

Review of: "Ethical and political consumption: an integrated typology of practices"

Daniel Balinhas¹

¹ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article clearly makes a substantial contribution to the field of political consumerism and alternative consumption. I think that Margarita has really done a thorough process of critically reviewing previous literature, engage with it, (re)conceptualizing the main constructs and elaborating a very useful and dynamic typology. Furthermore, this typology is, in my view, successfully illustrated with an example and it provides a good tool for the enrichment of future empirical attempts that try to test any aspects related to political consumption. Congratulations for this splendid article!

As all the fundamental ingredients of a very good paper are already there –Margarita convincingly argues the need for a new, broader typology, does a good work in reviewing the literature, explaining the typology and how it would work in a real-life example- I can just point to some minor aspects that might help to polish some parts of the paper:

- On page 8, when the iceberg analogy is developed at this point of the text, it remains unclear what the “base” and hidden parts of what we usually call “the economy” are. Thus, a graphical representation of this might help the readers to better visualize the message that the economy is something broader than usually envisaged. Besides, it would be useful to better follow the subsequent parts of the text.
- It would be fantastic to find a reflection, at some point of the text, about how activities located in some quadrants, such as quadrant 2, though potentially beneficial in terms of promoting social change in many settings and situations might be reinforcing mainstream consumerism characteristic of other quadrants, such as quadrant 1, in other situations. This would add another layer of complexity to the typology. For instance, going to a friend or relative’s house at a different place/country could have implied some conventional, often not very “ethical” purchases (plane tickets, Uber...), though the practice itself of sharing temporarily a house without a monetary transaction might be framed as an example of a gift or sharing economy. Besides, depending on the purposes and frequency of these trips, they might be contributing to the broader practices of “doing tourism” and consequently, constitute a very conventional –and oftentimes detrimental- pattern of consumption, far from “ethical” or “political”. This relational component between some of the “choices” and/or consumer practices might be relevant to add another nuance for an already very thorough and dynamic typology.
- In the limitations section I miss a reflection on what would be the basic limitations of a focus on agency. Very briefly, “agency” appears to me as an individual-level concept that might lead us to reproduce the dominant methodological individualism, and then, to locating individual-level agency as key factor behind social change. These aspects are somewhat vaguely commented at some points in the text, but I think that it would be productive to add an explicit and

clear reflection on this. Though the “systemic” is part of the model, I think that the article could benefit from this final reflection. A clear focus on agency without a complementary approach highlighting the systemic constraints on individuals’ agency and how citizens’ “political consumerism” is constrained by systemic aspects beyond legislation might imply different analytical limitations. I think that briefly but explicitly discussing these issues might enrich the final limitations section.

Apart from these minor aspects, I think that overall, the paper offers a very insightful re-especification of key terms in the literature, a nuanced and mature discussion about political consumerism and its potential effects on fostering or changing the status quo, and a very useful typology that addresses some of the shortcomings of previous approaches. In this sense, this article offers many insights for future literature on the topic.