attitude		
[H4a] Negative emotions and negative WOM intention	0.200	[0.129, 0.289]
[H4a] Negative emotions and positive WOM intention	−0.241	[−0.329, −0.166]
[H4a] Negative emotions and purchase intention	−0.212	[−0.303, −0.141]
[H5a] Positive emotions and negative WOM intention	−0.253	[−0.386, −0.161]
[H5a] Positive emotions and positive WOM intention	0.305	[0.201, 0.432]
[H5a] Positive emotions and purchase intention	0.269	[0.167, 0.395]
[H6a] Issue involvement and negative WOM intention	−0.151	[−0.257, −0.072]
[H6a] Issue involvement and positive WOM intention	0.182	[0.092, 0.294]
[H6a] Issue involvement and purchase intention	0.161	[0.084, 0.256]
Relationships mediated by subjective norms		
[H4b] Negative emotions and negative WOM intention	−0.025	[−0.073, 0.015]
[H4b] Negative emotions and positive WOM intention	−0.015	[−0.045, 0.009]
[H4b] Negative emotions and purchase intention	−0.020	[−0.063, 0.010]
[H5b] Positive emotions and negative WOM intention	0.189	[0.103, 0.321]
[H5b] Positive emotions and positive WOM intention	0.113	[0.056, 0.199]
[H5b] Positive emotions and purchase intention	0.148	[0.070, 0.252]
[H6b] Issue involvement and negative WOM intention	0.133	[0.067, 0.239]
[H6b] Issue involvement and positive WOM intention	0.080	[0.036, 0.155]
[H6b] Issue involvement and purchase intention	0.105	[0.045, 0.199]
Relationships mediated by perceived behavioral control		
[H4c] Negative emotions and negative WOM intention	−0.008	[−0.047, 0.022]
[H4c] Negative emotions and positive WOM intention	−0.017	[−0.053, 0.001]
[H4c] Negative emotions and purchase intention	0.010	[−0.008, 0.040]
[H5c] Positive emotions and negative WOM intention	0.006	[−0.017, 0.040]
[H5c] Positive emotions and positive WOM intention	0.013	[−0.001, 0.044]
[H5c] Positive emotions and purchase intention	−0.008	[−0.038, 0.005]
[H6c] Issue involvement and negative WOM intention	0.011	[−0.031, 0.059]
[H6c] Issue involvement and positive WOM intention	0.023	[−0.002, 0.063]
[H6c] Issue involvement and purchase intention	−0.014	[−0.058, 0.011]

To test H4–H6, further analyses with a bootstrapping procedure (with 5000 bootstrapped samples used to generate 95% bias-corrected CIs) revealed the indirect effects between latent constructs that are shown in Table 2. The confidence interval including zero suggests a non-significant effect.

H4 predicted that the relationship between negative emotions and CSA behavior responses (purchase intention, positive WOM intention, and negative WOM intention) regarding the company will be fully mediated by CSA attitudes (H4a), normative pressures (H4b), and PBC (H4c). As shown in Table 2, the relationships between negative emotions and purchase intention ($B = -0.212$, 95% CI = −0.303, −0.141), positive WOM intention (B = −0.241, 95% CI = −0.329, −0.166), and negative WOM intention ($B = 0.200$, 95% CI = 0.129, 0.289) were fully mediated by CSA attitudes. Therefore, H4a was supported. However, H4b and H4c were not supported.

H5 predicted that the relationship between positive emotions and CSA behavior responses (purchase intention, positive WOM intention, and negative WOM intention) regarding the company will be fully mediated by CSA attitudes (H5a), normative pressures (H5b), and PBC (H5c). The relationships between negative emotions and purchase intention ($B = 0.269$, 95% CI = 0.167, 0.395), positive WOM intention ($B = 0.305$, 95% CI = 0.201, 0.432), and negative WOM intention ($B = -0.253$, 95% CI = −0.386, −0.161) were fully mediated by CSA attitudes. The relationships between positive emotions and purchase intention ($B = 0.148$, 95% CI = 0.070, 0.252), positive WOM intention (B

= 0.113, 95% CI = 0.056, 0.199), and negative WOM intention (B = 0.189, 95% CI = 0.103, 0.321) were fully mediated by subjective norms. Therefore, H5a and H5b were supported. However, as shown in Table 2, H5c was not supported.

H6 predicted that the relationship between issue involvement and CSA behavior responses (purchase intention, positive WOM intention, and negative WOM intention) regarding the company will be fully mediated by CSA attitudes (H6a), normative pressures (H6b), and PBC (H6c). The relationships between issue involvement and purchase intention (B = 0.161, 95% CI = 0.084, 0.256), positive WOM intention (B = 0.182, 95% CI = 0.092, 0.294), and negative WOM intention (B = −0.151, 95% CI = −0.257, −0.072) were fully mediated by CSA attitudes. The relationships between issue involvement and purchase intention (B = 0.105, 95% CI = 0.045, 0.199), positive WOM intention (B = 0.080, 95% CI = 0.036, 0.155), and negative WOM intention (B = 0.133, 95% CI = 0.067, 0.239) were fully mediated by subjective norms. Therefore, H6a and H6b were supported. However, as shown in Table 2, H6c was not supported.

Discussion

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing additional support for further examination of CSA as a construct. Dodd and Supa (2014) demonstrated that CSA has significant impacts on individuals' purchase intention with regard to the socio-political issues of gay marriage, healthcare reform, and emergency contraception and same-sex marriage (Dodd & Supa, 2015). This study tested the TPB to examine how company stances on another issue – racial oppression – predict both purchase intention and positive and negative WOM communication intentions. Furthermore, this study examines emotions and issue involvement as antecedents of TPB variables (attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC) to predict CSA response behaviors.

Results from H1–H3, which tested TPB arguments, only partially supported findings from previous studies. The current study found that both attitudes and subjective norms were positive predictors of positive WOM intention and purchase intention, but only attitudes were a significant predictor of negative WOM intention. PBC was not a significant predictor of any behavioral intentions. This finding is consistent with some literature in related disciplines (Pashaei et al., 2016) that argues that individuals do not have the ability to estimate their PBC and intentions. Also, while some previous CSA literature found PBC to be a significant predictor, it was the weakest predictor among the three TPB measures (Dodd & Supa, 2014). With attitudes emerging as the strongest predictor of all three types of behavioral intentions, this study's findings highlight the important role individuals' attitudes toward CSA play in their responses. To a lesser degree, the perceived social pressures for supporters to talk positively about Nike and to support the company by purchasing merchandize also play a role. However, people in this study did not feel pressure to talk negatively if they did not support Nike.

This study also argued that the three TPB variables (attitudes, perceived norms, and PBC) would be immediate determinants of behavioral intentions, as H4–H6 predict. The sufficiency assumption (Ajzen, 1985; McKeever & McKeever, 2017) was partially supported in this study. The role of negative emotions, positive emotions, and issue involvement on behavioral intentions was fully mediated by attitudes and subjective

norms, but there was no mediation through PBC. Therefore, in examining the role of two additional mechanisms (emotions and issue involvement) on behavioral intentions, this study does indicate that emotions and issue involvement alone do not lead to behavioral intentions; rather, attitudes and perceived norms are the immediate determinants of behavioral intentions.

Theoretical implications

Of primary importance, this study offers key theoretical advancements in our understanding of the relationship between emotions, issue involvement, and behaviors. This model stresses the importance of emotions and issue involvement as antecedents of the TPB in the context of CSA. In this way, it bridges the gap between research that focuses on CSA, and research that focuses on behaviors, by including individual-level variables, emotions and issue involvement, in one fairly parsimonious model. Dodd and Supa (2014) also called for more research in CSA by parsing out individual variables.

While theoretically grounded CSA literature has been limited, this research contributes to current CSR literature by testing salient social–political issues with the TPB, which has been a useful theory to predict individual-level behaviors. As previous CSA studies have focused on describing and examining real-life cases (Abitbol et al., 2018; Gaither et al., 2018; Wettstein & Baur, 2016), existing studies have called for more CSA research with individual-level analyses (Frynas & Stephens, 2015), application of theories (Frynas & Stephens, 2015), and examining trends in public attitudes and sales (Gaither et al., 2018). This study extends previous CSA research and adds an additional layer to both TPB and CSA literature by answering these calls from previous CSA literature.

This study also offers further insight about the individual-level variables that predict purchase intention and positive and negative WOM communication, which are of utmost importance to corporations. More specifically, as previous CSR communication studies have explored individuals' WOM communication intention with various conditions such as organization reputation (Lii & Lee, 2012), message types and CSR issues (Overton, 2018), and communication responsiveness (Rim & Song, 2013), this study provides a new perspective into CSR/CSA literature by demonstrating the importance of emotions and issue involvement to predict individuals' WOM communication intention.

Practical implications

Nike has a reputation for supporting controversial issues in order to market images of edgy, risk-taking, young athletes. But, the Kaepernick ad got more people talking about Nike much more than they had during previous ad campaigns. This research reveals that Nike's decision to continue to take a stance by not just appearing to be socially responsible, but becoming more of an activist in its support of social issues in America, is important for the brand and the consumers that the company wants to attract because large percentages of these groups want companies to have a viewpoint and take a stand for something. In fact, two-thirds of Nike's customers are under 35 years old and more racially diverse than the baby boomer population (Lofgren, 2019). Therefore, the more positive emotions and higher levels of issue involvement in

support of the Colin Kaepernick ad campaign led to increased brand engagement and sales, and that level of engagement and sales far outweighed the negative emotions and calls to boycott the brand.

More profoundly, this study illustrates how Nike was able to take a stand regarding racism in society. The conversation about public opinion regarding companies taking stances on social issues continues to be controversial, with recent research revealing a racial divide between individuals' attitudes about companies serving as issue advocates (Intravia et al., 2019). However, public interest in companies engaging in CSA continues, particularly with regard to Nike's CSA experience. According to The Millennial Impact Report, this generation is more interested in causes and social issues that contribute to the quality of life for everyone, especially for people who have been marginalized in society (Meyersohn, 2018). A study by Ybrands, conducted in January 2018, collected over 44,000 interviews with 13–36 year-olds about more than 300 brands found significant increases in influence, personality characteristics, relevance, and momentum for Nike (n.a., YPulse, 2018). When compared with other popular brands such as Adidas, Jordan, Reebok, and Under Armour, Nike not only maintained a high competitive ranking, but increased in the areas of popularity, companies that support causes, and most talked-about companies as the competitor scores dropped among this age group post-Kaepernick. A Quinnipiac University poll revealed that voters approved of Nike's choice to feature Kaepernick 49% to 37% and a significant age gap with those aged 18–34 approving by 67–21 margin versus those aged 65 and older that disapproved by 46–39% (Quinnipiac University Poll, 2018). A similar age divide was reported in a separate SSRS Omnibus poll provided to CNN. Among Americans aged 18–34, 44% approved compared to 32% opposed yet 47% of those 65 and over disapproved while only 26% were in support of Nike (Meyersohn, 2018). It has been reported that Nike's campaign was a calculated risk. The amount of positive support for Kaepernick and the fact that people took behavioral actions to show that support is supported by this study. Regarding social advocacy, Nike is actually better positioned to continue to engage in CSA than other companies and has demonstrated that it will have the support of the younger generations of consumers that the company seeks.

This study offers an example of a company that is widely viewed as a corporate social justice advocate that took a stand on an important social justice issue. While conventional wisdom suggests that companies should avoid engaging in socio-political issues that may alienate stakeholder groups, this study suggests that there is an increasing expectation that companies will serve as social actors and that avoiding to do so may no longer be a safe course of action. It is important for companies to recognize the shift in societal expectations and to embrace opportunities to take an active role in solving social problems. Companies need to have a strong, clearly communicated social purpose that fuels their existence, and employees need to be on the front line as ambassadors of social advocacy. As this study illustrates, companies must consider how they want to be viewed among stakeholders and must be thoughtful about the manner in which they take a stance. Furthermore, companies need to carefully consider how they wish to be viewed among important stakeholder groups, as it is clear that CSA engagement may impact much more than the bottom line – it has reputational impacts. If companies wish to remain sustainable investments, they must shift corporate values and

communicate with key stakeholders the way that they are making meaningful contributions to the public good.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has several limitations on which future research can be built. First, while this study offered a theoretically grounded examination of individuals' CSA response behaviors, data collection took place five months after Nike launched its 30th anniversary ad campaign, not immediately afterward when emotions and reactions were arguably more heightened. However, as companies' efforts to engage in socially responsible actions are intended to be long-term, relationship-building decisions (Coombs & Holladay, 2012), it was more appropriate to assess individuals' long-term attitudes and behavioral intentions instead of taking a snapshot of their immediate reactions to a controversial event in this study. However, future research could conduct a longitudinal analysis to examine trends over time. Also, although this study used a nationally representative sample that mirrored U.S. census data, this study did not focus on highlighting potential differences in CSA responses using demographic considerations (e.g. age groups, gender, race, political affiliation, etc.). Future studies may consider testing differences among groups to further examine how these factors may interplay with the variables examined in this study. Future studies may focus on examining-related topics such as implications for the NFL, freedom of expression, or how perceived motives for Nike's CSA efforts impact attitudes and behavioral intentions. Finally, conducting an experimental study could reveal causal relationships between variables that would offer additional insights beyond what survey research can provide. All of these research ideas could provide insights for strategic communicators to more effectively understand and employ CSA messaging strategies.

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