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Article:

How political ideology drives anti-consumption manifestations

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How political ideology drives anti-consumption manifestations

Abstract

This article examines the role of political ideology as a motivation for general and targeted anti-consumption. Using data from a cross-sectional online survey conducted in the United Kingdom, we provide a unified model of the ways in which the economic and the sociocultural dimensions of political ideology are associated with anti-consumption manifestations (i.e., suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott) at the individual level. We show that 1) both kinds of manifestations of anti-consumption are found among politically extreme—versus moderate—individuals, 2) pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism have opposite effects on the likelihood of evincing anti-consumption attitudes and behaviours, and 3) authoritarianism moderates the overall negative effect of pro-market attitudes on anti-consumption manifestations. Our findings have implications for the persuasiveness of anti-consumption campaigns.

1. Introduction

Understanding citizens' anti-consumption manifestations is fundamental to the study of consumer behaviour (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013). Predictors of anti-consumption attitudes and behaviours include individual and collective motivations resulting from negative experiences with a particular product or brand or may relate to a symbolic incongruence between one's sense of identity and a company's image (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Kozinets et al., 2010; Lee & Ahn, 2016). Different streams of research consider political ideology as an individual-level predictor of anti-consumption (e.g., Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2014; Jost et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2017; Makri et al., 2020). They tend to focus on progressive motivations— such as protection of the environment; inclusion of gender, ethnic and sexual minorities; or opposition to child labour—which could intuitively be labelled "left-wing" (Stolle & Huissoud, 2019).

Marketing scholars, drawing on political psychology, have examined a single left-right dimension and concluded that right-wing individuals are less likely to boycott products or companies (Jost et al., 2017). Given that right-wing individuals tend to express system justification attitudes and accept the "economic institutions and authorities under capitalism" (Jost et al., 2017: 508), their belief systems are assumed to be incompatible with anti-consumption. However, this presupposition fails to explain several instances of anti-consumption driven by what are commonly thought to be "right-wing" ideological values (Cambefort & Pecot, 2020; Stolle & Huissoud, 2019). For example, Gillette received fierce criticism and faced calls for boycott from so-called men's rights activists over a #MeToo-inspired advert. Other instances include abuse against members of staff—as in the case of the Decathlon boycott in France for planning to sell a sports version of the Muslim headscarf (RFI, 2019) and ransacking of Muslim- and Jewish-owned shops (France24, 2018; The Global Terrorism Database, 2017).

How might these seemingly counter-intuitive occurrences be understood? Extant literature examining political ideology as a key driver of anti-consumption attitudes and behaviour aver that nationalism (Lekakis, 2017), ethnocentrism (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018), bigotry (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Shamir & Ben-Porat, 2007; Swimberghe et al., 2011), country of origin avoidance (Russell et al., 2011) and defence of traditional hierarchies (Johnson & Grier, 2017; Varul, 2013) are prominent anti-consumption motives. However, rather than exploring the broad tendencies across the citizenry as a whole, existing work tends to focus on isolated instances of anti-consumption and qualitative analyses of specific groups that engage in anti-consumption. Research using individual-level data does not necessarily centre on political ideology (Duman & Ozgen, 2018; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Russell et al., 2011; Swimberghe et al., 2011). When it does, it fails to explain the orbit of the phenomenon, either because the researchers only considered boycotts as the main manifestation of anti-consumption or because they did not capture the complexity of political ideologies in the context of European multi-party systems (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2014; Fernandes, 2020; Jost et al., 2017) (see Online Appendix A for a synthesised literature review).

1.1 Focus of study

To address the foregoing gap, this article employs insights from the literature on dimensionality of political conflict. It considers political extremism—as well as the economic and sociocultural dimensions of political ideology—as predictors of two manifestations of anti-consumption: a general suspicion towards marketing and individuals' propensity to boycott certain companies and/or products. This article complements extant research by providing a unified model of the ways in which political ideology and its distinct components are associated with anti-consumption manifestations at the individual level.

Our theory builds on and incorporates existing theoretical approaches into an enhanced unified understanding of anti-consumption attitudes and behaviour. First, we argue that, rather than juxtaposing

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"left-wing" and "right-wing" individuals on a unidimensional measure of political ideology, scholars should be focusing on political extremism as a predictor of anti-consumption. Citizens positioned at both extremes of the left-right political spectrum are more likely to be suspicious of and to engage in boycotts compared to political moderates. Second, we posit that, although a unidimensional measure of political ideology may provide a neat summary of belief systems in the US context, it does not account for the complexity of European politics—where political ideologies are generally summarised by two dimensions, i.e., an economic axis of contestation that relates to individuals' views on how to run the economy and a sociocultural dimension that captures opposing cultural and community values (e.g., van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009; Hooghe et al., 2010; Kriesi et al., 2008; Lefkofridi et al., 2014). This distinction provides an enhanced nuanced picture of anti-consumption manifestations. Lower pro-market attitudes (i.e., preferences for state-planned economy and egalitarian distribution of resources) and higher authoritarian attitudes (i.e., endorsement of exclusive social structures and a paternalistic social order) are both associated with greater suspicion of marketing and higher engagement in boycotts. Third, we demonstrate that authoritarianism moderates the negative effect of pro-market attitudes on both kinds of manifestations of anti-consumption. Adherents of high authoritarianism who also express pro-market attitudes are more likely to perceive consumption as a sociocultural rather than an economic risk and thus oppose it on sociocultural grounds.

1.2 Contributions of study

Our study makes two major contributions. First, we present a comprehensive framework to help unravel the complex relationship between political ideology and anti-consumption manifestations. In doing so, we show that extant literature has not given enough attention to anti-consumption among politically extreme and authoritarian citizens. Second, by using evidence from a cross-sectional online survey representative of the UK population and employing sophisticated measures of both ideology and anti-

consumption, we empirically test and provide generalisable findings for claims made in prior qualitative research. In short, this article provides an important complement to existing work examining the motivations of anti-consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009) and contends that future research on the political foundations of anti-consumption should transcend a focus on so-called progressive motives of anti-consumption. Our findings have implications for persuasiveness of anti-consumption campaigns.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political ideology as a driver of anti-consumption manifestations

Anti-consumption has been studied from a variety of conceptual perspectives—such as consumer resistance (Lee et al., 2011), voluntary simplicity (Iyer & Muncy, 2009), brand avoidance (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009), sustainable consumption (Garcia-de-Frutos et al., 2018), and consumer activism (Hoffmann et al., 2018). Drawing upon Makri et al. (2020, p. 2), who have conducted a systematic literature review, we define anti-consumption as "intentionally and meaningfully excluding or cutting goods from one's consumption routine or reusing once-acquired goods with the goal of avoiding consumption". Anti-consumption research essentially examines this phenomenon through the lens of the "reasons against" consumption, which is qualitatively different from the reasons for consuming a product or a brand (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013).

Manifestations of anti-consumption must be intentional and meaningful but go beyond the boycotting of goods and services, which includes rejecting consumption or marketing that does not necessarily translate into an observable act (Chatzidaki & Lee, 2013). Makri et al. (2020) distinguish between two manifestations of anti-consumption. *General opposition* against consumption captures negative attitudes towards general ideas and practices—such as marketing, advertising, and materialism—rather than specific objects (Iyer and Muncy, 2009). It involves a desire to reduce all forms of consumption for

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personal (Zavetoski, 2002), environmental (Garcia de Frutos, 2018) or political (Sandikci and Ekici, 2009) reasons. *Targeted actions* entail specific behaviours—such as boycotting, "brandalism", or culture jamming (Sandlin & Callahan, 2015). These demeanours aim to punish specific organisations (Friedmann, 1985), avoid certain brands (Lee et al., 2009), or decrease consumption of identified goods (Lee et al., 2011). They focus on a specific object (brand, product, company) and thus do not imply a reduction of all forms of consumption (Iyer & Muncy, 2009).

To provide an enhanced comprehensive analysis of anti-consumption, we consider both its attitudinal and behavioural manifestations as our dependent variables. We are interested in the effect of political ideology (predictor at the individual level) on suspicion against marketing (general opposition/attitude) and intention to boycott (targeted action/specific behaviour).

Political ideology refers to a set of core values and beliefs about how society should be organised. Denazu and North (1994/2000: 24) suggest that "ideologies are the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured". These socially shared, but competing, philosophies not only help individuals interpret the world as it is, but also influence their adherents' motivations and preferences. The traditional way of thinking of political ideology is to summarise it using a "left-right" dimension (often labelled "liberal-conservative" in the US context); this antipode essentially reflects individuals' preferences for change versus stability and its provenance dates from the French Revolution or earlier (Jost et al., 2009). Individuals tend to associate the "right" with such terms as "conservative", "system maintenance", "individualism", and "capitalism"; the "left", with "progressive", "system change", and "equality" (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990). Given their innate tendency to challenge the status quo, research suggests that left-wing individuals are more prone to engaging in targeted manifestations

(specifically boycotts). In contrast, right-wing individuals are less likely to do so, primarily because of their system justification tendencies (Fernandes, 2020; Jost et al., 2017; Jung et al., 2017).

2.2 Political extremism and anti-consumption manifestations

On the one hand, the distinction between left and right can neatly summarise ideological differences between two essentially antagonistic, antipodal belief systems about how society should be organised. On the other hand, the distinction between moderate and extremist individuals captures levels of tolerance and open-mindedness vis-à-vis opposing points of view. Ideologically extremist individuals (on the left or right) tend to resist change and express hostility towards perceived enemies of their "accepted" order. Individuals placing themselves in ideological extremes tend to be more distrustful of governments and elites more generally, and to believe in conspiracy theories (e.g., van Prooijen et al., 2015). In fact, "rigid, extreme, and dogmatic adherence is characteristic of proponents of all types of extreme political ideologies, left-wing as well as right-wing" (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003: 379).

Research on political consumerism in the US has shown that ideological strength (moderate versus extremist) appears to be a stronger predictor of boycott and "buycott" (i.e., punishing [boycott] or rewarding [buycott] companies for their behaviour) than the direction of the ideology (left versus right) (Copeland, 2014). This is consistent with the view that political consumerism is associated with more intense political activity (Baek, 2010) and lower institutional trust (Stolle et al., 2005). Rather than a single focus on buycott and boycott, we extend this line of research by examining the relationship between political extremism and the two manifestations of anti-consumption—suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott. Based on the foregoing disquisition, the following hypothesis is offered:

H1: *Higher political extremism on the left-right dimension is associated with higher suspicion of marketing (H1a) and higher intention to boycott (H1b).*

2.3 Pro-market attitudes and anti-consumption manifestations

At least in the European context—which is characterised by multi-party systems (Hooghe, et al. 2010; Kreisi et al.2008; Lefkofridi et al. 2014)—political ideologies are best summarised by two dimensions. As noted earlier, one is an economic factor that relates to individuals' views on how to run the economy; the second is a sociocultural feature that captures opposing cultural and community values. Positions on these dimensions can be readily combined, thus creating a two-dimensional attitude space (van der Brug and van Spanje, 2009; Flanagan, 1987; Hooghe et al., 2010; Kitschelt, 1994; Kriesi et al., 2008).

The economic dimension ranges from preferences for state-planned economy and egalitarian distribution of resources (low pro-market attitudes) to a complete market allocation of resources and individual economic freedom (high pro-market attitudes). The dimension tends to correspond to the traditional class cleavage. The sociocultural axis of political contestation ranges from liberal to authoritarian views on the trade-off between inclusive and exclusive structures of the community and social values. It describes the tension between the importance of personal autonomy and independent self-organised communities (low authoritarianism) versus support for social cohesion through paternalistic societal hierarchy (high authoritarianism) (Feldman, 2003; Kitschelt, 1994). Authoritarians seek to sustain a stable social order through out-group hostility and punitive behaviour towards non-conformists (Feldman, 2003). This dimension tends to include issues of cultural liberalism, nationalism, and immigration (Kriesi et al., 2008).[2]

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[2] Note that multiple labels have been used to describe these two dimensions. The economic dimension has also been referred to as pro-welfare versus pro-market (Harteveld, 2016) or economic left versus right (Hooghe et al., 2010; Lefkofridi et al., 2014). The sociocultural dimension has also been labelled cosmopolitan versus nativist (Harteveld, 2016), sociocultural liberal versus authoritarian (Lefkofridi et al. 2014), or green/alternative/libertarian versus traditionalist/authoritarian/nativist (Hooghe et al., 2010). These essentially refer to the same underlying constructs; for the sake of consistency with our continuous measures, we refer to the economic dimension as pro-market attitudes (low/high) and to the sociocultural dimension as authoritarianism (low/high).

Research has shown that in the European context, the sociocultural dimension is independent from the economic dimension, as the choice over the social aspects of the community does not tend to predict the choice on the allocation of resources (van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009; Kriesi et al., 2008; Lefkofridi et al., 2014). This two-dimensional framework of political conflict allows for a "more nuanced (yet still parsimonious) description of voters' policy preferences" compared to a unidimensional scheme (Lefkofridi et al., 2014: 68). For example, it has been employed to contextualise and explain party competition and transformation of European party systems (e.g., Kriesi et al., 2008), emergence of the far-right in Europe since the 1980s (e.g. Kitschelt & McGann, 1997), and preferences for European integration (Hooghe et al., 2010).

We argue that such a multi-dimensional framework should also be considered when explaining anti-consumption manifestations. Indeed, we aver that, what anti-consumption research considers as being associated with the "left" in politics is actually primarily captured and activated by the economic dimension. In line with prior anti-consumption research, we hypothesise that people expressing lower levels of pro-market attitudes are more likely to express general opposition against consumption and to engage in targeted actions than individuals supporting market intervention in the economy and individual economic freedom. The economic arguments against consumption and its importance in society mostly relate to favouring equality over liberty, as well as collective forms of political and economic organization—usually provided by a strong state (not by a free capitalist market). The opposition to consumption for economic reasons tends to be part of a broader criticism of the capitalist system, with references to a class warfare (Kozinets & Handleman, 2004; Lee et al., 2009). It stems from the observation that marketization and commodification go against collective forms of organisation that would be more democratic (Gilbert, 2008). In this context, marketing and advertising practices drive people towards material possessions and individual competition (Hirschmann, 1993) and, therefore,

potentially resulting in citizen acceptance of inequalities. Through branding, marketing conveys the private appropriation of goods that should be public, and it is used to maximise the transfer of resources from the general population to shareholders (O'Reilly, 2006). that the preceding discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H2a: *Pro-market attitudes are negatively associated with suspicion of marketing.*

Economic arguments against "greedy corporations" (Kozinets & Handleman, 2004, p.702) or hegemonic brands (Lee et al., 2009) also support the idea that pro-market attitudes are likely to be associated with a lower intention to punish organisations. Boycotts are partly described as collective actions aiming to compensate for the absence of protection of consumers from the state (Friedmann, 1991). Empiricism has found that interest in the collective well-being and promotion of social justice are predictors of boycott intentions (Hoffman et al., 2018). Support for fairness related to the economic struggle surrounding resource allocation has been found to be associated with intention to boycott (Fernandes, 2020). The preceding dialectic leads to the following hypothesis:

H2b: *Pro-market attitudes are negatively associated with intention to boycott.*

2.4 Authoritarianism and anti-consumption manifestations

Research on religious or nationalist anti-consumption (Cambefort & Pecot, 2020; Lekakis 2017; Sandicki & Ekici, 2009; Ulver & Laurell, 2020) infers that authoritarianism is associated with expression of a general opposition against consumption and engagement in targeted actions. The authoritarian argument against consumption and its pivotal role in society reflects the endorsement of a paternalistic social order, the frequent definition of communities in ethnic or racial terms, and the support for exclusive rather than inclusive societal structures with religion and nationalism often informing morality and social values (Feldman, 2003; Kitschelt, 1994). Consumerism is putatively linked to the process of globalization as

part of its value system (Sklair, 2008). Consumerism promotes a global consumer ethos—which contravenes authoritarians' core value of nationalism (Lekakis, 2017; Sklair, 2002; Varul, 2013). Authoritarians tend to favour established traditions and hierarchies, but consumerism and marketing practices draw upon novelty and ephemeral trends (Cherrier, 2010) that challenge authority (Behr, 2010; Stearns, 1997). Moreover, factional support for established hierarchies and privilege have been found to influence anti-consumption (Varul, 2013; Johnson & Grier, 2017). Based on the aforementioned arguments, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3a: *Authoritarianism is positively associated with suspicion of marketing.*

Targeted punishment of brands, products, or organisations are actuated when consumers (i.e., as part of the national community) reject foreign brands because they associate them with cultural imperialism—a threat to their "own culture and values" (Sandicki & Ekici, 2009: 213). In instances when the community is defined religiously, authoritarians may attack national and foreign businesses for promotion of another religion or for alleged intolerance (Bee, 1991; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012). People expressing higher levels of authoritarianism will also likely boycott on ethnic or racial grounds, as evidenced by the boycott and ransacking of Jewish-owned businesses in Nazi Germany (Park, 2019). In these foregoing examples, cultural justifications for boycotts seemed to be more prominent than economic explanations.

The driver of the above demeanours tended to be primarily authoritarianism—a predisposition towards intolerant and punitive attitudes, conformity to in-group norms, and support for exclusive societal structures (Feldman, 2003; Kitschelt, 1994). Individuals' intention to punish can also stem from a perceived attack on the established hierarchies in the community: for instance, an advertisement using an inclusive topic (e.g., gender equality, representation of a minority) can spark a boycott call on the grounds of feminization of the society or pushing a multicultural agenda (Ulver & Laurell, 2020).

Protection of authority has also been associated with intention to boycott (Fernandes, 2020). The prior logic leads to the following hypothesis:

H3b: *Authoritarianism is positively associated with intention to boycott.*

2.5 Authoritarianism, pro-market attitudes, and anti-consumption manifestations

Thus far we have discussed the direct effects of pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism on general and targeted anti-consumption. However, we have also argued that the positions on the left-right dimensions of political ideology can be readily combined in a two-dimensional attitude space (Flanagan, 1987). Because the two dimensions have opposite effects on anti-consumption manifestations, they could induce a conflict of values. Specifically, high pro-market attitudes and low authoritarianism or low pro-market attitudes and high authoritarianism are not enigmatic, as their effects would be similar. Low pro-market attitudes and low authoritarianism should not be inscrutable either. As Chatzidakis and Lee (2013) explain, anti-consumption is about the reasons against consumption, and these are not the opposite of the reasons for consumption. A lower score on authoritarianism (e.g., accepting of gay marriage or immigration) does not signal reasons for consumption that would conflict with the economic reasons against it. However, a high score on both could create tensions meriting further empirical scrutiny.

Extant research has focused on tensions arising from conflicting values in both marketing and political research. Scholars in marketing have discussed the effect of conflicting values of materialism and collectivism (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002) or materialism and green values (Furchheim et al., 2020). Conflicting values create psychological tension and discomfort that consumers try to resolve by realigning their value priorities (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). Here, the values and beliefs associated with higher levels of pro-market attitudes (i.e., endorsing laissez-faire economics and the freedom of enterprise) point towards refraining from challenging marketing practices. These values conflict with

those associated with a higher score on authoritarianism (i.e., endorsing a paternalistic social order, protecting the community from outsiders, respecting traditions)—which relate to being suspicious of practices that challenge authority and promote a global consumer ethos. This combination of economic and cultural positions is not unusual: according to Harteveld (2016), it would be the case of 27 per cent of the European electorate. This conflict exists and is not settled among right-wing theorists: between those favouring a free market over national cultures (such as Friedrich Hayek) and those believing that the protection of national cultures should limit free markets (such as Roger Scructon) (O'Sullivan, 2013).

In the context of this research, we anticipate this conflict will exist through a moderating effect. We expect that authoritarianism will moderate the negative effect of pro-market attitudes on anti-consumption manifestations. The literature identifies one coping strategy aimed at solving the psychological tension arising from conflicting values. Individuals with pro-market attitudes and authoritarian beliefs might consider that marketing practices in general (suspicion) and/or a specific company's doings (boycott) may pose a threat to the community while concurrently viewing them as contrary to the principles of a free market. For instance, they could assume that multiculturalism is imposed on companies by the state, or that companies are no longer pursuing profit but an "ideological" agenda (Ulver & Laurell, 2020). This line of reasoning justifies suspicion or a punitive reaction without compromising those individuals' beliefs about the economy. Research in politics also shows that the economy is not always mobilised by the far right in electoral campaigns; however, rejection of immigration on sociocultural grounds is the only factor that consistently explains its success across Europe (Ivarsflaten, 2008).

We posit that in a situation where individuals' economic and sociocultural values are in conflict, those with higher pro-market attitudes and higher authoritarian views would perceive a sociocultural risk (e.g.,

multiculturalism, gender equality, gay marriage) as a more important threat than an economic risk (e.g., regulation of the economy, market intervention, attack to the free enterprise principles). that the previous discussion thus leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: *Authoritarianism reduces the negative association of pro-market attitudes on suspicion of marketing (H4a) and intention to boycott (H4b).*

3. Methodology and Data Description

An ad hoc survey was submitted to the YouGov UK online panel in April 2018 (n = 3271). According to Hill et al. (2007), opt-in Internet panels introduce relatively small biases compared to traditional stratified random sample surveys. Both the YouGov online panel and the sample are representative of the UK's demographics. To improve the representativeness of our sample, data were weighted by age, gender, social class, region, level of education, previous General Election vote, European Union (EU) referendum vote, and level of political interest.

We operationalised the two anti-consumption manifestations based on our theoretical framework discussed earlier (see also Makri et al., 2020). We employed factor analysis with maximum likelihood extraction and promax rotation [K=4] of 10 items from the anti-commercial consumer rebellion scale (Austin et al., 2005) to empirically disentangle the items that relate to intention to boycott from those that relate to suspicion of marketing (see Online Appendices B1 and B2 for descriptive statistics and factor loadings). We chose these specific items because they were articulated in a neutral way, thus helping avoid biased results.

Six OLS regression models were used to test the hypotheses. Individual-level scores on suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott served as dependent variables in all models. Models A and D tested

the main effect of the independent variables corresponding to H1a and H1b. Models B and E tested H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b. Model C and F tested H4a and H4b.

H1 suggested that political extremism would be positively associated with suspicion of marketing (H1a) and intention to boycott (H1b). We used a measure of political ideology on a unidimensional scale ranging from 1 (very left wing) to 9 (very right wing). We employed a quadratic term of left-right ideology to build a measure of political extremism and test whether we observed a stronger suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott among individuals self-placed at the extremes compared to those at the centre.

H2 posited that pro-market attitudes would be negatively associated with suspicion of marketing (H2a) and intention to boycott (H2b). A "pro-market attitudes" variable ranging from 1 (more intervention in the economy, low pro-market attitudes) to 5 (no intervention in the economy, high pro-market attitudes) was built using four items from the survey ($\alpha=0.53$, Online Appendix C). H3 proposed that authoritarianism would be associated with suspicion of marketing (H3a) and intention to boycott (H3b). An authoritarianism variable ranging from 1 (low authoritarianism to describe more liberal views) to 5 (high authoritarianism) was constructed ($\alpha=0.83$) using 13 items from the survey (Online Appendix C). To test H4, we added the interaction of free market attitudes and authoritarianism to models B and D.

4. Findings

4.1. Findings for H1

Reported in Tables 1 and 2 are the results of the models testing H1-H4. All models included the following control variables: political attention, gender, age, social grade, and education (detailed tables are available in Online Appendix D). H1 posited that political extremism would be positively associated with suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott: that is, individuals with extreme views on politics were

to be more likely to engage in anti-consumption manifestations compared to moderate individuals, regardless of the direction of the ideology. Models A and D offered support for H1. As expected, left-right ideology is significantly and negatively related to suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott—lower scores on political ideology reflect left-wing views are associated with higher suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott. In addition, in line with our expectations, political extremism was also significant and took the opposite sign: the relationship was not perfectly linear. Robustness checks using a behavioural measurement of political extremism provided an even stronger case for these results (Appendix E).

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

4.2 Findings for H2 and H3

Results are reported from Models B (Table 1) and E (Table 2) of the test of the effect of pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism on anti-consumption manifestations. Model B (Table 1) provided support for H2a and H2b: pro-market attitudes were associated with lower suspicion of marketing and less intention to boycott. Specifically, individuals believing that the market should operate freely were less likely to be suspicious of marketing activities or engage in targeted anti-consumption actions such as boycotts. Model E (Table 2) offered support for H3a and H3b: authoritarianism was associated with suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott. This result confirms aforementioned qualitative observations on racist or nationalist forms of anti-consumption. Interestingly the relationship was stronger for suspicion than for boycott, thus indicating that higher levels of support for social cohesion through paternalistic societal hierarchy are positively related to suspicion of marketing; this suspicion, however, does not always induce boycotting deportment.

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4.3 Findings for H4

Our models also supported H4a and H4b. Models C (Table 1) and F (Table 2) show that the interaction of pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism had a statistically significant effect on both dependent variables: at constant pro-market attitudes, authoritarianism increased the likelihood of emergence of both suspicion and boycott. Shown in Figures 1 and 2 are the predicted values of boycott and suspicion at different values of pro-market attitudes for respondents holding "extreme" positions on authoritarianism. For the sake of clarity and as an illustration of our analysis, we only portray the findings for extreme values (the predicted values at intermediate levels of authoritarianism, and the average marginal effect are presented in Online Appendix F). A strong effect of pro-market attitudes on respondents with low authoritarianism views is visible; but as hypothesised, this effect no longer held for those with high authoritarianism perspectives. To be more specific, respondents espousing high authoritarianism exhibited the equivalent level of suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott, irrespective of their pro-market attitudes. This plot also showed that authoritarianism increased the suspicion of marketing for most respondents, except for those scoring the lowest on pro-market attitudes (score < 2 on a 5-point scale). However, the situation was more marked for intention to boycott: authoritarianism increased boycott intentions among individuals with an average or high endorsement of pro-market attitudes (> 3 on a 5-point scale); it made no difference for respondents with a low to average score (between 1.5 and 2.5); and it reduced boycott intentions for those with the lowest score (1 on a 5-point scale).

[Insert Figure 1 and 2 here]

5. **Discussion**

5.1 Contributions to theory

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This article built on and contributed to prior research on the role of ideology in understanding anti-consumption, political consumerism, and political consumer psychology. The originality of our research lays in systematically analysing the relationship between political ideology and anti-consumption manifestations. We examined the role of political extremism as a predictor of anti-consumption. We also distinguished between two dimensions of political ideology (pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism) and two manifestations of anti-consumption (suspicion of marketing and intention to boycott), with implications for the mobilization of consumers.

Our results indicated the existence of three types of political anti-consumption, including political extremism, support for regulation of the economy and its actors (i.e., companies, products, and brands), and a rejection of inclusivity and diversity. These forms of anti-consumption can co-exist and contribute to an improved understanding of "problematic" cases (Michelletti & Oral, 2019). For instance, identifying whether a Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) activist against Israel is primarily driven by economic (e.g., fairness regarding Palestinians' access to resources and opportunities) or sociocultural motivations (e.g., anti-Semitism) is fraught. Our research shows that 1) such an individual is more likely self-placed on the extremes of the left-right dimension, 2) an examination of their position on the economy and on sociocultural matters would explain their motivation behind joining a BDS, and 3) this assessment could help predict their behaviour (i.e., whether they would join a march or sign a petition— depending on which organisation makes the call and how it justifies it).

5.2. Implications for practitioners

As a result of an increasingly polarised political landscape, marketing managers, directors of communications, community managers, and PR consultants are being challenged owing to the belief systems embodying their firms' brands. Our work provides practitioners a framework with which to approach these challenges. The design of our research can be used in market research in efforts to identify

latent crises and potential black swan events before they arise or induce irreparable damage to a brand or company. For instance, we encourage market researchers to survey the political ideology of their clients' target consumers, not with a simple left-right measure, but with attention to their customers' underlying beliefs. This focus could be informative about existence of a gap between a brand's (e.g., universalism) and its consumers' (e.g., nationalism) values and requisite corrective action to take before the situation escalates into a crisis.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

More broadly, we encourage researchers to examine the underlying economic and sociocultural concerns motivating anti-consumers. Not only did we find support for anti-consumption among individuals ordinarily categorised as "right-wing", but our results also showed that they are likely to take extreme views and/or be driven by completely different reasons. At a time of growing influence of the far-right globally (Geiselberger, 2017) and increased dovetailing of politics and marketing (Korschun et al., 2020), understanding the beliefs at stake in boycotts, as well as the political motivations behind the expression of negative attitudes towards marketing, advertising, or materialism, are critical.

Another promising avenue for future research relates to further unpacking the reasons underlying the gap between anti-consumption attitudes and behaviour among high authoritarians. Although our models supported H3b and H4b regarding the relationship between authoritarianism and intention to boycott, the effect was not as strong for suspicion (H3a and H4a). Our findings also suggested that authoritarianism was more likely to explain suspicion than boycott. This gap could be related to a value conflict within authoritarianism (and not the conflict between pro-market attitudes and authoritarianism explored in H4). The desire to punish a company for sociocultural reasons could conflict with a sense of conformity to the status quo and the dominant system (Jung et al., 2017). It might also be related to a rejection of disruption

and protest more generally (Kostkella et al., 2019). Despite our choice of a neutral scale, perhaps in the minds of individuals endorsing authoritarian beliefs, the word boycott remains associated with liberal values and ideals antithetical to authoritarianism. A detailed analysis of responses at the item level would tend to support this line of reasoning[3]. Finally, conceivably authoritarian individuals might prefer other ways of expressing their general opposition to consumption (Crocket & Pendravis, 2017). Further research should, therefore, investigate the development of another scale for anti-consumption, starting with qualitative work using focus groups to define appropriate wording that would allow capturing different kinds of actions against businesses and against consumption as a whole.

Political ideology is, of course, one of many explanations for anti-consumption (Lee & Ahn, 2016). It only explains part of the phenomenon, but we are confident in the validity of our quantitative analyses as they resonate with and are able to contextualise many recent manifestations of anti-consumption organised by entities identified with nationalism, bigotry, or defence of traditional values (see Cambefort & Pecot, 2020, or Stolle & Huissoud, 2019, for detailed examples). Some manifestations may well seem mundane and be local, such as the condemnation of Greggs (a UK fast food chain) over a sausage roll nativity scene in November 2017. This reaction originated from the Freedom Association, a right-wing pressure group. Although the justification at first appeared to be on religious grounds, the Freedom Association related its action to the presence of immigrants in the UK, making reference to "other religions" that the company would not dare insult (Smithers, 2017). Other public reactions against companies are international, however, such as the Gillette backlash over the #MeToo-inspired campaign in January 2019. This attack against Gillette had no organization behind it but generated much social media content accusing the company of "feminist propaganda" or "a global assault on masculinity"

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[3] We examined the three items forming the intention to boycott. The item mentioning boycott yields a non-significant and positive regression coefficient (.04), while the items mentioning "not buying on principle" (-.06, ns) and "avoid purchasing" (-.08, $p < .05$) are negative, as expected (details in Online Appendix G).

(Baggs, 2019). The attack explicitly referred to traditional or so-called natural differences between men and women. Our results showed that such anti-consumption manifestations are very likely to resonate with significant segments of the UK population.

More broadly, our results suggested that there is a clear reservoir of anti-consumers among authoritarian citizens, which may be mobilised on these grounds. In other words, conceivably parties might use anti-consumption campaigns focusing on authoritarian justifications to draw political attention. Experimental designs could verify the effect of being exposed to authoritarian criticism of businesses, brands, or consumption in general on individuals' positions on sociocultural matters: for example, the effect of being exposed to the Freedom Association's criticism of Greggs on citizens' positions towards Muslim immigration in the UK.

Finally, we focused on the UK. The results should be understood in light of this context. We did not consider an intention to punish state-owned brands associated with strong pro-market attitudes. This could theoretically occur in countries having a collectivist economy in which individuals with strong pro-market views would avoid state brands as a result of their ideological endorsement of competition and individualism. In addition, compared to other European countries, UK voters tend to pride themselves on their moderation and rejection of extremism although they might not be as moderate as they would like to think (The Economist, 2018). Furthermore, Britons' propensity for taking actions against businesses is higher than for most other Europeans (Jost et al., 2017). Further research should examine countries where authoritarian politics are more electorally successful (e.g., France, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Poland). Hungary and Poland are particularly interesting cases, owing to the illiberal agenda of their governments.

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TABLES

Table 1 - Results of three models of OLS regressions on Suspicion

Models	A	B	C
Tested hypothesis	H1a	H2a; H3a	H4a
Dependent variable	Suspicion	Suspicion	Suspicion
Political variables			
Unidimensional political ideology	**-6.62*****	-5.74***	-4.23*
Political extremism	**0.68*****	0.65***	0.46*
Pro-market attitudes		**-6.55*****	-13.25***
Authoritarianism		**4.59*****	-0.96
Pro-market attitudes # Authoritarianism			**2.17****
CONTROLS	YES	YES	YES
N	2084	1618	1618
r2	0.06	0.13	0.14

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

**Table 2 - Results of three models of OLS regressions on Boycott**

Models	D	E	F
Tested hypothesis	H1b	H2b; H3b	H4b
Dependent variable	Boycott	Boycott	Boycott
Political variables			
Unidimensional political ideology	**-8.26*****	-6.74***	-4.83*
Political extremism	**0.82*****	0.80***	0.57*
Pro-market attitudes		**-7.14*****	-15.62***
Authoritarianism		**2.22***	-4.79
Pro-market attitudes # Authoritarianism			**2.74****
CONTROLS	YES	YES	YES
N	2084	1618	1618
r2	0.08	0.13	0.13

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Figure 1 - Authoritarianism moderates the effect of pro-market attitudes on suspicion
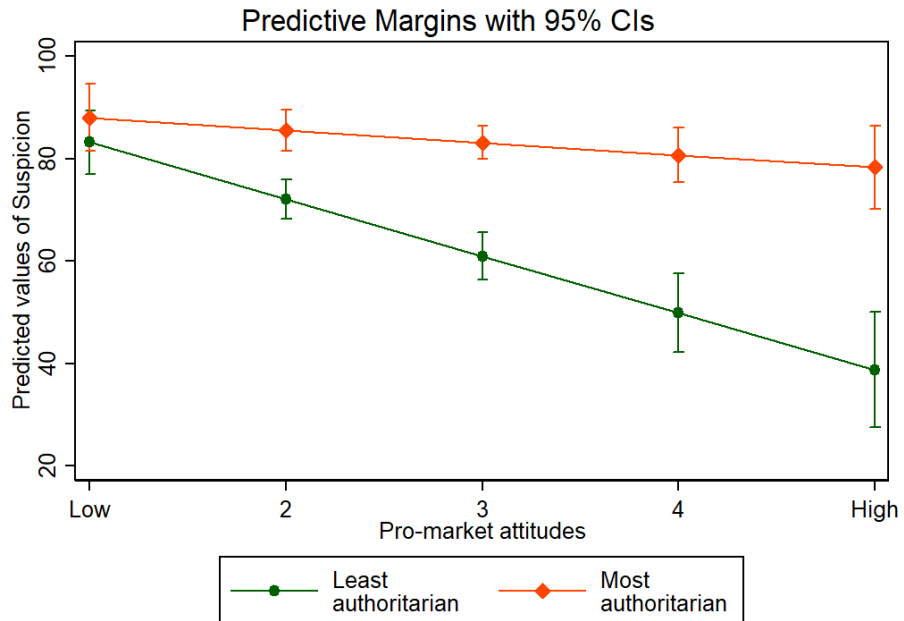
Figure 2 - Authoritarianism moderates the effect of pro-market attitudes on boycott