

# Are Republicans more open to new product choices?

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(Phys.org) —Some people may think of political conservatives as having a desire to maintain traditions, but a new study shows they also have a more adventurous side that seeks out variety in products.

The new research from the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University was recently posted online by the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. It includes three experiments in which political conservatives prove they are more likely to choose a variety of consumer products than their liberal counterparts.

"Although political conservatives have been found in previous studies to have a higher desire for control, they have an even stronger motivation to follow [social norms](#) when there is no threat to the system or individual," explains Naomi Mandel, professor in the W. P. Carey School of Business, one of the study authors. "Since we have a very individualistic culture in the United States and Europe, people tend to think of others more favorably when they include more variety in their consumption choices. Therefore, political conservatives may seek out that approval and positive evaluation."

In a series of experiments, Mandel and her co-author – Daniel Fernandes, assistant professor of the Catholic University of Portugal – found political conservatives wanted more variety in their products than liberals.

For example, the researchers first used several established scales to

question and determine the political leanings of 192 college undergraduates. Then, they told the students to imagine four consecutive weekly [grocery shopping](#) trips during which they could select from four brands of snack chips. Overwhelmingly, the politically conservative students chose more variety in their chips for the month than the more liberal students did.

In another experiment, 111 undergrads were polled for their political leanings. Then, they completed other tasks before ultimately being asked to select three candy bars from five options as a reward for participating. Again, the political conservatives exhibited much more variety in the candy bars chosen.

"Differences between liberals and conservatives are rooted in basic personality dispositions that reflect and reinforce differences in fundamental psychological needs and motives," says Mandel. "We wanted to understand how and why a consumer's political ideology could affect his or her [consumption choices](#)."

Mandel explains the findings could help marketing managers with future ad placements. For example, if a company wants to introduce a new product, it might decide to target politically conservative neighborhoods and outlets like Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal*.

**More information:** [www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S1057740813000478](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S1057740813000478)

Provided by Arizona State University

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