

Learning to recycle: Does political ideology matter?

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Some targeted messages based on political orientation are more effective at persuading consumers to recycle, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Given the sharp differences in attitudes toward sustainability, surprisingly little attention has been paid to understanding how to appeal to differences in [political orientation](#) in order to influence recycling. Unique appeals targeted to liberals and conservatives may be more effective at getting them to adopt environmentally conscious behaviors," write authors Blair Kidwell (The Ohio State University), Adam Farmer, and David M. Hardesty (both University of Kentucky).

In one study, consumers were asked about their recycling intentions after reading various appeals. Consumers who call themselves liberals were more enthusiastic about recycling when the focus was on fairness and reducing harm to others to create a sense of feeling good. Meanwhile, consumers who call themselves conservatives were more likely to express an intention to recycle when appeals focused on group membership, duty, or obligation to authority.

In another interesting study, consumers were asked about their intentions to recycle, purchase CFL [light bulbs](#), and conserve water after reading persuasive appeals. Consumers who call themselves conservatives showed greater commitment to sustainable behaviors when the appeals were accompanied by patriotic images, while appeals displaying a well-known charity (Habitat for Humanity) had a greater influence on

consumers who call themselves liberals.

"While there has been progress in getting consumers to embrace recycling, much remains to be done to uncover new ways to increase [sustainable behavior](#). Persuasive appeals consistent with underlying [political ideology](#) can influence both sustainable intentions and behavior," the authors conclude.

More information: Blair Kidwell, Adam Farmer, and David M. Hardesty. "Getting Liberals and Conservatives to Go Green: Political Ideology and Congruent Appeals." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2013.

Provided by University of Chicago

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