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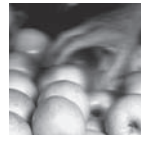
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# Value for money: Political consumerism in Israel

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## Abstract

Studies of political consumerism and of political consumers tend to ask general questions about motivations and tendencies among specific segments of society and investigate the likelihood of the political attitudes of specific social identities to affect consumer choices. In contrast, we examine how political consumerism is influenced by both individual characteristics and the communities in which these individuals live. In addition, we explore whether specific issues of political consumerism – environmental concerns, social justice, and religion – exist independently of general political consumerism. Finally, we attempt to determine the relationship between these different focuses of political consumerism. Based on a survey conducted in August 2010 in Israel of a random sample of 603 adult Jewish Israelis, we delineate the general trends of political consumerism. We then present a regression model to further explore the different paths of political consumerism. This article concludes with a model developed using structural equation modeling in which the different factors and paths are brought together in order to understand the relationship between the three paths of political consumerism.

## Keywords

political consumerism, environment, social justice, religion, Israel

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For an increasing number of citizens, shopping can also involve political preferences and choices. Political consumerism, the use of purchasing power for political goals, is a new channel of influence for citizens who often find the more traditional channels of political participation blocked. The notion of political consumerism raises two important and interrelated sets of questions. The first deals with the political power of consumption and is concerned with the impact that the individual economic decisions of consumers have on producers. The second question, the one we focus on in this article, concerns the identity of political consumers, their interests and motivations, and their ability to organize effectively. Understanding the identities and motivations of political consumers is a key for understanding under what conditions political consumerism is likely to have an impact.

Consumerism is increasingly meaningful in today's culture because people spend more time and money shopping and choosing among a growing variety of products that cater to different wants and tastes. Conversely, interest in party politics has been in record decline in many democratic countries, expressed in lower voter turnouts and involvement. The general disinterest in politics is attributed to the loss of confidence in the political system. Voters see the system as stagnant or corrupted, believing that ordinary citizens are unlikely to be able to influence it. The withdrawal of citizens from conventional politics, however, does not necessarily imply apathy and ignorance. Rather, interested citizens may seek alternative channels of influence they find more likely to be effective. Political consumerism is one potential channel that has arguably become more available in a global age of production, consumption, and information. This tool provides people with a means of expressing their views and values through consumption choices.

Studies of political consumerism and of political consumers tend to ask general questions about motivations and tendencies among specific segments of society and investigate the likelihood of the political attitudes of specific social identities to affect consumer choices. Scholars point to several factors that influence political consumerism. First, and central to this work, a loss of confidence in the political system and the ability to bring change through formal political channels (Beck, 1997, 1999). Second, economic changes related to the global economy that include, on the one hand, the salience of transnational corporations and, on the other hand, growing consumer consciousness (Micheletti, 2003). And, third, cultural changes described as post-material values (Inglehart, 1990, 1997). In this study, we first examine how political consumerism is influenced by both individual characteristics and the communities in which these individuals live (Neilson and Paxton, 2010). Second, we investigate political consumerism in three specific areas – environmental concerns, social justice, and religion. Accordingly, our research questions are as follows: (a) What individual and group characteristics are related to political consumerism in general? (b) What individual and group characteristics are related to the specific categories of political consumerism? (c) What are the relationships between the different categories of political consumerism?

Using Israel as our case study, we examine the scope and characteristics of political consumerism among different groups of Jewish Israelis and in relation

to the specific issues. Political consumerism in Israel seems to reflect developments elsewhere, where trust in political institutions underscores new channels of political participation, and the findings suggest that specific paths of political consumerism may evolve. Our findings are based on a survey conducted in August 2010. The survey included a random sample of 603 people. We begin by presenting the theoretical concepts used in this work and provide a general description of political participation among the Jewish majority in Israel. Political consumption in Israel, we argue, seems to replicate developments in other democracies, where new political channels replace traditional ones. In the second part of the article, we present our findings and discuss them in the third and final part of the article.

### **Politics, political participation, and political consumption**

A significant decline in the political participation of citizens in many democracies has raised interest and concern among many scholars. Democracy offers citizens direct and indirect channels to express their desires and influence the shaping and implementing of public policy (McClosky, 1968; Parry, 1972; Verba and Nie, 1972). The repertoire of political participation includes voting in elections, membership in political parties, being involved in formal and informal organizations, approaching policymakers, and engaging in acts of protests (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Verba and Nie, 1972). Citizens can choose between different levels of participation, from apathy to active engagement (Milbrath and Goel, 1977), different issues in which to become involved, the adherence to existing norms and laws (Marsh, 1977), and the arena in which they participate. Identifying politics solely with the state and its institutions, however, might ignore the “rich negotiation, interaction, and resistance that occur in every human society among multiple systems of rules” (Migdal, 2001: 15). Consequently, understanding of the dynamics of political change requires broadening the scope and locus of politics so that political activity is not only what is openly declared and visible and not only direct engagement with rulers and elites (Singerman, 1995: 14).

The study of alternative forms of political participation – their mode and their location – has become ever more important in light of the continuing decline of traditional political participation and trust in formal politics. Studies of political participation in different democratic countries find a significant decline in election turnouts (Hay, 2007; Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Warren, 2002), participation in voluntary activities (Blais et al., 2004; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Putnam, 2000), trust in and satisfaction with government and their representative politicians (Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999; Nye, 1997), an increase in apathy and withdrawal of citizens from party affiliation and political involvement (Dalton, 2004), and alienation from political institutions and leaders (Diamond and Gunther, 2001). This growing alienation and distrust underscores, on one hand, a negative attitude described as “anti-politics” (Boggs, 2000) and, on the other hand, the diminishing capacity of traditional governance (Pierre, 2000).

Nevertheless, the decline of interest and participation in traditional forms and arenas of politics is not necessarily equivalent to political apathy and withdrawal from the public sphere. Rather, researchers have pointed to different channels of participation that citizens find more available and rewarding. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck described the non-institutionalized form of politics as “sub-politics,” referring to different political activities that operate “outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states” (Beck, 1996: 18; see also Holzer and Sorensen, 2001). Sub-politics, according to Beck (1999), implies “direct politics...ad hoc individual participation in political decisions, bypassing the institutions of representative opinion-formation (political parties, parliaments) and often even lacking the protection of the law” (pp. 39–40). This type of political action is evident in the supermarket, at school, in the media, and on the streets (Beck, 1997). Other scholars describe new forms of participation as “alternative politics,” new channels that emerge when governments fail to provide stable and coherent public policy, and citizens step in to address the failure (Lehman-Wilzig, 1991; Weimar and Vining, 1998).

Thus, when political institutions lose their ability to govern and citizens lose faith in political institutions, they can adopt new practices and find new channels in order to fill the political vacuum. Holzer and Sorensen (2001) defined this action as “active sub-politics,” which implies citizens’ taking responsibility for matters in their everyday, individual-orientated life. Such matters cut across the public and private spheres. These forms of citizen engagement can be described as “individua-lized collective action” involving “... the practice of responsibility-taking for common well-being through the creation of concrete, everyday arenas on the part of citizens alone or together with others to deal with problems that they identify as good life” (Micheletti, 2003: 25). Thus, citizens alienated from the formal political system and conventional forms of participation may use their power as consumers to advance social values and political goals.

Political consumerism is not a new phenomenon, but its popularity seems to have grown rapidly in the last two decades (Neilson and Paxton, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005). Micheletti (2003: xiv) defines political consumerism as “consumer choice of producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices.” This phenomenon may translate into a negative action, such as a boycott, “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman, 1999: 4). Alternatively, political consumerism can take a positive form of action such as the support and purchase of goods and services of selected companies in order to reward them for their “ethical” behavior (Friedman, 1996). Thus, political consumerism is an aggregate of private decisions in which citizens are willing to pay a higher price as a result of an ethical or political commitment. As such, it is a collective action that in order to be successful, must transcend problems of free riding and defection.

Political consumerism can provide an alternative form of political participation more readily available in a global consumer society. But, while stagnant political

systems combined with consumer societies may motivate political consumerism, the individual costs and collective action problems involved raise questions under what conditions political consumerism will take place and whether it is an effective political strategy. Accordingly, to understand the potential of political consumerism, more specific theoretical questions and empirical evidence are necessary. Questions related to political consumerism include the following: Where is political consumerism likely to occur? Which people are more inclined to become political consumers? Which groups have a greater potential to make an impact using political consumption?

Surveys demonstrate that political consumerism has become more common in Europe and North America but have also found between countries. The popularity of political consumerism is higher in stable democracies with welfare regimes, high levels of education and employment, and openness to global influences (Koos, 2012; Stolle et al., 2013). Political consumerism is associated with post-material values, social capital (Neilson and Paxton, 2010), and a general growth of consumption that translates into the rise of consumer organizations that provide information and raise consumer awareness (Stolle et al., 2013). Research identified five main variables that influence the propensity of groups and individuals to engage in political consumerism: high levels of social capital, post-material values, participation in conventional forms of politics, higher socio-economic status (SES), and religiosity.

Social capital's association with political consumerism was strongly influenced by social capital's dimension of "membership in association" and less influenced by other dimension of social capitals such as "trust in others" and "social meetings" (Forno and Ceccarini, 2006; Neilson and Paxton, 2010; Strømsnes, 2004). On the individual level, researchers found a strong correlation between political consumerism and post-material values (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2004; Stolle et al., 2005). Thus, political consumers tend to manifest a growing sensitivity and concern for environmental issues, human rights, minority rights, and support of individual autonomy and self-expression (Inglehart, 1990, 1997). This value orientation is consistent with the fact that political consumers are generally young, as youth is associated with post-material values (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2004; Forno and Ceccarini, 2006; Micheletti and Stolle, 2007). Conventional forms of politics are not necessarily crowded out by political consumerism. Rather, political consumers often combine conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. Political consumerists vote in elections, take part in demonstrations, work for candidates, and approach their representatives, all of which demonstrate a substantial interest in politics (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2004; Micheletti and Stolle, 2007; Strømsnes, 2004).

Political consumerists are also likely to have a higher SES. Individuals with a higher level of education and higher income are both more aware of the existence of ethical products and have the means to pay for them when they are more expensive (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2004; Forno and Ceccarini, 2006; Micheletti and Stolle, 2007; Neilson and Paxton, 2010).

Finally, religiosity has a significant effect on political consumption. Political consumers are more likely to be churchgoers and attend religious meetings (Forno and Ceccarini, 2006). Religion provides its followers with a coherent and stable set of norms and values that underscore their identity. Consequently, patterns of consumption can express commitment to religion by adhering to ethics in the process of individual and group consumption choices (Lindridge, 2005). Religious groups strengthen the commitment of their members to boycotts and buycotts that usually involve some sacrifice through solid norms, sanctions and rewards, and the leadership to ensure compliance and help transcend the free rider problems that political consumerism involves (Stolle et al., 2005). Political consumerism, measured in the willingness to pay more for a product considered ethical, is not only a general inclination of the groups and individuals with the characteristics described above. In order for political consumerism to be an effective strategy, the conditions described above must be met with entrepreneurship and wide social commitment. Accordingly, we suggest that political consumerism can be issue related rather than a general phenomenon so that political consumerism clusters on specific topics that garner interest and commitment.

To investigate the role of specific issues in political consumerism, we use three categories of products and political consumerism. Environmental political consumerism involves a preference for environmentally friendly products and/or the boycott of products with a negative environmental impact. Environmental consumers use product labels and other information to select the products they prefer or boycott (Berry and McEachern, 2005; Bostrom and Klintman, 2008; Elkington and Hailes, 1989; Jordan et al., 2004; Micheletti, 2003: 92–93; Seidman, 2003). Social political consumerism involves a preference for fair trade products and employment and/or the boycott of products of child labor and exploitation (Bird and Hughes, 1997; Jordan et al., 2004; Levi and Linton, 2003; Peretti and Micheletti, 2004). Social-minded consumers use fair trade product labels, stores, and other sources of information to select products. Finally, religious political consumerism involves the preference for products that abide by religious restrictions and/or the boycott of those that do not comply with these restrictions. Religious consumers are concerned with products that violate religious and moral codes, and follow religious dictums, mediated through religious institutions and leaders, when they shop (Shamir and Ben-Porat, 2011). We examine these patterns of political consumerism and the relations between them.

## **Israel: Economy and politics**

Israel has been described a “non-liberal democracy” because of the religious hold over significant aspects of public life, entrenched anti-liberal and ethnocentric attitudes in society, and various discriminatory practices toward minorities (Ben-Dor et al., 2003). Yet, Israeli democracy was also characterized by relatively high level of political involvement, measured by party affiliation and voter turnout.

Social conflicts and the frustrations of marginal groups in the past three decades increased to a point where Israeli democracy has become an “overburdened polity.” The political system, it has been argued, faces difficulty when it attempts to mobilize material resources and collective normative commitments. While scholars dispute the reasons for societal break-up, there is an overall consensus that relations between national, ethnic, religious, ideological, and cultural groups have become overtly politicized. Israeli society since 1980 came to realize not only its plurality, translated to various demands for equality and recognition, but also that the existing formal and informal institutions can no longer contain the tensions between groups. Consequently, Israel provides an interesting setting to examine the development of political consumption, underscored by the declining interest in traditional politics. This general trend, we argue, evolves through particular patterns of political consumption shaped by global and local factors.

Three interrelated changes that occurred in the past three decades can explain the interest in and the potential of political consumerism. First, a governance crisis eroded trust of Israeli citizens in political institutions and has negatively affected political involvement in formal channels. Second, the state-led economy has gone through a process of rapid liberalization, toward becoming a Western-type liberal economy, well integrated in the global economy and with similar characteristics of a consumer society. And, third, the decline of trust does not equal political apathy. Rather, Israel remains a multi-cleavaged society engaged in internal and external struggles and a society in which various groups struggle for recognition and influence and existential questions pertaining to questions of borders and boundaries are yet to be resolved. Consequently, the decline of trust in Israelis and lower levels of involvement in formal political processes set the potential for new channels of political activity.

The large wave of social protest among the general population in the summer of 2011 and public boycotts declared against large food manufacturers for allegedly overpricing their products suggest that many Israelis, even if temporarily, discovered political consumerism as a substitute for or a supplement to more traditional political channels. Henceforth, it would be of special interest to examine whether political consumerism has become part of the political landscape, how it is used, and for what purposes. Political consumerism is a relatively new phenomenon in Israel, and to date, very few studies have been conducted on the subject there (Shamir, 2011). One exception is the religious ultra-Orthodox community that responded to growing secularization by consumer boycotts in attempt to protect what was considered vital interests (Ben-Porat, 2013).

Political consumerism, as described above, was made possible by economic and political changes in Israel. Rapid economic growth since the late 1980s has turned Israel into an affluent, Western-style society, with more hedonistic values, open to foreign cultural influences, and deeply engaged in a consumption (Azaryahu, 2000; Ram, 2005; Shalev, 2000; Yishai, 2003). Until the 1970s, production exceeded consumption, but from that point on, the trend reversed (Carmeli and



Applbaum, 2004). As a result, Israelis are now spending a larger portion of their income on housing, transportation, and communication and less on basic food and clothing. Today, consumerist behavior and values have become increasingly evident, with more money being spent on leisure activities, entertainment, and lifestyle (Azaryahu, 2000; Shalev, 2000).

Along with the rapid changes in the economy and similar to other Western democracies, there has been a consistent decline in the government's ability to provide public goods and to manage public services (Arian et al., 2008; Mizrahi, 2008; Nachmias and Arbel-Ganz, 2005; Vigoda-Gadot and Mizrahi, 2006). As a result, public confidence in the government has dropped precipitously. It is not surprising, therefore, that a considerable part of the Israeli public expresses a growing distrust of formal political institutions, dissatisfaction with the political leadership's performance (Arian et al., 2008: 68–72), and a continuous decline in political party membership and voter turnout in national and local elections is measured. The growing sentiment that the formal channels of political influence are either ineffective or blocked often leads to attempts to provide public services via non-governmental or semi-private, often illegal or semi-legal channels (Ben-Porat and Mizrahi, 2005; Lehman-Wilzig, 1991). Political consumerism has the potential to be one alternative channel of influence. In this study, we examine patterns of political consumerism among Jewish Israelis, and we assume that those patterns are different among non-Jewish citizens.

Among the first Israeli groups to wage a successful boycott was the ultra-Orthodox community. The religious–secular divide in Israel is a deep schism that pertains to fundamental questions of authority and legitimacy. Arrangements were established in early statehood, based on pragmatic resolutions and compromises between secular and religious. The power of religious groups that provided for both privileges and control of public domains was the result of political bargaining and ability of the representative parties to secure and increase their gains in government coalition partnerships. Political, economic, and demographic changes in the 1990s undermined the arrangements and eroded the power of religious parties (Ben-Porat, 2013). While the ultra-Orthodox community involvement in the labor market and army service was minimal, it was highly involved in politics. Growing awareness that political gains did not translate into effective policies protecting religious values led to the emergence of new entrepreneurs advocating political consumerism (Ben-Porat and Shamir, 2012). The relatively successful campaigns are attributable not only to its leadership's ability to command obedience and a strong commitment to religious values, but also the social capital that fosters the required cooperation. Boycotts were waged against companies that violated religious rules such as Sabbath observance or to demand products and services congruent with the religious way of life such as mobile phones without Internet services (Shamir and Ben-Porat, 2011). These examples demonstrate that religion is effective in boycotts related to religious issues, but does it extend beyond religious issues to environmental and social-economic concerns? In other words, the

question is whether the social capital in ultra-Orthodox society is “bonding,” exclusive to members of the group, or “bridging,” extending to society at large (Putnam, 2000). Specifically, it is questionable whether ultra-orthodox Jews have an interest in other, social and environmental, issues addressed by political consumerism. The growing involvement of ultra-Orthodox Jews in social life (Stadler et al., 2008) begs the question whether political consumerism that crosses the divide is possible. Another important question is whether Israelis who are not part of the ultra-Orthodox community have the will and the capacity to wage similar campaigns over social and environmental concerns.

Social and environmental struggles in general and the use of political consumerism in particular are less salient, but several attempts were made. In recent years, campaigns demanding a living wage and fair employment have been waged. For example, a “social label” has been given to restaurants and coffee shops committed to fair employment, and various labels such as “green” and “eco-friendly” inform consumers concerned with ecological issues (Shamir, 2011). In addition, there has been a campaign waged outside and inside Israel to boycott products made in the settlements in the occupied territories. The level of participation in and impact of these campaigns were not measured, but public attention seemed rather minimal. In the summer of 2011, thousands of people took to the streets, actions that echoed developments elsewhere, in Europe and the United States, protesting the high cost of living and demanding “social justice.” Shortly before, successful campaigns against large food producers also demonstrated that the Israeli public was not necessarily apathetic. The protest was short lived and largely absorbed by the political system, but the potential for political consumerism that ignited it may still exist, and its actual size and categorization require an empirical study.

## Research questions, measurements, and methodology

Based on the discussion above and using Israel as our case study, we (1) examine the general potential for political consumerism, (2) determine which factors are likely to influence political consumerism, and (3) investigate whether political consumerism is a general trend or expresses itself in different ways. Specifically, we will address the following questions:

- a. How do Jewish Israeli citizens regard political consumerism, and to what degree are consumers willing to pay more in order to avoid a product that offends their beliefs?
- b. Can specific patterns of political consumerism – environmental, social, and religious be identified?
- c. What is the impact of the different factors identified in previous studies – social and economic status, post-material values, religiosity, political participation, and social capital – on political consumption patterns?
- d. What is the relationship between different patterns of political consumption?

Based on the questions above, we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Political consumerism in Israel is expected to be popular, with three distinct patterns of political consumers: religious, social, and environmental.

The growing feeling of alienation from and frustration with formal politics, on the one hand, and the commitments that Jewish Israeli citizens have, on the other, are likely to contribute to moral awareness. Therefore, citizens will show interest in purchasing products that are compatible with their belief systems as long as the price difference is not high.

Consumer choices involve different factors of tastes and values and are likely to be influenced by specific political backgrounds and preferences. Therefore, religious consumers concerned with religious values are likely to be more concerned with products that violate religious norms. Similarly, consumers concerned with social values will attribute greater importance to products that violate labor rights. The different concerns will translate into consumption preferences that attach importance to specific types of products:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The different patterns of political consumerism will be affected differently by the influencing factors identified in the literature. Religious consumerism will be strongly affected by religiosity and high level of social capital. Environmental consumerism will be positively and strongly affected by conventional political participation and socio-economic status. And social political consumerism will be positively related to social capital, conventional political participation, and socio-economic status.

This hypothesis derives from the previous studies surveyed above that established the relationship between political consumption, commitments, and social ties. While some studies found post-material values to be relevant, in Israel, they were insignificant. Therefore, we do not expect them to influence Israeli political consumers. However, we examine whether political consumerism can take place in the absence of post-material values. The effect of religiosity, political activism, and social capital on political consumption will increase with the willingness to pay more for an ethical product. We expect religiosity and social capital to influence religious consumerism. Stronger religiosity is correlated with a stronger commitment, and social capital implies the trust that other members of the community will behave in a similar manner. Studies have found a relationship between environmental political consumerism and post-material values. We also expect that traditional political participation will be related to environmental concerns. Finally, we predict that social capital will affect social political consumerism because it reflects social concerns and networks:

Hypothesis (H3): We expected to identify three distinct patterns of political consumerism. While social and environmental consumption will be related, religious consumers will be distinct from social and environmental consumers.

Religious consumers who share religious values and communal attachments will be concerned with religious issues that pertain to the community, but relatively indifferent to environmental and general social issues. Religious issues stretch beyond the avoidance of non-kosher foods into more ambiguous questions of purchasing from businesses that violate Sabbath observance. Some citizens will share environmental and social concerns, but others will prioritize one set of issues over another.

## Data and method

To study the different aspects of political consumerism as they unfold among the Jewish population in Israel, a university research institute conducted a survey in August 2010. The survey included a random sample of 603 adult Israelis, 53% women and 47% men with an average age of 47.9 years ( $SD = 16.2$ ). With regard to demographics, 72.3% of participants were married, 52.8% had no children under the age of 18, and 36% had one to three children under the age of 18. With regard to education, 32.8% possessed high school education, 18.6% had post-high school education (degree studies), 46.5% had a university or college degree, and the rest were uneducated. The vast majority of respondents (94.5%) identified as Jewish, 22.1% of them defining themselves as secular, and 21.2% as ultra-Orthodox. Those who did not identify as Jews are likely to be non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

The questionnaire included 71 questions scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 in which 1 indicated a low level of agreement with a given statement and 5 indicated a high level of agreement. Of these questions, 51 assessed four measures that were constructed based on the theoretical foundations outlined above and were verified as reliable measures using reliability tests (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ). The four measures included *political consumerism*, *political participation*, *post-materialist attitudes*, and *social capital*.

*Political consumerism* was measured by 13 items and was broken down into three sub-indexes representing four different aspects of the complicated main phenomenon. The first aspect was *attitudes toward issues that can stimulate political consumerism*. We measured this factor using a 7-item scale indicating general attitudes toward environmental questions, recycling, and fair trade. The second aspect was *attitudes toward policymaking*. We measured this factor using six items indicating the desired level of state intervention via policymaking in these areas. Third, we used a 7-item scale to assess reported *actual behavior*. In this scale, we asked whether respondents spend time examining the social, religious, or environmental attributes of the products they buy. Then, we asked whether they actually buy products that are environmentally friendly, produced under terms of fair trade, or are in line with religious restrictions. Finally, using a 5-item scale, we assessed the willingness of subjects to pay more for a product that was friendly to the environment or was produced under methods of fair trade, respectively. The third scale is also used to identify three distinct areas of political consumerism: environmental, social, and

religious. In order to identify each type, we presented a series of individual items and asked respondents to indicate their willingness to check and buy products that are environmentally friendly, produced under terms of fair trade or in line with religious rules. In these yes/no questions, we asked respondents whether or not they would look for an alternative product in case the one on the shelf was harmful to the environment, unethically produced, or did not meet religious restrictions.

*Political participation* included five items that referred to different types of political activity. Responses to these questions ranged from 0 to 5 (0 = not at all and 5 = very often).

*Post-materialist values* were measured by the 4-item scale developed by Inglehart (19 + + +), asking respondents to rate the importance of four items: avoidance of criminality, taking into account public opinion, inflation reduction, and protecting freedom of speech.

*Social capital* was measured by three separate indicators of social networks – social involvement, volunteering, and levels of social trust. We measured social involvement and meetings with friends using five separate items asking participants to report on the number of social meetings with friends, relatives, and colleagues during the past year, the number of social activities such as sports and card games with friends they had engaged in over the past year, how frequently they had entertained guests at home, and how often they had sent greeting cards in the past year. Responses were scored on a scale of 1 to 5. We assessed levels of social trust using two items scored from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much), in which respondents indicated their trust in the social environment and confidence in their close social circles.

## Findings

We begin with the general trends inferred from the survey regarding the interest and concerns of Jewish Israelis with environmental, social, and religious questions. These concerns indicate the knowledge people have about these issues, the political significance they attribute to them, and, consequently, the likelihood that they will embed these concerns in their consumer choices.

As Table 1 demonstrates, Jewish Israelis attribute different levels of importance to the issues presented. Fair employment scored the highest level of concern, while commerce on the Sabbath was lowest. Indeed, the majority support commerce on the Sabbath (Ben-Porat and Feniger, 2009), and this concern is one generally confined to the religious community.

In Table 2, we expanded the analysis to examine whether specific potential patterns of political consumerism exist, based upon the type of concerns people have. The different environmental concerns examined show a strong correlation between concern over air pollution and the damage to open areas ( $r = .506$ ) and recycling ( $r = .502$ ). However, people concerned with these issues are less concerned with social issues like child labor ( $r = .268$ ) and even less with fair trade ( $r = .182$ ). An interesting finding is that people concerned with observance of the Sabbath

**Table 1.** General attitudes toward environmental, social, and religious issues. Percentage, mean (standard deviation (SD)).

To what extent is each one of the following issues of concern to you?	1 (strongly disagree)	2	3	4	5 (strongly agree)	Mean (SD)
Air pollution	9.6	7.3	22.3	26.2	34.6	3.7 (1.2)
Open spaces	12.6	11.4	22.0	24.0	29.9	3.5 (1.4)
Recycling	6.3	5.5	20.2	23.7	44.2	3.9 (1.2)
Child labor	10.6	7.9	12.6	15.0	53.8	3.9 (1.4)
Fair employment	5.4	4.3	13.9	15.9	60.5	4.2 (1.2)
Commerce on the Sabbath	38.9	8.6	11.6	8.7	32.2	2.9 (1.7)

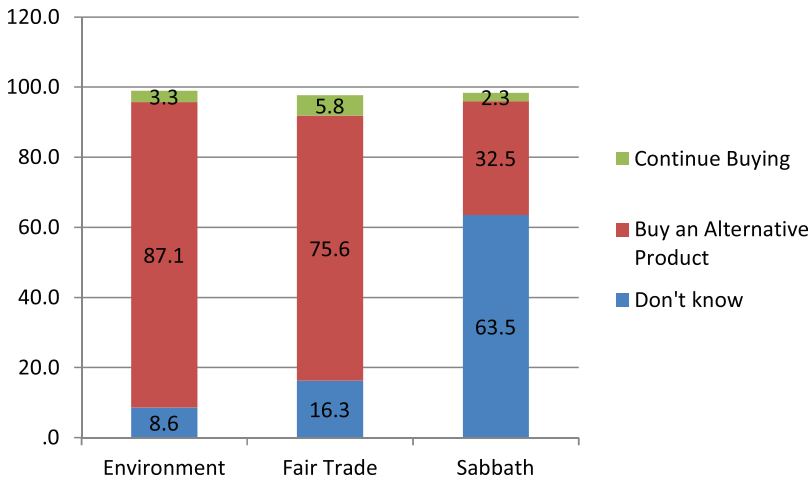
**Table 2.** Pearson's correlations between questions.

	Air pollution	Open spaces	Recycling	Child labor	Fair employment	Commerce on Sabbath
Air pollution	1	.506**	.502**	.268**	.182**	-.013
Open spaces		1	.401**	.204**	.151**	-.036
Recycling			1	.266**	.217**	.038
Child labor				1	.578**	-.044
Fair employment					1	.001
Commerce on Sabbath						1

\*\* $p < .01$ .

(or the growing commercial activity on Sabbath) are not concerned at all with environmental or social issues. The two tables indicate the typology we will expand upon later to argue that the three different motives for or dimensions of political consumerism – religious, environmental, and social – are largely independent from one another.

In order to understand how concerns over certain issues translate into political consumerism, respondents were asked whether they would continue to purchase a product once they learned it was environmentally unfriendly, unethically produced, or produced or marketed in violation of the Sabbath. Asked whether they would search for an alternative product, 91% of the respondents would search for an environmentally friendly product, 82% for an ethically produced product, and only 34% for a product that did not violate the Sabbath rules (see Figure 1). When we asked the respondents how much more they would be willing to pay for such a product, the differentiation between respondents was even larger. Thus, 60% declare they would pay 10% more for an environmentally friendly product, but very few would pay more than that. We found a similar distribution for fair



**Figure 1.** Buying the same product or look for alternative.

trade products. However, there was a stronger commitment for Sabbath-respecting products. The religious respondents were willing to pay the highest price for their moral values. Despite the fact that the number of people involved in religious consumption is smaller than that of people involved in other types of political consumerism, its commitment is stronger, as measured in the willingness to pay more for the “right” product. This commitment explains the relative success of religious groups in waging boycotts.

Environmental consumerism is relatively popular as 37.3% of respondents state that they are willing to pay 10% more for an environmentally friendly product. However, the numbers dramatically diminish as the difference in price between the environmental and the “regular” product rises to 50%. A smaller number of 19.4% are willing to pay 10% more for a fair trade product, but almost the same number (18.4%) are willing to pay 20% more, and 15.3% among them are willing to pay 50% more. Finally, the number of people who declare they will pay more for products that do not violate the Sabbath is relatively small and proportional to the number of religious people in Israeli society. However, the percentage of participants willing to pay remains almost the same between 10% and 50%, even rise at 100% more. Thus, more people are concerned with environmental issues (air pollution, open areas, and recycling), but are willing to pay only moderately more (10%–20%) for environmentally friendly products. In contrast, fewer people concerned with social and religious issues are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products, but these people are deeply committed to products that respect fair trade or the Sabbath. At this point, we can identify the typology of political consumerism as being divided into three distinct patterns independent of each other. Thus, political consumerism reflects distinct priorities of individuals that translate into specific consumer preferences and choices.

**Table 3.** Willingness to pay extra for products.

	Environment	Sabbath	Fair trade
Willingness to pay 10% more	37.3	6.8	19.4
Willingness to pay 15% more	10.3	1.8	6.8
Willingness to pay 20% more	19.1	4.8	18.4
Willingness to pay 50% more	8.8	6.3	15.3
Willingness to pay 100% more	3.3	9.8	8.1

### Factors influencing political consumerism

Based on the above discussion, we hypothesized that political consumerism would be influenced by five factors found in relevant studies: social capital, post-materialism, political participation, SES, and religiosity. To examine these hypotheses, we define political consumerism as the willingness to pay more for an alternative product that is environmentally friendly, produced by fair employment or in line with Sabbath rules (10%, 15%, 20%, 50%, or 100% more) (Table 3). Our findings indicate that post-materialism is practically non-existent in Israel and, consequently, had no significant relationship to political consumerism. Examining the remaining factors in relation to the three types of political consumerism – environmental, social, and religious – further validates the differences between them.

We conducted a regression analysis for each pattern. We added a higher category of religiosity in order to capture the ultra-Orthodox Jews. The analysis demonstrates that religious political consumerism is distinct from the other two and characterized only by the religiosity of participants and their low economic status. As a result of their large families and low rate of participation in the labor force, ultra-Orthodox Jews are one of the poorest sectors in Israel. The other two types – environmental and social – are similarly influenced by age (adults tend to participate more in both types of political consumerism), but are related to different factors. Environmental consumerism is not related to SES, negatively related to religion, and positively related to social networks and political participation. In contrast, social consumerism is not related to SES, political participation, or religion, and is positively related to social networks and volunteering.

### Patterns of political consumerism

In order to examine the relationship between the different patterns of political consumerism, we used a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. The results strongly support our argument that there are three distinct patterns of political consumerism among Jewish Israelis. The first, concern with environmental issues, is strongly related to the respondents' care in recycling paper and plastic ( $b = .75$ ;  $p < .000$ ) and with compatible consumer behavior measured in the willingness to



pay more for environmentally friendly products ( $b = .27$ ;  $p < .000$ ). Environmental concern is positively correlated with political participation, but we found no direct relationship between environmental concerns and the willingness to pay more for alternative, ethically produced, or religious products (Figure 2).

Second, concern with social issues is positively related to the willingness to pay more for ethically produced commodities ( $b = .17$ ;  $p < .000$ ). Concern with social issues is positively related to concern for environmental issues ( $b = .44$ ;  $p < .000$ )

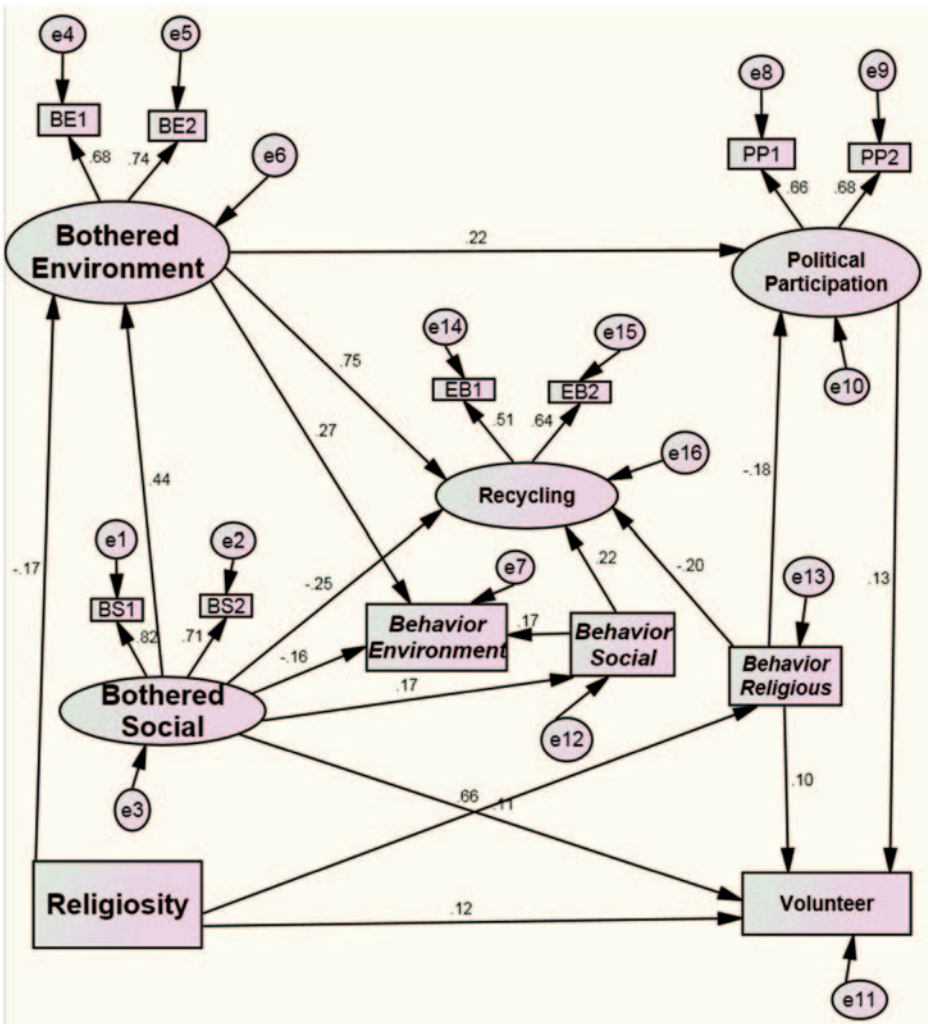


Figure 2. SEM model: paths of political consumerism. SEM: structural equation modeling.

but negatively related to the willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products. Thus, while people may be concerned with both, they prioritize their consumer choices so that one overrides the other. Moreover, the more individuals are concerned with social issues, the less likely they are to recycle ( $b = -.25$ ;  $p < .004$ ). Finally, concern with social issues is positively related to volunteering ( $b = .11$ ;  $p = .029$ ).

Third, religiosity is strongly and positively related to religious consumerism ( $b = .66$ ;  $p < .000$ ), measured in the commitment to search for an alternative product whose production and marketing do not violate the religious restrictions of the Sabbath. Religiosity is positively related to volunteering ( $b = .12$ ;  $p = .015$ ), negatively related to environmental concerns ( $b = -.17$ ;  $p < .000$ ), and has no relationship with social concerns. There is a negative relationship between the willingness to pay more for a product that meets religious requirements and recycling ( $b = -.20$ ;  $p < .000$ ).

According to the model, religious political consumerism exists in a path independent from social and environmental political consumerism. A more complex relationship exists between social and environmental political consumerism. Environmental concerns, somewhat like religious concerns, are distinct and limited to environmental issues. In contrast, social concerns also extend to environmental concerns. A direct path exists in which people who would search for an alternative, fair trade product would also search for an environmentally friendly product ( $b = .17$ ;  $p < .000$ ) and tend to recycle ( $b = .22$ ;  $p < .000$ ). Finally, there is a negative relationship between religious consumerism and political participation ( $b = -.18$ ;  $p = .001$ ).

The model is strongly insignificant ( $p = .518$ ) with  $\chi^2$  of 51.876 and  $DF = 53$ ,  $CMIN/DF = 0.979$ , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.000 (90% confidence limits (CL) 0.000–0.025), comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.000, and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 1.002. These measurements strongly reflect respondents' answers.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify distinct patterns of political consumerism and the relationships between them. Several developments in Israel in the past two decades enable us to study political consumerism there: economic growth and the evolution of a consumer society, growing alienation from formal politics, and different examples of the use of consumer power for political purposes. Our findings indicate that Jewish Israelis are concerned with environmental and social questions (and a smaller number with religious ones) and declare that they would make an effort to buy products compatible with their beliefs and concerns. As expected, the greater the price difference between the regular and ethically preferred product, the fewer people say they would make an effort to purchase it. One major exception in this regard is in the area of religion. While the number of people committed to purchasing religiously friendly products is small, their commitment, measured in

the price they are willing to pay, is stronger. The higher level of commitment, underpinned by social capital and leadership, is especially strong among ultra-Orthodox Jews (Ben-Porat and Shamir, 2012).

We identified three particular patterns of political consumerism in the study: religious, social, and environmental. We attribute all three to ideologies that, at least to some extent, shape behaviors as reported by the participants and their willingness to pay. These patterns are influenced by somewhat different factors and have distinct implications for preferences and behavior. Previous studies have found positive correlations between political consumerism and religiosity, social capital, SES, post-material values, and participation in conventional forms of politics. As in other studies, we found no evidence of post-material values in Israeli society. SES was not related to environmental or social political consumerism, which is shared by people of different backgrounds. Environmental consumers, willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products, were largely non-religious, engaged in social networks and also involved in traditional forms of political participation. Social political consumers, willing to pay more for ethically produced products, were also non-religious, tended to participate less in formal politics and were involved in social networks and volunteering.

The three patterns of political consumerism are built upon different concerns that translate into particular consumer behaviors. For ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel, political consumerism seems to provide an attempted new channel for influence. While in the past political parties were able to protect religious interests through coalition bargaining, the weakening of the political system requires different means (Shamir and Ben-Porat, 2011). Religious political consumerism is an independent path, strongly related to religiosity and largely indifferent to environmental and social concerns. Religious political consumers, therefore, have a strong commitment to purchase products that do not violate religious rules but will not pay more for ethically produced or environmentally friendly products. Religious political consumerism, therefore, is committed almost solely to religious questions and to the religious community.

The concerns of environmental political consumers focus on environmental issues and the products they will pay more for, but they are largely indifferent to social concerns and will tend not to pay more for ethically produced products. The findings that religiosity is associated with religious political consumerism is obvious, but religious values could also potentially influence social and environmental commitments. However, the indifference toward different concerns demonstrates that the boundaries of community bonding social capital. While environmental consumerism is relatively popular, the level of commitment, measured by the price consumers are willing to pay for an environmentally friendly product, is relatively small. Finally, social political consumers demonstrate a level of commitment similar to religious political consumers but driven by different motivations. Social political consumers express concerns over environmental issues but will not pay more for environmentally friendly products or even recycle. The concern for

environmental issues appears to be overshadowed by social commitments that crowd out environmental ones.

Political consumerism, therefore, is neither a general trait nor an arbitrary decision. Rather, more general commitments – religious, environmental, or social – guide individual decisions and create distinct patterns of political consumerism. Moreover, as this research demonstrates, political consumers differ not only in their motivations but also in their level of commitment and willingness to extend their concerns to other issues and beyond their social group.

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