

# Thinking globally linked to optimism

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As the world becomes increasingly global, people often respond one of two ways: They start to consider themselves part of the larger global community, or they strengthen their association with their smaller national or local community.

These differences can lead to heated debates, such as the Brexit situation which pitted English citizens against one another as the country decided whether or not to leave the E.U. What if our global or local mindsets influenced the types of goals we set and the way we think about our own lives?

This was the question that researchers set out to answer, and their findings are available online in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. The investigators suspected that people with a global [mindset](#) would adopt goals that encourage growth and advancement (promotion goals).

"Previous research has shown that people with a promotion mindset think more broadly and about the future," says researcher Rajeev Batra, a professor in the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. "They are more optimistic and want to maximize the positive things in their lives."

People with a local mindset, however, would most likely focus on goals that center around roles and responsibilities (prevention goals). "These people think about the here and now and want to minimize the negative, prevent losses and think about reasons not to do things," Batra says.

In an experiment, researcher Sharon Ng of Nanyang Business School in Singapore divided participants into two groups. One group read a paragraph discussing globalization and wrote a few sentences about what being a global citizen meant to them. The other group read a paragraph about Singapore citizenship and wrote about what being a Singapore citizen meant to them.

Then the participants in each group were asked to complete a signal detection task. First, they were given 20 seconds to remember a list of 20 unrelated words. Next, they were asked to indicate how many of these words were on a new list of words. The participants who had written about being a global citizen selected more words on the new list than those who had read about being a Singapore citizen. This suggested that they were focused on getting as many positive identifications as possible—which has been correlated in previous research to the optimistic, growth mindset.

The two groups also viewed different fruit juice advertisements. One ad focused on how the juice could increase energy and improve well-being, while the other stated that the juice could protect against harmful daily elements. People who had written about their global identity preferred the positive version of the advertisement, while the local identity group preferred the juice ad that focused on preventing harm.

The researchers also conducted two other experiments that showed similar variations between people who associated with global versus local identities.

"These mindset differences might help us understand why we see some of the population adopting a more broad, optimistic view while others are more protective of the status quo," Ng says. "Policy makers who want to influence people to think more globally may want to design campaigns about global issues, such as climate change, that help people

connect with the worldwide community."

This study will appear in the April issue of the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

Provided by Society for Consumer Psychology

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