

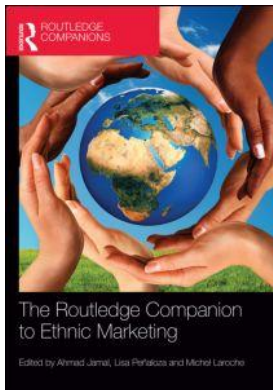
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Ethnicity marketed to and consumed by the transcultural consumer

*Esi Abbam Elliot, Joseph Cherian
and Hernan Casakin*

Introduction

... As we begin to love people in another culture, we can begin to identify with them and see the truth they understand. As we make their truth our own, we become new people, formed by the synthesis of two cultures.

Adeney 1995: 165

Rampant globalization and immigration has created transcultural consumers who seek to consume ethnicity; the cosmopolitan consumers move beyond the confines of their cultures, embracing the global, the local, and their intersections (Epstein 2009). Such situations allow transcultural consumers to expand their repertoires by perceiving differences not as disconcerting, but as opportunities to adapt their old selves. The consumers, who participate in an ethnic festival that celebrates an important occasion with spicy food and after the experience look at spicy food differently, have become transformed in a small cultural way. This transcultural thinking embraces diversity and brings the possibility of transformation from the affordances of diverse ethnic attitudes and behaviours (Ghisi 2010).

Transcultural consumers wander through an ethnicity cafeteria with an eagerness to sample and partake at will. They cobble together an identity by taking the best selves offered across the transcultural spectrum they encounter; their exposure to multiple cultures enables them to (re)work their multiple, nested or elective identities. For example, a traveller from a 'masculine' culture (in the Hofstede sense) who visits a 'feminine' culture and therefore modifies their mental model of work relationships has essentially transformed their work-related elective identity. Generally speaking, ethnicity is how 'we' think the world does work and should work and our related behaviours; identity is how 'I' think I actually work and should work within this ethnic context; and here the 'we' and 'I' refer to a construal of the group one belongs to and of the self. Despite such observable phenomena, there has been limited research on consumption of ethnicity in and through the transcultural arena. Therefore, this chapter investigates the marketing and consumption of ethnicity in the context of transcultural consumption.

We propose an approach to marketing ethnicity that considers its consumption as integral to the construction of a transcultural identity. Our work differs from previous research on ethnic consumption in at least two ways. First, where existing studies on ethnic marketing focus mostly

on marketing to marginalized or niche groups (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006), we suggest a transcultural perspective that is inclusive of all cultures. Second, where prior studies have been inspired by observation of ethnic practices (e.g. Askegaard *et al.* 2005), our ideas are grounded in two streams of research: the theories of transculture and consumption of ethnicity. Given the limited attempts by existing research in addressing transcultural aspects of ethnic consumption, it seems useful to evaluate ethnic consumption through the eyes of consumers as they absorb elements of ethnicity provided by artists who are considered in this study as producers and marketers of ethnicity.

Our investigation was carried out in the Pilsen community in Chicago, a Mexican enclave with a rich cultural heritage. The sample included a group of American tourists (i.e. transcultural consumers) and a group of Mexican cultural workers – artisans who produce artistic cultural products for sale and also offer cultural services (i.e. culture producers and marketers). To investigate such phenomenon a qualitative approach is most suitable, and therefore our methods included phenomenological interviews, field observations and photography.

Theoretical foundations

In this section we present key studies on transcultural perspectives, consumer mental models, visual cultural metaphors and destination image. The relation between transcultural perspectives and ethnic consumption is discussed, and current theoretical gaps in literature are further delineated.

Ethnic consumption and transcultural perspectives

Consumer ethnicity is made manifest through customary behaviours, values, patterns of thinking and communication (Levy 1981). Marketers socially validate ethnic groups by targeting them as market niches or segments and by exchanging relevant artifacts and sentiments (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Peñaloza 1994). Naturally, marketers tend to focus on those artifacts and behaviours that are more marketable. This predilection towards marketability can create distortions when people consuming a certain culture are not a member of the ethnic group (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006).

The production and consumption of ethnicity by individuals from different cultures creates ‘agency’ and ‘subjectivity’ as a prelude to transcultural experiences. Agency refers to the way individuals in one ethnic group act with those of another group, and how they shape their actions to sustain their culture and develop their communities (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006); in essence, they are the ‘selling’ agents of their culture. Subjectivity, on the other hand, refers to the individual’s position with respect to the larger group, the way the individual feels about the ethnic group and the position of the ethnic group in relation to other groups (Venkatesh 1995); in essence, it is the sense of how it feels to an individual to belong to an ethnicity. Because cultures are not mutually exclusive (Yeo 1996), consumers belong simultaneously to multiple cultures influencing their preferences and behaviour. The interaction between consumers from different cultures can lead to the emergence of transcultural perspectives, which may have an effect in the materialization of new concepts and visions. According to Voss (2003), transcultural perspectives are ideal for the creation of a space where the interrelation between consumers is enhanced and a transcultural identity can emerge.

Such transcultural experiences can lead to the formation of an identity where one is no longer bounded by a single relatively closed culture but can be part of other cultures as well (Appadurai 1996). An example is the common saying that ‘everyone is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day’. Bianchini (2004) also argues that transcultural perspectives endow consumers with a

capacity for self-transcendence, i.e. to be open to the world, to transcend cultural differences, to fit themselves in another's position and to embrace new meanings. Such transcendence is reflected in 'the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective' (Piedmont 1999, p. 988).

Epstein (2009) notes that being transcultural enables consumers to share common elements that make it possible to establish cosmopolitan relationships. In this regard, the chapter presents and discusses transcultural perspectives identified by studying consumers in the process of consuming ethnicity. The study provides insights to the understanding of ethnic consumption in a transcultural context and to the development of relevant marketing strategies.

(Visual) cultural metaphors in ethnic markets

Metaphors are essential building blocks of cognition that enable individuals to creatively comprehend an ever-changing world (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Metaphorical reasoning embraces tacit knowledge (Zaltman and Coulter 1995), which has deep implications for unconscious thinking and emotions (Zaltman 1997). Metaphor fleshes out our understanding (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) and has the power to assist in reflection by providing representative insights (Lakoff 1987). This mechanism assists in analyzing information (Zaltman 1997) and in the depiction of emotions and thoughts (Elliot, Elaydi and Cherian 2014).

Metaphors have their roots in culture (Morris and Waldman 2011). Gannon *et al.* (2005) define cultural metaphors as 'an institution, phenomenon, or activity with which most citizens in each national culture identify cognitively or emotionally, and through which it is possible to describe the culture and its frame of reference in depth'. Cultural metaphors entail words, visual patterns, shapes and colours. Denny and Sunderland (2005) suggest that cultural metaphors have the potential to unveil relevant categories of meaning among consumers.

Studies on metaphors that derive from symbolic anthropology focus on cultural images and visual metaphors (e.g. Hirschman 2007). Visual metaphors are often seen in visual media; for example, flags metaphorically evoke the ideals of a nation through symbolic colours and/or elements (Elliot, Cherian and Casakin 2013). The prevalence of national flags at cultural destinations is a strong visual reminder of national ideals. Hirschman (2007) indicates that metaphors are cultural and symbolic ways of structuring reality in the marketplace. These devices enable one to gain new and deeper insights into cultural aspects of another nation or ethnic group (Gannon 2002). An advantage of cultural metaphors is that they allow transcultural consumers become familiar with a foreign culture in a quick and friendly way.

At many neighbourhood ethnic festivals it is possible to see a cornucopia of nostalgic items and themes visually presented. Flags and foods, signs and symbols – all cultural metaphors – cram into the space of a few days the transcultural experience of visiting a country. For the span of these days, a hard-core native coming home for a visit would revel in the all-consuming experience. An expatriate coming home for a visit could become more fervently ethnic, at least during the visit. The transcultural tourists encounter a wide-spectrum of ethnic behaviours all available for consumption – looking at how 'they' greet each other, how 'they' relate to food, how 'they' express ethnic pride, etc. and they might wonder how those behaviours could be adapted to their home contexts. Each of these (can) have a metaphoric content: greeting each other with a kiss and a hug signifies the closeness of members, a metaphor for solidarity; the predominance of a food-type, say meat, a metaphoric stand-in for strength and valor in some ethnicities; the overt expression of ethnic pride through tattoos visually expresses an allegiance to ideals or group identity and endorses the idea that the visual representation of solidarity is desirable, perhaps even expected.

Visual cultural metaphors thus affect the quality of a transcultural experience. According to Zaltman and Coulter (1995), specific metaphors are filled with symbols and imagery that bring relevant reasoning processes and mental models to life. Through imagery, metaphors provide a vivid and, therefore, memorable emotion-arousing representations of the ethnic experience. Despite its prevalence, the influence of visual cultural metaphors on ethnic markets has not yet been fully investigated. This study investigates the effect of these cultural metaphors on ethnic production and consumption.

Metaphors and mental models

While a metaphor is, in essence, seeing one thing as another (Lakoff and Turner 1989), a mental model can be thought of as a coherent linkage of many metaphors (Hill and Levenhagen 1995). For example, seeing one country's citizenry as being consumers and another's as being producers is a simple metaphor that equates a citizenry to one or the other function; seeing a nation as being a 'kingdom of consumers' combines, coherently, two metaphors: citizen is consumer and consumer is king.

Teichert *et al.* (2006) propose three roles of metaphors in affecting mental models: (1) mental model communication, which occurs by enabling a metaphoric transfer from previously unassociated knowledge domains to create new meanings; (2) mental model matching, which takes place when metaphors are used as a shaping device to overcome deeply ingrained viewpoints that seek to influence mental models of consumers; and (3) mental model creation, that occurs when metaphors are used as cognitive frameworks to imbue meaning. Accordingly, visual cultural metaphors have the potential to influence consumer mental models and, in consequence, to affect the destination image. The role of mental models, closely informed by how visual cultural metaphors impact destination image and transcultural consumers, has yet to be deeply investigated.

Destination image

The destination image is a consumer's mental representation of knowledge and beliefs, of feelings and of the overall perception of a particular destination (Fakeye and Crompton 1991). A destination, which can vary in scale, can be a building, a city, a region, etc. Image formation is based on the information, images and experience that a consumer has about the destination (Gartner 1993; 1989). Indeed, the image can even be formed more by imagination than by information from the real world. The destination image formed by a transcultural consumer will then affect the subjective perception, behaviour and destination choice of the consumer (Han 2005).

A number of studies have examined how cultural tourism impacts the destination image for the consumer. This included investigations of iconic structures and mega-events (e.g. Richards and Wilson, 2004), thematization (e.g., Arnould and Price 1993; Joy and Sherry 2003) and heritage mining (e.g. Russo 2002). Destination images in consumer minds can develop to the extent that little of the local or original culture remains (Richards and Wilson, 2004). Such a loss of authenticity leads the purist cultural consumer to seek out archaic communities that are imagined to be culturally unadulterated (Berger 1996). Other studies showed that consumers are weary of finding the serial reproduction of their home cultures in different destinations all over the world and as a consequence they direct their efforts to find destinations alternative to their native and conventional ones (Richards and Wilson 2004); in other words, a destination may be valued to the extent that it does not have familiar fast food outlets. Seeing familiar signage from domestic

fast food chains at a destination could entangle the destination image with the origination image. This entanglement is not necessarily bad as it could have the dual effect of helping create a sense of familiarity ('they like fries too') and a sense of difference ('they like their fries spicier'). To what extent then do universal symbols and metaphors, like global brands, institutions, personalities and such render the unfamiliar familiar?

Despite the relevance of this topic, few investigations have looked at transcultural consumption as a mechanism for enhancing destination image. If there are consistent mechanisms of improving destination images via reproducible aspects of transcultural consumption, then it is likely that global consumers and marketers can benefit from this; for example, can destination images of a popular movie star from home assuage natural tensions transcultural consumers no longer feel at home. In order to deal with the above issue, the present study explores transcultural consumption as a non-conventional way of leveraging culture to enhance the destination image.

Methodology

Research context

The setting of the Pilsen Mexican community was selected for our exploration due to its past role as a port of entry for many immigrant ethnic groups. The Pilsen community, previously inhabited by Jewish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Czechs and Poles, has now become a major centre of the Latino population, primarily Mexican Americans. In this community, cultural workers play an inspiring role of using murals, museums, galleries and other forms of material culture to communicate transcultural values and to enhance destination images. Hence, many members of this ethnic community have taken on the profession of cultural workers to portray the rich culture, history and values of their ethnic community *to visitors*.

Research method

The main goal of this study was to investigate the production and consumption of ethnicity through transcultural consumption and to look at the specific mechanisms of destination image enhancement, visual cultural metaphors and consumer mental models. A phenomenological qualitative methodology and interpretive approach were considered suitable to deal with the research questions. These approaches combine aesthetics, ethics and epistemologies, and at the same time exhibit representational adequacy that is free from race, class or gender, and represent many voices (Christians 2000).

A qualitative approach based on phenomenological interviews, observations and photographs was used to collect the research data. Insights gleaned from the phenomenological interviews allowed the identification of not only cognitive themes, but also of emotions, attitudes, goals, values and sensory aspects of the assessed phenomenon (Christensen and Olson 2002). Given that cultural metaphors are characterized by numerous visual elements, photography was a particularly important complementary research technique.

Interviews carried out with twelve participants lasted from forty-five minutes to one hour. Due to the qualitative nature of the interviews, there was no canonical sample size required. Therefore, the interviews were considered complete when no novel information could be obtained and a saturation point was reached. [Table 15.1](#) provides personal information for the participants. Five of the participants were Latino cultural workers and seven others were American tourists.

Table 15.1 Personal information for the participants

Name	Age	Gender	Education	Status
Gabriel Villa	53	Male	High School	Muralist/teacher
Hector Duarte	62	Male	Undergraduate	Artist
Jose Guerrero	65	Male	High School	Muralist/tour guide
Rolando	47	Male	High School	Artist/performer
Alejandro	36	Male	Ninth grade	Artist/photographer
Alison	30	Female	Graduate	American tourist
Monique	25	Female	Undergraduate	American tourist
Freddie	32	Male	Undergraduate	American tourist
Sarah	33	Female	Graduate	American tourist
John	37	Male	Graduate	American tourist
Tom	32	Male	Undergraduate	American tourist
Linda	41	Female	Undergraduate	American tourist

Note

Original names used in the table of participant information are those of Gabriel Villa, Hector Duarte and Jose Guerrero. All other names are pseudonyms.

Three different strategies were used for conducting the interviews. First, we interviewed three artists exhibiting their work at the National Museum of Mexican Art. Second, we approached two artists in their art galleries and interviewed them about their artwork. Third, we joined a guided tour looking at the murals of Pilsen streets, where we interviewed seven American tourists about their experiences. The tourists were recruited through snowball sampling from introductions made by one of the participating cultural workers, who was a tour guide. Based on research directions by Thompson *et al.* (1989), each interview was recorded, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted to identify emergent themes. A list of the sample questions asked during the interviews are attached in [Appendix 15.1](#).

Findings and analysis

Our approach to the data is grounded in procedures for rigorous interpretive analysis, including individual analysis, iterations and part-to-whole comparisons (Thompson *et al.* 1989). We analyzed data, including both text and images, and discussed emerging interpretations. Findings were coded and classified into main themes using an interpretive phenomenological analysis approach. Coding was performed based on meaningful key words, phrases or sentences that generated themes related to the research objectives. The resulting interpretation was evaluated and modified as a function of supportive data, as well as by triangulation between the researchers. Transcripts of in-depth interviews and field notes provide the basis for the iterative analysis. This included tacking between the data and the literature (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to develop further an explanation of ethnic consumption in the transcultural context. Themes relating to production and consumption of ethnicity interplaying with transcultural perspectives emerged from the data. The initial codes concerned with ethnic consumption included worldview, cultural identity and cultural aesthetics, as well as those relating to transculture included humanity, idealism and interrelatedness. These emergent categories are used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters (Patton 2002). Our findings are presented through the themes emerging from the codes.

In our presentation of findings, we build up three thematic dimensions that allow us to explain how transcultural perspectives impact and transform the consumer. These include:

(1) use of cultural metaphors; (2) mental model transcendence and (3) enhancement of the destination image. The identified themes, which are detailed below, showed that artists and workers use cultural metaphors to create a transcultural space that generates an awareness of the consumers' self and leads to a mental model transcendence.

Cultural metaphors and symbolic consumption

The consumption of cultural metaphors is an integral aspect of the consumption of ethnicity. The cultural metaphors are displayed through the Latino artworks. As explained before, cultural metaphors are associations that convey shared beliefs and understandings of a particular group or society. According to Morgan (1987), metaphors can serve to narrate an event, describe a scene, illustrate a concept, effect an emotive persuasion or present a logical argument. In our study, the artworks were used as visual images to convey metaphors. Langer (1980) describes art as the practice of creating observable symbolic forms representing the human feeling in a way that cannot be expressed using verbal language. The use of metaphors in art leads to a view of these tools as containers of cultural ideals.

Cultural metaphors capture essential characteristics of ethnicities (Gannon 2002) and connect consumers with the experiences and feelings of the ethnic communities. Features such as social sustainability, globalized culture, world peace, poverty elimination and environmental sustainability are characteristics of the Latino cultural metaphors. The construction of cultural metaphors is a process where meanings from different cultural domains are connected to each other to create, or recreate transcultural understanding. The consumption of cultural metaphors has the following components: a) *altruistic*: messages are conveyed to help the consumer; b) *agnostic*: cultural workers derive a positive emotional pleasure from sharing messages; c) *instrumental*: cultural workers want the consumers to share their interpretations; d) *obligatory*: cultural workers feel the situation demands it; e) *relationship mending*: messages are used to alleviate hard feelings; and f) *antagonistic*: used to disturb the consumer. In this process the consumer can be transformed by the transcultural perspective. An example of this is illustrated below.

The Latino culture uses the beating heart in many metaphors; for example, the eaten heart is used to signify a faithless wife, a shrinking heart to indicate a feeling of fear or pity. The use of heart of gold or big heart is more universal and may not be particular to any one ethnic group. Hector Duarte (age 62, male artist) expresses his feelings and wishes by means of cultural metaphors of a pumping heart in order to inspire ideals, and create a transcultural way of thinking. He says:

I like to create optical illusions in my artwork. This [work] represents the idea of a closure of spaces between cultures. This mural creates an optical illusion of a pumping heart wrapped in chains. [But there are glimmers] of hope . . . on each side of the heart, where [there can be seen] metal hands holding broken chains . . . I would like tourists to admire the love for nature and life in my culture, and a love for people so they can be treated with respect and dignity.

The connection between the production and consumption of ethnicity and transcultural communications can be perceived by the use of cultural metaphors. Hector Duarte uses optical illusions to communicate his ideals as transcultural, which creates a platform for the production and consumption of ethnicity (see [Figure 15.1](#)). Ethnicity shapes and is shaped by the artworks through which Hector Duarte, like other Latino artisans, expresses his views and ideals, and establishes social interactions with consumers of culture. Hector Duarte uses several



Figure 15.1 Mural of a heart breaking chains

Note

Artwork by Hector Duarte. Image used with permission from Mr. Duarte.

cultural metaphors to communicate universal ideals such as love for life and people, courage, social conscience and liberation. In the Latino culture, a heart represents love and warmth. Metaphorically speaking, the heart signifies connections with people, while the chains depict the opposite. Thus, the breaking of chains can be seen to convey a transcultural message of hope, love, respect and dignity. Such ideals, represented through a set of principles and values, are interpreted as personal goals strongly connected to ethical issues.

American tourists perceive the artwork exhibited by Hector Duarte as a multiplicity of transcultural issues – including cultural, social, psychological, political and ideological ones. For example, Freddie (age 32, male American tourist) refers to how the cultural metaphors inspire universal ideals as he consumes the Latino ethnicity:

I appreciate these older murals for their beauty and detail, and that they show a historic spectrum of mural creation in this neighbourhood. Some of the older, fading murals are more symbolic and depict signs and forms from ancient Aztec culture. When I look at the murals and artwork I distinctly see in them a desire to communicate certain ideals . . . These murals are a big part of what makes Pilsen so special, so unique and so desirable.

Freddie notices the desire to communicate ideals as he consumes artworks from the ‘ancient Aztec culture’. This is transcendental for him as a tourist in the sense that his interpretation is about a (universal) cultural drive to communicate while he imagines the lives of Latino immigrants in between multiple worlds. Freddie also shows an understanding of the evolution of the culture by referring to the ‘historic spectrum’ of the murals in this neighbourhood.

Sarah (age 33, a female American tourist) provides further insights into how cultural metaphors inspire universal ideals. This involves issues relating to humanity, which encourages the compatible co-existence and integration of culturally diverse groups:

. . . the aesthetics are very colourful . . . things they make their art out of is very fascinating. They pay a lot of attention to nature and also to religion, and I find their religious depictions like these paintings and other pieces of art really cool – and it makes me wish America could go back to what it was . . . the colours are fascinating. We can identify with the culture, and I am just blown away with all this faith and culture. I have read about it, but never experienced it, and that is why this is all awesome for me. I really feel emotional when I see this and hearing the descriptions of the artists, you really seem to get an idea of what this is all about – humanity and in a way it is very touching. It means to me that different cultures perceive things differently. I think that it is good to realize that things are different, to be aware of what other cultures are like and to understand them.

Consumers of culture like Sarah are inspired by cultural metaphors representing ideals that celebrate different cultures. Transcultural aspects transport consumers beyond cultural differences, to focus on issues that unify humanity (Epstein 2009). In order to provide further insights into how cultural metaphors serve as symbolic consumption through the inspiration of universal ideals, Morgan's (1987) exposition on the properties of metaphors are considered. According to Morgan, metaphors invite the generation of a 'constructive falsehood' that inspires a conversation outside the constraints of normal discourse. When consumers perceive artworks, their sensory, emotional and cognitive systems are immediately engaged and experiential information is transferred in rich and vivid detail. The richness of ethnic consumption is therefore underlined by the cultural metaphors.

Mental model transcendence

The findings presented in this section indicate how the consumption of ethnic artworks as cultural metaphors creates mental model transcendence for the consumer. The consumption of ethnicity exposes the ways of being and knowing of marginal groups, the relations between social groups, and how members of other groups treat a marginalized group and its members, both informally in personal interactions and in formal settings (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006). The findings depict that the awareness of social issues made possible by the cultural metaphors leads to a mental model transcendence that allow to see such social issues in a new light. Schon (1979), who investigated the 'generative' role of metaphors, promoted the view that by constructing a new way of looking at 'problems' it is possible to reconcile conflicting situations. This process that takes place by finding new metaphorical ways of understanding transcultural situations, which can be characterized as a blending of cultural frames that causes consumers to break free from their previous conceptions.

The existing differences between artworks from the Latino and American cultures create a distance from the so-called 'conventional' understanding. The intentional vagueness of the Latino images offers new and unorthodox points of view to understand reality, and this leads consumers to introspection. That novel way of perceiving the world has the potential to evoke a richer set of associations in the memory and the self of the consumer. Self-awareness is a phenomenon that can cause a revolution in the consumer's thinking. It can open up new horizons when the consumer is able to identify his or her 'self' as the 'other' – a person from a different culture. Consequently, interpretation is an important component of the consumption of ethnicity that is crucial to the consumer's mental model transcendence.

Insights from two informants – Gabriel Villa (age 49, male artist) and Linda (age 41, female tourist) – illustrate how the metaphorical images are used to create a self-awareness that changed their prior mental models. Gabriel Villa's desire to instill a social conscience leads him to use cultural metaphors in his paintings to help encourage a change or an update of mental models, which in turn helps to transcendence:

I am very concerned about disparities in social contemporary life and vices in society that lead to a deterioration in human life. I have learned to play with new concepts relating to my culture and add new dimension to my work that stimulate social conscience. An example is my painting showing the different human heads under the cactus plants . . . If people come to the gallery and they don't know about the issue, then I want them to walk away a little more knowledgeable . . . It's about values . . .

Gabriel Villa uses human heads under a cactus plant to represent a transcultural identity that embraces all humanity (see [Figure 15.2](#)). He suggests that the human heads forming a circle under the cactus show human condition of interaction. The self-confessed intention of the artist is to



Figure 15.2 Cactus and heads

Note

Artwork by Gabriel Villa. Image used with permission from Gabriel Villa.

make the consumer feel a sense of responsibility for the creation of a better world. Through his artwork, Gabriel Villa embodies ethnicity connecting physical, cultural and social spaces. The cultural objectification of the artworks is presented as a form of social confrontation. In this way, this cultural worker opens up a discourse of ethnic domination/subordination/empowerment and creates a framework for the production and consumption of social exchanges (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999).

The process of consuming and producing ethnicity causes the consumer to 'live in the blend' and establishes an interaction with the unpleasant visceral connotations of social injustice. Linda explains her impressions of Gabriel Villa's paintings thus:

I perceive these images as crucial tools for storytelling and for exposing both the struggles and beauty of the Mexican culture. As a non-Mexican, I can appreciate the experience of coming upon these murals, being curious about their meaning, and wanting to learn more . . . So you become more personally engaged, and this provokes me to become more interested in this issue.

Linda's words show that the murals emotionally touch her and that, by being curious about their meanings, her self-awareness is raised. Although the mural is one of a confrontation, in its consumption Linda transcends the ethnic segregation and stereotyping. Despite there being no long-term engagement or shared experience between Linda and the cultural workers, her curiosity is aroused. This creates a platform for changing her mindset about Latino ethnicities.

Creative work by Hector Duarte also provides further support for explaining how transcultural perspectives create self-awareness, leading to mental model transcendence (see Figure 15.3). This is illustrated in the following quote:

Images associated with my concept of transformation are a whirlpool, the breaking of a barbed wire, and butterflies . . . Paintings such as *Awakening of the Americas* have images that represent our roots as well as new horizons. I like to [dismantle] the psychological frontiers of the mind . . . This picture shows a man with a DNA fingerprint where his face is supposed to be. The DNA represents the exterior identity of mankind while on the other hand, the fingerprint represents the interior identity.



Figure 15.3 Barbed wire and butterflies

Note

Artwork by Hector Duarte. Image used with permission from Mr. Duarte.

Butterflies and whirlpools in Mexican culture are associated with a mystical transformation of one form of life into another. In his approach, Hector Duarte represents the DNA as a human identity (Figure 15.4), which triggers an awakening to a new sense of self. With the consumption of ethnicity through these ideologically loaded paintings, cognitive processes and communication structures of the consumer change to embrace a transcultural perspective.

Similarly, Jose Guerrero (age 65, male artist/tour guide) speaks about his mural painting depicting a skeleton tangled in barbed wire. Jose indicates that this painting represents Gulliver who travelled around the world with no borders and as a result he was maltreated. Making reference to a barbed wire that leads to death, a death of conscience, Jose suggests that the human species needs to be liberated from prejudice. This artist adorns the alleyways and garage doors in Pilsen with his painting of Mexican history, which he shares with people from all races in order to provide a transcultural perspective.

Peñaloza (2007) considers the subjectivity and agency of ‘whiteness’ as a mental model that creates discrimination against ethnic minorities and cripples knowledge of ethnicity and consumption. Artwork such as that of Hector Duarte and Jose Guerrero prompts White American consumers to look beyond this subjectivity, question White values of individual autonomy, achievement and meritocracy, and contrast them with transcultural perspectives. In this way, mental model transcendence can be achieved.

Tom (age 32, male tourist) illustrates the transformation that he experienced after being exposed to the barbed wire and butterfly image (see Figure 15.3):

I have been inspired and would like to acquire this ability to take care of one’s community while appreciating and understanding the diversity and differences of others in the world: local action and global consciousness. I realize that one should appreciate all the world has to offer but try not to change others to your ways.



Figure 15.4 DNA fingerprint

Note

Artwork by Hector Duarte. Image used with permission from Mr. Duarte.

Similarly, the immediate effect for Tom after consuming the ethnicity in this artwork was an awareness of the self that led him to a mental model transcendence. The new perception Tom has is different from the nostalgic and romantic characterizations of the ethnic cultures. His inspiration takes him to reflections of issues such as ethnic community welfare.

In order to explain mental model transcendence caused by ethnic consumption, we consider Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) blending theory. This theory is concerned with the concept of stimulated elaboration, which refers to the imaginative processes based on novel conceptualizations for learning, understanding and other creative sense-making activities. We relate the narratives of the cultural workers about the production of ethnicity to three different stages that take place in the process of stimulated elaboration. The first stage deals with the use of metaphorical images to stimulate thinking. Metaphorical images help people look at themselves and those involved (Morgan 1997). Stimulated elaboration evokes a rich set of associations in memory, which leads to a greater persuasion and a higher agreement with the message that metaphors convey.

The second stage is concerned with the creation of distance from conventional understandings of the cultural metaphor by means of an intentional vagueness that raises open issues and unanswered questions. The third stage is the ownership of insights, which in turn lead to a sense of self-awareness. At this stage, an opportunity is offered to attempt to deal with the unknown, and in so doing to internalize unfamiliar knowledge and new meanings. Rather than being distant and abstract, the emergent meaning is considered to be immediate and personal, and thus allows the creation of a sense of self-awareness. Consequently, the sense of self-awareness that involves cognition (revelation, knowledge) and emotions is able to evoke a mental model transcendence. Teichert *et al.*'s (2006) concept of mental model matching helps to understand how mental model transcendence is achieved. In their role in mental model matching, metaphors act as a trigger to break up entrenched mental models that are no longer in line with changing mental representations. The narratives of cultural workers show how cultural metaphors are used to create new collectively shared mental models focusing on universal ideals. Once the connection to an ideal reality is made, mental paradigms are changed in such a way that they lead to mental model transcendence into a transcultural space. In this study, we aimed at extending Teichert *et al.*'s (2006) model to include metaphors as major triggers of consumers' mental model transcendence.

Enhancement of destination image

Interviews with three informants illustrate how the consumption of ethnicity through cultural metaphors creates awareness of transcultural identity. This in turn results in a mental model

transcendence that enhances the destination image. According to the informants, the importance of awareness of transcultural identity is to make consumers transcend the traditional concept of culture, characterized by social homogeneity, and intercultural divisions. The aim of awareness is therefore an attempt to encourage a respect for, and enjoyment of, diversity. This appreciation of, diversity was identified as a major factor enhancing the destination image. Jose Guerrero vividly illustrates how the cultural metaphors represented in the public murals are used to signal a deeper level of thinking that moves beyond cultural and gender boundaries. He notes:

You can see symbols in these murals, which are meant to encourage [the youth] to understand history and utilize it for a better life in harmony with other cultures. *Choc mol* is a metaphor for knowledge and belief. The crack running down from top to bottom has the symbolic importance of separating belief from knowledge.

From Jose Guerrero's words, it can be understood that the use of cultural metaphors depicting belief and wisdom creates an awareness of a transcultural identity for the youth that contributes to enhance the destination image. The opportunity to obtain transformative learning enhances the destination image for consumers. Transformative learning does not simply add to the reservoir of knowledge, but changes the consumer fundamentally. As stated by Clark (1993), 'transformative learning shapes people: they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize. The process can be gradual or sudden' (p. 47).

Rolando (age 47, male artist) describes the way he uses cultural metaphors in his artwork in order to evoke something 'magical' that makes tourists more aware of who they are. He says:

People are absorbed in the textures and sizes of my pieces. A lot of my images go back to the magic of the Mexican theatre and also scenic designs. My work [operates between] figuration and abstraction, leaving more questions unanswered than answered. I leave my audience with direction to think about a specific idea or situation and try to evoke a response that would come from them . . .

Rolando's allusion refers to a magic that is partially staged, but closely based on reality. He shows the way that the Mexican culture considers people to feel affection for nature. This is perceived as a call to awake to a sense of self characterized by elements of love inviting to a transcendence experience.

Alison (age 30, female tourist) who admires Victor's works comments:

The bright, bold colours and the range of faces and stories [are] absolutely beautiful. I value that there is some history here that you normally don't see in other parts of Chicago. You definitely have some homely, warm feelings when you experience the culture . . . there's the murals, gardens, the style of the building, the way people paint their homes, the potted humble plants upfront. Or like the Virgins of Guadalupe . . . What other neighbourhood has that in Chicago?

In her words, both the physical and symbolic features of the paintings provide a transcultural perspective that contributes to enhance the destination image of the neighbourhood far away than its physical borders. Transcultural consumers such as Alison, most of who have achieved the American dream of owning a beautiful house with aesthetic gardens, are fascinated by the effect/impact

of this imagery in their consumption of ethnicity. The aesthetics of ethnic communities often represent 'the better life', one that closely resembles the American dream. Such perceptions grant social legitimacy to ethnic groups in targeting them as market niches (Peñaloza 1994).

John (age 37, male tourist) shares similar sentiments:

I would say that my emotions range with the different murals – some of which are very serious, quite literal . . . I often feel curious as I feel that these images are communicating deeply powerful stories about the Mexican immigrant experience, both in Mexico and here in the U.S. Some of them portray a sense of strength and courage stemming from community and faith . . . These stories touch me deeply, and draws me to this community . . .

John makes an interpretation of the stories reflected in the different murals of the neighbourhood, indicating that his destination image is enhanced. The metaphorical images of the Pilsen community play a major role in evoking feelings and emotions that contribute to his transcultural experience. The richness of the ethnic themes captured in the historical images of the murals shows John that the 'other' also lived the heroic lives they aspired to. As a result John is emotionally moved and his destination image is favourably affected.

Fauconnier's (1997) work concerned with the uncovering of the conceptual blend is fundamental for the interpretation of consumption of ethnicity that leads to transcultural awareness and the enhancement of the destination image. According to this researcher, the basic principles of conceptual blending can be described as operating in two input mental spaces that yield to a third space: the blend. Mental spaces are conceived as being cognitively processed and constructed in the memory of the consumers as they think, talk and act in different settings. Mental spaces draw partly on background knowledge acquired through past events and are stored in the form of image schemas that endow meaning to the consumer experience (Johnson and Lehman 1997). Furthermore, the conceptual blend helps analyze how consumption of ethnicity through cultural metaphors plays a role in shaping the transcultural experience. Most cultures have some dominant metaphors about life and how it is to be lived; some may see life as a game, some as a journey and so on. Seeing how others view life through a metaphorical lens brings one's own guiding metaphors into question.

In the concept of Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) conceptual blending, the metaphorical space is the transcultural exposure and the source domain is the cultural artworks. Then the blend can be understood as the resultant transcultural space, with altered image schemas. The transcultural artist (Rolando) specifically tries to 'evoke a response that would come from them (the transcultural tourist)', which leads to 'homely, warm feelings when you experience this culture' (Alison) and that 'touch me deeply, and draws me to this community' (John). Clearly then, Rolando's attempt to evoke a response created felicitous reactions in terms of destination image in Alison and in John, who are left with altered image schemas with respect to the cultural destination they had visited.

Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, we investigated the production and consumption of ethnicity in a transcultural context from three different angles. First, we explored how cultural metaphors represent the consumption of ethnicity. Second, we found how the consumption of cultural metaphors can be an important medium for enhancing understanding of ethnic cultures, and hence resulted in mental model transcendence. We showed how cultural workers managed to make use of powerful means

to communicate thought-provoking messages dealing with open and unresolved issues. In their attempt to understand the conflicts and contradictions represented in the artworks, consumers were able to gain self-awareness as transcultural beings, and this led to mental model transcendence. Third, the findings depicted how the transcultural perspective from the metaphorical images and the mental model transcendence enhances the destination image. Such enhancement of the destination image is an integral part of the process, by which ethnicity is consumed. Consumers found the messages retrieved from the metaphorical sources as inspirational and stimulating as they evoked novel ideas that were radically different from those of their cultural milieu. The messages transmitted by these works of art embraced the co-existence of the local and the global, the modern and the traditional, as well as the historical and aesthetic at the same time. All these generated positive perceptions and favourable evaluations of the destination image by positively and emotionally moving the consumer.

Implication for theory

The themes that arose in this investigation have important implications for research and practice. In terms of research, the notions of cultural metaphors, mental models and destination image are central to the understanding of the consumption of ethnicity. The first finding of this study – consuming ethnicity – shows how this leads to motivations and ideals that transcend cultures and groups to endow transcultural meaning to consumers, and enriches their lives. Personal meanings and understandings may be essentially metaphorical, cobbled together from a palette of more universal metaphors; the most likely ones used are the ones selected through acculturation. This suggests that one can consume a new ethnicity via the predominant metaphors that these ethnicities use (as suggested by Zaltman [2003] in *How Consumers Think*). Thus, new ethnicities can be better introduced in a wide array of forms and places if the reigning metaphors are explicated.

The mechanism suggested above provides an avenue for the exploration of how cultural metaphors can be used to consume salient issues relating to ethnicity and even to marginalized consumers. For example, does the consumer need to be accosted by an ‘other’, one that uses a starkly different metaphoric view of the world, to realize that everyone is guided by their own metaphors? How different does the ‘other’ need to be to provoke a possibility of rapprochement? How important is the degree of difference in this process? What processes can attune a consumer to an awareness of the other and, therefore, of oneself?

The second finding – transcending culture – suggests the same pattern as the first finding of consuming ethnicity. To an extent, consumption of ethnicity can be considered a larger version of the project of creating the self – that there are guiding metaphors for ethnic cultures like there are for selves; that cultures have cosmologies of metaphors that are sanctioned ways for its members to construe the world. Then, it could be asked what ethnic cultures are more likely to generate cosmopolitan consumers, those more willing to accept a transcendent encounter? What makes some ethnic cultures more likely than others to accept that which is different? Are (some) ethnic and cultural dimensions more related to acceptance of other cultures than others (e.g. are masculine cultures more resistant to the ‘other’ than feminine cultures?) Are some ethnic metaphors more acceptable to others for absorption? And what aspects of metaphors are these based on?

The final finding – transcending the local – was driven by the notion that seeing the ‘other’ as being the same as oneself would lead to favourable evaluations while consuming ethnicity. Whereas this was one of the outcomes of this study, there are several conditions under which

seeing the ‘other’ as same as ‘us’ could lead to a dislike; this is especially true when the ‘other’ is a romanticized ideal – this happens when such transcultural consumers are chasing ‘differentness’, not seeking a ‘sameness’. Transcultural consumers who loathe their own ethnicity and seek escape in some destination perceived as exotic are primed to see differences, and will likely balk at anything that has actual or perceived familiarity with their own culture. This raises questions such as: ‘Are consumers of some ethnicities more likely to appreciate the essential sameness of different cultures while consuming ethnicity?’ and ‘What makes the social reality constructed by cultural metaphors constraining enough to preclude seeing the oneness?’ Within the context of our study, one could ask whether the reactions of Latino tourists visiting an American village would lead to the same kinds of transformations that the American tourists had when visiting a Latino enclave, based on the guiding metaphors within the source and destination cultures.

Implications for practice

Our findings can have important implications for marketers. The first one is the opportunity to leverage the intersections of marketing and ethnicity, such as in the context of tourism. Transcultural consumption, e.g. through tourism, is pervasive and therefore is becoming one of the largest industries. Mainstream and minority ethnic subcultures are likely to benefit from contact and cross-fertilization with each other through such marketing initiatives.

Additionally, the consumption of ethnicity can be modified so that the consumers’ ways of relating to the world are packaged and sold, much in the same way that other products are consumed. Similarly, configuring opportunities for transcendence will make other cultures and ethnicities more likeable, i.e. improvement of destination images; this can also help to properly calibrate, and rehabilitate, the country-of-origin or country-of-destination effects. Images of the ‘other’ are not fixed but (trans)mutable. Thus, rich and complex transcultural resources can be used as transformational tools for influencing the mental models of consumers.

Second, transcultural marketers can profit from applying the findings of this study to create a distinctive destination image and gain a favourable differentiation from competitors. A transcultural perspective with an emphasis on diversity makes possible the recognition of cultural universals, those that link consumers to common values and ideals. This phenomenon is in line with Benjamin *et al.*’s (2006) concept of culturally adaptive communities, in reference to those cultural groups that, after identifying what makes them unique, develop distinctiveness from others. Awareness on this issue can be beneficial for ethnic marketers, who can enhance the destination image influenced by diverse cultures. Transcultural strategies could be encouraged by placing consumption of ethnicity and transcultural perspectives as important priorities of policy-making. Such an approach may have an important impact on marketing, not only in the field of tourism but also in other areas relating to multicultural activities such as consumer entertainment, i.e. development of multicultural theatre, dance, literature and the crafts. Cultural metaphors can also play a key role to create mental model transcendence, enhance destination images and inspire universal ideals that unite ethnic and transcultural markets. These transcultural values could be embodied in other public displays, such as the symbols located in central areas of the city, flagship buildings, public art and information services.

Finally, this study has implications for the segmentation, targeting and positioning of ethnic markets. Marketers must understand what the critical cultural metaphors are and the mental models of their target segments. Different cultures, or ethnic groups, will have different metaphors undergirding the consumer experiences, and this will require the marketer to engage in sense-making any product that goes between cultures in terms of the guiding metaphors of each culture.

In a culture where a breakfast is an occasion for the family to gather (metaphorically, gathering the tribe before going off to combat), the multinational company cannot simply barge in and offer breakfast cereals in a variety of local flavours; the meaning of the meal is not in the flavours but in the gathering, and to make it about flavours is to misconstrue it at its metaphoric core.

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Appendix 15.1: interview questions: Latino and American participants

Interview questions: Latino cultural workers

Description of creative expression

1. How would you describe your artwork?
2. Why did you choose to design and make these?

Description of value created with artwork (cultural and symbolic value):

1. What are the thoughts and feelings behind the design of this mural?
2. What would you like the tourists to admire about your work?
3. Can you relate your artistic movement to the enhancement of Pilsen as a touristic destination?
4. How is your culture reflected in the form and function of your art work?
5. What is the symbolism of these designs?

Interview questions: American tourists

1. What are your thoughts and feelings when you look at these murals? What do you admire most about these works?
2. How do these artworks influence your perception of the community?
3. How do these artworks influence your perception of the world?