

**The Role of Moral Emotions on Consumers' Responses toward a Sport Property-Driven Cause-Related Marketing Campaign: A Case of NFL's Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign**

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Buying decisions involving cause-related products and services (e.g., team merchandise tied to charitable donation) provide opportunities for consumers to demonstrate their moral values and beliefs. For instance, some people donate their time to feel proud or happy as a result of supporting a worthy cause (Arnett et al., 2003). Previous studies have found that people engage in prosocial behaviors based on feelings of approval or disapproval which are closely linked to moral emotions (e.g., Haidt, 2003). As such, some researchers found that moral emotions (e.g., pride, empathy, guilt, etc.) play critical role in changing consumers' intentions to purchase the cause-related product (Kim & Johnson, 2012). However, the influence of moral emotions on sport consumers' response to the league-driven cause-related program is little understood. Following Kim and Johnson (2012), we propose that moral emotions will mediate the effects of organization affinity and cause involvement on attitudes and behaviors toward a sport property-driven cause-related marketing (CRM) campaign. The current study contributes to the CRM literature by investigating the link between moral emotions and consumers' CRM evaluations.

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a term used to describe marketing activities that offer consumers opportunities to make purchase decisions for reasons other than personal benefit (e.g., social and moral beliefs). We use Varadarajan and Menon's (1988) definition of CRM as it refers to the donation from a firm to a designated cause when consumers engage in revenue-providing exchanges (e.g., purchasing a cause-related merchandise). The National Football League's (NFL) breast cancer awareness program (A Crucial Catch campaign) was chosen for the current study as it exemplifies the league's commitment to fight breast cancer through its partnership with American Cancer Society. For example, the National Football League (NFL) has partnered with American Cancer Society and promotes pink-themed merchandise, which proceeds go to support the cause (i.e., breast cancer prevention). During October, NFL games feature players, coaches, and referees wearing pink game apparel, on-field pink ribbon stencils, and special game balls and coins to help raise awareness of the campaign. While the league's partnership seems critical in raising awareness of the cause, it remains to be examined how this type of campaign works in consumers' minds. Particularly, little research has been conducted to explore the role of emotion on consumers' moral decision-making (Gaudine & Thorne, 2001).

It has been well documented in the consumer behavior research that emotions have significant impact on consumers' judgment and decision-making (e.g., Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Labroo & Mukhopadhyay, 2009). However, the dimension of emotional feelings varies across situations and these different discrete emotions influence how consumers make judgments of the product. According to Haidt (2003), moral emotions are different from basic emotions (e.g., joy, happiness, surprise) in that they are linked to something outside of the individual such as the welfare of society and others. Recently, Kim and Johnson (2012) found that moral emotions (e.g., pride, empathy, elevation, and guilt) significantly influenced consumers' purchase intention for a cause-related product. Based on the existing literature on moral emotions, we identified both ego-focused (i.e., pride and guilt) and other-focused (i.e., empathy and elevation) dimensions as key moral emotions that could be elicited from engaging in a CRM campaign.

Based on the review of existing literature, we hypothesize that individuals' predisposed attitudes toward the property (i.e., NFL) and the involvement with cause (i.e., breast cancer) will significantly affect moral emotions. Additionally, we predict that moral emotions will have a positive and direct impact on attitude enhancement toward NFL and behavioral intentions to support the campaign, respectively. While the majority of early work focused on the effect of CRM on improving organization's image and purchase decision, the current study extends the literature by examining the impact of CRM on individuals' behavioral intentions to support the cause.

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In order to test the proposed model, data were collected from the general U.S. population ( $N = 603$ ) by using an online panel service (i.e., Qualtrics). Mean age was 50 years old (ranged from 19 to 77;  $SD = 13.18$ ) and about half of the participants were female (51%). A majority of respondents were Caucasian (78.9%) and about 63% had some college experience or college degree, while 24% were high school graduates. In terms of watching NFL games on television, 24% reported that they watch less than one game per year, while 36% reported 13 games or more per year.

All multi-item scales were derived from previous literature to measure attitude toward the organization (NFL ATT), cause involvement (CAUSE INV), moral emotions (EMOTION), attitude change toward the organization (NFL ATT CHANGE), and behavioral intention to support the cause (BI). The measurement model fit the data well ( $S-B \chi^2 / df = 4.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $CFI = .96$ ;  $RMSEA = .08$ ) and the scales demonstrated good psychometric properties. The structural model also showed acceptable model fit ( $S-B \chi^2 / df = 5.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $CFI = .94$ ;  $RMSEA = .09$ ). Path coefficients suggest that NFL ATT ( $\beta = .38$ ) and CAUSE INV ( $\beta = .55$ ) had significant direct effects on EMOTION. Additionally, EMOTION had significant direct effects on NFL ATT CHANGE ( $\beta = .75$ ) and BI ( $\beta = .81$ ). All predictors in the model accounted for 56% of the total variance in NFL ATT CHANGE and 66% of the total variance in BI, respectively.

Our results indicate that individuals' disposition toward the organization and the cause are critical in eliciting moral emotions which subsequently affect positive attitudinal and behavioral changes to the cause and the sponsoring organization. Results showed that both ego-focused (pride and guilt) and other-focused (empathy and elevation) moral emotions play critical role in shaping consumers' attitudes and in motivating consumers to engage in cause-supportive behaviors. Managers should realize the importance of moral emotions as they can benefit both the sponsoring organization and the campaign. For instance, communication messages should be designed to evoke positive moral feelings (e.g., pride, empathy) among target consumers. The present study makes several contributions to the body of work examining the social impact of sport organizations. First, the study examines the moral emotion-enhancing effect of CRM and its impact on the organization and on the campaign. Second, a sample from the general population allowed us to examine the broader impact of a sport property-driven CRM campaign. Future studies should incorporate potential moderators (e.g., past altruistic behavior, gender, strength of team allegiance, etc.) to further our understanding of the effective use of CRM in sport.