

**Leveraging Sport Organizations' Green Initiatives: A Belief-attitude-intentions Hierarchy Approach**

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**50-minute poster presentation**

North American sport organizations at professional and collegiate levels actively engage in environmentally friendly practices, as well as engage in strategic partnerships with leading pro-environmental stakeholders, to develop integrated green initiatives (Casper, Pfahl, & McCullough, 2014; Henly, 2013; Kellison & Kim, 2014). According to Green Sports Alliance (2019), the Green Alliance has grown to include 194 sport teams, 195 venues, and 16 league members to commit to enhancing environmental performance. In particular, the National Hockey League (NHL) member clubs honor NHL Green Month and celebrate Go Green Night to support NHL's sustainability efforts. The hockey clubs have not only strived to raise environmental awareness of and funds for green initiatives, but have also encouraged their fan base to participate in such green practices (e.g., recycling, using public transportation, and waste management).

At the collegiate sport level, sustainability has become an institutional priority and identity due to urgent environmental pressures (Ralph & Stubbs, 2014). Athletic departments are often the division with the highest profile at many higher education institutions in the United States. These departments are uniquely positioned to present opportunities to leverage sustainability through their community outreach activities, direct facility operations, and educational marketing efforts (Casper et al., 2014). Collegiate sport greening seeks to embrace a sustainable mindset and behavioral change among stakeholders including fans, employees, business partners, and media outlets. For example, the University of Colorado at Boulder Athletic Department established Ralphie's Green Stampede (a sport sustainability program) in 2008 and continuously institutes a number of green initiatives to reduce waste and save water and energy all season long and inform and educate fans in making sustainable choices and taking on active, pro-environmental roles. In doing so, the athletic department has distinguished itself as a sustainability leader, playing a crucial role in the fulfillment of the overall university mission (Casper et al., 2014).

Communicating sustainability through various initiatives provides an opportunity for the sport organizations to effectively engage in and build strong relationships with their fans who believe in the benefits of sustainability (Ciletti, Lanasa, Ramos, Luchs, & Lou, 2010). "A green game is a primary example of an educational marketing effort as well as a social cause event targeted towards fans" (Casper et al., 2014, p. 68). In this sense, one of the major goals of the sport organization's sustainability programs is to inspire fans to engage in pro-environmental behaviors that benefit its green movement (Inoue & Kent, 2012; Kellison & Kim, 2014; McCullough & Cunningham, 2011). However, little is known about the key underlying mechanisms of how and why sport fans engage in environmentally responsible behaviors to contribute to the sport organization's green movement and culture. In response to the research gap in the literature, this current study provides empirical evidence to address the following three research questions:

- (1) Do green initiatives increase sport consumers' participation in environmentally responsible behaviors?
- (2) What is the key underlying mechanism that influences sport consumers to adopt advocacy behaviors?
- (3) How do sport consumers engage in a green movement?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the psychological mechanism of consumers' pro-environmental behavior. In particular, the current study provides conceptual evidence on the extent to which consumers' beliefs about the benefits of the sport organization's green initiatives influence their attitudes toward such initiatives and its subsequent impact on their behavioral intentions to support the green practices. The hypothesized conceptual model seeks to explain the psychological mechanism of consumers' environmentally responsible behaviors in the

## 2019 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XVII)

perspective of Madrigal's (2001) belief-attitude-intentions hierarchy. The fundamental premise of this hierarchy is that beliefs demonstrate the basis for an attitude toward engaging in a certain behavior. For example, individuals' favorable attitudes towards green initiatives are determined by their beliefs about the benefits (favorable outcomes) of the sport organization's green initiatives (Ajzen, 1985; Madrigal, 2001). In turn, individuals' favorable attitudes toward certain behaviors lead to the formation of behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1985; Madrigal, 2001). In combination, the more positive and stronger the belief one holds about the outcome of a certain behavior, the more favorable one's attitude will be toward engaging in a range of advocacy behaviors (Ajzen, 1985; Armitage, 2003).

The findings of this study shed light on the vital role of the sport organization's environmental commitment and the importance of their green initiatives in promoting a sustainable mindset and behavioral change among stakeholders. More importantly, our findings provide evidence for the effectiveness of green initiatives in the context of spectator sports. In particular, consumers' beliefs about the benefits of green initiatives carry a significant association with their environmentally responsible behaviors, contributing to the sport organization's green movement in return. Hence, this study demonstrates the window of benefits and opportunities after facilitating green initiatives. The findings will help sport marketers acknowledge the important role of their environmental stewardship and advance their sustainability actions in sporting events to build strong connections with their stakeholders.

In academia, this study contributes to the sport management literature by applying the conceptual framework of a belief-attitude-intentions hierarchy to better understand the underlying mechanism that drives consumers' environmentally responsible behaviors. In sport organizations, this study provides valuable insight into how and why individually responsible reactions are affected by sport organization's green initiatives and what could be the key driver of the framework influencing individual intentions to adopt green practices and lifestyles. To educate and engage in sustainable practices, it is important for consumers to consider the effects of their actions at public and private places (e.g., home, school, and workplace). After all, this current study will encourage sport marketers to implement more and expand on current green initiatives and continue their efforts into sustainability goals for future generations. In addition, the findings of this study will contribute to a growth in sport fans and spectators embracing sustainable practices and initiatives supported by sport organizations, from amateur to professional.

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## 2019 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XVII)

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