Executive Summary

The Role of Organizational Values for Sustainable Development: The Case of Forest Green Rovers and the Promotion of Plant-based Diets

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The present study aims to explore the role of a professional sport team’s organizational values to promote the consumption of plant-based diets among fans. The study adopts a single case study, applying a mixed-methods design, using qualitative and quantitative data, to investigate the role of Forest Green Rovers’ organizational values to promote plant-based diet consumption among fans. Forest Green Rovers were selected as a case due to the implementation of vegan food initiatives as part of their ongoing pro-environmental activities.

A qualitative document analysis was conducted to explore Forest Green Rovers’ values work processes towards fans (Study 1). The present study relies on the theory of values work to explore how a professional sport team’s sustainability-directed organizational values may promote the consumption of plant-based diets among fans, that is, an important area of sustainable action in the sport event context. The analysis revealed five themes: (1) dealing with pockets of concern; (2) knotting local concerns into action networks; (3) performing values practices; (4) circulating values discourse; and (5) overcoming value constraints to build a holistic value system. Most important to the present study, value internalization, that is, the extent to which values and behaviours of organizations are accepted and adopted in one’s own value system, seems to be crucial to stimulate behavioural changes in daily life, such as the adoption of a plant-based diet. To assess the role of team value internalization further, we conducted a quantitative study.

In Study 2, a survey with Forest Green Rovers fans was conducted. The study aims to assess whether fans adopted a plant-based diet when they became a fan of the team and whether such potential behavioural change is positively associated with team value internalization and,
hence, fans’ intention to eat plant-based foods in the future. The relationship between adoption of a plant-based diet and team value internalization is positive and team value internalization relates positively with intention to eat a plant-based diet in the future. The indirect effect via team value internalization is significant.

To conclude, we can state that Forest Green Rovers’ systematic approach to adopt plant-based foods helped overcome value constraints within the organization and build a holistic value system that allows to implement target group-specific marketing activities. Establishing sustainable values and organizational culture likely made fans internalize team values in their own value system. Food trials are only one example to stimulate behavioural change in fans.