

When Gender is as a Zero-Sum Game: How Political Orientation Shapes Gender Ideals and Consumption

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Abstract

Past research shows that gender and political identity independently impact consumer behavior. Little is known about how these two identities interact to shape consumption. Four studies show that, contrary to conventional wisdom, conservatives and liberals agree on the importance of masculinity in men and femininity in women. They both associate gender congruence with ideals of men and women. However, liberals and conservatives differ in their holistic view of gender. Conservatives see gender as a zero-sum game; liberals do not. For conservatives, ideal men should have only masculine attributes and ideal women should have only feminine attributes. In contrast, liberals believe ideal men and women should have masculine and feminine attributes. These effects are explained by different beliefs about agency and communion. Conservatives and liberals both favor gender-congruent consumption. However, conservatives avoid gender-incongruent consumption, while liberals do not.

Subject Areas: *Attitude, Consumer Behaviour*

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