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WHAT IMPACT DOES CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING HAVE ON PROFESSIONAL
SPORTS TEAMS?
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In today's competitive business climate, firms must find new and innovative ways to differentiate their brand from others in their field. American Express Credit Card Company discovered such a marketing tool in 1981 when they sponsored the Statue of Liberty Restoration Project by donating a predetermined percentage of their card sales. The purpose of the sponsorship was twofold: American Express wished to increase card usage as well as support a cause to gain an overall better corporate image. In the end, American Express experienced a 28% increase in card usage and was able to donate \$1.7 million to the Statue of Liberty restoration effort.

American Express also registered the trademark phrase "cause related marketing" at this time. Since its inception, cause-related marketing has become increasingly popular and more and more corporations have decided to not only participate in corporate philanthropy (monetary donations to a chosen organization) but to also swing some efforts into cause-related marketing. A notable difference between corporate philanthropy and cause related marketing is that CRM is more beneficial to both parties, whereas corporate philanthropy is less beneficial to both the corporation as well as the organizations. CRM not only provides funding for an organization but also awareness of it. Furthermore, corporations usually receive some form of increased profit as well as a more positive brand image (Lee, Jaedock, and Ferreira 2011).

The popularity has since extended beyond the traditional corporate world and has become prevalent in professional sports as a marketing and public relations tool as well. What are the effects, if any, of a professional sports team or league's involvement in a cause-related marketing campaign? The thesis statement for this paper is that professional sports teams strengthen fan

loyalty and increase overall image through involvement in cause-related marketing campaigns. This will be supported by information found in previous studies about cause-related marketing campaigns and how they were beneficial to corporations that engaged in such campaigns.

CRM in Corporations

This business era is marked by general distrust of large corporations by consumers, due to unethical and immoral behavior displayed by companies such as Enron. Most consumers both appreciate and support CRM efforts made by corporations. A report by Lachowetz and Irwin cites a 1999 study in which 83% of respondents stated they have a more positive view of companies that support a cause they care about, with 60% affirming that CRM should be a standard business practice. Two-thirds also admit they trust companies involved in CRM more than those not involved. Two-thirds of consumers are also more likely to purchase from a brand that supports a cause when price and quality are equal to a brand not participating in CRM. Companies executing well-developed CRM programs experience many benefits, including but not limited to low cost exposure, ability to sway consumers who want to support a cause, a differentiated and enhanced company image, greater employee pride, and positive publicity. A consumer study by Lachowetz and Irwin (2002) had over half of its respondents admit to feeling that purchasing products from socially responsible and charitable corporations is important, and about 55% will switch brands to support such companies. Fifty percent of the consumers studied reported that had purchased a product because of their desire to support a cause and are still willing to try a new brand to support a cause related promotion (Lachowetz, Tony, and Richard Irwin).

A later study by Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell, and Clark (2003) used information from that same event to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and purchase intentions of consumers exposed to a firm's sponsorship of a sporting event associated with a nonprofit organization. A survey was completed by 442 event spectators. Survey results showed that consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and purchase intentions towards the sponsoring company were positively impacted by the company's involvement in cause-related marketing. This study confirmed previous findings in regards to this subject, not only by other individuals but by some of the authors of this particular article as well, that CRM is an important and positive aspect of businesses. This proves the value of cause-related sport sponsorship in today's world and shows its ability to either sway consumers or reaffirm a consumer's positive beliefs, attitudes, and purchase intentions.

Demetriou, Papasolomou, and Vrontis (2002) proved in their study that corporations that practice CRM (i.e., partner with nonprofit or social cause organizations) maintain a stronger, more positive corporate image than those that do not. The authors performed mostly quantitative research in the form of a survey to gather opinions from Cypriot. They then used the top three CRM involved corporations (based on consumer responses) and interviewed the marketing managers about CRM and CSR marketing plans. Due to limitations on funding and time, the sample size of the Cyprian population was 820 and again, only the top three ranking companies based on responses were interviewed. Results of the consumer survey proved that 87% of consumers feel that corporations do need to be socially responsible. Furthermore, if two different brands are each offering a product similar in quality and price, consumers are more likely to purchase the product of a brand that supports a cause over one that does not, proving that brand preference is directly related to a company's social responsibility efforts. The study proved that people do indeed put their loyalty towards brands that support a social cause over those that do

not. Cypriot consumers were also asked which organizations and/or causes they would best like to see corporations form partnerships with. The most popular answer was cancer prevention, research and treatment efforts, followed closely by protection of children's rights. The survey also indicated an interesting fact that organizations that simply donate money to a small number of charities rather than continually working with one organization are usually not viewed as corporate donors. This means that a close partnership should definitely be formed between a corporation and one cause or organization and maintained from there to increase brand reputation.

Previous research the authors mention in the article includes information that states two-thirds of Americans agree that CRM should be a standard business practice and the same percentage have more trust in companies that take on a social cause. Also, eight out of ten Americans have a more positive image of companies that support charitable causes or organizations. A closer look was then taken by the researchers to see what type of methods are being used by the top three corporations to select and keep an ongoing partnership with an organization. The interviews with the marketing managers of the top three companies revealed that it is a careful and strategic process. Once an organization is chosen, an explicit contract must be drawn up between the two which outlines expectations, timeframes, and promises as well as highlight and potential problems that may arise within the partnership. This backs up previous research stating that CRM goes so far as to cause the majority of people to buy another product that is equal in quality and price when the brand supports a cause over one that does not.

Ioanna Papsolomou and Philip J. Kitchen (2011) analyzed the efforts of BMW Cyprus in meeting the objective of publicly demonstrating the firm's commitment to addressing a social issue or cause while simultaneously achieving marketing and corporate objectives like new

product introduction, increasing sales, or building reputation within a local or national market. BMW of Cyprus partnered with the Cyprus Football Association in support of fighting drug addiction, all the while creating brand and product awareness for their new 320i model in the national market. The researchers analyzed a CRM campaign executed by BMW Cyprus and drew on the experiences and views of people working for the company to discover the nature of the campaign and to find out why it was adopted by the company. For their study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Secondary sources included analysis of related promotional material for the campaign such as presentations, leaflets, TV advertisements, and press conferences. Primary information was collected via one-hour interviews with members of the charity organization as well as members of the CRM campaign organizational committee. Ten interviews were conducted with members of BMW of Cyprus' marketing department and five interviews with members of the charity's organizational committee. There was no formal interview guide and interviewees were encouraged to freely share their perceptions and experiences in regards to the CRM campaign.

The results from the interviews showed that benefits were felt by both BMW and the Cyprus Football Association and their joint cause to battle drug abuse. Benefits to BMW included enhanced corporate and brand reputation via positive feedback from customers, agents, and members of the public. Awareness and knowledge of the new product (the 320i) increased, as shown by the increase in number of test drives for the vehicles.. Other benefits included improved standing of the firm in relation to competition, increased staff morale and camaraderie among employees, and reinforced core values of the company. Benefits felt by the charity included 125,000 Euros raised, greater visibility and publicity for the cause, facilitated potential new partnerships, and established an ongoing cooperation with the BMW of Cyprus dealer. This

mutual benefit is the essence of CRM campaigns and shows that BMW's CRM campaign and alignment with Cyprus Football Association was successful. The results showed that CRM can be a very effective way of living up to corporate values and communicating them to stakeholders and the general public. BMW of Cyprus' CRM campaign was executed successfully as it allowed the firm to promote its new model while showing concern and taking action for the community by raising money to combat drug addiction. This study is a good example of how CRM is a worldwide trend in markets of all kinds.

What makes CRM effective?

To discover why CRM campaigns have an effect on consumer behavior, it must be understood what inner feelings philanthropy touches on within a person. Seouni Youn and Hyuksoo Kim (2008) analyzed the impact of consumer psychographics on their support for cause-related marketing initiatives. Psychographics measure and study personality, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles. By examining this information, marketers will be better able to make strategic decisions for CRM campaigns including targeting, message strategy, media planning, cause selection, and other strategic decisions. By determining who is or is not in favor of CRM, knowledge is gained about which consumer characteristics lead to the positive attitudes toward CRM and communication with such programs.

Researchers focused on a motivational approach where psychographic factors including personal values, differing lifestyles, and individual interests and attitudes are used to explain why consumers choose to support brands involved in corporate social responsibility. Psychographics can offer perspectives beyond those offered by demographics as to what differentiates buyers of products that support social causes. Psychographics also offer greater insight as to why some

consumers are more willing than others to purchase brands and companies that support charitable causes through a cause-related marketing campaign. It had been predicted that psychographic variables would be important determinants beyond demographic factors for explaining consumer support for a company's CRM campaign or activities.

The results of the study did indeed show that psychographic factors accounted for a significant amount of variance in consumer support of cause-related marketing when demographic variables were controlled. For specific social causes geared toward improving the well-being of minorities, consumers' public self-consciousness and sense of responsibility were found to be the most important psychographic factors in consumer attitudes towards cause-related marketing. For general causes, interpersonal trust played a role in support, indicating that consumers' belief of others as being trustworthy translates into their support for a company's efforts to sponsor social causes and believing in a company's philanthropic motivation to help others in need. Consumers' religious beliefs in giving back to others were also found as a key psychographic factor in supporting a company's cause through purchasing. Religious lifestyles seemingly lead an individual to be exposed to volunteerism, causing one to become more civic-minded. An unexpected finding was that it is an individual's external, rather than internal, locus of control that is more likely to lead to one's support of corporate involvement in social causes.

Overall, the study indicated the importance of psychographics in explaining why consumers do or do not value corporate support of social causes. The findings of the study advance marketers' knowledge of consumer profiles in a CRM scope through the integration of pro-social behavior research into cause-related marketing. This is the only study found and examined for this paper that looked into psychographics and how they affect consumer behavior in relation to CRM.

Consumer connection to a cause, compatibility and a good fit as perceived by consumers also leads to an effective CRM campaign. Rifon and Trimble (2006) set out to compare the effects on a corporation's reputation of different types of donor/cause compatibilities within the realm of cause related marketing. The authors reviewed and explained the construct of compatibility and CRM effects on causes and corporations. The study also takes into account consumer response and consumer relationship to causes and how that leads a consumer to be more sensitive towards a business supporting a particular cause.

This study confirmed that the role of sponsor and cause compatibility creates positive consumer perceptions of the donor and highlights the importance of the individual characteristics like compatibility, relevancy of the cause to the customer, or size of the donation promised by the donor that can affect perceptions of the business organization's CRM campaign. The results suggested that the cause or social issue supported by the corporation in the CRM campaign does indeed make a difference and should be compatible to be more widely accepted by consumers. A "strong" fit is also more successful than a "weak" fit, as perceived by consumers. Something of note is that this is relying on the consumers' perceptions; even if there is in fact a logical meaning behind the pairing, it must be known by consumers to have a more positive effect. Individual differences are also to be considered, as a woman is more likely to perceive a partnership as compatible and will be less likely to scrutinize the campaign in general than men. Furthermore, consumer familiarity with the cause is of importance as familiarity with a cause is necessary to determine if a corporation is compatible with it or not. This shows that a CRM campaign must be carefully constructed, as not all pairings will be successful.

Hoek and Gendall (2008) further explored whether congruence between a cause and a sponsor matters to consumers and makes a difference in the behavior of consumers in regards to

cause related marketing. The researchers basically wanted to determine if there needs to be an appropriate fit between cause and sponsor. For example, a women's undergarments manufacturer or retailer developing a CRM campaign with Susan G. Komen for Breast Cancer research would be a good fit since both the manufacturer or retailer as well as the cause apply predominantly to women. Since the inception of CRM when American Express campaigned to increase card usage by supporting the Statue of Liberty restoration, CRM has been called many things including "strategic giving" and "pragmatic altruism". While the benefits of such a campaign make CRM a good marketing strategy for companies, researchers have cautioned against its use without proper planning to ensure the cause and brand are logically and emotionally aligned. With so many causes to choose from, narrowing down which are best for a company can be tricky, but good fit leads to a more successful campaign and increases the impact of the campaign by about five times more than a low fitting cause does. Furthermore, while some level of skepticism exists in nearly all CRM campaigns, it is much greater when the cause-brand fit is poor. One study by Tribble and Rifon (2006) stress the importance of a strong brand-cause relationship and suggests that consumer involvement with the cause would bring about more positive attitudes towards the sponsoring company.

To explore the aforementioned theory, three hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis was that a low-congruency cause will have less influence on consumers' choice behavior than a high-congruency cause. The second hypothesis questions whether respondents who had previously purchased brands because of their support of a cause will be more responsive to CRM than those who have not previously responded. The final hypothesis questioned whether respondents who had previously been responsive to CRM promotions will be more responsive to high-congruency causes than to low-congruency causes.

Six potential CRM beneficiaries were identified and tested in depth interviews with a sample of 12 coffee drinkers. Both national and global causes were represented and all had been active with campaigns and fundraising activities in the last year. Included were children's charities (The Child Safety Foundation, Plunket), medical charities (National Heart Foundation, Cancer Society), and international causes (World Wildlife Fund, Red Cross). Respondents were asked to identify which of the causes they felt had a strong link to the coffee product category and those they would not expect to see associated with coffee products. Respondents chose the Child Safety Foundation (CSF) as the weak link and WWF as the strongest linkage. The reason for a weak link with CSF was due to the fact that coffee is an adult beverage and therefore not relevant, and also that a hot beverage can pose a risk to children. The linkage with WWF was seen as strong because the idea of sustainable coffee production was linked to the need to create environments that sustained endangered species. Furthermore, coffee beans are grown in regions where animals protected by the WWF are prevalent.

The results of the study showed that congruency positively affects the attitudes of a consumer towards a brand but does not cause a consumer's behavior to change, even compared to generally popular causes such as cancer research. Furthermore, previous involvement in a cause or cause-related marketing campaign did not necessarily cause consumers to favor brands involved in cause-related marketing campaigns. This is the only mentioned study that actually puts "consumers" into a real-life situation via the methodology used and observes what they do and how they feel about a product being paired with a cause rather than just going by survey responses.

Broderick, Jogi, and Garry (2003) examined the importance of customer awareness, perception, and involvement in cause related marketing. The main focus is the Breast Cancer

Awareness campaigns in one retail and one product-based organization, ASDA (now part of Walmart) and AVON. The researchers' findings are reported in three areas: respondent awareness of and action towards cause-related or joint marketing activities; customers' direct experience and involvement in the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign; and their perception of some specific elements of CRM – specifically why organizations engaged in cause-related marketing, and their reasons for choosing to support one CRM campaign over another. The emotional level of each individual's involvement appears to be the key differentiating factor when it comes to a customer's awareness, perception, and response to CRM campaigns.

Ruth Taylor and Tekle Shanka (2011) studied the motivations, satisfaction, and intentions of participants attending a sporting event organized by a nonprofit organization to raise funding for and awareness of the cause. It was an exploratory study wherein questionnaires were distributed for participants to complete. It was found that there are several components that lead to motivation: achievement, involvement, status, and socialization. It appeared that the component of achievement was the most significant to the level of participants' overall satisfaction of the event. Overall satisfaction was measured by asking participants' intentions to participate in the same event the following year. The findings in this study are relevant to the marketing forces of nonprofit organizations for them to learn how to create more overall satisfaction for participants in hopes for their greater chance of return for events to come. This is the only research found that delves into why people choose to participate in events held for the benefit of nonprofit organizations. This is different from other research, which just shows data on how much more likely an individual is to buy a product supporting a cause. This is good information to have so corporations can tailor their CRM campaigns to best match the interests and lifestyles of their target market. While these motivation elements could be generalized to a

worldly population, one must keep in mind that this study only measured the results of 218 participants from one singular race in one community in one nation of the world.

CRM in Sports

Cause-related marketing has penetrated the world of professional sports as well. Lachowetz and Irwin (2002) collected data regarding the partnership between Fed Ex shipping mogul and the St. Jude Classic, a professional golf event held each year in Memphis, Tennessee. The spectator-corporation relationship was studied with specific looks into spectator beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. A survey was developed by a panel of experts, pre-tested, revised, and completed by 442 spectators at the St. Jude Classic. The team in charge of creating the survey contained representatives from the research team, corporate sponsor, and event management. It consisted of demographic questions as well as a "Likert Scale" in which the number one was used to indicate one strongly disagrees with a statement. Five hundred surveys designed to capture the attitudes, beliefs, and purchase intentions of attendants were distributed to those eighteen and older. Four hundred and forty two completed and usable surveys were collected and analyzed for data. The average age of respondents was 39, with 69% of the total being male. Sixty-nine percent of respondents were married, and 44% registered as earning \$75,000 annually. The first section measured whether or not CRM enhances a company's image. Eighty-seven percent either agreed or strongly agreed that CRM does enhance a firm's image and 72% felt that CRM should be a standard part of a company's activities. Eighty-eight percent affirmed that CRM is a positive thing in businesses today. While these results include both males and females, females tended to agree more with the affirmative statements about CRM's positivity. Over eighty percent agreed with the following: they are impressed with a company that supports and organization for over a year; they like to see companies supported meaningful

causes; and Fed Ex's sponsorship of the St. Jude Classic improved Fed Ex's already favorable reputation. Finally, respondents were asked to provide their level of agreement with the suggestion that they would be more likely to use Fed Ex's services based on their support of the St. Jude Classic. Sixty-four percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. It was noteworthy that respondents who reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000 were more likely to agree with the statement. When asked if they would be willing to pay more for a service that supports a cause they care about, 68% said they would. Lastly, when asked if they would be more likely to use Fed Ex based on their general support of St. Jude's Children's Hospital, 75% agreed or strongly agreed.

All respondents confirmed that the partnership led to a better corporate image of Fed Ex, which was in line with the authors' hypothesis. This study proves that while CRM enhances a corporation's image and favorability, lower price may still prevail when customers have a choice. The authors show that the corporate sponsor of a charity event benefits and increases potential consumer purchases.

Jaedock Lee and Mauricio Ferreira performed a study (2011) to understand the influence of cause-related marketing on consumer choice by providing evidence that team identification can impact the relationship between CRM and consumer choice of team-licensed products. The duo examined the extent to which affinity can vary between two cause-related affiliations as well as the impact that team identification may have on that relationship. In this study, the social identity theory is used to explain that when an individual perceives oneself as a member of a group, they are more willing to engage in purchasing a product if it is seen as a way to support the organization they have an interest in. This study shows that identification plays an important role in the effectiveness of a CRM program. A limitation of this study is that it was conducted in

one particular area, whereas the importance of sports teams can vary in different areas and some teams attract a more loyal and adamant fan base than others.

Donald P. Roy and Timothy R. Graeff (2003) examined consumers' attitudes toward professional athletes and teams as cause marketers. In professional sports, CRM is used by many teams and leagues as a way of "giving back" to the community in which they are located or even communities in need elsewhere. By doing so, it also creates a perceived and/or real bond between them and their target markets. While CRM campaigns and their effects have been studied within the field of businesses and general organizations, few studies have covered the practice in the sports realm. The main purpose of the article is to report the results of the aforementioned study on consumer attitudes toward CRM and certain marketing outcomes brought about by CRM. Three main issues examined were: obligation to support community causes and charities, effects of cause support on building image, and the influence of cause support on purchase intentions.

This study focuses on the consumer attitudes toward the CRM efforts of a local NFL team and its players to assess consumer attitudes toward CRM in professional sports in general. Researchers found that consumers have high moral expectations of all three groups (businesses, professional athletes, and professional sports franchises). Around 90% of respondents expressed some level of agreement that businesses should support community charities or causes, and 87% indicated that professional athletes should do the same. Expectations for the local NFL team were even higher: 90% agreed the local team's players should individually support local charities or causes and 92% agreed that the local team's organization as a whole should do the same. Women were found to be more responsive to CRM than men, and fans of the NFL were more responsive than those who do not consider themselves fans. A large majority of respondents

agreed with statements that they were more likely to have a more positive image of businesses, athletes, and the local team if they knew that they supported local causes. Furthermore, it was found that professional athletes may benefit most from involvement in their communities. A higher percentage of respondents strongly agreed with the image statement for professional athletes than for businesses or the local team. This could be due to the tendency for professional athletes to serve as role models in their communities whereas a business is never really looked at as a role model. Athletes engaging in such positive behaviors create positive cognitive associations that shape his or her image in the eye of the general public. In contrast to these findings, purchase intentions as result of CRM in the sports industry do not experience as great of an effect as the business industry does. One possible explanation for this could be the fact that support shown for a team involves expensive jersey and/or ticket purchases as opposed to retail items for businesses.

Overall, the paper shows that businesses, athletes, and athletic teams can benefit by increasing a positive public image from CRM. It also highlights which groups of people are likely to be more positively affected and participative in the effort. A very pertinent piece of information lies within the fact that CRM for sports may not increase consumer purchase intentions, but could be a good public relations tool to build and improve image. No limitations were mentioned in the article, but the researchers only surveyed residents within a tri-county area in an unidentified southern state. This can lead to questions about generalizability, but it seems that the responses fall in line with those from previous studies that are at least somewhat related to this one.

Tony Lachowetz and James M. Gladden (2003) provided a framework for management of cause-related sport marketing (CRSM) programs. The framework is derived from past

research on both CRM and branding theory. They list the necessary conditions and actions that must be present for a CRSM program to bring about the intended outcomes of enhanced brand image, enhanced brand loyalty, and consumer brand switching. This framework assists both academics and practitioners in the field with its assessment and evaluation of CRSM programs in the spectator sport industry. In the sports industry, fans range from lowly identified to highly identified. For low identified fans, a successful CRSM campaign can cause them to become more identified with the team, while for high identified fans it could reinforce and strengthen their attachment to the team. For a CRSM campaign to reach optimal implementation, the conditions that need be present are identifying a cause that resonates with consumers and organizations, complete and genuine organizational commitment to the cause, evidence of a tangible gain for the nonprofit, and promotion of the CRSM program. While no actual study was done, the authors provide a framework for cause related sports marketing campaigns, which has never been done before.

Major League Baseball (MLB) hosts an ongoing program called MLBcommunity, which serves as an umbrella which connects league teams, players, communities, and fans alike to charitable organizations to donate to and volunteer time with. The MLBcommunity is partnered with 17 charitable organizations, including Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Stand Up to Cancer, and the Drug-Free Campaign. Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C) is the Community's main charity. A large event which benefits SU2C is an online auction of a variety of items and "experiences". Items up for auction are donated by each team in the league and include signed commemorative baseballs and photos, game-used bases and pitching mats, and jerseys, amongst others. The experiences available for auction vary by team and include hitting lessons from professional players, meet and greets, and bus rides with teams to away games. The auction

website states that 90% of profits from each individual auction are donated to the charity (auction.mlb.com).

Each team in the MLB also has its own community involvement program within its geographic area. The New York Mets, for example, founded the Mets Foundation in 1963 with the purpose of funding and promoting various educational, social, and athletic programs and charitable causes that benefit children and others in need. The foundation takes no portion of funds raised – not even to cover internal costs. The New York Mets pay 100% of the foundation's overhead costs to ensure all money raised goes to those in need. The New York Mets have also partnered with the Ronald McDonald House of Long Island over the past eight years to host "An Evening with the Mets," a fundraiser at Shea Stadium/Citi Field which has raised over \$175,000 to date (newyork.mets.mlb.com). Each campaign and event gets the New York Mets attention whether it is on the radio, in local newspapers, or at the events themselves. According to work by Roy and Graeff cited earlier in this paper, people that they were more likely to have a more positive image athletes and the local team if they knew that they supported local causes.

Furthermore, it was found that professional athletes may benefit most from involvement in their local communities. The aforementioned partnerships are only a few of over thirty campaigns the Mets are involved in. This coupled with the fact that there thirty teams within the MLB from New York to California that each have their own involvement with numerous causes and campaigns, proves that partnerships between sports teams/leagues and charities is popular across the United States.

October Breast Cancer Awareness in the NFL

Cause-related marketing does not exist solely within the MLB; it can be found within most professional sports leagues or teams. These pairings can strengthen fan loyalty and increase overall image of a team through its involvement in such a CRM campaign. Whether or not someone is a fan of professional football, it is likely the person has still heard the buzz surrounding the National Football League's pink jerseys, accessories, and cleats sported by players during games in October. Each team in the league may choose how to show support for breast cancer awareness, namely A Crucial Catch, the campaign partnership with the American Cancer Society adopted by the NFL in 2008 as a form of cause-related marketing. As stated in the "About a Crucial Catch" section on the NFL website:

"The NFL, its clubs, players and the NFL Players Association are proud to support the fight against breast cancer. Our campaign, "A Crucial Catch", in partnership with the American Cancer Society, is focused on the importance of annual screenings, especially for women who are 40 and older. Throughout October, NFL games will feature players, coaches and referees wearing pink game apparel, on-field pink ribbon stencils, special game balls and pink coins - all to help raise awareness for this important campaign. All apparel worn at games by players and coaches, along with special game balls and pink coins will be auctioned off at NFL Auction, with proceeds benefiting the American Cancer Society's Community Health Advocates National Grants for Empowerment (CHANGE) program. The CHANGE program provides outreach and breast cancer screenings to women in underserved communities. The NFL markets being supported in the first year of the program are Atlanta, Baltimore, New England, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and Washington, DC." (NFL.com/pink)

During the first week of October each year, every player on every team in the NFL is required by the NFL to wear pink accessories like gloves, shoes, towels, and wristbands. Coaches even get involved by wearing pink caps on the sidelines. For the remainder of the month, wearing the pink accessories is optional, but most teams in the league elect to continue to sport the pink gear. Most of the accessories are later auctioned off to fans, with all of the proceeds going to support breast cancer programs. Field accessories like penalty flags, goal posts, and awareness ribbons painted onto the field are also seen throughout the month to increase awareness (Waldron, 2012).

While this partnership clearly benefits breast cancer research programs through the American Cancer Society, does it benefit the NFL and its teams? As previously mentioned, a key component to cause-related marketing is for the pairing to be a mutually beneficial situation. In an article published by *Forbes*, Anna Isaacson, the Community Relations Director for the NFL stated, “That we’ve fundraised this much, shows that our fans are looking at this campaign and seeing the value. Not only are they wanting to hold onto something used in an NFL game, but they know that the money they’re spending has such a big impact on the lives of other fans. That’s pretty tremendous.” Isaacson clearly states that the fans see the value of the NFL’s efforts to support breast cancer research. This can also be proven by the huge winning bids on items throughout the years. Not including 2012, the top 5 highest bid-on items are: a Tom Brady 2011 game-used jersey (sold for \$46,000), a Brett Favre 2010 game-used Vikings jersey (sold for \$16,000), a Super Bowl XLVI game experience (sold for \$16,000), a Tim Tebow 2011 game-used Broncos jersey (sold for \$15,000), and an Aaron Rodgers 2011 game-used Packers jersey (sold for \$12,000). Last year, between retail sales of pink merchandise and auction sales of NFL items, the NFL raised over \$1.4 million for their “A Crucial Catch” campaign for breast cancer research (Jessop, 2012).

While the NFL's obvious support of awareness and early detection of breast cancer is one of the most noticeable cases of cause-related marketing in sports today, it is also one of the most controversial. It is clear that NFL teams and the league as a whole take many measures to display their pink during the month of October. Cheerleaders' pompoms, players' cleats and wrist guards, and even designs on the field are pink and display pink awareness ribbons. However, with all the money being put into acquiring all of these pink items, how much is being donated to the American Cancer Society? Many argue that the money the NFL spends on their awareness campaign would be better spent as a lump sum donation each year to the ACS. After *Business Insider* questioned where the money generated by the sales of pink NFL merchandise was really going, a spokesperson at the NFL shop replied that 5% of the sales are donated to the American Cancer Society. *Business Insider* takes this number and breaks it down a bit further: "If the pink products have a typical 100% mark-up at retail, that means the NFL is keeping 90% of the profit from the sale of Breast Cancer Awareness gear. And then consider that only 70.8% of money the ACS receives goes towards research and cancer programs. So, for every \$100 in sales of pink gear, only \$3.54 is going towards research while the NFL is keeping approximately \$45 (based on 100% mark-up)." (Gaines, 2012)

After this article was published, the NFL spoke up in somewhat of a defense. While they did not dispute the calculations provided by *Business Insider*, an NFL representative wanted to be clear that the NFL does not profit from the sale of pink merchandise. Instead, all proceeds not donated directly to the ACS are used to directly cover all costs of the NFL campaign, "A Crucial Catch". The representative also stated that the NFL has donated \$3 million total since the program's inception in 2009, equaling a donation of \$1 million a year. Furthermore, in an NBC Sports article, the NFL claims that the sale of pink merchandise generates revenue that pays for

the materials and pays the manufacturers, the employees involved in the process of making and selling the products, and pays for all other costs relating to the creation of the merchandise. Leftover funds are used for donation and/or funding the league's "A Crucial Catch" campaign, helping to reimburse the league for expenses arising from the campaign. However, there is speculation as to what may be written off as "expenses" for the campaign.

While the aforementioned yearly million dollar donation surely seems generous at a glance, a further look demands answers to questions regarding how much is spent on the awareness campaign. If the campaign was eradicated – or even made to last a week rather than a month – and the money normally used to provide athletes and cheerleaders pink cleats, accessories, etc., was instead donated to the ACS, would it in fact largely outweigh the money raised during the campaign? Furthermore, the 32 NFL teams generated about \$9.5 billion of revenue in 2011. Broken down (unweighted), each team's revenue is about \$296,875,000. Keeping this in mind, recall the one million dollar donation each year from the NFL. Dividing this amount of money by the 32 teams in the league approximates a \$31,250 yearly from each team. This "yearly donation" from each team is just over 0.01% of each team's reported revenue – hardly a number to swoon over.

Users on discussion boards and in comment sections of news articles across the Web express both positive and negative views towards the campaign. While thousands of people voice their opinions on the matter, arguments for them remain largely the same. Those in favor of the campaign argue that the awareness aspect of the campaign is most important, while those who oppose stick to the numbers and criticize the money spent versus the money actually donated to the cause. One could enter a sports bar during a game in October and most likely be able to catch a conversation about the pink campaign and how fans feel about it.

The articles presented do show a positive relationship between cause-related marketing practices and increased customer loyalty and public image, but none clearly address how it would affect perception of a sports team. Data showed that the first real case of cause-related marketing in 1981 when American Express Data did in fact show that FedEx's support of the St. Jude Classic positively influenced attendants' view of the corporation.

Overall, cause-related marketing is seen as an innovative form of strategic marketing that creates more value for a brand. Association with a cause has led to brand switching in retail when other factors such as price and quality are held constant. Further study should be done to find if this can be generalized to other areas such as spectator sports, including the ability to sway a person into becoming a fan of a different team or at least lead to an overall better image as well as increases fan loyalty.

Anyone doing further study on the topic should seek to answer the following questions: How does cause-related marketing affect a professional sports team's image in the public eye? Is brand switching due to CRM relevant to sports teams as it is in retail? Would a team benefit from focusing more of its marketing plan on CRM activities over traditional marketing? The individual completing further study on the topic should also use surveys to measure the public's feelings towards the NFL's Breast Cancer Awareness campaign "A Crucial Catch". Access to accounting documents would probably be difficult to acquire but could provide some valuable information. Interviews with a representative for the NFL and "A Crucial Catch" would provide answers as to how the league feels the campaign is doing to raise awareness and money as well as improve image for the teams and league. Surveys could also be administered to fans at a football game, in a sports bar during the showing of a football game, or online to anyone

interested could also produce valuable insight about how fans and the general public view the NFL's breast cancer awareness and donation efforts.

Answers to these questions will benefit any sports team, even in the collegiate level, looking to increase the size of their fan base, increase loyalty among current fans, or enhance overall team image within the public eye.

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