

# THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CONSUMPTION ETHICS ON PROACTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF POLITICAL POSITION

## UTJECAJ EKOLOŠKE SVIJESTI I ETIKE POTROŠNJE NA PROAKTIVNO EKOLOŠKO PONAŠANJE: MEDIJATORSKA ULOGA POLITIČKE ORIJENTACIJE



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### Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper examines how environmental awareness and consumption ethics influence proactive environmental behaviour, with the mediating role of individuals' political positioning.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – Data were collected via a structured survey of 179 respondents and analysed using structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) and mediation analysis.

**Findings and Implications** – The results suggest that conservative political positioning negatively influences,

### Sažetak

**Svrha** – Ovaj rad istražuje kako ekološka svijest i etika potrošnje utječu na proaktivno ekološko ponašanje, uz medijatorsku ulogu političke orijentacije pojedinaca.

**Metodološki pristup** – Podaci su prikupljeni pomoću strukturiranog upitnika na 179 ispitanika, a analizirani su metodom modeliranja strukturnih jednadžbi (PLS-SEM) i analizom medijacije.

**Rezultati i implikacije** – Rezultati upućuju na to da konzervativna politička orijentacija negativno utječe na proaktivno ekološko ponašanje te da ima djelomičan

and partially mediates the effect of environment awareness and ethical consumption on proactive environmental behaviour.

**Limitations** – The primary limitation is the use of a non-probabilistic convenience sample of Brazilian respondents. Future studies should employ stratified sampling to improve representativeness and explore variables such as social class.

**Originality** – Despite increasing concerns about environmental issues, a gap remains between individuals' attitudes and behaviour, particularly when political orientation plays a role. This paper contributes to the literature by highlighting the mediating function of political positioning.

**Keywords** – political position, pro-environmental behaviour, consumption ethics, consumer behaviour

medijatorski učinak na odnos ekološke svijesti i etičke potrošnje i proaktivnog ekološkog ponašanja pojedinca.

**Ograničenja** – Glavno ograničenje istraživanja odnosi se na korištenje namjernog uzorka brazilskih ispitanika. Buduća istraživanja trebala bi koristiti stratificirano uzorkovanje kako bi se povećala reprezentativnost rezultata i razmotrile varijable poput društvenog staleža.

**Doprinos** – Unatoč sve većoj zabrinutosti za okoliš, i dalje postoji razlika između stavova i stvarnog ponašanja pojedinaca, osobito kada politička orijentacija ima značajnu ulogu. Ovaj rad doprinosi postojećoj literaturi naglašavanjem medijatorske uloge političke orijentacije.

**Ključne riječi** – politička orijentacija, proekološko ponašanje, etika potrošnje, ponašanje potrošača

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Debating social issues is a common practice among individuals, both in private circles and within public institutions such as government agencies and regulatory bodies. Topics such as immigration, gun control, abortion, religion, and environmental concerns often polarize social actors and provoke political positioning on each side of these debates. The challenge of sustainable growth demands more active participation and engagement from everyone, whether individuals, governments, non-profit organizations, or businesses (Sachs, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller & Woelm, 2021). Pro-environmental discussions and positive actions to build a better way of life for the present and the future are controversial topics in various spheres of society. Despite the importance of sustainability, there is yet no consensus about the reasons for the gap between environment-friendly attitudes and behaviours (Antonetti & Maklan, 2015).

Proactive environmental behaviour is a set of actions in favour of the environment that people take in their daily activities (Huang, 2015). These actions depend on individual, rather than collective, motivation. Proactive environmental behaviour is intentional, private, and impact-oriented. It is grounded in action, not just attitude and intention. It is assumed to be an environment-friendly action consistent with the attitude-to-behaviour paradigm regarding sustainability issues (ElHaffar, Durif & Dubé, 2020). Awareness of the need for environmental preservation is supposed to be based on an ethical orientation to consumption, which is reflected in the efficacy of an individual's action on the environment (Mitchell, 2021).

Environmental awareness is frequently assessed through the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP), which measures fundamental beliefs about humanity's relationship with nature (Rosa, Collado & Profice, 2021). Likewise, ethical consumption is expected to lead to environment-friendly actions, something that becomes even more imperious considering the social

dimension of ethical consumption. Social-ethical consumption assumes that concern for the environment is coupled with consideration for other individuals, leading to acts of solidarity, altruism, compassion, and generosity in consumption practices. Examples of these practices are collaborative consumption, donations to institutions that care for the environment, purchase of products from fair trade, and preference for local products from small family producers (Tomşa, Romoņi-Maniu & Scridon, 2021).

Despite initiatives to understand the antecedents of environment-friendly behaviour, it remains difficult to explain why environment-friendly motivations and attitudes do not consistently translate into positive actions. Several studies explore reasons for this discrepancy, such as attitudes, norms, and self-efficacy (Govindan, Zhuang & Chen, 2022), lack of education on sustainability (Kioupi & Voulvoulis, 2019), or inefficient mitigation policies (Tavares & Robaina, 2021). Therefore, we propose that political discussions based on ideologies (or pseudo-ideologies) affect consumption choices related to sustainability.

Political beliefs influence individuals' perceptions and decisions in daily life. The conservative political-ideological agenda is more favourable to maintaining the status quo without altering traditional, established positions, such as family unity, opposite-sex marriage, defence of religion, and other similar values (Everett, 2013).

The political debate may influence the individual-collective balance. One of the most discussed themes in the last decades has been the environment. Brazil is a protagonist in this field due to its broad natural resources and several biomes prized around the world. Environmental issues have more recently expanded from the institutional debate among sustainability organizations to occupy people's daily agendas. As a result, the political debate on environmental issues has grown more heated, and so has the influence of people's political positions about government actions toward the environment.

This study aims to determine the mediating role of consumers' conservative political position on the relationships of environmental awareness and social, ethical consumption with proactive environment behaviour.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Proactive environmental consumption

The impact of environmental issues on consumer behaviour has attracted considerable attention from researchers. Individuals with higher levels of environmental knowledge are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviours, attitudes, and habits—such as saving energy in their households (Pothitou, Hanna & Chalvatzis, 2016). Barr and Gilg (2006) examined consumers who strive to adopt sustainable lifestyles through everyday practices, including energy and water conservation, composting kitchen waste, and green consumption both inside and outside the home. A pro-environmental attitude may also be linked to behavioural intentions such as choosing eco-certified hotels, engaging in positive word-of-mouth, and being willing to pay a premium price (Han, Hsu, Lee & Sheu, 2011).

Consumers, especially females, are more likely to pay a premium price for so-called eco-friendly products (Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001), especially those certified for sustainable practices (Husted, Russo, Meza & Tilleman; 2016; Morone et al., 2021), featuring green packaging (Singh & Pandey, 2018), or associated with environmental initiatives (Gao, Mattila & Lee 2016), such as organic food (Zhang et al., 2018). Moreover, word-of-mouth has a positive influence on the relationship between content marketing and purchase intention for green products (Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, 2020).

Exposure to and engagement with media coverage of global warming has a positive and direct impact on three types of pro-environ-

mental behaviour: accommodative, promotional, and proactive. Increased exposure leads to more environmentally responsible actions, such as recycling, composting, unplugging electronic devices, and reducing air conditioning usage (Huang, 2016).

Social media also plays a key role in promoting eco-friendly word-of-mouth. The use of phrases such as “buy products with biodegradable packaging” or “choose products that are collected and recycled” can significantly influence interactions with environmentally conscious consumers (Ebrahimi, Khajeheian & Fekete-Farkas, 2021).

### 2.2. Political position

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound global impact, sparking intense political debate over the appropriate measures to address the crisis. The conflicting discourse between different segments of society and governing authorities hindered effective responses to the health emergency (Ponce, 2020), illustrating how political dynamics can directly affect people's everyday lives. This influence extends to the domain of consumption. The blurred boundary between individual and collective thinking shapes attitudes and behaviours that often culminate in collective actions either in favour of or against issues on the public agenda.

Political positioning refers to an individual's political attitudes and ideological orientation, which are expressed through their choices in social life. Political psychology has largely converged on the view that political positions lie along a continuum from left-wing to right-wing, or from liberal to conservative (Everett, 2013; Ordabayeva, Fernandes, Han & Jung, 2021). In this study, these terms are considered interchangeable.

A conservative political orientation typically emphasizes nationalism and the preservation of traditional structures, while a liberal orientation tends to challenge the status quo. Conservative thinking is associated with higher levels of dogmatism and discipline, lower openness to novel-

ty, reduced tolerance for ambiguity, and diminished concern for inequality—traits that contrast with liberal or left-wing tendencies. Conservatives are generally less concerned about policies related to refugees (Everett, 2013) and are more likely to deny the existence or seriousness of climate change (McCright & Dunlap, 2011).

It is important to note, however, that this classification can encompass various combinations of political leanings. For instance, an individual may adopt conservative positions on social issues while supporting liberal economic policies, or vice versa. Socially, conservatives tend to favour the preservation of traditional values, while economically they prefer minimal government intervention. These characteristics also influence their stance on environmental issues. In contrast, liberals and left-wing individuals are more likely to advocate for the protection of minority groups and to boycott companies that harm the environment. Research suggests that conservatives show lower levels of empathy and concern for others, which may translate into reduced engagement with global issues that affect vulnerable populations. Liberals, on the other hand, tend to exhibit stronger prosocial behaviour and solidarity (Hasson, Tamir, Brahm, Cohrs & Halperin, 2018).

Conservative ideology often opposes environmental activism, viewing it as a constraint on economic development (Everett, 2013). Political interest itself has been shown to influence attitudes toward climate change denial, with more conservative individuals tending to reject the legitimacy of environmental concerns (Carrus, Panno & Leone, 2018). Fernandes, Ordabayeva, Han, Jung and Mittal (2022) found that conservatives generally support consumption and entrepreneurial freedom. Moreover, conservative consumers are more likely to differentiate themselves based on social status (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018), reinforcing values associated with consumerism. Several studies have documented that conservatives are less inclined to engage in climate change mitigation behaviours (Gillis, Vandenberg, Raimi, Maki & Wallston,

2021; Tesler, 2018; Carrus et al., 2018; Hess & Maki, 2019). Drawing on the ideology-consistency approach, Ehret, Sparks and Sherman (2017) found that environmental support is less strongly associated with conservative individuals. These findings are consistent with those of Matuszczak, Kryszak, Czyżewski and Łopaska (2020), who reported that left-wing individuals exhibit a stronger correlation with eco-efficient practices compared to other political orientations.

*H1: Conservative political positioning impacts proactive environmental behaviour negatively.*

*H2: Environmental awareness has a significant, negative impact on the conservative political position.*

### 2.3. Environmental awareness

In recent years, Brazil's environmental standing has been significantly affected by a rise in forest fires in the Amazon region and increasing international pressure to reduce carbon emissions. This situation is closely linked to deforestation and the management of agricultural land, particularly for cattle ranching and soybean cultivation (Fuchs, 2020).

According to the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE), forest fires have increased over the past five years. Brazil's ecological problems are rooted in prevailing societal values, attitudes, and beliefs. A strong emphasis on economic growth and prosperity, faith in science, technology, and economic development, as well as reliance on government planning, have collectively contributed to environmental degradation (Campbell & Wade, 1972; Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978).

Environmental awareness is considered essential for effective environmental protection. Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) developed the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale to measure public acceptance of a new set of ecological beliefs, in contrast to the "dominant social paradigm," which promotes notions of unlimited growth, technological optimism, and anthropocentrism. The NEP introduces concepts such

as the inevitable limits to growth, the need for a steady-state economy, and a rejection of the belief that nature exists solely for human use. The original NEP scale comprised 12 items and was validated for this purpose.

Rosa and other (2018) conducted two studies applying the NEP scale in the Brazilian context. They performed both a systematic literature review and empirical testing using an adapted version of the scale. The final validated version includes 15 items, and the results confirmed its convergent and predictive validity. Their study highlighted six key findings regarding the factor structure, internal consistency, convergent, and predictive validity. However, the authors concluded that the NEP scale's applicability in Brazil requires further refinement. Although Brazilians tend to demonstrate medium to high levels of pro-environmental attitudes, they show comparatively lower agreement with the "limits to growth" dimension of the scale.

Perceptions of environmental issues are influenced by individuals' beliefs, values, and life experiences. Barradas and Ghilardi-Lopes (2020) examined whether the frequency of visits to coastal areas—whether for work, research, or leisure—would influence environmental perception among residents of Greater São Paulo, Brazil's largest urban area. Their findings confirmed the strong psychometric properties of the revised NEP scale, including good internal consistency and one-dimensionality, validating it as a reliable tool for measuring pro-environmental behaviour. The authors also emphasized the importance of promoting environmental education from an early age and highlighted the role of effective scientific communication in fostering environmental awareness (Barradas & Ghilardi-Lopes, 2020). Therefore:

*H3: Environmental awareness has a significant, positive impact on the proactive environmental behaviour.*

Studies on political orientation consistently show that ideology influences individual behaviour and opinions across a wide range of

issues. The political-ideological lens through which individuals interpret social reality shapes how they evaluate specific topics and, in turn, how they respond. Antecedent opinions, attitudes, and intentions interact with one's ideological worldview to generate behavioural responses. Political positioning reflects more than the social context in which individuals are embedded—it represents a broader worldview that guides how people assess major societal issues. For environmental concerns to emerge as topics of personal relevance, they must resonate with individuals' underlying beliefs and values (Matuszczak et al., 2020). Environmental awareness is thus contingent upon the alignment between one's attitudes and the belief that sustainability matters. This orientation toward environmental issues serves as an expression of political positioning. Based on this reasoning, we propose that political orientation functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between environmental awareness and behaviour.

*H3': An individual's political position will mediate the relationship between environmental awareness and proactive environmental behaviour.*

## 2.4. Ethical and social consumption

The concepts of ethics, politics, consumption, and consumerism are often deeply interconnected. Consumption has long been viewed as a practice influenced by moral sentiments, most notably in the work of Adam Smith, but also more recently within convention theory and cultural economics (Amin & Thrift, 2004).

According to Clarke (2008), the so-called ethical consumption practices are rarely disconnected from organizations and their political activity. Over time, scholarly attention has shifted from focusing solely on consumer identities and knowledge to examining consumer practices, social networks, infrastructures, and institutional arrangements. This shift carries important implications for the study of political consumption.

The field of ethical consumption has grown in both theoretical scope and development of scales (Bennett, 2018; Hasanzade, Osburg & Toporowski, 2018). Ethical consumerism is broadly defined as a form of consumer activism that considers the social and environmental implications of product production and consumption (Bennett, 2018; Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004).

Numerous studies in the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour have sought to understand the factors that sustain the gap between declared ethical intentions and actual consumption practices. This gap challenges the notion of a consistently rational and ethically rigid consumer, and instead emphasizes the influence of social and cultural contexts in shaping ethical behaviour within the domain of consumption. For example, Tomşa et al. (2021) examined the impact of sustainable behaviour on consumers' intentions to engage ethically across political, social, and environmental dimensions. Their findings indicate that all three dimensions significantly and positively influence the intention to consume ethically. Given that ethical and socially responsible consumption is closely linked to pro-environmental agendas—and that pro-environmental concerns tend to be negatively associated with conservative political ideologies (Matuszczak et al., 2020)—we hypothesize that, from a political and ideological standpoint, ethical and social consumption is perceived as part of the broader pro-environmental discourse. Accordingly, a negative effect is expected among individuals with a conservative political orientation.

In this context, companies aiming to proactively engage eco-conscious consumers must understand the complexity of the decision-making processes among ethically oriented individuals. The way in which individuals translate environmental awareness into action helps explain the connection between social and ethical consumption and proactive environmental behaviour. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H4: Social and ethical consumption will have a significant, negative impact on conservative political position.*

To the extent that ethical consumption represents a favourable attitude toward the environment (Jung, Kim & Oh, 2016; Tomşa et al., 2021), we expect it to trigger proactive environmental behaviour. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

*H5: Social and ethical consumption will have a significant, positive impact on proactive environmental behaviour.*

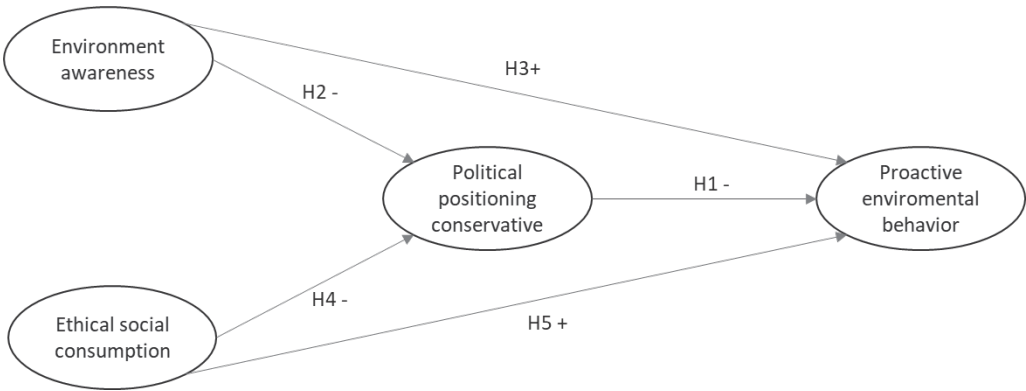
As social and ethical issues often trigger pro-environmental behaviours—and are frequently embedded within political discourse (Matuszczak et al., 2020)—we propose that political positioning may function as a mechanism that transmits the influence from attitudes to behaviours. Political orientation becomes particularly salient when pro-environmental attitudes are activated, shaping the way subsequent behaviour is expressed. An individual's political standpoint may serve as a moderating or mediating factor in how environmental issues are interpreted and acted upon, especially as collective debates influence personal stances on the topic. This aligns with previous findings that political positioning can mediate the effects of social and ethical concerns on behaviour across various societal agendas (Ordabayeva et al., 2021).

*H5': Social and ethical consumption impact on proactive environmental behaviour will be mediated by conservative political positioning.*

## 2.5. Proposed theoretical model

Figure 1 illustrates the study's proposed theoretical model and hypotheses. The model represents a partial abstraction of real-world phenomena, outlining how antecedents of pro-environmental behaviour interact with environmental awareness and ethical consumption, and how these relationships are mediated by individuals' political orientation.

FIGURE 1: Proposed model



### 3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Given that a non-probabilistic snowball sampling method was employed in this study, efforts were made to capture as much demographic diversity as possible within the Brazilian population. Accordingly, all individuals aged 16 and above (i.e., of voting age in Brazil) were eligible to participate. The survey instrument was distributed via social media platforms to potential respondents, who were then encouraged to share it within their own networks.

The questionnaire included four validated measurement scales (see Table 1), along with demographic items covering age, gender, income, and educational level. Additionally, respondents were asked to self-report their political orientation. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

The measurement scales were professionally translated into Portuguese, after which three PhD-level researchers in consumer behaviour reviewed them for clarity and cultural relevance. Following this review, minor semantic adjustments were made to the survey instrument.

We conducted partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) following the procedures outlined by Hair, William, Babin and Anderson (2019), and Ringle, Da Silva and Bido (2014). Mediation effects were tested using the PROCESS® macro version 4 (Hayes, 2022). Prior to hypothesis testing, the dataset was examined for missing values, outliers, and multicollinearity, assessed via variance inflation factors (VIF) (Hair et al., 2019). To address potential common method bias, Harman’s single-factor test was conducted as a complementary procedure to the item randomization employed during data collection (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

TABLE 1: Scales

Construct	Number of items	Author(s)
Proactive environmental behaviour	10	Huang (2016)
Political conservatism	12	Everett (2013)
Environmental awareness	15	Rosa, Collado & Profice (2021)
Social and ethical consumption	3	Tomşa, Romonţi-Maniu & Scridon (2021)

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### 4.1. Sample

The study sample was notably diverse, as intended. A total of 179 valid responses were collected. The average age of participants was 25.49 years (SD = 7.63), and 53.6% identified as female. Most respondents were undergraduate students (67%) with middle-class income levels (58.7%).

In terms of political ideology, the majority identified as centrists (42.45%) or left-wing (22.34%). Other ideological affiliations included centre-left (11.7%), centre-right (10.62%), and right-wing (12.89%).

### 4.2. Adequacy of the data to the proposed model

The final sample consisted of 117 valid respondents. A total of 62 individuals were removed

from the dataset as multivariate outliers, given their potential to bias the results. VIF analysis revealed no values exceeding the threshold of 5, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. Additionally, Harman’s single-factor test for common method bias showed a total variance of 27.82% (KMO = 0.704;  $\chi^2 = 340.68$ ;  $df = 45$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting no significant bias that could compromise the validity of the analysis.

Table 2 presents data on convergent validity (AVE), model fit indicators—including composite reliability (CR), Cronbach’s alpha (AC), and the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>)—as well as the mean and standard deviation, correlations among the latent variables, and discriminant validity (the square root of each construct’s AVE appears on the diagonal and exceeds its correlations with other constructs).

TABLE 2: Convergent validity

Variables	AVE	Mean	sd	VIF	CR	R <sup>2</sup>	CA	1	2	3	4
1. Proactive environmental behaviour	0.616	3.312	0.846	1.196	0.763	0.170	0.377	<b>0.785</b>			
2. Environmental awareness-	0.557	3.010	0.828	1.111	0.710	0.000	0.218	0.310	<b>0.746</b>		
3. Ethical social consumption	0.693	3.610	0.803	1.101	0.872	0.000	0.781	0.241	0.117	<b>0.833</b>	
4. Political positioning-conservative	0.623	3.000	1.021	1.131	0.830	0.083	0.692	-0.274	-0.190	-0.237	<b>0.789</b>

\* CR: Composite reliability; CA = Cronbach’s Alpha; AVE’s square root in bold letters

Source: The authors

We complemented these results with an analysis of item cross-loadings, which were higher in their respective variables than in the others. This analysis complements the discriminant validity analysis displayed in Table 3.

All proposed hypotheses were confirmed. The results demonstrated that environmental awareness functions as a significant predictor of proactive environmental behaviour ( $\Gamma = 0.255, t=3.057, p<5\%$ ). This suggests a greater propensi-

TABLE 3: Cross-loadings

Variables	Items	1	2	3	4
1. Proactive environmental behaviour	PEB7	<b>0.788</b>	0.278	0.162	-0.195
	PEB9	<b>0.782</b>	0.207	0.216	-0.236
2. Environmental awareness - NEP	NEP11	0.273	<b>0.856</b>	0.088	-0.167
	NEP14	0.179	<b>0.617</b>	0.091	-0.111
3. Ethical social consumption	SEC1	0.241	0.059	<b>0.867</b>	-0.223
	SEC2	0.126	0.132	<b>0.818</b>	-0.206
	SEC3	0.218	0.117	<b>0.813</b>	-0,161
4. Political positioning- conservative	PI12	-0.198	-0.167	-0.171	<b>0.836</b>
	PI6	-0.194	-0.036	-0.211	<b>0.658</b>
	PI7	-0.251	-0.219	-0.186	<b>0.858</b>

Based on these initial results, which indicated a good fit between the data and the proposed model, we proceeded to test the formulated hypotheses.

### 4.3. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to assess both the direct relationships and the mediating effect of political orientation. The results are presented in Table 4.

ty among individuals to respond to sustainability challenges and to seek an improved quality of life. In addition, the results indicate an inverse relationship between political orientation and proactive environmental behaviour ( $\Gamma = - 0.187, t=2.294, p<5\%$ ).

This negative relationship suggests that a conservative political orientation is associated with lower levels of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours, acting as a mediating factor in

TABLE 4: Testing hypotheses

Hs	Relations	effect	sd	t test	p-value	status
H1	Political positioning → Proactive environmental behaviour	-0.187	0.081	2.294	0.023	Supported
H2	Environmental awareness → Political positioning	-0.164	0.083	1.979	0.049	Supported
H3	Environmental awareness → Proactive environmental behaviour	0.255	0.083	3.057	0.003	Supported
H3'	Environmental awareness *M→ Proactive environmental behaviour	0.041		IC [0.049; 0.087]		Supported
H4	Ethical social consumption → Political positioning	-0.218	0.079	2,747	0.007	Supported
H5	Ethical social consumption → Proactive environmental behaviour	0.167	0.079	2,110	0.036	Supported
H5'	Ethical social consumption *M→ Proactive environmental behaviour	0.059		IC [0.0138; 0.108]		Supported

these outcomes. The mediation effect was supported by confidence intervals for both environmental awareness (CI [0.049; 0.087]) and ethical consumption (CI [0.0138; 0.108]). The mediating role of political orientation was observed across the ideological spectrum, from left to right. Political positioning thus operates as an intervening mechanism through which positive antecedents influence proactive environmental behaviour. Since both direct and indirect paths were statistically significant, we infer evidence of a combined causal pathway ( $X \rightarrow Y$ ), wherein favourable antecedents exert influence both directly and indirectly through political ideology. In other words, the relationship between environmental awareness or ethical consumption and sustainable behaviour is partially shaped by an individual's political orientation, which transfers the effect of these antecedents to behavioural outcomes.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the mediating role of individuals' political and ideological orientation in the relationship between environmental awareness, ethical consumption, and proactive environmental behaviour. The findings provide evidence of a partial, indirect mediating effect of political orientation on proactive environmental behaviour. While environmentally friendly attitudes predict favourable behavioural responses, political ideology was also found to shape the strength and direction of these effects. In particular, the results indicate that a conservative political orientation is inversely associated with pro-environmental practices, both as a predictor and as an outcome.

Political dynamics influence people's everyday lives across various domains. Controversial topics such as abortion, religion, immigration, and reforms related to social security, labour policy, or firearm regulation are debated not only during election periods or legislative processes but also in private conversations among family, colleagues, and friends (Sutto, 2018).

Ordabayeva and Fernandes (2018) suggest that political and ideological frameworks influence how individuals interpret social inequality—conservative individuals are more likely to attribute inequality to differences in effort, ability, and personal responsibility. Our findings align with previous research on the role of political ideology in shaping consumption patterns (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018; Ordabayeva et al., 2021), brand preferences (Khan, Misra & Singh, 2013), brand positioning (Hydock, Paharia & Blair, 2020), retail customer journeys (Jung & Mittal, 2020), and consumer regulation (Irmak, Murdock & Kunari, 2020).

This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the mediating role of conservative political orientation in the adoption of sustainable behaviours. Political ideology not only influences individual preferences and decisions but also serves as a broader interpretative framework through which individuals make sense of the world and navigate social structures. Amid increasing global political polarization, political debate has become more prominent in everyday life, shaping attitudes and decisions across a wide range of domains. Our findings underscore the relevance of political orientation as both a driver and a lens through which pro-environmental behaviour can be understood.

The relationship between politics and consumption has recently regained scholarly attention, building upon earlier studies that examined the role of political ideology in shaping consumer behaviour (Shah et al., 2007; Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004). Moreover, this phenomenon appears to have a global dimension, as political issues occupy a central place in public discourse across many countries. Prominent examples include the resurgence of far-right ideologies, debates over immigration, economic blocs, global leadership, the rise of China, national economic management, fiscal austerity versus social welfare, sustainable development, and the human and economic impacts of war.

Several of these issues exert a significant influence on Brazilian society, intensifying political

and ideological polarization. This polarization affects interpersonal relationships as well as interactions between consumers and organizations (Rogenski, 2021). In this context, Brazil plays a prominent role in the global debate on environmental issues. The present study contributes to advancing the understanding of the politics–consumption nexus by proposing the mediating role of political orientation in shaping attitudes toward environmental issues. While previous studies have primarily focused on broader structural influences on consumption (e.g., Mont & Power, 2010) or on public policy and its relationship to consumption (Spaargaren & Mol, 2008), few have examined the influence of individual political orientation.

Our findings provide empirical evidence of the interrelationship between environmental awareness, the antecedents of ethical consumption, and political ideology in predicting proac-

tive environmental behaviour. Future research could explore the role of political orientation in relation to other elements of the societal agenda, such as social entrepreneurship, educational services, or preferences for local versus global products.

This study has limitations, particularly concerning the sampling method. Although we attempted to capture the diversity of the Brazilian population, future studies should consider using stratified sampling to improve representativeness. Additionally, future research could explore other relevant variables, such as differences in social class. Cultural factors may have contributed to the exclusion of certain items from the original scales, representing a limitation in the present study. Subsequent studies should perform measurement invariance tests before field data collection to ensure cross-cultural validity.

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