

**Selling Pink: Exploring the Impact of Breast Cancer-Related Marketing Campaigns**

*Joon Sung Lee, University of Michigan*

*Kali Hengsteler, University of Michigan*

*Dae Hee Kwak (Advisor), University of Michigan*

**Marketing**

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Introduction

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer for women in the United States (American Cancer Society, 2011). In accordance with the high incidence rate, breast cancer has become one of the most popular causes for many organizations (e.g., NFL) to generate revenues and increase awareness of the disease. Some critics argue that breast cancer-related marketing (CRM) programs are actually benefiting the sponsoring companies rather than the cause. In light of this criticism, the proposed study explores the impact of a sport property-driven breast cancer-related marketing campaign (i.e., A Crucial Catch) on consumer perception toward the organization and cause-supporting behaviors. Particularly, we examined if male and female consumers respond differently to the promotion of a gender-specific cause (cf. Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010). Given the campaign is heavily promoted through strong visual cues (e.g., pink uniforms, pink gears and utensils on field, etc.), we further examined if the level of television viewership affects an individual's perception of the campaign.

Theoretical Background and Research Hypotheses

A growing numbers of sport teams and leagues are embracing socially responsible programs in order to exemplify citizenship within their respective communities (Aschermann, 2006). In particular, CRM is employed by many sport properties as a way of community engagement. Previous studies following consumer responses to CRM initiatives have tended to focus on the description of general responses to the concept of CRM and measurement of how the elements of CRM campaigns affect attitudes and purchase intentions (Webb & Mohr, 1998). In general, research has shown that consumers express favorable attitudes and intentions towards firms engaged in CRM initiatives. In support of this, Irwin and colleagues (2003) found that a non-profit organization involved with CRM had a positive influence on sport consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and purchase intentions toward the sponsoring company. With regards to gender differences, previous research has consistently noted that males and females differ on their responses toward CRM (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010; Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). For instance, women tend to react more positively toward a company's CRM and its related product and donation requests than men (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010). Moreover, males are reported to be more skeptical than females on perceiving a firm's motive in engaging in CRM (Ross et al. 1992; Webb & Mohr, 1998). However, previous studies have failed to control for potential confounding variables (e.g., personal involvement with gender-specific cause) that would have accounted for gender differences. Therefore, it remains to be examined if gender differences would still exist after controlling for personal involvement with the cause (i.e., breast cancer).

In addition, an individual's level of involvement with the organization increases the effectiveness of a CRM communication (e.g., Bloom et al., 2006). This implies that individuals who regularly consume the product or service will respond to the firm's CRM initiative favorably. As such, in the context of professional football, consumers who regularly watch NFL games on television will be more likely to report favorable evaluations toward the league's CRM campaign (i.e., A Crucial Catch Campaign). Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Compared to men, women will show more positive perceptions and supporting behaviors toward a property-driven CRM campaign.

H2: As TV viewership level increases, people will show more positive perceptions and supporting behaviors toward a property-driven CRM campaign.

Method

Data were collected from the general U. S. population (N = 603) by using a panel service. Online surveys were

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administered and respondents in the panel group completed the survey prior to the start of the 2012 NFL season. Females were 50.6 % (n = 305) of the total respondents, and the majority of respondents were Caucasian (78.9 %, n = 475). The average age of participants was 49.9 years (SD = 13.2 years), and 54.5% of participants ranged from 46 to 65 years of age. To examine the effect of NFL television viewership on perception toward the CRM, respondents were classified into three groups: Light-viewers (watch less than one game per season; 24.4%), Medium viewers (watch between 2-10 games per season; 39.6%), Heavy viewers (watch more than 11 games per season; 36%). These groups showed significantly different levels of attitude toward the NFL (M<sub>light</sub> viewers = 3.46; M<sub>medium</sub> viewers = 5.1; M<sub>heavy</sub> viewers = 6.15), suggesting convergent validity of the tripartite classification. A 2 (gender: male/female) x 3 (TV viewership: heavy/medium/light) Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine the proposed hypotheses. Following existing CRM literature, outcome measures included perceived motive of CRM [MOTIVE], attitudinal change toward the cause [CAUSE CHANGE], attitudinal change toward the NFL [NFL ATT], behavioral change toward the NFL [NFL BEHAV], and behavioral intentions to support the campaign [CAUSE SUPPORT]). Four socio-demographic variables (i.e., ethnicity, education, household income, and age) and perceived cause involvement were employed as covariates. All multi-item scales demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged from .87 to .96).

### Results and Discussion

The MANCOVA results showed significant main effects of NFL TV viewership on MOTIVE [F (2, 601) = 51.22, p < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .12], CAUSE CHANGE [F (2, 601) = 51.22, p < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .12], NFL ATT [F (2, 601) = 40.14, p < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .12], NFL BEHAV [F (2, 601) = 28.20, p < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .09], and CAUSE SUPPORT [F (2, 601) = 20.50, p < .001,  $\eta^2$  = .07]. However, gender had no significant main effect on any of the dependent variables. With regard to the covariates, ethnicity and cause involvement significantly influenced outcome variables.

Findings indicate that NFL television viewership has a significant positive effect on consumers' perceptions toward the NFL's campaign. Individuals who watch games more frequently showed more favorable perceptions toward the campaign than those who watch less. This finding supports previous research that a high level of involvement with the firm leads to favorable evaluation of the CRM campaign (Bloom et al., 2006). However, when controlling for respondents' personal relevance with the cause (breast cancer), we found no gender differences on any of the dependent measures (cf. Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010). This finding suggests that a property-driven CRM campaign would be equally effective to both males and females in creating positive attitudinal and behavioral changes toward the cause and the property. Managers should differentiate CRM-related communication strategies to effectively target different consumer segments.