

Keeping Healthcare Pure: How the Science–Religion Opposition Lay Belief and Purity Preference Influence Integrative Care Aversion

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Abstract

Why are some consumers resistant to integrative healthcare plans that blend biomedicine and complementary alternative medicine? We theorize that endorsement of the science–religion opposition (SRO) lay belief elicits a preference for keeping distinct care categories separate, heightening aversion to integrative healthcare. Across four studies, including one field study, we demonstrate an integrative-care aversion effect; the more consumers endorse SRO, the more they reject integrative healthcare plans that mix biomedicine and complementary alternative medicine, relative to “pure” options. This relationship is mediated by preference for purity. Boundary-preserving framings increase perceived category integrity and reduce aversion, particularly among high-SRO consumers. This research identifies SRO as a superordinate lay belief that structures healthcare preferences, uncovers a novel purity-based mechanism that explains integrative-care aversion, and offers actionable strategies for framing care delivery to improve acceptance.

Track: Consumer Behaviour