

In-Group Heroes and Out-Group Antagonists? The Role of Social Identity and Ideology in Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Eric Klebeck

University of Mannheim

Sabine Kuester

University of Mannheim

Aleksandar Blečić

University of Mannheim

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Abstract

With political polarization on the rise, it is vital to understand how ideology informs sustainability in consumer behavior. This research examines the influence of political ideology on the preference for sustainable products among liberals and conservatives. We employ social identity theory to explore how political ideology shapes social identity, in-group adherence, and out-group bias. Three empirical studies, including a cross-sectional survey and two scenario experiments, demonstrate that conservatives have a lower preference for sustainable products relative to liberals. We find a stereotype linking sustainable consumption with liberal ideology, which drives the lower preference for sustainable products among conservatives. Offering novel insights into the ideological divide in sustainable preferences, our research emphasizes the critical role of social identity in shaping consumer choices. These insights provide valuable considerations for companies and policymakers in developing strategies that transcend ideological borders to encourage sustainable practices.

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