

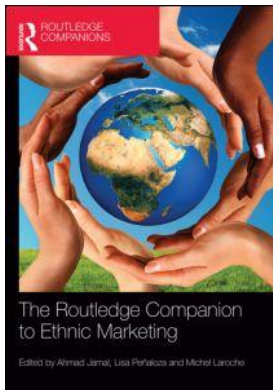
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Part VI

Advertising

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Multicultural advertising and ethnic minority consumers

Jinnie Jinyoung Yoo and Wei-Na Lee

Introduction

The United States has always been the embodiment of a multicultural society as seen from its diversity in race, ethnicity, religion and how someone identifies oneself and the lifestyle that a person adopts. The goal of this chapter is to offer a summary of our understanding of ethnic minority consumers in the US and point to knowledge gaps to be filled by future research.

Major segments of the ethnic minority population in the US include Hispanic, African and Asian Americans, those who do not identify themselves as non-Hispanic White. The U.S. Census Bureau further includes individuals who identify themselves as Black or Asian in combination with another race such as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native or some other race (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Recent trends suggest that a growing number of ethnic minority consumers in the US are becoming increasingly proactive in expressing their unique cultural identities. This trend is reinforced by the changing demographic, technological, social, cultural and media environments. Ethnic minority consumers currently comprise nearly 30% of the U.S. population. They are estimated to reach 46.3% by 2050 (ibid.) Eventually, the so-called minorities will become the majority in the US. Specifically, the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) predicted that people who regard themselves as Hispanic American, African American, Asian American, American Indian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander will become the majority by 2042, minorities accounting for 54% of the population and non-Census Bureau further reported that the population shares of Hispanics and Asians are set to double to 30% and 9% of the total population before 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). As the marketplace in the US becomes increasingly diversified and ethnic minority consumers' purchasing power and ethnic consciousness grow, marketing and advertising professionals have duly recognized the important role of multiculturalism. Significant efforts have been made to attend to cultural differences in marketing communication programs. Although there is little consensus on the definition of the term multicultural marketing, Friedman *et al.* (2007) succinctly pointed out that it is about 'targeting, communicating, and using differentiated marketing strategies with diverse cultures including ethnic groups, religious groups, nationalities, people living in particular geographic regions, or groups that share common beliefs, values, attitudes or a way of life' (p. 25). The goal of multicultural advertising is, therefore, to engage multiple target audiences who are distinguished

by cultural characteristics. Put another way, multicultural advertising is a specific class of advertising that aims to simultaneously reach a culturally diverse target audience through the use of culturally relevant representations such as sources, symbols, traditions, beliefs, values and/or objects from multiple cultural backgrounds in persuasive messages (Johnson *et al.* 2010). The following sections first summarize research insights on ethnic minority consumers and their responses toward multicultural advertising. Subsequently, future research agenda are provided to offer directions for empirical work that fills the current knowledge gaps.

An evolving understanding of ethnic minority consumers' cultural identity is the core

People generally live within their cultural boundaries. Cultural values and norms influence the way individuals think, feel and act. People in the same ethnic groups tend to share similar language, customs, values and social views. These shared values influence people's cognition (beliefs and motives), affect (emotion and attitude) and behaviour (purchase and consumption). Based on the notion that 'advertising acts as a mirror of the society', cultural values and standards are to be presented in adverts in such a way that consumers can 'see themselves' and identify with the characters in the adverts and feel affinity toward the brands (Hong *et al.* 1987). Central to this culturally based approach to communication is the idea that communication is most effective when the message content, the characters and symbols used, and values portrayed are congruent with the target audience's cultural identity.

Ethnic minority consumers have been known to exhibit different marketplace responses in product use, shopping orientation, response to promotion, brand loyalty, media usage, attitude toward advertising, purchase decision, etc. (Hernandez and Kaufman 1991). They tend to be more responsive to messages that are reflective of their cultural values and assets than those that are not (Pitts *et al.* 1989; Green 1995; Hernandez 1988). Findings from a number of empirical studies on ethnicity in an advertising context generally suggest that ethnic minority consumers are likely to be aware of and thus respond more favourably to adverts with ethnic cues. Specifically, some of the early studies have found that ethnic minority consumers are more likely to deem their ethnicity important and trust spokespersons of similar ethnicity more than those who are not, which in turn leads to more favourable response the adverts using same-ethnicity actors (e.g. Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Koslow *et al.* 1994). Furthermore, other early research has found that ethnic minority consumers tend to be influenced by adverts using ethnic language and show favourable responses to such adverts and associated brands (e.g. Deshpandé *et al.* 1986; Roslow and Nicholls 1996). In addition, subsequent work has found that relative to weak ethnic identifiers, strong ethnic identifiers evaluate adverts that feature same-ethnicity spokespersons more positively and have stronger purchase intentions for brands with them in the adverts than those who do not (e.g. Green 1999). In summary, clear ethnic cues in an advert encourage ethnically sensitive consumers to develop more positive attitudes about that advert, which in turn should induce more favourable attitudes toward and stronger purchase intentions for the featured brand (Appiah 2001a; Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001).

More recent literature has focused on the influence of ethnic identification on ethnic minority consumers' response to adverts. For example, Appiah (2001a) found that strong ethnic identifiers saw themselves as more similar to and identified more strongly with the same-ethnicity characters in adverts than weak identifiers did. Another study, introducing the idea of ethnic primes and its influence on consumers' advertising response, found that ethnic minorities

responded more favourably to the same-ethnicity spokesperson and adverts targeted to that ethnic group when they were both primed and socially distinctive (Forehand *et al.* 2002).

Research examining ethnic salience and self-reference should be helpful in explaining the influence of ethnic culture identification on consumer response. Lee *et al.* (2002) found that ethnic minority consumers exposed to adverts consistent with their ethnicity were likely to spontaneously self-reference the advert, which in turn led to more positive responses to both the advert and the associated brand. Martin *et al.* (2004) found that unusual voice-over/subtitling increased ethnic self-awareness as well as advert recall, demonstrating that advert schema congruity moderated the effect of target market affiliation on attitudes toward the advert and the spokesperson.

As can be seen, research examining the influence of ethnic identity on advert response has evolved, and scholars have begun to pay attention to the complexity of *cultural identity* among ethnic minority consumers. Unlike majority consumers, most ethnic minorities must deal with two central issues: (1) the extent to which they are motivated or allowed to retain identification with the culture of origin, the non-majority or minority culture and (2) the extent to which they are motivated or allowed to identify with the dominant or majority culture (Berry 1990). The process of negotiating this dual or even multiple cultural identities is complex, multifaceted, and is at the core of how ethnic consumers behave. Some ethnic minorities perceive the two cultural identities to be compatible, whereas others see them as oppositional. How this identity negotiation process influences ethnic minorities' response to marketing communication efforts requires an in-depth understanding.

The consumer acculturation process

One of the key theoretical constructs that scholars have delved into when discussing cultural identity negotiation among ethnic minority consumers is acculturation. Although there have been many competing views about the meaning of the term acculturation, early views about its nature offer a useful foundation:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.

(Redfield et al. 1936, pp. 149–50)

A recent definition of acculturation by Berry (2005) focused on the notion of 'either or both groups'. Berry defined acculturation as:

The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members Acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups.

(Berry 2005, pp. 698–99)

Berry went on to suggest that there are a number of alternative courses and goals to the process of acculturation. In other words, one key feature of all acculturation phenomena is the variability with which they take place. In this light, ethnic minorities enter into the acculturation process in different ways and to different degrees (Jun *et al.* 1993; Lee and Um 1992). The levels

of acculturation have been reported to be critical in understanding the unique experiences of ethnic minorities living in a multicultural society (Berry 2005).

Consumer acculturation is that part of acculturation specific to the consumption process. Peñaloza (1994) defined consumer acculturation as ‘the general process of movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another country’ (p. 33). Acculturation can be seen as a socialization process in which an immigrant consumer learns the behaviours, attitudes and values of a culture that are different from their culture of origin (Lee 1988). Different levels of acculturation among ethnic minority consumers may result in differences in shopping orientation, use of language and media, perceptions of product attributes and attitudes toward advertising (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983). Some immigrants, when they first arrive in a new country may desire to maintain significant aspects of their home culture and to stay informed about events in their home country. On the other hand, newcomers who are faced with role conflicts in the new culture may also be highly motivated to learn its basic consumption-related attitudes, knowledge and skills to function as consumers in that new culture.

Many scholars have recommended that ethnic minority consumers be studied from the acculturative perspective. They argue that the level of acculturation can be a potent segmentation variable since it has been linked to differences in attitudes toward advertising, media use, coupon use, print advertising, direct marketing advertising and even consumer purchase decision and information search behaviour (Deshpandé *et al.* 1986; Donthu and Cherian 1992; Korgaonkar *et al.* 2000; Ueltschy and Krampf 1997; Webster 1991).

A number of studies have noted significant differences in media preferences and advertising effectiveness between ethnic minorities who were high versus those low in acculturation (Deshpandé *et al.* 1986; O’Guinn and Faber 1985). These differences have been found in many different types of media such as print advertisements (Adelson 1989), store signs (Hayes-Bautista *et al.* 1984), radio (Valenzuela 1973; Dunn 1975), and general media advertising (Deshpandé *et al.* 1986). Ueltschy and Krampf (1997; 2011) found that highly acculturated Hispanics showed significantly more positive attitudes toward the adverts when the advert copy was in English while Hispanics low in acculturation showed more positive attitudes toward the advert when the copy was in Spanish. Lee and Um (1992) found that mixed acculturation patterns contributed to differences between Korean immigrants and Anglo-Americans in consumer product evaluations. Specifically, highly acculturated Koreans, compared to less acculturated Koreans and to Americans, tended to actively adopt dominant American cultural styles by observing what their American friends buy, taking friends’ advice on purchase recommendations and listening to what advertising says. Rajagopalan and Heitmeyer (2005) found a negative relationship between the level of acculturation and involvement in Indian ethnic apparel among Asian Indian consumers, suggesting that acculturation may be negatively related to ethnic consumption and positively related to mainstream consumption.

Theoretical conceptualization of acculturation has evolved from the earlier one-dimensional model to bi-dimensional models. While the one-dimensional model assumes that non-dominant groups and individuals would move from some ‘traditional’ way of living to a way resembling that of the dominant society (Berry 2005), bi-dimensional models consider diverse ranges of cultural identities with particular focus on the way that identity formation expresses minority and dominant cultures. Study by Peñaloza (1994) marked the beginning of the new phase of consumer acculturation studies. Her study on Mexican immigrants in the US focused on specific acculturation processes and conditions. It offered four practices of consumer acculturation: *resistance* (favouring Mexican practices over American practices), *acculturation* (adoption of American practices while maintaining Mexican practices), *assimilation* (adoption of American practices while

deserting Mexican practices) and physical segregation (a spatial form of separation). It suggested that immigrant consumers commingle these practices in different ways to form identities.

Oswald's subsequent work (1999) added another interesting aspect to the study of consumer acculturation, focusing more on identity formation among ethnic minority consumers. Oswald's research of Haitian migrants in the USA introduced the notion of culture swapping, showing that a Haitian immigrant family unconsciously switched codes between the tastes of the Haitian elite and the American middle class depending upon the situation. This study provided rich insights to how consumer identities result from the dynamic interplay between the minority and the dominant culture. Many post-1999 acculturation studies have adopted Oswald's dualistic home/host notation. Askegaard *et al.* (2005) conducted a study regarding hybrid identities. Their study found that Greenlanders in Denmark moved between positions of hyperculture, assimilation, integration and pendulism. Importantly, Askegaard *et al.*'s study provided confirming evidence of the integrative cultural identities suggested by both Peñaloza (1994) and Oswald (1999). Collectively, these recent acculturation studies offer the possibility that ethnic minority consumers tend to individually pursue various 'integrative (or hybrid)' identities, thus the particulars of which vary across individuals and situations.

Recently, a few advertising studies have considered how different stages of acculturation affects consumers' advertising responses. For example, Khairullah (2011) examined whether the perceptions of Asian Indian Americans towards Indian print versus American print adverts vary within and across stages of acculturation. Their findings indicated that low and moderate acculturated participants had a greater preference for adverts with Indian cues while high acculturated Asian Indians had a greater preference for adverts with American cues. More recent work by Tsai and Li (2012) examined the moderating effects of acculturation modes (assimilated, integrated and separated) on Hispanic consumers' responses to three advertising targeting strategies (Caucasian-targeted, bi-cultural and Hispanic targeted). They found a significant interaction effect between acculturation and message targeting on attitudes toward the advert. Specifically, Caucasian-targeted adverts generated the most favourable responses to the advert from assimilated Hispanic consumers, bi-cultural adverts generated the most favourable responses to the advert from integrated Hispanic consumers, and Hispanic-targeted adverts generated the most favourable responses to the advert from separated Hispanic consumers. Overall, findings of these studies suggest that an understanding of the effect of acculturation could aid in planning and executing appropriate advertising programs in order to effectively cater to specific segments of ethnic minority markets. However, research that adopts the concept of 'hybrid' identities or 'culture swapping' is still limited in the field of advertising.

Explanations of ethnic consumer responses

Ethnic affiliation, often called the strength of ethnic identification (Webster 1994), is a person's knowledge of his or her membership in a social group and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Phinney 1992). While one member of an ethnic minority group may have a strong ethnic identification with his or her culture and to a lesser degree identify with the majority culture, another member within the same ethnic group may have a weak identification with his or her culture and a high degree of affinity to the majority culture. Much research has shown ethnic identification to be a contributing cultural variable in consumer purchase behaviour (Donthu and Cherian 1992; Hirschman 1981; Webster 1994), media use (Deshpandé *et al.* 1986; Donthu and Cherian 1992; Appiah 2004; Becerra and Korgaonkar 2010) and evaluation of advertisements (Whittler 1989; Green 1999; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Wittler and Spira 2002; Appiah 2001a; 2001b; 2004).

An extended stream of studies has suggested that strong ethnic identifiers should display attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with the core cultural values of their ethnic group such as customs, language, foods, religion, product use and media use, etc. This, in turn, leads to a preference for advertisements that are congruent with their attitudes and behaviours. In contrast, consumers who have weak ethnic identities would display attitudes and behaviours that are less consistent with traditional cultural values and closer to those of the dominant culture (e.g. Appiah 2001b). Strong ethnic identifiers may see the ethnicity of the model in adverts as a positive cue confirming similarity and thereby pay more attention to and show more favourable attitudes toward the model and the media (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Whittler 1989). In other words, the ethnicity of the model may be particularly instrumental in inducing individuals with strong ethnic identities to infer similarity or dissimilarity, whereas the model's ethnicity may not function as a similarity cue for those with weak ethnic identities.

An important theoretical perspective that explains this racial similarity effect is the identification theory (Kelman 1961). The theory contends that people automatically assess their level of similarity with a source during an interaction and make similarity judgements. This process explains how individuals connect with spokespersons/models in adverts based on perceived similarities between them. Researchers have found evidence to suggest that when the symbols, characters and values depicted in the messages are drawn from the intended audience's cultural background, the audience is likely to better identify with the message and the source of the message (Appiah 2001a; 2001b; McGuire 1984; Pitts *et al.* 1989). Furthermore, individuals who are more likely to identify with the characters (Huesmann *et al.* 1983) and think of themselves as similar to the characters (Brock 1965; Burnstein *et al.* 1961) are more influenced by such message content.

Appiah (2001b) and Whittler and Spira (2002) found that strong Black ethnic identifiers perceived themselves to be more similar to and identified more strongly with Black characters in media and expressed greater liking for Black characters in adverts than Blacks with weak ethnic identities do. Furthermore, Whittler and Spira (2002) showed that Blacks with weak ethnic identities evaluated products and adverts similarly irrespective of whether the adverts were targeting Whites or Blacks. In contrast, strong Black identifiers evaluated products and adverts more favourably and showed a greater comprehension of message content after seeing a Black-targeted advert vis-à-vis a White-targeted advert. While much of the work examining the effects of racially targeted messages on ethnic minorities has focused specifically on print and television advertising, Appiah (2004) examined Blacks' differential responses to race-targeted websites and found that Blacks with a strong ethnic identity spent more time browsing a site and viewing each story when the site was targeted to Blacks. Additionally, Blacks with strong ethnic identity also rated the site and the stories more favourably when browsing the Black-targeted sites compared to White-targeted sites. In contrast, Blacks with weak ethnic identity displayed no difference in their browsing time on websites and stories or their ratings of the sites and stories with different racial targeting efforts (*ibid.*).

The other stream of research development in consumer acculturation focused on situational ethnicity or felt ethnicity (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989). Situational ethnicity is based on the notion that the acculturation process may vary depending on the context in which the behaviour occurs. The underlying premise here is that people take on different roles in their daily lives and these roles may involve different levels of acculturation or ethnicity (O'Guinn and Faber 1985). Consequently, a consumer's consumption behaviour can exhibit a considerable degree of situational variability depending on which personal meanings are salient in a given consumption context (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Zmud and Arce 1992).

A theoretical perspective that has been employed to help interpret the impact of situational ethnicity in the advertising context is the distinctiveness theory. The central idea here is that

a person's distinctive traits in relation to the other people in their environment will be more salient to that person than other traits that are more common to everyone (McGuire 1984; McGuire and McGuire 1982). Put another way, this theory suggests that individuals who belong to a distinctive or numerically rare group tend to be highly aware and mindful of the characteristics shared by that group and are more likely to incorporate that group identity into their self-concept than individuals who do not belong to such a group (Grier and Brumbaugh 2004). Hence, for example, ethnicity will be more salient for members of the minority than the majority group. This might be because when one feels he/she belongs to a numerical minority group – and, hence, distinctive – the feeling is more likely to spontaneously evoke ethnic-based identification as a way to define oneself in social contexts (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994).

The distinctiveness theory has provided a wealth of insights into how social contexts and individual characteristics jointly influence consumer response to marketing communication efforts. Specifically, the theory supports the notion that numerical minorities are more likely to respond favourably to advertising messages designed to resonate with their distinctive characteristics (Grier and Deshpandé 2001). For example, Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) found that unlike Whites, Blacks as ethnic minorities appreciated the acknowledgement associated with being a target market and were more likely to use targeting cues based on their racial distinctive trait in evaluating messages than White majority members were based on their 'non-distinctive trait'. Further, due to their increased awareness of the trait that made them unique, Blacks were more likely to connect targeted messages with themselves. Several studies have shown that this leads Blacks to develop more favourable attitudes toward Black-targeted messages than toward White-targeted messages (Aaker *et al.* 2000; Appiah 2001a; 2001b; 2002).

Many empirical studies have found that consumer distinctiveness results in a heightened sensitivity to targeting efforts, more identification with and trust of a similar source, and increased favourability toward the advertisement and the brand (Aaker *et al.* 2000; Deshpandé and Stayman 1994; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999). Among the findings, Deshpandé and Stayman (1994) showed that Hispanic Americans living in Austin, Texas (where they are ethnic minorities) were more likely than Hispanic Americans living in San Antonio (where they are ethnic majority) to consider their ethnicity salient. Furthermore, they found that members of the ethnic minority group (versus majority group) were more likely to believe that an advert spokesperson from their own ethnic group (i.e. Hispanic spokesperson) was more trustworthy and therefore hold a positive attitude toward the advertised brand. Grier and Brumbaugh (2004) further explained that ethnic similarity between the viewer and a source enhances advert responses among targeted ethnic minorities because similarity judgements are more readily made among these numerically distinctive individuals and impact the effectiveness of targeting efforts. These findings are consistent with the larger body of consumer research focused on spokesperson ethnicity effects, which has demonstrated that more favourable attitudes toward ethnically congruent stimuli exist among ethnic minorities (e.g. Whittler 1991).

Appiah (2004) cautioned that this notion should be qualified by the degree of ethnic identity maintained by the ethnic minority consumers. For instance, some Blacks may be a numerical minority yet not feel distinctive because they lack a strong connection to the Black culture. Blacks with weak cultural identity may not consider 'Blackness' an attribute that defines their self-concept and may use targeting cues based on their non-distinctive traits, focusing instead on similarities between themselves and the source that are less race-specific (e.g. dress, lifestyle, social class). In other words, weak Black identifiers may be less aware of their ethnicity and minority status and may, therefore, feel less distinctive (Appiah 2004). Thus, despite their

numerical minority status within an environment, it is also important to consider ethnic identification in consumer response to racially targeted messages.

The effect of ethnicity on consumers' evaluation of advertising messages can be further explained by the concept of in-group favouritism (Fiske and Taylor 1991), which suggests that individuals have a tendency to evaluate people who are members of their own group (i.e. in-group) more favourably than those who belong to other groups (i.e. out-group). The in-group bias theory (Brewer 1979) posits that people generally tend to show attitudinal and perceptual biases toward members of one's in-group, rather than toward members of the out-group. The basic premise of the theory is that people categorize other people on the status of their membership in in- or out-group. In-group membership is represented by identifying with other people who are similar in some way to the person doing the comparison, and out-group membership refers to people who are dissimilar in some way to the person doing the comparison (Qualls and Moore 1990).

The theory argues that there is a greater social distance between an individual and members of the out-group and that, in the absence of other information, individuals will rely on their knowledge of members of their own group and on preconceived assumptions and biases regarding out-group members in making comparisons and/or evaluations (Green 1999; Qualls and Moore 1990). Furthermore, minority group status makes in-group membership much more salient than does membership in a majority group (Gerard and Hoyt 1974). Research findings that show that Black consumers were more sensitive to racial cues and preferred Black models in comparison to White models (e.g. Green 1999; Qualls and Moore 1990) could be explained by in-group bias. Black consumers were likely to evaluate adverts featuring Black models more favourably than adverts featuring White models, while White consumers tended to be somewhat indifferent.

However, Spira and Whittler (2004) later pointed out that the manifestation of in-group favouritism relies on the perceiver classifying others into in- and out-groups. With respect to a spokesperson's race, this suggests that the viewer of an advert must use race as a basis for categorizing the spokesperson. A number of variables that influence the salience or importance of race may determine whether and when it is used as a basis for categorization. For example, a spokesperson's race may be more meaningful to individuals who feel a strong affiliation with their own racial group. Using the strength of ethnic identification as an important explanatory variable, Spira and Whittler suggested that the Black spokesperson's race might have positively biased the advert perception of Blacks who strongly identified with their own racial group.

One other useful theoretical framework for understanding why individuals from different ethnic minority groups react differently to advertising messages is the theory of accommodation. The underlying assumption here is that more accommodation results in more favourable responses: the greater the ethnic accommodation shown by advertisers, the more favourable the response by ethnic group members. Applying this theory to advertising efforts, it is possible that advertisers can improve marketing communication by making themselves more similar to consumers (Cho *et al.* 2004). Since ethnic audiences feel more affinity toward culturally congruent messages, they tend to appreciate efforts in providing culturally accommodating advert messages (e.g. featuring ethnic spokespersons, culturally sensitive messages, placed in culturally congruent media, etc.) and will then respond favourably.

A few researchers have applied the accommodation theory in the advertising context (e.g. Holland and Gentry 1997; Koslow *et al.* 1994). For example, Holland and Gentry (1999) introduced the concept of intercultural accommodation in evaluating the impact of cultural symbols (i.e. language, music, art, attire, spokesperson of a similar ethnic background) on advertising effectiveness. The term intercultural here refers to the notion that communication

occurs between two different cultural groups (e.g. the advertiser, representing the dominant culture; and the audience, representing the ethnic minority culture), and the targeted group is expected to react most favourably to advertisements that are culturally accommodating (i.e. featuring models of similar ethnic background or placed in culturally congruent media; Green 1999). Holland and Gentry (1999) argued that advertisers can accommodate ethnic minority consumers by not only using ethnic languages but also applying many cultural symbols including ethnic spokespeople and models. Karande (2005) applied accommodation theory to explain the effects of using ethnically similar models on the minority consumer response to adverts. He argued that a consumer's response varies due to the extent to which the consumer believes that the advertiser is culturally sensitive or perceived to be so. If ethnic consumers feel that the use of an ethnically similar spokesperson is an indicator that the advertiser is sensitive to their culture, they will respond more favourably than if they feel this is not the case. The study found that the use of an Asian model in an advert influenced Asian American consumers' attitudes toward the company and intention to use the service when the advertiser was perceived as culturally sensitive, and negatively when the advertiser was not perceived as culturally sensitive (Karande 2005).

This concept can also be applied to media placement. Green (1999) suggested that the greater the accommodation by the advertiser in terms of culturally congruent media placement, the more favourable the evaluation of the adverts among the target audience. For example, placing adverts with Black models in minor or background roles in racially targeted media would be perceived as less accommodating than placing these adverts in non-targeted media by Black consumers, resulting in less favourable evaluations. By the same token, placing adverts that feature Black models in positions of dominance in racially targeted media should result in more favourable evaluations as they are perceived more accommodating (*ibid.*).

As a cognitive-based theory of stereotyping, polarized appraisal theory – also called the complexity–extremity theory, (Linville 1982; Linville and Jones 1980) – further explains how ethnic consumers respond to an ethnically similar in-group model versus an out-group model. The theory states that because in-group members are evaluated on the basis of a greater number of dimensions than out-group members, out-group members would be evaluated more extremely than in-group members (Linville and Jones 1980). A rationale for this perspective lies in the nature of prior knowledge structures (i.e. cognitive schema) concerning in-groups and out-groups. In particular, Linville and Jones argued that people have more complex schemas regarding their own groups than other groups. For example, they found that White subjects were more likely to show greater cognitive complexity regarding Whites than they did regarding Blacks, which, in turn, led to more moderate evaluations of their own group (i.e. Whites). This might be because perceivers must come to terms with a larger collection of diverse instances involving in-group members. This rich background of experience with the in-group generates a larger number of dimensions along which individual members may be characterized, and, thus, in-group members will be less likely to be perceived as being consistent with those categories or matching the set of dimensions used by the observer. In contrast, for out-group members, the cognitive structure held by the perceiver is less complex, therefore consisting of fewer dimensions, and the likelihood is that out-group members would match the set of evaluative dimensions. The lower cognitive complexity for out-group members increases the extremity of evaluation (*ibid.*). Put another way, evaluations tend to be more extreme, either positive or negative, with regard to out-group members as a result of having relatively less information and experience (Qualls and Moore 1990).

Applying this theory to the advertising context, Qualls and Moore (1990) postulated that people evaluated ethnically dissimilar models more extremely than ethnically similar models

because of lower cognitive complexity or knowledge about dissimilar cultures. Unfortunately their findings were mixed. Qualls and Moore explained that while cognitive complexity might in fact be a key moderating variable in the process of racial stereotyping, its importance could not be validated in their study. This suggests that, although a single theory may hold promise by itself, race or ethnicity effects in advertising are complex and may require the application of multiple theories simultaneously to understand their relative impact (Williams *et al.* 2007).

Future research agenda

Understand identity negotiation involving multiple cultures

Ethnic minorities consistently experience challenges in dealing with multiple cultural identities. While scholars have acknowledged the importance of examining dual cultural identity among ethnic minority consumers (e.g. Berry 1990; Phinney 1996), little is known about how these individuals manage and negotiate their dual or multicultural identity in the acculturation process.

In order to describe how ethnic minority consumers negotiate and move between dual-cultural identities, researchers have used concepts such as ‘culture swapping’, ‘context-shifting’ (Oswald 1999) and ‘frame switching’ (Hong *et al.* 2000). Oswald (1999) suggested that the identity of ethnic minority consumers is an unstable construct that necessitates the process of ‘context-shifting’ or ‘culture swapping’. That is, consumers move between multiple cultural identities rather than blending them into a single homogeneous identity; and situational demands influence consumers’ need to switch cultural codes and ‘negotiate day-to-day border crossings between home and host culture’ (Oswald 1999, p. 307).

In a similar fashion, introducing the concept of ‘cultural frame switching’ among bi-cultural individuals, Hong *et al.* (2000) argued that individuals shift between interpretive frames rooted in different cultures in response to cues in the social environment. To capture how bi-cultural individuals switch between cultural lenses, Hong and colleagues conceptualized internalized culture ‘as a network of discrete, specific constructs that guide cognition only when they come to the fore in an individual’s mind’ (Hong *et al.* 2000, p. 709).

Drawing from an extensive review of empirical and qualitative acculturation and bi-culturalism literature, Benet-Martínez *et al.* (2002) proposed the conceptualization of Bi-cultural Identity Integration (BII) as a framework for investigating individual differences in bi-cultural identity organization. BII focuses on bi-cultural individuals’ perceptions of how much their two different cultural identities intersect or overlap and captures the degree to which ‘bi-culturals perceive their mainstream and ethnic cultural identities as compatible and integrated vs. oppositional and difficult to integrate’ (Benet-Martínez *et al.* 2002, p. 9). According to Benet-Martínez *et al.*, individuals high on BII are likely to easily integrate both cultures and develop a compatible bi-cultural identity, regarding themselves as part of a ‘hyphenated culture’. These individuals do not perceive the two cultures to be mutually exclusive, oppositional or conflicting. On the other hand, individuals low on BII experience difficulty in incorporating both cultures into a cohesive sense of identity (Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997; Vivero and Jenkins 1999). Although they also identify with both cultures, they are particularly sensitive to tensions between the two cultural orientations and see this incompatibility as a source of internal conflict.

Another approach regarding acculturation and dual cultural identity proposed by Roccas and Brewer (2002) identifies four alternative representations of multiple-group identity. They proposed that individuals cope with the demands of competing cultural identities by adopting

different forms of identity management. The first form of this is called *hyphenated identities*. This locates one's cultural identity at the intersection of the ethnic and societal levels and thus forms a blended bi-cultural identity (Birman 1994; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). With this representation, terms such as African American, Latino American, and Korean American represent unique cultural configurations derived from the specific experiences of enacting a particular ethnic cultural identity. Another mode of coping with alternative cultural identities involves subordinating one identity to the other. This is called *cultural dominance*. Assimilation to the host culture at the expense of ethnic cultural identity is one form of cultural dominance (Berry 1990).

Another form is the exclusive investment in one's ethnic cultural identity with alienation from the culture of the host society – the separation strategy (Berry 1990; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). The third mode of adapting to the perceived conflict between alternative cultural group identification is *compartmentalization*, in which an individual consciously activates different cultural identities in different contexts or social settings – a pattern referred to as 'alternating bi-culturalism' (LaFromboise *et al.* 1993; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997). This type of identity structure is best illustrated by children of immigrant parents who alternate between the language used at home and the one used in the community. It can also be seen in other cultural practices, norms and values. Individuals who adopt this strategy have a sense of competence in both cultures (LaFromboise *et al.* 1993) but also an awareness of conflict between cultures that renders bi-culturalism sometimes problematic (Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997).

The last form of dual cultural identity is termed *integrated bi-culturalism*. Unlike compartmentalization, in which different cultures are considered incompatible and situation specific, this form of bi-culturalism acknowledges multiple cultural identity simultaneously – where membership, values and norms of both groups are combined and integrated (Oyserman *et al.* 1998). This conceptualization clearly equates multiculturalism with the acquisition of a more inclusive complex group identity than that represented by any component cultural identity alone (Roccas and Brewer 2002).

Likewise, several social psychologists have suggested that ethnic minorities are likely to develop their own unique cultural styles through a blending of their old culture and the host culture (e.g. Benet-Martínez *et al.* 2002; Roccas and Brewer 2002). The blending of cultural styles suggests that these consumers may respond differently to advertising messages than other members of the host country. For instance, ethnic minority consumers high on BII or who possess hyphenated identity may easily move between their two cultural orientations by shifting between different cultures based interpretative lenses in response to cultural cues. Applying this to the advertising context, it may be that responses to cultural cues in advertising among ethnic minority consumers high on BII are more flexible than those of ethnic minorities low on BII.

Consumer acculturation helps us understand how and why ethnic minority consumers respond differently to various cultural cues in advertising. However, there have only been few studies that examine how the diverse identity negotiation process and the complex identity structures of ethnic minority consumers affect their response in the marketplace. Researchers in advertising and marketing will need to go beyond the traditional acculturation research to fill the gaps in our understanding.

Apply existing theories to multicultural advertising

A number of researchers have made an effort to incorporate diverse models or theories drawn from the broader fields of consumer behaviour and psychology to studies of ethnic minority consumers. For example, the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) has been applied

in multicultural advertising research in order to study the effect of a source's race or ethnicity in consumer response. Researchers have long argued that the role a particular spokesperson plays tends to be different for different groups. Because of differences in source perception being driven by the racial or ethnic background of the recipient or the source (or the interaction of a variety of factors), a source can be an additional argument, an inducement to process, a biasing factor or a cue (Williams *et al.* 2008). Specifically, based on the ELM, Spira and Whittler (2004) suggested that the race of the source might function as a biasing factor or a peripheral cue. A cue in a persuasion setting may activate a simple decision rule that forms the basis of an evaluation. For example, source attractiveness or likability has been shown to influence attitudes by functioning as a simple persuasion cue. Spira and Whittler reasoned that, like those other source characteristics, race might function as a peripheral cue. The findings of their study indicate that both White and Black consumers responded more favourably to the product endorsed by the same- versus different-race spokesperson in the adverts.

Other research has applied the *Persuasion Knowledge Model* (PKM) in examining the vulnerability of subsistence consumers in the US to marketing communication messages (Williams *et al.* 2007). According to Friestad and Wright (1994), people's knowledge about persuasion attempts influences their response to the attempts. Incorporating this concept to their study, Williams *et al.* (2007) proposed that the PKM framework offers one approach to assess the ability of 'cognitively vulnerable' consumers, especially racial/ethnic minority consumers who live at a subsistence level, to cope with persuasive marketing communications. As such, they attempted to identify whether low-literate consumers were more vulnerable in the marketplace because their cognitive capacity is significantly low to preclude the use of persuasion knowledge and to draw higher-order inferences about ulterior motives of salespeople or to correct invalid inferences. By incorporating the PKM with constructs such as self-esteem, locus of control, and powerlessness, Williams *et al.* (2007) provided insights into the coping process of these consumers and further suggested that future research should explore other ways in which there may be racial differences with respect to the PKM.

More recently, Oyserman (2009) provided a model that fits well with existing theories on self-concept and cultural differences, namely, the *Identity-Based Motivation* (IBM) model. The IBM model integrates several theoretical perspectives, including social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), self-categorization theory (Turner *et al.* 1987) and symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981). The model proposes that making a social identity salient activates relevant meanings associated with the in-group identity, which then results in actions that increase one's perceived similarity to the in-group and enhance one's positive social identity (Oyserman 2009). The IBM model helps explain why ethnic minority consumers' responses to culturally congruent cues are not always favourable. For example, ethnic minority consumers' responses toward adverts with an ethnic spokesperson may depend on whether the ethnic identity of those consumers is likely to be salient at that moment in time in the given context.

In a similar vein, several studies have demonstrated the consequence of identity salience by incorporating theoretical concepts such as self- and social-identity and self- and social-schemata. For example, Newman *et al.* (1997) showed that Black females who had their ethnic identity made salient had more favourable perceptions of O.J. Simpson's innocence. Similarly, Shih *et al.* (1999) found that Asian American females' maths test scores improved when their ethnic identity was activated, but worsened when their gender identity was activated. Built upon this research stream, Forehand *et al.* (2002) examined the underlying factors that heighten identity salience in the context of advertising. They proposed that identity primes and social distinctiveness would influence identity salience (i.e. the activation of a social identity within

an individual's social self-schema) and subsequent response to targeted advertising. Findings of their study indicate that Asian American participants of the study responded most positively to Asian spokespeople and Asian-targeted advertising when the participants were both primed and socially distinctive (*ibid.*).

Although researchers have made an attempt to incorporate diverse theoretical perspectives to help us understand multicultural advertising aimed at ethnic minority consumers, the scope of their research is still somewhat limited. Importantly, ethnic consumers' identity structure is becoming complex as they may not need or be willing to be subordinated to the mainstream culture. In order to better understand ethnic minority consumers' needs, desires, interests, attitudes and behavioural patterns, it is critical for researchers to expand the scope of research by incorporating various theoretical approaches drawn from fields such as marketing, social psychology, sociology and many others. This will help better explain ethnic consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes in response to multicultural advertising.

Consider the new media landscape

From the standpoint of practice, some of the obstacles in reaching the ethnic minority markets can be attributed to differences in media use patterns (La Ferle and Lee 2005). It has long been acknowledged that careful media considerations are called for when communicating with ethnic minority consumers. Given the sizes, growth rate, purchasing power and the differential affinity toward various media platforms (Williams and Tharp 2001), it is obvious that media should be included as a key variable in future research on consumer response toward persuasive messages.

A number of studies have examined the media consumption habits of ethnic minorities (Korzenny 2008; La Ferle and Lee 2008; Villareal and Peterson 2008). These studies suggest that ethnic minorities are more likely to use certain type of media, different from that of non-Hispanic Whites. For example, ethnic minorities spend more hours per day reading newspapers and talking on their cell phones than non-Hispanic Whites, and they are also more likely to have their own blog. African Americans engage in television viewing and radio listening activities for longer periods of time than Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites. About one-third of Hispanics do not read English newspapers or magazines (La Ferle and Lee 2005). They may prefer reading Spanish language print media over English language options (Koslow *et al.* 1994). Other than industry statistics, few academic studies have delved into ethnic consumers' media behaviour in the age of digital media.

With the fast proliferation of technologies, it is imperative to document the ways in which ethnic minorities use new media. How persuasive messages are delivered vary in different digital forms (Internet and mobile media), which would no doubt influence consumer information processing and response. Likewise, a consumer's proficiency with various media platforms is an important moderating factor to consider. Although online marketing and advertising has moved to the core of the business-consumer interaction (Plummer *et al.* 2007) and is poised to become the dominant marketing channel, how ethnic minorities react to and become involved with the online marketing communications is still one of the least understood areas. Only a few researchers have investigated the internet usage among ethnic minority population in the US. For example, the 2006 AOL Latino Hispanic cyber study (Business Wire 2006) revealed acculturation differences among online Hispanics that led to differences in preferences for Spanish-language content, the types of websites visited and watching television online. Singh *et al.* (2008) found that Hispanics with low levels of acculturation preferred websites that included some content in Spanish. Becerra and Kraognakar (2010) found that Hispanics had

more positive attitudes than the general population towards online advertising in the form of pop-ups, banner adverts and emails.

A recent Nielsen Report also briefed:

- African Americans are the heaviest TV consumers, watching 6 hours and 54 minutes a day versus the 5 hour and 11 minute average for all U.S. households. More than 30 percent of African American households have four or more televisions, and they over-index in subscription to premium cable services.
- Hispanics are very active on their smartphones, texting the most out of all races/ethnicities (943 texts per month) and employing a wide range of mobile activities, including mobile banking. Smartphone penetration has reached 45 percent, matching only Asian American usage levels in popularity.
- Asians/Pacific Islanders are the most active PC and Internet users, spending nearly 80 hours on PCs in February 2011 versus the national average of about 55 hours. They also consume more internet content than any other group, visiting 3,600 web pages in February – about 1,000 more than their counterparts. While Asian American consumers watch less television, they do more watching online, streaming the most video.

(Pearson-McNeil and Hale 2011)

A clear understanding of media habits and behavioural patterns across ethnic groups not only helps make better media decisions but also facilitates our understanding of consumer response to advertising messages. Furthermore, although key disparities do remain (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2010), the increasing proliferation of new technologies adds to the complexity of the role of media delivery platform in influencing ethnic minority consumer response toward persuasive content.

Regarding the recent technological trend among ethnic minorities, researchers emphasize the emergence of a ‘new digital divide’ in how the internet is incorporated into people’s everyday life. A Pew Internet & American Life Project’s Report, *Asian-Americans and the Internet* (Spooner 2010), suggests that Asian Americans engage in their online activities at a much higher rate on a typical day than other ethnic groups, indicating that Asian American users have made the internet an integral part of their daily lives. This pattern cuts across all major internet activities, whether it is for fun, to transact commerce or to search for information related to major life activities. Asian Americans are proportionally much more likely than others to obtain information about financial matters, travel and political information from the internet. According to the report, just over a third (34%) of Asian Americans gets their news online on a typical day. In comparison, 22% of Whites, along with 15% of African Americans and 20% of Hispanics do so. Asian American users are also more likely to use the internet as a resource at school or at work.

For Hispanic Americans, language is a powerful factor as internet use is much higher among Hispanics who speak and read English fluently than among those who have limited English abilities or who only speak Spanish. While use of the internet among Hispanics is increasing, there is a large difference in internet use among English speaking and bilingual Hispanics compared to Spanish-dominant Hispanics (Pew Research Hispanic Center 2009). The Pew Internet Project’s report suggests that online Hispanics were more likely than online Whites to search for information about books, movies and other activities, to download and listen to music, and to go online just for fun. In addition, Hispanics, once online, are as broadly and intensely connected to the internet as Whites. Phillips (2008) found that Hispanics use the internet for interactive purposes, with 46% using instant messages, 32% visiting social networking sites and 22% participating in chat rooms.

Like Hispanics, African Americans also use the internet to connect with others. African Americans are just as likely to participate in instant messaging, visit social networking sites and participate in chat rooms as Hispanics (Phillips 2008). According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project's Report (2010), African Americans are much less likely to use the internet for school or work compared to other ethnic groups. They are also less likely to use the internet to obtain information on products, make purchases, seek information about news/sports/weather or use email. Instead, African Americans engage in online activities for entertainment at a much higher rate, such as playing games, downloading music.

Given the proliferation of new technology and media vehicles, fundamental changes are taking place in how advertising messages are delivered and consumed. The new media technology and devices offer consumers growing access to an infinite number of information sources, varying in content forms and length, at virtually no cost. Questions such as 'How does this access change the search strategies?' and 'How does the platform of message delivery influence consumer information processing?' are beginning to be answered for the general public but not ethnic minority consumers. This is an important information gap because ethnic minority consumers clearly have different levels of access to the new media, possess varying degrees of proficiency and exhibit vastly different patterns in receiving consumption-related information. Researchers have an important mission in uncovering how ethnicity plays a role in ethnic consumers' motivations, habits and patterns of using new media as well as their attitudinal and behavioural responses toward advertising messages received through the new media.

Furthermore, as discussed previously, today's ethnic minorities do not want to be merely lumped together with other American consumer segments. Therefore, marketers and advertisers should be reminded that not all ethnic minority consumers are gradually assimilating into mainstream culture. Instead, they should view the population as containing differing segments of consumers with varying degrees of acculturation. This understanding can be used to adapt online marketing messages, including developing culturally customized web content tailored to the cultural and language expectations of ethnic minority consumers online (Singh and Pereira 2005).

Concluding remarks

Increasing ethnic diversity in the population is a significant aspect of today's U.S. market environment. Moving away from the 'melting pot' ideal and into the 'salad bowl' notion, minorities of various cultures desire to develop a U.S. lifestyle while maintaining their language and values, thus creating their unique mixes of cultures. Today, it is not necessary for ethnic minorities to rid themselves of their mother culture before they can find a job, watch TV or succeed in school. A new path for becoming a successful American is to celebrate ethnicity, instead of hiding it, and assimilating into the majority culture. Research has shown that in a multicultural America, group identity, especially racial or ethnic, is the social base camp from which ethnic minorities make forays into the American culture.

In the U.S. multicultural market, marketing and advertising academicians and professionals need to understand each group of ethnic consumers well and use appropriate marketing communication strategies to engage them. These tasks are complicated further when cultural identity is influx. In order to successfully communicate with ethnic minority consumers, it is necessary for advertisers to (1) realize differences in communication patterns, values, behaviour, etc. across ethnic groups; (2) recognize individual differences in the process of identity negotiation and the structure of multiple cultural identity among ethnic consumers; (3) explore culturally acceptable/unacceptable, sensitive/insensitive advertising messages; and (4) develop effective and efficient advertising messages targeted at the specific group of ethnic consumers and deliver them via

appropriate channels. While past research has provided explanations of how ethnic minority consumers respond to multicultural advertising, there are still significant gaps in our understanding. Nuanced research that expands or seeks alternative conceptualizations is very much needed.

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