**Red or Blue: How Political Affiliation of Sport Fans Relates to Sustainability Attitudes and Behaviors**

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Sustainability continues to be an important issue, especially heading into the 2020 United States presidential election. Findings from presidential elections indicate that the environment had a significant impact on voter’s candidate choices (Davis, Wurth, & Lazarus, 2008). Political polarization over climate change is at an all-time high, with conservatives being more skeptical of climate change and less willing to act against it than progressives (Baldwin & Lammers, 2016). Political ideology is one of the most powerful predictors of climate change perceptions and related behaviors (Hornsey et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study was to examine if sport fans’ political identification relates to awareness of sport sustainability programs, providing an opportunity to drive engagement with environmental issues. Sport organizations are actively developing fan engagement strategies and marketing campaigns to attempt to increase fan sustainable behaviors (Kellison & Kim, 2014; Pfahl, 2011). In order to increase awareness of environmental issues, as well as impact both at-event and post-event behavior, understanding fans’ attitudes toward sustainability efforts is warranted (Casper, McCullough, & Pfahl, 2019; Trail & McCullough, 2019). We set out to determine if sport fans’ political identification directly affects awareness of sustainability programs, perceptions of organizational sustainability commitment, fan commitment, and environmental behaviors. Therefore, we hypothesized that self-identified Democrats would be more receptive to organizational sustainability efforts leading to significantly greater awareness of, commitment to, and behaviors around sustainability.

To test these relationships, we formulated an on-site survey for sport fans around environmental attitudes, sport and environmental behaviors, environmental program recall, and demographics. Respondents (N=134) at a western Division I NCAA institution in September 2019 were administered the survey before two football games prior to any sustainability marketing exposure. For this study only, respondents who self-identified as Democrat (n=48) or Republican (n=49) were examined. The 23-item instrument measured demographics, awareness (yes, no), and commitment/behaviors (Likert-type scales). T-tests and chi-square analysis were conducted to examine differences (p<.05) based on political affiliation.

While over 50% of respondents were aware of the environmental program brand (N=57) and the University’s commitment to Sports for Climate Action Framework (N=49), no significant differences were found between Democrats and Republicans. Additionally, no significant differences were found in awareness of the five environmental initiatives featured during the game. While a majority of the fans somewhat or strongly agreed (N=77) that environmental efforts related to their commitment as a fan, no significant differences were found between Democrats and Republicans. Similar results were found when examining influence on their environmental behaviors.

While our results were not necessarily expected based on prior research (Hornsey et al., 2014), the findings are promising for environmental engagement. That is, if political affiliation of sport fans does not significantly impact their awareness of, commitment to, and behaviors around environmental sport programs, then sport may serve as a neutral and desired platform to drive environmental initiatives. We will continue this discussion as to how sport can be leveraged to engage diverse fan segments on environmental sustainability and further implications for academics and practitioners alike.