

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday October 16, 2023

Where: JMHH G50

When: 12:00 – 1:30 pm

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Status Versus Uncertainty: How Political Ideology Affects the Appeal of Really New Products

ABSTRACT:

Really new products (RNPs), or novel products that have never been experienced, have a curious duality. The newness makes RNPs a potential signal of consumer status, albeit a risky status symbol because of the potential uncertainty of product performance. Politically liberal consumers have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and therefore would seem to be better able to cope with product-based uncertainty and thus more likely to adopt RNPs than conservative consumers. By contrast, politically conservative consumers characteristically try to avoid the risk of uncertainty, but they also value social hierarchy and products that signal status. To address these conflicting influences, in five studies the authors demonstrate that the baseline preference for RNPs is higher for conservatives than liberals and that status is the main driver of RNP adoption for conservative consumers. RNPs can signal status because consumers display access to exclusive products not yet available for mass consumption. Moreover, conservatives' desire to signal status supersedes their aversion to uncertainty. The authors then identify key moderators that interfere with the ability of the RNP to signal status, to advance both theory and marketers' ability to better position RNPs for conservative and liberal consumer segments.

