

# Study: Conservative customers are more satisfied than liberal ones

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Across industries, conservatives are more satisfied than liberals with the

products and services they consume, according to a study of more than 326,000 U.S. consumers by an international research team from Rice University, the Catholic University of Portugal, Boston College, the University of Texas at San Antonio and Korea University.

The researchers examined ratings from 326,532 customers in [different industries](#)—industrial goods, restaurants, educational videos and health insurance. "Consistently, results showed that conservatives are more satisfied than liberals with the products and services they purchased. This is profoundly important for companies and businesses whose goal is to provide customer value by satisfying their customers," said study co-author Vikas Mittal, a professor of marketing at Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business.

Cultivating a base of satisfied customers is the [holy grail](#) for any [successful business](#), the researchers said. A 2021 study by Mittal found that a 1-point increase on a 7-point scale measuring satisfaction resulted in 12% sales growth for firms. Satisfied customers help businesses grow sales through greater repeat purchases, increased positive word of mouth, more recommendations to friends and family and fewer complaints, Mittal said. When customers are more satisfied, they are also more likely to promote the company's brand on social media, he said.

For every customer, the team measured political identity and [customer satisfaction](#). They measured [political identity](#) in different ways: asking consumers to share the [political party](#) they supported, their past voting behavior, their self-ratings on the liberal-conservative spectrum and whether they watch CNN/MSNBC or Fox for news. Customers rated their satisfaction on a scale ranging from "completely dissatisfied" to "completely satisfied." All studies showed that satisfaction ratings were higher among conservatives than liberals.

Why? "It is their higher belief in free will, or the extent to which they

believe they have control of their actions," Mittal said. "People with higher belief in free will see their life, destiny and outcomes as being under their own control rather than being predetermined. Due to higher free-will beliefs, conservatives are more trusting of their own purchase decisions and feel more satisfied with their purchases. Over time, customers feel good about themselves, thinking, "I chose a good product," and (feel) more satisfied with their choices.

"Some companies have embraced corporate political activism to satisfy their customers," he said. "Such a strategy is almost sure to backfire because it forces companies to choose sides, whether liberal or conservative.

"Instead of choosing sides, companies should relentlessly focus on increasing [customer](#) satisfaction to drive sales," Mittal said. "Doing so will be appreciated by their conservative customers more than their liberal customers, but both will be more loyal, engage in higher word of mouth and recommend the [business](#) more."

**More information:** Daniel Fernandes et al, EXPRESS: How Political Identity Shapes Customer Satisfaction, *Journal of Marketing* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/00222429211057508](https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429211057508)

Vikas Mittal et al, Improving Business-to-Business Customer Satisfaction Programs: Assessment of Asymmetry, Heterogeneity, and Financial Impact, *Journal of Marketing Research* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/00222437211013781](https://doi.org/10.1177/00222437211013781)

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