

From Rivalry to Recycling: Using Social Identity to Enhance Pro-Environmental Behavior in the Field

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Abstract

This study explores how leveraging social group identities of football supporters can promote pro-environmental behavior (PEB) in public settings. We conducted a season-long field experiment at a Norwegian Premier Division stadium on visiting supporters of 14 football clubs (N=5,712). Our findings show that combining an ingroup appeal with social comparison-based gamification tripled recycling rates (from 15% to 53%). A survey experiment (N=1,813) with the same population indicated that the effectiveness of ingroup-based appeals is partly driven by supporters' desire to contribute to their club's success and their perception of the appeal's impact. Two survey experiments with UK Premier League supporters (combined N=2,044) replicated our effects, suggesting cultural generalizability. Taken together, our research contributes to sustainability and group identity literatures and offers practical strategies to enhance PEBs in public settings.

Keywords: social identity, field experiment, pro-environmental behavior