



# ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

---

Association for Consumer Research, University of Minnesota Duluth, 115 Chester Park, 31 West College Street Duluth, MN 55812

## **Brands Are the Right Choice: Political Ideology and Brand Centricity**

Efe Camurdan, University College Dublin, Ireland

Zeynep Gurhan-Canli, Koc University, Turkey

Alokparna (Sonia) Monga, Rutgers University, USA

This research explores brand centricity through the lens of political ideology. Across several studies, we demonstrate that brands are more central for conservatives than liberals because brands enable them to make dispositional inferences.

### **[to cite]:**

Efe Camurdan, Zeynep Gurhan-Canli, and Alokparna (Sonia) Monga (2019) ,"Brands Are the Right Choice: Political Ideology and Brand Centricity", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 47, eds. Rajesh Bagchi, Lauren Block, and Leonard Lee, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 485-486.

### **[url]:**

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/2551303/volumes/v47/NA-47>

### **[copyright notice]:**

This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at <http://www.copyright.com/>.

# Brands are the Right Choice: Political Ideology and Brand Centricity

Efe Camurdan, University College Dublin, Ireland

Zeynep Gurhan Canli, Koc University, Turkey

Alokparna Basu Monga, Rutgers University, USA

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands, as essential as they are to companies, are beginning to lose their power in the eyes of consumers. Increasing number of alternatives, aggressive price competition and unlimited online resources negatively affect brands' influence on consumers. Consequentially, it is becoming increasingly important to understand whose lives center more or less around brands. In this research, we examine consumer brand centricity (Fischer, Volckner, and Sattler 2010; Puligadda, Ross, and Grewal 2012) through the lens of political ideology.

Political ideology, particularly whether individuals hold conservative or liberal ideology, strongly shapes consumers' attitudes and intentions in the marketplace (Crockett and Pendarvis 2017). Even though political ideology has always been one of the central elements of consumer identity, lately its relevance has increased significantly (Westwood et al. 2018). Yet, many questions on the effects of political ideology on marketing still remained unanswered (Jost 2017). This research examines how consumers' level of brand centricity can be determined by their conservative versus liberal ideology. We argue that consumers who hold a more conservative ideology would be more brand centric than the ones who hold a more liberal ideology. This is because, brands, through their identity signals, would enable conservatives (vs. liberals) to make inferences about other individuals based on their dispositions.

We test our propositions in four studies. In Study 1 (n: 50), we first asked participants their political ideology and then used a ten-item ( $\alpha = .91$ ) scale (Puligadda et al. 2012) to directly measure their brand centricity. We regressed the brand centricity scale on political ideology index. As expected, conservative (vs. liberal) political ideology predicted brand centricity ( $b = -.29, t = -2.13, p = .038$ ).

For Study 2, 103 Amazon Mturk workers were first asked to indicate their political ideology. Afterwards, they were asked to rank sixteen different product options based on their likelihood of purchase. All options presented consisted of evenly distributed combinations of four different attributes (brand name, price, picture quality, warranty) across two levels (Sony vs. TCL; \$570 vs. \$460, 8.5/10 vs. 7.9/10; 1 vs. 3 year). Our goal was to see whether conservatives would rank the options that include the more (i.e. Sony) vs. less (i.e. TCL) favorable brand name higher. To test our predictions, we created a dependent measure which consisted of all eight product options that included the Sony (vs. TCL) brand and regressed the political ideology index on dependent measure. We controlled for familiarity towards the Sony and TCL brands. As expected, the political ideology index was a significant indicator for the dependent measure ( $b = .19, t = 2.22, p = .029$ ). Results replicated when we controlled for indicators of participants' socio-economic status ( $b = .19, t = 2.19, p = .030$ ).

In Study 3 (n: 168), our goal was to explore a boundary condition to shed light on the underlying mechanism. If conservatives' tendency to be more brand centric would be rooted in their inclination to make dispositional inferences, then nudging conservatives towards relying less on dispositional inferences should make them less brand centric. To test this, participants were first asked to complete the political ideology measure followed by dispositional/situational inference manipulation. In the situational inference condition, participants were primed to think that the differences among people are externally driven. In the dispositional inference condition, partici-

pants were primed to think that differences among people are internally driven. Afterwards, participants were asked to image that they could win a gift for completing the study, but we first asked them to view a review for each of the two options. For one of them, the review mentioned the brand, while for the other, it mentioned product features instead. We predicted that conservatives would choose the gift that had the review in which the brand name (vs. product feature) was mentioned, but only under the dispositional inference condition.

Results yielded a significant main effect of political ideology ( $b = .37, z = 1.74, p = .053$ ) on choice such that conservatives (vs. liberals), overall, chose the review that mentioned the brand as opposed to product features. This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between the political ideology and inference manipulation ( $b = -.85, z = -2.24, p = .025$ ). As expected, under the dispositional inference condition, conservatives (63%), compared to liberals (30%), were more likely to choose the gift in which the reviews mentioned the brand vs. product features ( $b = .78, z = 2.64, p = .008$ ). However, under the situational inference condition, both conservatives (38%) and liberals (42%) were less likely to choose the option that highlighted the brand vs. product feature ( $b = -.07, z = -.31, p = .75$ ). Controlling for participants' level of materialism, how much they care about quality and socio-economic indicators did not affect the significance our results.

In Study 4, we relied on Google search data to assess the relationship between conservative ideology and brand centricity. For this study, we examined Google Shopping searches for the use of the term: "brand" in the period between 16.07.2008 and 16.07.2018 and extracted a volume score for each of the 50 US states (www.google.com/trends). To gauge conservative vs. liberal ideology, we used Gallup metrics to rank each state's conservative standing. We predicted that conservative states would use the keyword "brand" more than liberals when shopping online. In order to test this prediction, we regressed the search volume of the term "brand" on conservative standing of each state. As expected, conservative standing significantly predicted the search volume of the term "brand" ( $b = .55, t = 4.65, p = .00$ ). Results replicated our focal findings when we controlled for GDP per state, income per capita, and population density and median age ( $b = .39, t = 2.34, p = .023$ ).

This research demonstrates that brands are more central for conservatives than liberals because conservatives are more likely to rely on dispositional inferences. We document these effects through experiments and using secondary data. Across studies, we control for potential confounds including socio-economic indicators, materialism, and importance consumers give to product quality.

## REFERENCES

- Crockett, David, and Nicholas Pendarvis (2017), "A Research Agenda on Political Ideology in Consumer Research: A Commentary on Jung et al.'s "Blue and Red Voices"." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(3), 500-502.
- Fischer, Marc, Franziska Völckner, and Henrik Sattler (2010), "How Important Are Brands? A Cross-Category, Cross-Country Study," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 47(5), 823-839.

Jost, John T. (2017), "The marketplace of ideology: "Elective Affinities" in Political Psychology and Their Implications for Consumer Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(4), 502-520.

Puligadda, Sanjay, William T. Ross Jr, and Rajdeep Grewal (2012), "Individual Differences in Brand Schematicity," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(1), 115-130.

Westwood, Sean J., Shanto Iyengar, Stefaan Walgrave, Rafael Leonisio, Luis Miller, and Oliver Strijbis (2018), "The Tie That Divides: Cross-national Evidence of the Primacy of Partyism." *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(2), 333-354.