

# Political Ideology and Cultural Consumption: The Role of Flexibility in Shaping Liberal and Conservative Preferences for Global-Local Experiences

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**ABSTRACT** Research has long discussed the personal and collective benefits of cultural consumption. Yet not all cultural experiences are the same, as experiences vary in whether they benefit consumers' understanding of global or local cultures. The present research proposes that consumer preferences for these discrete types of cultural experiences vary by their political ideology. Across four studies, liberals prefer global consumption experiences, whereas conservatives prefer local consumption experiences. Moreover, these preferences are driven by differences in cognitive flexibility and are shown to emerge from different learning styles (breadth or depth). Furthermore, these preferences are independent of openness, cultural identity, and mental construal, and have implications for marketing and public policy decisions. Collectively, these findings detail the role of political ideology and cognitive flexibility in shaping consumer preferences for different types of cultural experiences and thereby offer a nuanced perspective on the impact of liberal and conservative consumers in shaping cultural consumption.

The concept of culture expresses a shared knowledge of ideas, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that shape the way individuals understand, interpret, and interact with their surroundings (Fiske et al. 1998; Chiu and Hong 2007). This influence is clearly illustrated in the realm of consumerism, where individuals seek to increase their knowledge through the consumption of goods, services, and experiences that embody a particular culture (Aaker, Benet-Martínez, and Garolera 2001; Otnes et al. 2018). Indeed, research illustrates the variety of ways that consumers seek out experiences to enhance their cultural knowledge, such as eating healthy foods, sharing a meal with family, visiting a museum or art gallery, attending a concert or baseball game, riding motorcycles, or buying fashion products (Cannon and Yaprack 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005). Moreover, these experiences provide more than just a means of learning about and assimilating within a certain group or so-

ciety (Tomasello, Kruger, and Ratner 1993); the acquisition of cultural knowledge helps consumers better understand their identity, increase their psychological well-being, and validate their personal existence (Mead 1934/2015; Suh 2002; Osborne and de la Sablonniere 2014; Strizhakova and Coulter 2019).

Yet not all cultural experiences are the same. Certain experiences provide consumers knowledge of global culture, whereas other experiences provide knowledge of local cultures (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra 1999, 2006; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden 2003; Zhang and Khare 2009; Strizhakova and Coulter 2015; see Steenkamp 2019). This distinction between global and local cultural knowledge is important as the benefits are inherently different. Global experiences can broaden understanding of global culture by expanding insight into different ideas, beliefs, and traditions that provide new meaning (Holton 2000; Steenkamp and De Jong 2010).

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Local experiences, on the other hand, can deepen understanding of local culture by bolstering insight into existing lifestyles, values, attitudes, and behaviors (Crane 2002).

Within this context, the present research demonstrates a systematic difference in the preferences for global and local cultural experiences as a function of political ideology. This difference is attributed to differences in cognitive flexibility that shape different learning styles. Collectively, these findings offer convergent support for the notion that consumers differ in their propensity for cultural knowledge, while emphasizing the role of political ideology and cognitive flexibility in predicting consumer preferences for different types (i.e., global and local) of cultural consumption.

### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Consumption of products, goods, and services offers a wealth of opportunity to learn (Cowley and Janus 2004; Clarkson, Janiszewski, and Cinelli 2013; see Hoeffler, Ariely, and West 2013). Indeed, the food that consumers eat, music that consumers hear, movies that consumers watch, and books that consumers read are all experiences that can facilitate the acquisition of cultural knowledge (Cannon and Yaprack 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005). Yet the consumption of various goods, services, and experiences can vary in the type of culture they promote (Alden et al. 1999; Steenkamp et al. 2003; Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2008; Zhang and Khare 2009). That is, even though culture relates to a specific network of values, customs, and traditions (Chiu and Hong 2007), not all experiences emphasize the same culture and therefore not all experiences provide the same knowledge. For instance, visiting the White House promotes learning the customs, rituals, and procedures that make the US government uniquely American, whereas visiting the United Nations promotes learning the customs, rituals, and procedures that make international government uniquely cross-cultural.

This reflects an important example of how cultural knowledge can be distinguished—namely, as a function of global versus local consumer culture (Alden et al. 2006; Zhang and Khare 2009; Anderson-Levitt 2012; Strizhakova and Coulter 2015). When presented with different cultural experiences, then, consumers' preferences should depend on the type of cultural knowledge most valued. We, in turn, believe that preferences for different types of cultural knowledge vary as a function of consumers' political ideology.

#### *Political Ideology*

Political ideology reflects individuals' views of how the world is or should be, and plays a critical role in shaping beliefs, at-

titudes, opinions, and behaviors (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). The construct is traditionally divided into two ideological groups: those who believe in progressive values and social equality (i.e., liberals) and those who believe in traditional values and maintaining the present social system (i.e., conservatives) (Carney et al. 2008). Critically, the differences in the fundamental beliefs of an ideology can inform philosophies regarding how individuals value culture (Griffin 2006) and behave as consumers (Jost 2017).

One might anticipate that consumers' political ideology simply impacts the amount of cultural experiences they seek out. For instance, liberalism is associated with greater openness to experience (Carney et al. 2008; see also McCrae 1996), and openness has been linked to greater engagement in cultural consumption experiences more broadly (Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2005; Schwaba et al. 2018; see also Riefler, Diamantopoulos, and Siguaw 2012). Yet we propose the relationship between political ideology and cultural consumption is more nuanced than an openness account in that cultural consumption depends on the type of experience and thus the cultural knowledge presented. Specifically, we posit that liberals and conservatives vary in their preference for global and local cultural knowledge due to innate differences in cognitive flexibility.

#### *Cognitive Flexibility*

Cognitive flexibility is a mental characteristic that facilitates restructuring, adapting, or appropriately updating mental processes and strategies (Ionescu 2012). It reflects a general property of cognition that involves changing perspectives, considering alternative explanations, and modifying behavior according to environmental constraints (Diamond 2013). For instance, flexibility facilitates individuals' ability to adapt their behavior to changing circumstances, whereas rigidity facilitates individuals' ability to persist and repeat their behavior over time. Of importance to the present research, research links liberalism and conservatism to different levels of cognitive flexibility, with liberalism associated with greater flexibility and conservatism associated with greater rigidity (Buechner et al. 2021).

This difference in the cognitive flexibility of liberals and conservatives is important, as cognitive flexibility impacts the manner in which consumers categorize information (Ionescu 2012). Indeed, research distinguishes between how broad or narrow consumers categorize a given concept (Pettigrew 1958; see also Ülkümen, Chakravarti, and Morwitz 2010). Broader categorizations tend to be more inclusive and can result in more unusual, creative, diverse, and

atypical associations than narrow categorizations (see Ashby, Isen, and Turken 1999). Importantly, these differences in category width map onto cognitive flexibility, such that flexibility is associated with broader categorizations and rigidity is associated with narrower categorizations (see Scott 1962).

### *The Role of Learning Styles*

Given this difference in categorization, we propose that flexibility shapes the cultural preferences of liberals and conservatives by altering their learning style (i.e., *breadth* or *depth*; Clarkson et al. 2013). Specifically, flexibility should lead liberals to leverage their existing knowledge to learn about different experiences that broaden their understanding of a category (i.e., *knowledge breadth*). Because global experiences offer insight into different ideas, beliefs, and traditions (Holton 2000; Thomas et al. 2008; Steenkamp and De Jong 2010), we predict that liberals—due to their flexibility—should prefer global cultural experiences. Conversely, rigidity should lead conservatives to leverage their existing knowledge to learn about similar experiences that deepen their understanding of a category (i.e., *knowledge depth*). Because local experiences bolster insight into existing lifestyles, values, attitudes, and behaviors (Crane 2002; see also Chiu and Hong 2006), we predict that conservatives—due to their rigidity—should prefer local cultural experiences.

### EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW

Four studies are presented in support of the hypothesis that consumers exhibit a clear preference for cultural knowledge type as a function of their political ideology. In doing so, this research details the role of political ideology and cognitive flexibility in shaping consumer preferences for different types of cultural experiences and thus provides a more nuanced perspective on the impact of liberal and conservative consumers in shaping cultural consumption.

We acknowledge several points about our procedures. First, we differentiated global and local knowledge across studies by varying choice sets to feature American or world culture experiences (Alden et al. 2006; Zhang and Khare 2009). Second, we assessed political ideology on a single-item measure (Jost 2006), though we also included measures of social and economic political ideology in each study to assess the multidimensionality of political ideology (Feldman and Johnston 2014), and those results are summarized in the General Discussion. Third, we report all analyses regarding political ideology with and without statistically controlling for respondent demographics in the appendix, available online.

It is important to emphasize these studies were conducted with participants from the United States. This decision was made to control for nuance in cultural definitions of liberals and conservatives (Jost 2006). However, in an attempt to address this limitation and increase the generalizability of the present findings, we provide preliminary data from samples of two cultures with similar ideological structures to the United States (i.e., UK and Australia). We present these findings and further commentary regarding the generalizability of our findings in the General Discussion.

Full details of our stimuli, manipulations, measures, and a table with summary statistics for all studies are included in the appendix.

### STUDY 1

We conducted an initial test of the focal hypothesis that consumer preference for different types of cultural knowledge (i.e., global or local) varies as a function of their political ideology.

#### *Method*

**Participants and Design.** Ninety-six undergraduates (55% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.66$ ) participated in exchange for course credit. Participants were welcomed to the study and informed that they would be choosing a video to watch.

**Procedure.** Participants were instructed to choose between two informative videos: “Best Cities in the World” (global choice) or “Best Cities in America” (local choice). Prior to choosing, participants were informed that both videos were produced by the same company and had the same run time (8 minutes). Participants then made their choice and watched the video in its entirety. Afterward, participants responded to demographic measures, indicated their political ideology on a 7-point scale anchored from *very liberal* to *very conservative* (Knight 1999; Jost 2006) and were thanked for their time.

#### *Results*

The cultural preference data (0 = global choice, 1 = local choice) were submitted to a logistic regression, with ideology (continuous, mean-centered) as the predictor. Results revealed a main effect of ideology ( $B = .48$ , Wald’s chi-square = 7.56,  $p = .006$ ), with conservatives indicating a greater preference for local (vs. global) choice than liberals.

#### *Discussion*

This finding offers initial support for our focal hypothesis, as conservatives were more likely to choose the local video

and liberals were more likely to choose the global video. This association reinforces the importance of differentiating cultural experiences by knowledge type while demonstrating the role of political ideology in predicting cultural preferences.

## STUDY 2

Study 1 demonstrated that political ideology predicts distinct preferences in desired cultural experiences. Yet might this difference be merely an artifact of our choice paradigm? Conservatives are less open to new experiences (Carney et al. 2008), and lower openness is linked to decreased cultural engagement (Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2005; Schwaba et al. 2018). Thus, an openness account would posit that political ideology simply predicts consumers' willingness to choose or not choose an experience, regardless of the culture type. Said differently, liberals may prefer any cultural experience (global or local), whereas conservatives may prefer neither experience (and choose local only when forced). We attempted to address this potential confound in study 2 by presenting participants with a series of novel experiential choices between a global and local option, while also allowing participants to opt out of indicating a choice (see Dhar 1997). Moreover, in an attempt to use a more subtle dependent measure, we elected to use generic labels for each experience (i.e., option 1 and option 2) rather than labels that explicitly stated the options as representing global and local experiences.

### Method

**Participants and Design.** One hundred and twenty-nine online recruits (Prolific, 54% male;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.08$ ) participated in exchange for payment. Participants were presented with four choice scenarios in random sequence.

**Procedure.** Each scenario reflected a choice between different global and local experiences (i.e., beer subscriptions, free online college courses, food trucks, and podcasts). Critically, each choice set contained a no choice option (Dhar 1997). Thus, participants could choose the global option, the local option, or neither option. Note that we used generic choice labels (i.e., option 1, option 2, neither option) so that participants would have to read the descriptions to infer the type of cultural experience. Finally, participants responded to demographic measures, indicated their political ideology, and were thanked for their time.

### Results

**Choice Likelihood.** We computed a choice likelihood index (0 = global/local option, 1 = no choice option), where clas-

sification in the no-choice group was determined by a no-choice option in at least one scenario (13.18% of sample). The index was not associated with participants' political ideology ( $r = .051, p > .56$ ).

**Cultural Preference.** For those who elected to make a choice across scenarios, we computed an index of cultural preference by averaging responses across the four scenarios such that higher values indicated greater preference for local (vs. global) culture. Cultural preference was predicted by political ideology ( $r = .28, p = .003$ ). As in study 1, conservatives indicated a greater relative preference for local (vs. global) experiences than did liberals.

### Discussion

The findings of study 2 addressed the possibility that this association is merely an artifact of the choice paradigm. Indeed, there was no difference in consumers' likelihood to select the no-choice option as a function of political ideology. Moreover, for those who did make a choice, we replicated the association observed in study 1 using a different choice paradigm. Furthermore, this replication occurred using a more subtle dependent measure.

It should be noted that these findings are not inherently at odds with work linking openness to increased cultural engagement (Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2005; Schwaba et al. 2018). Ultimately, an openness argument is one of quantity—that is, consumers who are open to new experiences are more likely to attend a greater number of cultural experiences. Yet while openness may inform cultural engagement, the present findings suggest openness offers little insight into the types of cultural experiences preferred.

## STUDY 3

The primary objective of study 3 was to test our mediation hypothesis. We propose that liberals and conservatives vary in their cognitive flexibility which, in turn, drives the relationship between political ideology and cultural preference. In addition, we also tested the role of alternative mechanisms related to cultural identity and mental construal. As noted, cultural identity is a well-documented predictor of global and local products and brands (Zhang and Khare 2009; Ng, Faraji-Rad, and Batra 2021; see also Strizhakova and Coulter 2019), such that increased accessibility of a global (local) identity increases preferences for global (local) products. Separately, a wealth of research details how consumers differ in how they represent the same information in abstract or concrete terms (Trope and Liberman 2003). The inclusion of these measures allowed us to test the role of

cognitive flexibility in light of potential differences in both cultural identity and mental construal, while also remaining open to the possibility that mediation of the relationship between political ideology and cultural preferences could be multiply determined.

### Method

**Participants and Design.** Two hundred and one online recruits (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 79% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 35.36$ ) participated in exchange for payment. Participants were informed they would be presented with several choice scenarios in random sequence, and to make a choice in each scenario.

**Procedure.** Participants were presented choice scenarios that reflected a choice between different global and local experiences (i.e., virtual cooking classes, virtual fitness, and e-books). Following their choices, participants completed measures of cognitive flexibility, cultural identity, and mental construal. Cognitive flexibility was assessed on the actively open-minded thinking (AOT) scale ( $\alpha = .63$ ; Haran, Ritov, and Mellers 2013; see Baron 2019). The AOT includes items such as “People should revise their beliefs in response to new information or evidence,” and responses are scored on 7-point scales anchored from *completely disagree* to *completely agree*. Cultural identity was assessed on the *local-global identity scale* (Tu, Khare, and Zhang 2012), which includes subscales to separately assess local ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and global ( $\alpha = .56$ ) identity. Mental construal was assessed on the behavioral identification form (BIF;  $\alpha = .82$ ; Vallacher and Wegner 1989). Finally, participants indicated their demographic information and political ideology and were thanked for their time.

### Results

**Cultural Preference.** Responses to the choice scenarios were averaged to create an index of cultural preference, with higher

values indicating greater preference for local (vs. global) culture. Analysis revealed a significant association with ideology ( $r = .19, p = .008$ ), such that conservatives indicated a greater preference for local (vs. global) experiences than did liberals.

**Cognitive Flexibility.** Analysis of the cognitive flexibility measure (i.e., AOT) revealed a significant negative association with ideology ( $r = -.28, p < .001$ ), such that conservatives were less flexible in their thinking than were liberals. Additionally, the flexibility measure significantly correlated with cultural preference ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ), such that flexibility was associated with preference for global experiences.

**Cultural Identity.** Analysis of the local and global identity subscales did not reveal a significant correlation with ideology (local:  $r = .065, p > .35$ ; global:  $r = -.002, p > .97$ ). Additionally, global identity did not correlate with cultural preference ( $r = .07, p > .29$ ), although local identity did ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ) such that local identity was associated with greater preference for local experiences.

**Mental Construal.** Analysis of the BIF revealed non-significant relationships with both political ideology ( $r = -.04, p = .58$ ) and cultural preference ( $r = -.04, p > .56$ ).

**Mediation Analysis.** Using bootstrapping procedures (Hayes 2018), we tested the mediating role of each mechanism separately by computing a 95% CI around the effect of ideology on cultural preference through the proposed mediator (model 4). The mediation pathway through cognitive flexibility was significant (indirect effect: .012; 95% CI: .004, .023; see fig. 1). The mediation pathways through cultural identity (indirect effect<sub>local</sub>: .002; 95% CI:  $-.003, .008$ ; indirect effect<sub>global</sub>: .000; 95% CI:  $-.003, .002$ ) and mental construal (indirect effect: .0002; 95% CI:  $-.001, .003$ ) were not significant. Moreover, including cultural identity and

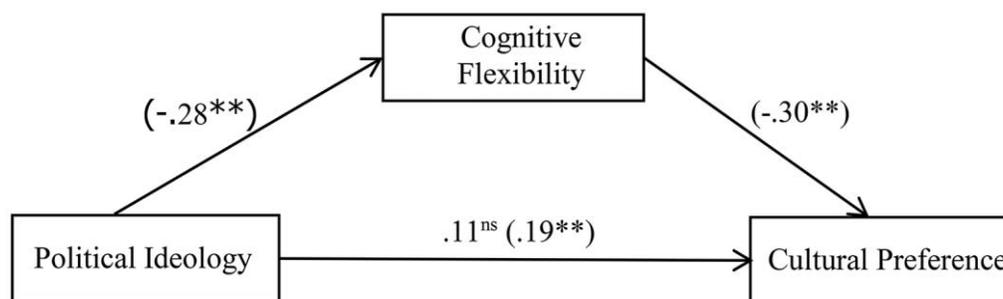


Figure 1. Path analysis of cognitive flexibility in study 3. Values in parentheses indicate standardized beta coefficients before controlling for other variables in the model. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

mental construal as covariates in the flexibility mediation model did not change the significance of the pathway (indirect effect: .012; 95% CI: .005, .021).

### Discussion

Study 3 tested the role of cognitive flexibility, as well as cultural identity and mental construal, in mediating the relationship between political ideology and cultural preferences. The findings revealed a significant mediation pathway through cognitive flexibility, not cultural identity or mental construal. Moreover, the mediation pathway through cognitive flexibility remained significant when controlling for participants' cultural identity and mental construal. Of further note, political ideology was related to cognitive flexibility (Buechner et al. 2021) but unrelated to cultural identity and mental construal. Similarly, cognitive flexibility was not related to either cultural identity or mental construal. These findings speak to cognitive flexibility as a novel mechanism—and political ideology as an independent antecedent—of cultural consumption preferences.

It is worth noting that our measure of cognitive flexibility (i.e., AOT; Haran et al. 2013) uses language that is evaluative in nature. That is, although research demonstrates the utility of both cognitive flexibility and rigidity (Buechner et al. 2021; Ionescu 2012), the wording of specific scale items suggests flexibility is better than rigidity. The scale itself has been shown to exhibit reliability and validity (Baron 2019), but the evaluative nature of the scale is a point to be considered by future research.

### STUDY 4

Study 4 tested the role of different learning styles in driving cultural preferences. As noted, prior research distinguishes between learning about experiences that allow consumers to either expand their knowledge of diverse experiences or deepen their knowledge of similar experiences (Clarkson et al. 2013). Moreover, we contend that the flexibility of liberals leads them to prefer global knowledge as a means of learning about different experiences that broaden their existing understanding of a category (i.e., knowledge breadth), whereas the rigidity of conservatives leads them to prefer local knowledge as a means of learning about similar experiences that deepen their existing understanding of a category (i.e., knowledge depth). Stated differently, both conservative and liberal consumers should favor local options when seeking knowledge depth but global options when seeking knowledge breadth. Thus, directly manipulating these discrete learning styles should alter consumers' cultural preferences, regardless of po-

litical ideology. We tested this possibility in study 4. Additionally, we tested the public policy implications of these findings by assessing cultural preferences via consumers' choice of funding a new community culture center.

### Method

**Participants and Design.** Three hundred and nine recruits (Prolific, 53% female;  $M_{age} = 34.16$ ) participated in exchange for payment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three learning style conditions (breadth, depth, or control).

**Procedure.** Participants were presented with an excerpt ostensibly from the *Wall Street Journal* about brain activity and learning. Participants read that brain activity in regions associated with learning increases significantly when learning about topics that either expand and broaden their knowledge (*breadth* condition) or refine and deepen their knowledge (*depth* condition) prior to reading about specific benefits of the respective type of knowledge. The *control* condition did not include the excerpt.

Participants were then informed their local government would be seeking funding for a new cultural center that provided a fun way to learn about different aspects of either cultures across the world (global choice) or American culture (local choice). Participants were asked to indicate which culture center they would endorse. Finally, participants indicated their demographic information and political ideology and were thanked for their time.

### Results

For conservatives, we expect preferences in the depth condition to align with the control condition (i.e., prefer local options) but reverse in the breadth condition (i.e., prefer global options). For liberals, we expect the breadth condition to align with the control condition (i.e., prefer global options) but reverse in the depth condition (i.e., prefer local options). We tested these hypotheses by submitting the cultural preference data (0 = global choice, 1 = local choice) to a hierarchical logistic regression with ideology (mean-centered) and learning style as predictors. Given that learning style is a three-level independent variable (control, breadth, and depth), indicator coding was used treating the control condition as the reference level (Hayes and Preacher 2014). This analysis revealed a significant control versus depth contrast ( $B = -.53$ , Wald's chi-square = 5.17,  $p = .023$ ) and a directional (though

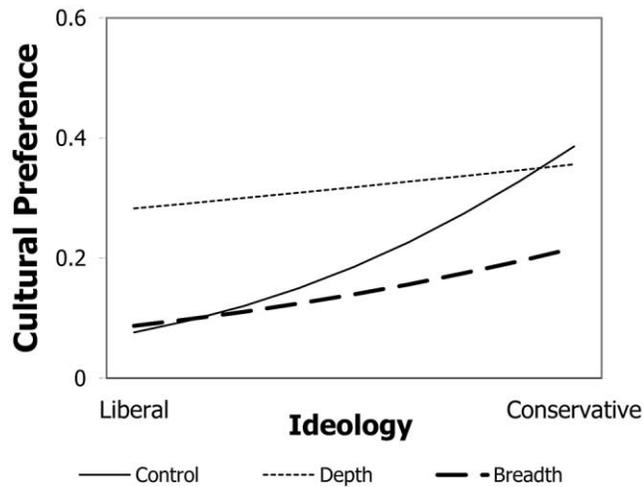


Figure 2. Cultural preference as a function of political ideology and condition in study 4. Political ideology is plotted at  $\pm 1$  SD.

not significant) control versus breadth contrast ( $B = -.30$ , Wald's chi-square = 1.71,  $p = .19$ ; see fig. 2).

As in studies 1–3, the effect of ideology on cultural preference replicated in the control condition ( $B = .64$ , Wald's chi-square = 13.01,  $p < .001$ ). Further analysis revealed that conservatives ( $+1$  SD) were equally as likely as the control to select the local option when depth was highlighted ( $p > .78$ ) but more likely to select the global option relative to the control when breadth was highlighted ( $B = -.82$ , Wald's chi-square = 3.86,  $p = .049$ ). Conversely, liberals ( $-1$  SD) were equally as likely as the control to select the global option when breadth was highlighted ( $p = .82$ ) but more likely to select the local option relative to the control when depth was highlighted ( $B = 1.56$ , Wald's chi-square = 7.81,  $p = .005$ ).

### Discussion

Study 4 offers insight into the learning styles that facilitate differential preferences for global and local knowledge—namely, broadening understanding of diverse cultural experiences versus deepening understanding of similar cultural experiences (Clarkson et al. 2013). Moreover, these findings speak to the potential implication of these findings for public policy, as the cultural experience represented endorsement of funding for either a global or local cultural center.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Research has documented the variety of experiences consumer seek out to enhance their cultural knowledge (Cannon and Yaprack 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005; see also Riefler et al. 2012). Yet not all experiences emphasize the same

culture, and therefore not all experiences provide the same knowledge (Alden et al. 1999; see Steenkamp 2019). In response, we proposed that preferences for different types of cultural knowledge vary as a function of consumers' political ideology. In support of this perspective, four studies demonstrated that liberals preferred cultural experiences that provide global knowledge, whereas conservatives preferred cultural experiences that provide local knowledge. Moreover, we demonstrate that these preferences are driven by differences in cognitive flexibility, linked to separate learning styles, and independent of openness, cultural identity, and mental construal. Collectively, these findings offer convergent support for the role of political ideology and cognitive flexibility in predicting consumer preferences for different types of cultural consumption.

It is important to note that our findings were isolated to US samples. The benefit of this approach is that it controls for nuance in cultural definitions of liberals and conservatives. The downside, of course, is that the generalizability of these results to other cultures is tenuous. However, to offer some perspective on the generalizability, we conducted a post-test using national samples from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. These results replicated the core finding across samples (see the appendix for details). Though preliminary, the findings provide initial evidence into the generalizability of the effect outside of US samples.

Separately, we assessed political ideology on a single item given the liberal-conservative continuum reflects how the majority of people in the United States understand and define political ideology (Jost 2006). However, for exploratory purposes, we included measures of social and economic ideology in each study, as a multidimensionality perspective argues people can hold inconsistent social and economic ideologies which can reveal differences missed by a single item (Feldman and Johnson 2014). Yet the findings across studies do not vary appreciably as a function of social or economic ideology (see the appendix). These results suggest that social and economic ideology do not inherently covary despite meaningful differences in global political ideology (Jost et al. 2009).

### Theoretical Contributions

This research seeks to understand cultural consumption through the lens of political ideology. Yet research in these domains almost exclusively focuses on indirect associations between political ideology and culture (e.g., openness increases cultural engagement; Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2005; Schwaba et al. 2018) and assesses consumers' likelihood to engage in cultural experiences (e.g., visiting a museum; Jafari, Taheri,

and Vom Lehn 2013). Here we show that the relationship between political ideology and cultural consumption is more nuanced in that this relationship depends on the type of cultural experience (i.e., global vs. local) and consequently liberals and conservatives are both open to cultural consumption. As such, this work contributes to a growing literature on the cognitive underpinnings of political ideology (Van Hiel et al. 2016) and speaks to a bipartisan approach to the study of political ideology (Duarte et al. 2015).

Additionally, these findings offer broader insight into the learning styles used by liberals and conservatives. Prior research distinguishes between consumers preference to learn about different experiences that broaden their category knowledge or similar experiences that deepen their category knowledge (Clarkson et al. 2013). The present research demonstrates that the desire for knowledge breadth led consumers to prefer global experiences, whereas the desire for knowledge depth led consumers to prefer local experiences (see study 4). This pattern offers initial insight into the different strategies liberals and conservatives take to learning about the same category.

Finally, research on cultural consumption emphasizes the role of identity in shaping consumer preferences for global and local brands; consumer gender (Gao, Mittal, and Zhang 2020), cultural identity (Strizhakova and Coulter 2019), and even cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999) shape preferences for foreign and domestic products. Political ideology is central to the consumer identity (Jost 2017), and the present findings not only demonstrate its role as antecedent of consumer cultural preferences but also the role of cognitive flexibility as a mechanism by which to understand why consumers seek out global and local experiences.

### **Strategic Implications**

The present findings offer broad implications for marketers hoping to better communicate the value of brands that are strategically positioned as either global or local to better assimilate into different cultures. For instance, a national grocery chain may acquire smaller, regional supermarkets, but leave the components affiliated with them unchanged (e.g., brand, name, logo, colors) as to assimilate with local consumer culture. Conversely, a consumer goods company may advertise their brands across the world using testimonials from consumers of different cultures to emphasize the company's global consumer culture. Consumer receptivity to these approaches may be contingent upon their political ideology. Similarly, public policies can be positioned as offering solutions that align with consumers' learning styles (see study 4).

Governments are tasked with the challenging role of providing services that are effective for a broad spectrum of constituents. For example, citizens may vote to support an educational program that promotes local civic pride versus revising school curricula to improve global diversity and inclusion. These examples emphasize opportunities for consumption of different cultural knowledge in ways that either broaden or deepen one's existing knowledge.

### **Future Directions**

The present research aligns with prior research demonstrating that consumers engage in cultural consumption as a means of learning (Cannon and Yaprack 2002; Arnould and Thompson 2005). Yet learning is not the only reason consumers engage in cultural consumption: consumers seek out cultural experiences to reinforce their self-concept (Usborne and de la Sablonniere 2014), align with their identity (Zhang and Khare 2009; Ng et al. 2021; see also Strizhakova and Coulter 2019), or maximize gratification (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). Thus, it may be that the preferences of liberals and conservatives for different cultural experiences vary depending on the particular reason underlying cultural consumption. That said, reasons apart from cultural learning may also reinforce liberals and conservatives to seek out global and local preferences, respectively (e.g., exposure to incidental uncertainty; Ng et al. 2021). In fact, liberals and conservatives may seek out different knowledge to cope with *culture shock* (Leung and Chiu 2008). In such contexts, rigidity may lead conservatives to identify the similarities between a new culture and their local culture, whereas flexibility may lead liberals to identify the differences between a new culture and global cultures.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to understand cultural consumption through the lens of political ideology. Although research indirectly associates political ideology and cultural experiences, we propose the relationship between political ideology and cultural consumption is more nuanced in that it depends on the type of experience and thus cultural knowledge presented. We adopted a distinction between global and local cultural consumption (Alden et al. 1999; see Steenkamp 2019) and, in four studies, demonstrated that consumer preference for different cultural experiences vary as a function of their political ideology. These findings not only reinforce the importance of differentiating cultural experiences by knowledge type but also provide

an important perspective on the role of political ideology in cultural consumption.

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