

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series

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November 6, 2025 | 12:00 - 14:00 | AD.0.090 Sitzungssaal 6

Social and Marketplace Implications of Political Polarization

Abstract: Ordinary Americans are more polarized than in the past, both ideologically by supporting opposing viewpoints and affectively by harboring negative attitudes towards those who are on the “other side” of politics. While there are many questions to ask about the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of political polarization, in this talk, I will focus on two specific questions: (1) how does ideological polarization manifest itself in marketplaces, especially with respect to operational decisions firms make on polarized issues (e.g., same sex bathrooms, being closed on Sunday), and (2) does affective polarization bleed into daily social decisions (e.g., dating, friendship, teammates) and in what direction? To the first question, I find that while all consumers, regardless of their ideology, infer a business’s political ideology from a consumer-facing operational feature, consumer inferences diverge along ideology lines when assessing whether it is politically motivated, which affects purchase decisions. To the second question, I find that Democrats (vs. Republicans) consistently shows more outgroup animus, reporting lower likelihood to fraternize and socialize with Republicans, which is at least in part driven by Democrats finding political ideology to be more diagnostic.