# Ethnic marketing to the global millennial consumers: Challenges and opportunities

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an exploratory interpretivist study of global millennial consumers' subjective interpretations of ethnic targeted marketing communications in a multicultural marketplace. Although millennials are the most ethnically diverse generational cohort that has ever existed, little is known about their interpretation of ethnicity depiction in advertising and how they draw from advertising imagery to infer their ethnic identity, social acceptance and inclusion in a culturally diverse society. Within the broader context of the global consumer culture, this paper draws on theories of social identity, persuasion and multiculturalism to investigate whether ethnic marketing is still applicable to reach the diverse millennial consumers. In-depth interviews with the photo elicitation technique were conducted with an ethnically heterogeneous sample of twenty-three millennial individuals in the UK. The findings show that ethnic millennials' multicultural identities cannot be primed through mono-ethnic targeted messages, whereas multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications provide a more effective access for the ethnically diverse millennial consumers in the modern society and can potentially be a viable solution towards enhanced wellbeing and lower prejudice. This study contributes to insights into millennial consumers' experience in the multicultural marketplace, the sociocultural meanings of ethnic advertising and the opportunities and challenges of reaching to this diverse audience.

## 1. Introduction

Millennials are the most racially/ethnically diverse generational cohort. Many of them were born and raised in ethnically mixed families with a history of immigration. Millennials have gained a reputation of diversity supporters, showing fairer understanding of race and ethnicity, tolerance, open-mindedness and multicultural thinking (Broido, 2004; Ford, Jenkins, & Oliver, 2012; Nielsen, 2014). They are more acculturated to the globally diverse cultures than any previous generational cohorts (Carpenter, Moore, Dohert, & Alexander, 2012), and many of them are fluent speakers of English, a language that triggers values characteristic of a global, more cosmopolitan and less ethnocentric identity (Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2015). In the US, Millennials represent the largest generational cohort that has ever existed, reaching more than 80 million people with a total buying power that has exceeded the Baby Boomers' (Thomas, 2013). In the UK, millennials stand for almost 25% of the population and are expected to reach 17 million by 2019 (Inkling, 2015). More than 20% of them are of an ethnic background other than White British, the Asian or Asian British being the most dominant group (Mintel, 2016). Given this diverse profile, millennials represent a lucrative market for global brands active in multicultural countries.

As a highly culturally tolerant group (Meyers & Morgan, 2013) and "less settled in their identity" (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2012), millennials are more prone to appreciate multicultural marketing efforts. Brands such as L'Oreal, AirBnb and Coca-Cola are constantly attempting to tailor culturally diverse messages that could appeal to this young and increasingly diverse audience. However, there is a void in the academic literature with respect to how ethnic millennials actually feel about advertising messages catered to them. Although young consumers and their readings of local and global appeals in the marketplace have been researched in the glocal literature (e.g., Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Zhou & Belk, 2004), a review of the ethnic marketing literature shows a paucity of research investigating how millennial consumers interpret and receive portrayals of ethnicity in advertising, particularly as active recipients of marketing communications from global brands. Research shows that young adults in the UK find advertising portraying diversity as very appealing (Mintel, 2016). This puts into question the theoretical and practical soundness of current accounts of ethnic marketing targeted at

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the millennial audience.

Most millennials are sojourners or individuals of mixed ethnicity, immigrants or individuals who have acquired more than one cultural identity and display a predisposition towards diversity. Given this fact, we argue that the investigation of millennials in the context of the global consumer culture and ethnic marketing research is theoretically and practically meaningful. In this paper we aim to provide an exploratory inquiry into how individuals of this generation living in multicultural Britain interpret ethnic embedded advertising imagery and narratives, and how these meanings interweave with their ethnic identity development, wellbeing and inclusion in the host society. Thus, we place the advertising viewer at the center of the interpretative process and join the research stream focusing on "reader response" and "meaning based" advertising inquiry (Bhat, Leigh, & Wardlow, 1998; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Scott, 1994) to answer the following research questions: 1) are millennials sensitive to ethnicity representations in ethnic embedded marketing communications? 2) if so, are their interpretations influenced by their living experience as ethnic individuals in a majority white society? 3) are these interpretations reflected in their ethnic identification, felt social inclusion, social status and wellbeing? and 4) which ethnic primes and communications strategies are more applicable to elicit the multifaceted self of the global millennial consumer in an ethnically diverse society?

To address these questions, this paper reports on a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with twenty-three ethnic individuals from the millennial generation in the UK. This paper makes an important theoretical contribution to the literature on ethnic consumer behavior and targeted marketing communications. The findings challenge the assumptions of distinctiveness theory and ethnic congruence (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978), in that highly congruent mono-ethnic advertisements seem to trigger more negative consumer response than multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications, which reduce the ethnic salience and felt targetedness and are interpreted as a more genuine attempt at ethnic representation. Furthermore, our findings highlight issues of manipulative intent and illusory connections in mono-ethnic advertising practices (Campbell, 1995; Hamilton & Gifford, 1976) and address topics of public policy concern such as ethnic consumer empowerment and inclusion in the multicultural marketplace. Based on our findings, we draw on the common in-group identity model (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) to propose an effective approach to reach to the ethnically diverse audiences through multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications. The current research answers to numerous calls in the extant literature for more in-depth exploration of generational issues in advertising (Taylor, 2018), vulnerable consumers, multi-cultural identities and challenging ethnic advertising practices with a history of non-inclusiveness (Broderick et al., 2011; Brumbaugh & Grier, 2006; Henderson & Williams, 2013).

## 2. Literature background

### 2.1. The global millennial consumers

Generational cohort theory proposes a segmentation strategy which groups the vast world population based on the historical cycle they belong to (Inglehart, 1977). This theory posits that the events that characterize a specific historical cycle impact the people living during that period and shape their behavior, attitudes, values and thinking styles, which in turn create generational cohorts that can be identified through common attributes (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006; Moore, 2012). Comparing to previous generational cohorts, millennials – the baby boomers' echo kids (Foot & Stoffman, 1996) born between the 80s and 90s – display the highest levels of acculturation to the global consumer culture (Carpenter et al., 2012), defined as "a particular nature of

consumption where groups draw on a globally available set of consumption related symbols" (Westjohn & Magnusson, 2009, p.324). The global millennial consumer profile features a cosmopolitan, less ethnocentric individual, who has an "outwards, worldly orientation", displays increased interest in acquiring global skills such as foreign languages, experiences, social interactions and global media and has a predisposition towards emulating and self-identifying with the global consumer culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Despite being constantly exposed to polarized opinions on immigration, millennials hold a liberal view about diversity and racial issues (Inkling, 2015), display high levels of cosmopolitanism and have a nuanced predisposition towards knowing and learning about other cultures and foreign people (Carpenter et al., 2012). From a consumption and branding perspective, millennials are more interested in foreign brands, foreign consumer lifestyles and global advertising than any of the other generational cohorts. Given their cosmopolitan profile and exposure to diversity, it is theoretically and practically meaningful to investigate how millennials respond to and interpret the meanings of advertising messages.

### 2.2. Ethnic marketing communications to global millennials

The way minority ethnic consumers have been represented in marketing communications has sparked debate recently, touching upon issues of stereotyping and exclusion (Broderick et al., 2011; Kipnis et al., 2012; Pires & Stanton, 2002; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005). Ethnic marketing communications convey a strong socio-cultural meaning that moves beyond advertising-as-persuasion and has the power to shape and reinforce social norms (Harrison, Thomas, & Cross, 2017). When they are effectively implemented, ethnic marketing communications may "validate ethnic minority identity" and become a means for social recognition of the intended audiences - as consumers, but most importantly, as members of their ethnic minority group (Peñaloza, 2017, p. 276). However, in an attempt to depict social groups, representations of ethnicity in advertising may be unavoidably selective and transmit messages of inclusion to some consumers and marginalization to others. Research has found that minority individuals (based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability) pay more attention to cues that signal acceptance and equality at the society level than members of the majority (Tsai, 2011), are more interested in gaining positive self-presentation (Schlenker & Leary, 1982) and being positively evaluated by others. Marketing communications that overlook how consumers feel about portrayals of ethnicity may easily trigger feelings of exoticization and exclusion (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005), and affect how ethnic individuals perceive themselves as well as the brands that convey the message.

Extant research shows that millennials wish for diversity celebration, respect and a certain level of cultural competence that can be derived from advertising efforts. They judge cultural misunderstanding and do not accept generalizations, stereotypical or cliché depictions. Millennials value authenticity and are more demanding of marketers than any other generation before (Ford et al., 2012). For example, some multiple ethnic embedded campaigns have been boycotted by millennials in social media such as the Pepsi Kendall Jenner commercial or Nivea campaign claiming that "white is purity". This stands proof of consumers' power in the marketplace and their radical position against racism and stereotypical representations in advertising. Therefore, marketing to millennials requires increased attention to their awareness of advertisers' persuasion attempts and sensitivity to issues of racism, discrimination and inequality.

While there is a plethora of experimental research investigating ethnic consumer response (regardless of generation) in terms of ad evaluation and purchase intentions (i.e. Appiah & Liu, 2009; Khan, Lee, & Lockshin, 2015; La Ferle & Lee, 2005 to name a few), we observe a considerable lack of exploratory academic research to provide an in-

depth inquiry of these responses. Meyers and Morgan (2013) draw from the results of an online survey to show that African American millennials do not follow similar patterns in their ethnic advertising reception as previous generations. Yet, the underlying reasons for this distinctive advertising interpretation pattern were not sufficiently explored, opening a path for further investigation. Our aim is to understand and identify the underlying reasons that dictate the millennial consumers' responses and to identify the cultural cues that are most effective to elicit ethnic millennials multi-faceted identities. Towards this end, we explore some of the core theoretical lenses such as the social identity and distinctiveness reader-response theories.

### 2.3. Ethnic identity in target marketing communications

The process of ethnic identity development and negotiation can be best understood from the perspective of the social identity theory. Tajfel (1981, p. 255) defines social identity as "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership". Ethnic identity is one aspect of one's social identity, involving a process of self-identification with an ethnic group with whom the individual shares similar ethnic characteristics. Thus, the ethnic group is a category of self-designation (Harrison, Thomas, & Cross, 2015) rather than a category to which ethnic individuals are assigned automatically by others. In light of the social identity theory, this conceptualization of ethnic identities provides a more contextualized and dynamic perspective that mitigates the negative aspects of categorization and ascribed ethnicity (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995), because many ethnic individuals do not necessarily associate themselves with one particular ethnic group in all circumstances.

Stayman and Deshpande's (1989) concept of situational ethnicity states that an individual can have multiple ethnic identities that are partly situationally determined. When a particular social identity is more salient (i.e. heritage ethnicity), individuals perceive and describe themselves in terms of the characteristics specific to that social category (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Thus, at one moment in time, an individual can identify more strongly to the ethnic heritage, whereas at a different moment he/she may feel more closely represented by the host country's culture, or vice versa. Forehand and Deshpandé (2001) argue that the ethnic visual and verbal cues embedded in advertisements "direct self-categorization and increased ethnic self-awareness" (p. 336) and make individuals more sensitive to ethnic related information. Thus, ethnic embedded marketing communications enable the situational elicitation of ethnic identity (Peñaloza, 2017) and make individuals more aware of their ethnic background. Thus, during exposure to ethnic advertisements, one's ethnic self is likely to be elicited, even without the directed attention to the ethnic information embedded in the ad (Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001). By extension, an individual exposed to an advertisement portraying a family may have other facets of his self-concept elicited, such as the role of being a father or son.

Brewer (2001) refers to this process of managing multiple identities as an "internal juggling act", in which the individual is constantly assessing which identity is more prevalent in a particular situation and needs to be activated. Given this complex conceptualization of identity, the question that follows is how marketers could ensure that the portrayals of ethnicity in marketing communications can draw on this internal juggling act and elicit the multiple and fluid ethnic and other role identities that global millennials internalize, without marginalizing or alienating considerable segments of the target market.

Moreover, according to the distinctiveness theory, distinctive individuals who are in numerical minority are more likely to self-define on the trait that makes them distinctive from the majority (such as ethnicity), and to prefer marketing messages that employ the distinctive

trait (such as ethnic-congruent advertisements) (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; McGuire et al., 1978). For example, a young Chinese student surrounded by his European classmates is more likely to have his ethnic-self elicited and prefer ethnic marketing that emphasizes his distinctiveness. According to these research streams it seems that congruent ethnic marketing communications are likely to be observed and preferred by ethnic audiences. Now, the question is whether indeed global millennial consumers who have an inherent predisposition towards diversity and a multi-faceted ethnic-self prefer to be targeted with narrowly defined ethnic criteria that emphasize their distinctive ethnic traits, and whether classic theoretical approaches such as the distinctiveness theory used to explain the effect of ethnic marketing based on source similarity and felt targetedness still hold in today's multicultural markets.

### 2.4. A meaning-based approach to ethnic marketing

In order to reach our research aims and gain a deeper understanding of ethnic millennial consumers' interpretations of ethnic advertising, we join the research stream focusing on "reader response" and "meaning based" advertising inquiry (Bhat et al., 1998; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Scott, 1994) to both formulate our research questions and interpret our findings. The reader response theory, firstly discussed in the context of advertising research by Scott (1994), gained considerable credit in studies investigating consumers' interpretations of advertising imagery (Borgerson, Schroeder, Blomberg, & Thorssén, 2006; Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Zhou & Belk, 2004). Yet, to our knowledge no study used this theory as a lens in interpreting consumers' response to ethnic embedded marketing communications. In her paper, Scott (1994) highlighted the diversity of consumer interpretations of advertising imagery in respect of their subjective experiences, emotions, motives, knowledge and expectations (Elliott & Elliott, 2005). Consumers are considered skilled "readers" that actively provide meaning to advertising cues, the meaning surfacing at the intersection of reader and text (Mick & Buhl, 1992). The effectiveness of ethnic embedded marketing communications is subject to each viewer's interpretation, the cultural codes used and their level of involvement in the meaning making process. The meaning of ethnic embedded marketing communications can migrate outside the product realm to become a source of social capital that the viewers use to understand their role in the society, their social relationships and status (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Thus, we adopt a consumer centered approach to ethnic marketing interpretation to investigate the way each individual co-constructs and negotiates the meaning of the ethnic embedded advertisements and the role of marketing communications as representational systems in influencing consumers' self-perceptions and interpretations of the social world (Borgerson et al., 2006; Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002).

## 3. Methodology

This research uses an interpretivist constructivist approach to data collection and data analysis, in line with our understanding of consumers as active readers and co-constructors of advertising meaning. Twenty-three face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted by the first author, who is part of the millennial generation and whose self-declared ethnicity is White, non-British. In line with the constructivist paradigm, the researcher could use her sensitivity and experience to enhance the dialogue and establish rapport with the interviewees (Ponterotto, 2005). As age and immigration status are the only shared characteristics with the informants, from a positionality point of view the researcher was situated as a "partial insider" (Chavez, 2008).

The interviews lasted between 56 and 99 min, starting with a collection of "grand tour questions" (McCracken, 1988) concerning the informants' backgrounds, their experience of living as ethnic

individuals in a majority white country, and their understanding and experience of social inclusion and acculturation. In the second stage of the interviews participants were asked to recall any instances in which they noticed marketing communications depicting their own ethnicity, and to further discuss their feelings and thoughts related to those examples. Then, using the photo elicitation technique, the researcher showed participants a collection of existing advertisements portraying ethnicity – mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic – and asked them to choose and express their momentary thoughts and feelings for the ads they found particularly interesting. The collection of advertisements included popular examples from Adidas, Gap, Olay, Pantene, TalkTalk, United Colours of Benetton, as well as adverts specifically targeted at the interviewees' ethnic group. To ensure comparability across the interviews, the same core collection of multi-ethnic embedded adverts was used in all interviews, to which we added ethnic-congruent advertisements that matched the interviewee's profile. On average, each respondent viewed a sample of 10 to 15 adverts, intended to generate discussion and used as prompts for consumer interpretation and latent memory retrieval (McCracken, 1988). Our procedure is in line with those reported in the extant literature (Thomas, 2013; Tsai, 2011).

This study employed a purposive sample identified through a maximal variation sampling strategy (Creswell, 2012), allowing us to identify "information-rich cases" from a highly heterogeneous group of consumers of diverse ethnic background and length of residence in the UK (Arnould & Epp, 2006). We adopt the approach used in Thomas (2013) and consider millennial generation comprising of individuals born between 1978 and 1994. Our sample included 23 millennial consumers (13 male and 10 female participants), aged 19 to 38 years old at the time of the interview, of varied self-declared ethnic backgrounds (six Chinese, two Pakistani, four Indian, two Polish, one European, two African, two other Asian, two Mixed and two Arab), highly educated, working full time or in full time education, and having resided in the UK (area of Manchester) between one and 25 years. Three participants were British born. Our participants' high level of education attainment is in line with the profile of ethnic millennials in the UK. Ethnic individuals of Chinese, Black African and Indian ethnic backgrounds in the UK have higher educational attainment than other ethnic groups, including the British White (Lymperopoulou & Parameshwaran, 2014) and a third of the 25 to 34-year-old adults attain higher levels of education than their parents (OECD, 2014). Participants were recruited through snowballing technique and through the International Societies at the authors' university. The data collection was resumed when no additional information was identified (Bowen, 2008). All participants were assured about the confidentiality of the data and gave their consent to have their interviews recorded. The names of all the informants have been changed throughout this paper.

In the present research the analysis is grounded within the constructivist perspective and follows the constant comparative technique (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and particularly six out of the seven analytical stages proposed in Spiggle (1994): categorization, abstraction, comparison, integration, iteration, and refutation. Data analysis was conducted in an iterative fashion, involving reading and rereading the transcripts until preliminary codes were identified. The transcripts consisted of around 400 pages of single spaced text. Data categorization was conducted through an exclusive inductive coding process that did not follow any pre-existing theoretical framework. The unit of analysis was represented by chunks of data on a particular topic that had a coherent meaning. All the codes were reviewed and compared within and across individual interviews. Subsequent interviews were analyzed in light of previous findings, akin to the constant comparative method (Spiggle, 1994). After further refinement, six broad themes emerged that represent the base of our further interpretation. The data analysis was interrupted at the point of saturation when additional iterations no longer brought new insights. We used both a descriptive and

explanatory approach to interpreting the data collected through the interviews (Yin, 2016). The narratives exemplified throughout the findings section are organized in a cross-participant manner. Although we preserve and build the analysis on our participants' voices, the focus is on the focal phenomenon as it emerges from the informants' experiences, rather than on the individual participants' stories (Yin, 2016). The table included in Appendix 1 presents the themes, the sub-themes/codes, the supporting data quoted in the research findings section (Power Quotes) and additional supporting data for each theme (Proof Quotes), following recommendations from the literature (Pratt, 2009).

## 4. Research findings and interpretation

### 4.1. Stuck in between: managing the multi-faceted ethnic self

Our analysis of the interview data suggests that our informants engage in a constant process of negotiation between their need for diversity and their need to stay in touch with the ethnic heritage, which influences, in turn, their everyday dealing with their multiple identities. Many informants seemed to not identify themselves with one clear ethnic typology and refused to be assigned to one particular ethnicity or ethnic group. One suggested that he rather adopted a multicultural identity than a single ethnicity, which enhanced his cultural competence: "*I'm sitting in between somewhere actually, I don't entirely belong to here, I understand, and also I don't feel I entirely belong to China. But every time I'm travelling anywhere, any part in Europe, any part in North America, in Asia, I don't feel I'm the foreigner*" (Silvan, Chinese, 11 years in the UK). This narrative seems to show Silvan's fluid ethnic self, which may be resulting from his navigation between cultures and adaptation to any new environment and enables him to simultaneously keep some features of the original culture and assimilate to the new society.

This view seemed to be shared by several participants, who seemed to disagree with clear-cut ethnic categorizations that were supposed to capture their multifaceted selves and complex acculturative processes. Memet's story is very reflective of the point above. Born in India but raised in Dubai for all his life, Memet moved to the UK to study and work. More than that, he is an atheist that grew up as a Muslim. Having to negotiate with his multiple cultural, religious and ethnic identities, Memet affirms that he is "*lost in transition*". Still, he considers that his complex identity helps him to accommodate everywhere: "*Wherever I go I would be a national of that country. Here, I would say I'm a British bloke. I would assimilate in the society. I can't say that I'm of a particular nationality*".

The process of dealing with multiple ethnic identities can be even more complex for second generation individuals. This may be particularly the case of visible minorities, such as Asian looking individuals, who look physically similar to their ethnic group but may not assimilate the cultural norms associated to the parents' culture. Often being more acculturated in the host culture than in their minority culture, second generation individuals are likely to emphasize the similarities rather than differences with the dominant group (Ambwani, Heslop, & Dyke, 2011). Jane, a second-generation Chinese, mentioned: "*Every time I go back to Hong Kong I feel out of place. I mean I look Chinese and I fit it when I walk into a crowd on the street, but inside me I just feel no, I don't belong here in Hong Kong, but then coming back to the UK it's like some people might say 'but you know, you are Chinese, you don't really belong in the UK either'*". Jane's comment seems to point to the fact that the process of identity formulation is often assigned to the majority's opinion of belonging, which uses cues like race or skin tone as physical reminders of the individual's ancestry and heritage. In this case, it is not the individual, but others that decide whether one belongs to the society. Although Jane thinks of herself as being "British", she feels alienated and excluded when the mainstream dominant group still questions her

"Britishness". This could also be the case of ethnic representations in marketing, which are often used as shortcuts to form impressions of acceptance and belonging of ethnic individuals in the broader society. Furthermore, this narrative shows that relying on physical cues is not sufficient to derive ethnic ancestry, as it is not the looks and how well one "fits into the crowd" as perceived by others, but one's ethnic self-definition that reflects his/her true ethnic identity. These findings are in line with the view that ethnicity is a category of self-designation and it cannot just be ascribed by others based on physical appearance or country of origin (Harrison et al., 2015).

Despite these slightly negative incidents, our millennial participants appeared to enjoy their culturally rich identities and were proudly displaying them in their daily life: "*I am mixed (laughing) and I'm very proud of it. For instance, I like my nose and I know that my nose came from being from the natives, the lack of hair I have (showing the arm), little or almost no hair, I like this kind of things*" (Nicole, Latin with European Influence, 6 years in the UK). Nicole is making sense of her ethnic identity by emphasizing the unique features given by her ethnic mixed background. Although her ethnic uniqueness has also led to instances of racism and discrimination, she has never stopped being proud of it. Similar pattern can be observed in the narrative below: "*I'm glad I'm British and Pakistani cause you are part of two communities and you get the experience twice. I feel like in Manchester I'm part of the Pakistani community, part of the Muslim community and just generally because I was born here, I got the same experiences as my friends who are white so I feel part of that community as well*" (James, UK born, 2nd generation Pakistani). During our entire discussion, James highlighted the flexibility in the way he self-defined his ethnicity and managed his multiple ethnic identities. Not only are the three distinct communities enriching James's process of self-identification, but they also integrate smoothly. This facilitates James to navigate between his ethnic, cultural and religious identities and to harness the value that each facet of his complex self brings to his overall experience. Nicole and James, as well as other participants, seemed to display a high level of cultural identity integration (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002), which, in turn, might determine them to be less sensitive to matters of ethnic stereotypes and unwelcome generalizations and be more open and positive about their origins. This extends the findings of past research showing that identity integration works as a buffer against discrimination (Jackson, Yoo, Guevarra, & Harrington, 2012). Our finding also suggests that multiethnic millennials' identity integration is complementary to the acculturation process (Berry, 1997) in that multiethnic millennials' cultural integration reflects both a high tendency to participate in the host society and a high degree of preserving their own ethnic cultural identity.

This section highlights the global millennials' multiple and fluid ethnic and cultural identities, leading us to put into question the effectiveness of marketing segmentation and targeting strategies that constrain the free process of ethnic identification and assign consumers to narrowly defined ethnic categories. The next sections are focused on our participants' interpretations of ethnicity representations in mono- and multi- ethnic marketing communications.

### 4.2. Multi-ethnic marketing as a pathway to lower prejudice

Our participants interpreted multi-ethnic embedded advertisements as a means of "*expos[ing] people to the reality which they might not be [part of]*", "*slowly sensitize them about the multicultural society*", which can actually "*change the perception about immigrants*". Therefore, it can be suggested that employing multi-ethnic cues in marketing communications shows acceptance of multiculturalism and is educative for the mainstream consumers, raising awareness of the ethnic presence in the society and improving perceptions of immigration. For example, when asked about the feelings triggered by a multicultural advert that he had

seen in central Manchester, one participant said: "*[It's] probably not about how migrants feel in this country… this is education for the local people. For example, this poster is educating the local community … we are three types of people who live in this society*" (Silvan, Chinese, 11 years in the UK). Similarly, another participant pointed out that multicultural advertising may enhance inter-ethnic conviviality through promotion of "*familiarity, knowledge that they (the ethnic individuals) are there and they are not aliens or something*" (Nikki, Indian, 3 years in the UK). Moreover, several informants mentioned the role played by ads featuring multi-ethnic families in reassuring people that it is socially acceptable to be involved in an inter-ethnic marriage: "*There was this advertisement, the man was white, and the woman was African American or Asian. That makes you feel that if they are advertising it and showing to the world, then it is ok to have this kind of family*" (Imer, Pakistani, 2 years in the UK). This interview excerpt highlights how consumers tend to draw on advertising imagery to infer social norms and suggests that multiethnic embedded marketing is not only a persuasion tool, but an educational means to change social perceptions about more sensitive issues, such as interracial families and migration.

These narratives can be interpreted in light of the common in-group identity model from social psychology, which proposes that intergroup conflict can be reduced by building a common group identity which reduces group boundaries and transforms perceptions of "us" and "them" in an overarching "we" (Gaertner et al., 1993). Employing multiple ethnicity cues in marketing communications may potentially be a strategy to build this common group identity across individuals of distinct ethnic backgrounds, enhance cross-cultural similarities and trigger more positive attitudes towards people of distinct heritage. Exposing individuals from the mainstream ethnic background to diversity through marketing communications may lead to erasure of ethnic barriers and ethnic categorizations, towards a more inclusive society, based on acceptance and friendship: "*In the long term it can have an impact on the way they interrelate with other races. If it's done for a long time, slowly it tells that it's ok to live with other races and interact with them at a normal level – maybe go out, or maybe just be more social with them.*" (Sonia, African, 4 years in the UK). Marketing communications tailored to the diverse audience become, therefore, means of representation and social recognition of the ethnic individuals within the society, giving them a sense of involvement in and contribution to the broader society beyond their ethnic groups/communities.

### 4.3. Are you in or out: placing ethnic marketing in the social inclusion discourse

Part of our interviews focused on the participants living experience as individuals of distinct ethnicity in a majority white society and explored in more depth their understanding of social inclusion, a real social challenge in today's diverse societies. The majority of the informants referred to social inclusion in terms of six key dimensions: acceptance (e.g. "*Social inclusion means they accept you in the society… to live and act. And work. And have friends*"); belongingness (e.g. "*You feel it at home. That is the feeling of being included*"; "*The big thing about not feeling included is you not thinking you belong.*"); comfort ("*I don't think I would feel comfortable if I entered a shop and everybody starred at me. (…) I think the sense of inclusion is when you are not the person that stands out negatively*"); respect and social recognition ("*to feel included I think is the most important. I think it's the recognition from work, from the neighborhood. You see there is respect for you*") and equality ("*feeling equal*", "*being treated equally*").

Although social inclusion was discussed at a broad level, as triggered by the informants' social encounters in their daily routine, it also came up as a topic of reference in our subsequent discussion of ethnic advertising. Words such as acceptance, belongingness, equality and respect were often repeated when describing the feelings triggered by

some advertisements. Social inclusion inferred from advertisements was manifested at two levels – inclusion at the society level and inclusion at the brand level. At the society level, the availability of multicultural advertising on the market appears to show the "*understanding and tolerance of British government*" (Shaun, Chinese, 3 years in the UK), which acknowledges the existence of multiple ethnic communities within the society, accepts them and tries to harness their financial power. In light of this idea, one informant mentioned that diverse marketing imagery could transmit information about how welcoming and friendly one country was towards foreigners: "*if I go to a new country and I see for instance that they have like big publicity outdoor and everything that have more mixed people I do feel more comfortable in the country, especially if it is the first time I am there*" (Nicole, Latin with European Influence, 6 years in the UK).

We observe how our participants draw from advertising imagery to infer their position in the society and how included they are. One informant suggested that multi-ethnic embedded advertisements "*send the message that we are in an inclusive society*" (Sonia, African, 4 years in the UK). By portraying everyone together, the sense of belonging among individuals of ethnic background can be felt and reinforced. On the other hand, mono-ethnic embedded marketing we not interpreted as inclusive, because of their focus on ethnic categorization: "*the whole thing about inclusion is not about saying Black belong, or Asian belong. It's about saying: this is the society, everybody belongs. So, I think you need to guarantee that everybody is going to have everybody portrayed*" (Nicole, Latin with European Influence, 6 years in the UK). Assigning people into groups can at most suggest segregation, but not a welcoming environment where anyone can belong. For these reasons, multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications, which ensure equal and fair representation of ethnicities in a country, are more likely to foster social inclusion than mono-ethnic embedded portrayals. In fact, using models of distinct ethnicities within the same advertisement shows how "*the world is actually meant to be, everyone together*" (Nick, African, 2 years in the UK), and multi-ethnic embedded advertisements provide a more realistic representation of the current society: "*It's about showing what the society is. When you go outside, what do you see? That's what should be portrayed in commercials, you know*" (Patricia, Polish, 5 years in the UK).

Multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications not only inspire inclusion at the society level, but also show that the brand is more inclusive, more welcoming and more accepting towards ethnic consumers, which leads to positive response to advertising and implicitly enhanced brand equity, brand respect and purchase intentions. Our findings point out that brands employing multi-ethnic advertisements seem to be inclusive even without establishing ethnic congruence. For instance, one African participant mentioned that even when a black person was not portrayed in the advertisement, he felt included only by seeing that the brand was open to diversity and featured multicultural cues in its adverts. Therefore, employing multi-ethnic marketing communications may represent a solution towards more inclusive customer relationships and branding strategies, reducing the risk of non-representation through more encompassing ethnic portrayals. Admittedly, this finding challenges the classic theory of distinctiveness (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994) and the findings of past studies showing that ethnic congruent models in advertisements trigger more positive response to the advert than incongruent models (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Khan et al., 2015; Meyers & Morgan, 2013).

### 4.4. The downside of ethnic congruence in mono-ethnic marketing

While multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications contribute to erasure of prejudice within a host society and inspire positive conviviality of diverse ethnic groups, mono-ethnic marketing was criticized for fostering generalizations within one ethnic group and segregation at the society level. In today's reality we cannot assume homogeneity within one ethnic group only due to common ethnic origin. For example, religion and religiosity represent one critical factor in segregating members of the same ethnic group (Lindridge, 2005). Consistent with this view, one of our respondents mentioned: "*what if they put an ad for me because I speak Arabic and they put something from Coran … and I am Christian from Syria? It's not for me although it's my language and everything but it's not for me. It's not my culture*" (Ahmed, Arab, 6 years in the UK). The repetition of the phrase "*it's not for me*" highlights the participant's unfavorable response to the targeting effort and how challenging it is to prime one's identity through ethnic segmentation. We can observe how the participant attempts to detach himself from a particular group of people with whom he is not identifying, by repeatedly emphasizing the lack of congruence between the portrayal in the advert and his own self and religious views.

These findings suggest that it may be extremely easy for marketers to use unwelcome generalizations and to become culturally blind (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). One edifying example of multiple identity blindness and lack of intercultural competence is assigning individuals with a certain ethnic look to one category. One of our informants from South Korea complained about employees of a major telecommunications company stopping him in the shopping mall and asking if he wanted to "*make cheap calls to China*". This informant considers that such incidents are "*annoying*", "*not very pleasant*" and ignorant. Similarly, the prevailing marketing strategy of using vernacular language in targeted communications was interpreted as a sign of ethnic blindness: "*Sometimes it feels not fair as treating everybody speaking this language as the same. Because I speak this language, they think I'm from a particular culture. But I am not … this is not very pleasant*" (Ahmed, Arab, 6 years in the UK). Our millennial informants seem to disapprove with the "one size fits all" approach to defining and characterizing ethnic groups. This highlights the challenge of using demographics as a singular criterion for targeting and segmentation strategies. Use of vernacular language as a mono-ethnic cue in advertisements may create a psychological barrier to the ethnic consumers' need to feel embraced into the mainstream society of the host country. Translation of adverts into a native language "*doesn't put the language skills of foreigner in a good light*" (Mario, Polish, 5 years in the UK), being "*annoying*" and "*patronizing*", exerting a negative impact on how "*this particular group is later going to be perceived by the society*", and raising insecurities with language competence.

Throughout the interviews, our participants repeatedly used words such as "*offensive*", "*ugly*", "*ignorant*", "*annoyed*" or "*patronizing*" when discussing some of the mono-ethnic embedded advisements that made use of stereotypical portrayals and cultural appropriation, such as using traditional ethnic attires for models in advertisements. When commenting on an ad featuring a typical Japanese model wearing kimono and eating sushi, one participant made a very eloquent analogy: "*assuming he's British, it's almost like dressing him with a Victorian jacket, this sparkly jacket with the long hair, white wig, it's just the same. Sometimes it could be very offensive you know, cause it's stereotyping. Sometimes it's very important to understand the culture of a country as it is, those stereotypes sometimes present wrong ideas I would say*" (Simon, South Korean, 5 years in the UK).

The narratives above are particularly illustrative for the theory of "illusory correlation", which posits that stereotypes can often be based on wrong assumptions of inter-group differences and relate the judgment of a group of people (the out-group) with an "illusory" characteristic with which the group is not truly correlated (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Because mono-ethnic embedded marketing communications use ethnicity as a criterion to segment consumers, they highlight the differences between ethnic groups in the social imaginary (Peñaloza, 2017; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963). When these differences are exaggerated, as in the example above, stereotyping representations may appear. This concept of illusory correlation explains most of the stereotypical examples that our participants identified in the

advertisements – small Chinese eyes, black models wearing turbans or the Japanese eating sushi. The lack of cultural competence allows marketers to rely on illusory correlations in marketing imagery. One solution for brands to avoid such generalizations and be more culturally competent may be to hire workforce from ethnic backgrounds who could provide more impactful and culturally sensitive insight to effectively target the ethnic individuals. Although evidence of cultural appropriation can be found in multi-ethnic embedded marketing as well, the "illusory correlation" is even more evident in mono-ethnic ads because of their direct reference to an ethnic group.

### 4.5. "Target me, not my ethnicity!" - importance of natural portrayals of ethnicity in marketing communications

Throughout the interviews participants emphasized the important role of implementing realistic portrayals of ethnic endorsers both in mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic embedded advertisements. They expressed a particular interest and positive affect towards advertisements that used natural portrayals, such as commonly looking people in common contexts who "*just happen to be of distinct ethnicity*" and that were devoid of explicit ethnic cues, such as traditional attires, stereotypical physical features or cultural symbols. In this context, the model's ethnicity does not become "*a spectacle*", but just one element of a brand's integrated efforts to reach to its audiences. Having a great understanding of cultural subtleties, millennials appear to interpret advertisements that overtly emphasize ethnicity as "*artificial*", dramatizing the differences between people of various ethnic backgrounds. In this regard, one participant commented: "*When you see ads with white models you don't write 'white' next to it or you don't write 'equality'. It's just about them. So make it about them, make it the same here*" (James, second generation Pakistani). On a same note, another participant added: "*It's natural (i.e. multi-ethnic ad). You know? It doesn't feel that it has to be a black person and a white person, it's just natural. This is the right way to do it I think. It's not about race at all*" (Nicole, 28, Latin with European Influence, 6 years in the UK).

These narratives seem to point to a new direction for an effective multicultural marketing approach – reduced salience of ethnic cues and use of ethnicity as just a trait to an individual and not as a main segmentation and targeting criterion. This finding is reminiscent of Tsai's (2011) work on gay consumers' interpretation of targeted advertising. Their interpretative study highlights that advertisements devoid of explicitly gay subcultural cues were particularly well received by gay consumers, while commercials that accentuate gayness induced stigmatization. Therefore, minority individuals' interpretations of targeted advertising highlight a desire to bridge the differences with the mainstream consumers by adopting an assimilationist approach – using natural portrayals that make them feel "*just like everyone else*". Drawing on Tsai (2011) and the present study, it appears that marketing to vulnerable minority consumers is in need of "normalization", as a routine marketing strategy and not as a "*big thing*" and a spectacle of cultural diversity.

Similarly, slogans which emphasize a brand's effort to be politically correct and inclusive appeared to be negatively received. One example is a multi-ethnic campaign from Adidas. Although the campaign was very well-received by all our informants due to the highly inclusive message transmitted by the visual representations in the advertisements, the taglines used – "*equality is love*" and "*equality is acceptance*" – were less welcome. Surprisingly, our informants considered these messages "*glaring*" and "*too much into your face*", overstating the effort of "*doing the right thing*". These findings suggest that when concepts such as equality, acceptance or social inclusion are overtly used, they lose their significance and become buzz words used for political correctness. In this case, the brand loses its credibility as an equality supporter and its effort is perceived just as a persuasion attempt: "*Equality is love is just*

like, I don't know, it seems a bit cynical to me… oh look what a good brand we are. Oh look you're all different*" (Manolos, Arab, 9 years in the UK).

### 4.6. Show me all your money! Persuasion knowledge in ethnic marketing communications

Participants suggested that advertisements portraying only one ethnicity that is distinct from the majority of a host country are an explicit sign of marketers' aim to increase the market share, rather than an inclusive attempt. This finding calls for attention to consumers' ability to identify the persuasion attempts when being exposed to mono-ethnic embedded marketing efforts. Millennials are well known for their knowledge of persuasion (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Henrie & Taylor, 2009). Being constantly exposed to marketing communications, millennials have developed an ability to recognize the marketers' persuasion attempts and question how genuine and legitimate a marketing effort is. This reaction to a fully Chinese-embedded advert for high-end cosmetics is edifying: "*They know that Chinese people buy that. And for me I feel little bit disgraceful. (…) That's because not many British people buying it and the Chinese people who are buying it they don't understand English, they don't speak English and purely they look at your pocket. They want your money. They want you to buy their product*" (Silvan, Chinese, living in the UK for 11 years).

Extant literature portrays young Chinese consumers as a lucrative market for luxury products (i.e. Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Li, Li, & Kambele, 2012), but brands need to be aware that young consumers are not naive and that they use their persuasion knowledge to interpret the targeting effort. This is reminiscent of the theory of intercultural accommodation (Holland & Gentry, 1999), according to which ethnic consumers use their persuasion knowledge to evaluate the reasons behind a brand's use of cultural symbols in marketing communications. Following this evaluation, marketer's targeting efforts are interpreted as being either appropriate or manipulative (Friestad & Wright, 1994). When ethnic marketing breaches the social values and becomes only a tool to capitalize on ethnic consumers' disposable income, it may lose its value and have negative repercussions on the brand (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Zhou, Poon, & Wang, 2015).

Furthermore, brands that employ mono-ethnic cues to target Chinese or other Asian consumers are perceived to be less global and of a lower quality, whereas multi-ethnic advertisements appear to trigger more positive brand associations, such as global, high quality, well-known, Westernized or unique: "*One reason for Chinese people to buy these brands is because we want to transfer the image of Western global countries to our identity. If the brand is only targeting Chinese people you will lose these customers. Chinese people want to become more international, more global. Multicultural would be more effective because they would think this brand is preferred in so many countries*" (Collin, Chinese, 4 years in the UK). This is in line with recent research suggesting that multi-ethnic cues in advertising suggest brand globalness and cosmopolitanism and are preferred by consumers in need of distinctiveness (Strebinger, Guo, Klauser, & Grant-Hay, 2017).

## 5. Discussion

The findings from the current study shed light on millennial consumers' perceptions about ethnic marketing communications used in the multicultural marketplace. Our findings portray an ethnically diverse, open-minded group of millennial consumers, with a pronounced global identity, embracing multiculturalism and refuting ethnic blindness. Our findings suggest that millennial consumers express strong opinions on issues of stereotyping and exoticization, are knowledgeable about marketing persuasive intent and interpret the advertisements beyond their ostensible meanings. Constantly negotiating between their multiples social identities, millennials are simultaneously connected to

multiple ancestral or affiliative communities that enrich their multi-faceted selves (Brewer, 2001; Forehand & Deshpandé, 2001). They show a particular interest in diversity led experiences, but at the same time they are proud of their unique ethnic traits. These findings enrich the literature on ethnic millennials as a lucrative market for brands in the global marketplace and open up opportunities for more effective marketing communications to this particular group of consumers.

Furthermore, we provide a new lens to understanding the underlying processes in the decoding and interpretation of mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic advertising by ethnic millennials. Our findings suggest that mono-ethnic embedded marketing communications enhance felt targetedness and trigger millennials' persuasion knowledge and negative brand associations. Our participants criticized this narrow view of ethnic categorization as unrepresentative for the multiple identities inherited by ethnic millennials, but also as a catalyst of "illusory correlations" and stereotypes (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Moreover, our findings suggest that mono-ethnic marketing communication serve as signals of manipulative attempt (Campbell, 1995; Friestad & Wright, 1994), extending the application of the persuasion knowledge model in the context of ethnic marketing research.

On the other hand, our data reveals that multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications reduce the ethnic salience and felt targetedness, trigger more positive feelings and are interpreted as a more genuine attempt to ethnic representation. These findings challenge some past studies which draw on distinctiveness theory to show that consumers prefer targeted messages that portray ethnically congruent cues (Aaker, Brumbaugh, & Grier, 2000; Appiah & Liu, 2009; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; McGuire et al., 1978). Contrary to these studies, our findings demonstrate that ethnic congruence and felt targetedness are not the most important elements in effectively reaching to ethnic millennial consumers. Rather, millennial consumers prefer to be exposed to portrayals of diversity which transmit low manipulative intent, high social meaning, and an overall sense of togetherness that is expected to be representative for the multicultural society they live in. This provides empirical support for claims from extant literature that advertising reflecting a sense of togetherness between individuals of diverse ethnic background through celebration of both commonalities and differences is the key to success in heterogeneous marketplaces (Broderick et al., 2011; Epps & Demangeot, 2013).

Our findings go beyond advertising as a model of persuasive communication to highlight current issues of public attention and policy concern (Mick & Buhl, 1992). We join recent efforts in research of consumer vulnerability and exclusion that question the future of ethnic marketing (Jafari & Visconti, 2014; Kipnis et al., 2012; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Smith & Cooper-Martin, 1997) and emphasize the role of multi-ethnic marketing in promoting acceptance, inclusion and empowerment of ethnic individuals. In line with the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993), our findings show how representations of ethnic diversity in advertising imagery can create an overarching, inclusive social membership category and foster cross-cultural interaction between individuals of distinct ancestry. This can lead to reduced prejudice and social bias and to increased visibility of minority ethnic consumers in the multicultural marketplace.

From a managerial perspective, this research opens a new path towards more effective marketing communications to the global millennial consumers. In current times of ethnic tension and violence in which media and marketing act as agents of social change, marketers need to be sensible to cultural issues, advance and normalize more positive inter-ethnic relations and promote conviviality of diverse ethnic individuals through fair representations in marketing communications (Peñaloza, 2017; Tsai, 2011). While our findings emphasize the challenge to represent diversity without being stereotypical and exclusionary, they can also serve as a set of guidelines for effective communication strategies for marketers who are in the position to improve the welfare of both brands and consumers present in the multicultural marketplace, through a more in-depth understanding of their target market and a stronger focus on social inclusion.

For policy makers, we highlight the potential social implications of ethnically tailored marketing communications and raise a need for increased cultural competence and multicultural education for the young generations. Multicultural marketing could be introduced in the university curriculum to train future marketers. Early education on multiculturalism and social inclusion could broaden cultural views and competence of future generations for a better understanding of ethnicity and increased cultural competence. A concerted effort of inclusive marketing and implementation of inclusive policies is expected to decrease implicit bias in the young generations and reduce prejudice at the society level in the long term.

### 5.1. Future research and limitations

Despite its contribution to current knowledge on global millennial consumers and ethnic marketing, this research is not without limitations. While our sample's demographics were motivated by the general profile of the millennial consumer, the majority of our participants were highly educated and fluent in English, which may provide an imbalanced and unrepresentative view on the broader immigration context in the UK. Future research may focus on a more heterogeneous sample, including participants of varied educational and social status background. Additional investigation of other generational cohorts and a comparative analysis on their perceptions of ethnic embedded marketing communications are also recommended to gain comprehensive understanding of cross-generational differences and similarities. Moreover, similar research may be conducted with other groups of vulnerable consumers, such as LGBT consumers, mixed-race consumers or people with disabilities and investigate how they interpret portrayals of their own vulnerability in marketing communications. Considering that the theoretical ground of this study draws on not only the extant literature but also practitioner-oriented research, we call for more academic research on millennial consumers that could build a solid theoretical ground for new marketing strategies for the global millennial consumers. Nonetheless, the findings of this exploratory study provide the opportunity for further experimental manipulation and testing, which can establish the direction and effect size of the relationships discussed in this paper and particularly of the effect of mono- and multi-ethnic marketing communications on ethnic consumers social inclusion. Finally, as ethnic marketing communications become more prevalent in the mainstream market, future research may consider the majority individuals and their interpretations of minority targeted advertising, but also how ethnic minority consumers respond to advertising featuring models of distinct ethnic heritages.

### Acknowledgement

## Appendix 1. Themes, sub-themes, and power and proof quotes

| Themes | Sub-themes/codes | Power Quotes (shown in the body of the paper in italics) & Proof Quotes (additional, not shown in the body of the paper) |
|---|---|---|
| 4.1. **Stuck in between: Managing the multi-faceted ethnic self** Theoretical concepts addressed: social identity (Brewer, 2001); situational ethnicity (Stayman & Deshpande, 1989); multiple identity integration (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005); global consumer culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007) | Identity confusion/feeling out of place | "I'm sitting in between somewhere actually, I don't entirely belong to here, I understand, and also I don't feel I entirely belong to China. But every time I'm travelling anywhere, any part in Europe, any part in North America, in Asia, I don't feel I'm the foreigner". "Every time I go back to Hong Kong I feel out of place. I mean I look Chinese and I fit it when I walk into a crowd on the street, but inside me I just feel no, I don't belong here in Hong Kong, but then coming back to the UK it's like some people might say 'but you know, you are Chinese, you don't really belong in the UK either'". "Wherever I go I would be a national of that country. Here I would say I'm a British bloke. I would assimilate in the society. I can't say I'm of a particular nationality" "Lots of my Chinese students the first thing they would ask me oh are you Chinese? That's the first thing they would ask me. Sometimes I don't even know how to respond them; cause I am but at the same time I'm not because they would think I'd be able to speak Chinese". "I'm lost in transition. I was born in India and I can go there and dissolve in the community cause I know my language. Whether I consider myself as wholly Indian? Probably not because of the way I was grown up. I was grown up in Dubai. Mostly in Indian community but the media I was exposed … for example I was raised Muslim but I am atheist and I don't believe in God. This is not acceptable back there. In terms of nationality I would say I'm a mixed nationality. Wherever I go I would say I'm a national of that country. Here I would say I'm a British bloke. I would assimilate in the society. I have the culture from Dubai and I also have the culture from here coming in. If I have children here then they are more likely to be British than Indian. They would speak tamal but they will have the British accent, they will learn the culture. I would make sure he gets some of my culture as well". |
| | Multicultural identification/Malleable ethnic identification | "I am mixed (laughing) and I'm very proud of it, I'm really proud of my… For instance, I like my nose and I know that my nose came from being from the natives … the lack of hair I have (showing the arm), little or almost no hair, I like this kind of things" "I'm British and Pakistani cause you are part of two communities and you get the experience twice. I feel like in Manchester I'm part of the Pakistani community, part of the Muslim community and just generally because I was born here, I got the same experiences as my friends who are white so I feel part of that community as well" "I think I'm different but I still identify myself as en Egyptian, I know who I am, I am between Egyptian and European identity. Even if I live here and get a British passport I would still identify myself as an Egyptian but I am definitely not the same like someone who has never been outside of Egypt". "It didn't feel like going home (i.e. going to Pakistan, his parents' country of origin). It just felt like my home because it is my home. I don't know how to explain it. I've never thought about it. It's the first time I'm trying to put it into words. It just felt like that's part of me in that country. It's just like getting in touch with… having not been there for 25 years it was getting in touch with my heritage, getting in touch with my roots". |
| 4.2. **Multi-ethnic marketing as a pathway to lower prejudice** Theoretical concepts addressed: common in-group identity model (Gaertner et al, 1993) | Raising awareness of multiculturalism | "Expose people to the reality which they might not be [part of]", "slowly sensitize them about the multicultural society", and can actually "change the perception about immigrants". "[It's] probably not about how migrants feel in this country… this is education for the local people. For example this poster is educating the local community … we are three types of people who live in this society. I think it's more that kind of feeling". Similarly, another participant argued that "Familiarity, knowledge that they (the ethnic individuals) are there and they are not aliens or something" is a first step towards better communication and inter-ethnic relations. "I just generally think when British are just more exposed to different cultures, Asian cultures or different ethnicities, they will feel more open about us being here". "I think when you see them on TV it makes it easier. Ok… For example in a big brother reality show there was a blind guy and I'd never spoken to a blind person before. And I saw him on TV and I just realized that actually despite the fact that he can't see he's still the same person. I think it's maybe the same with white people. When they see an Asian person or a Muslim person walking down the street they are not sure, they have different views… but when you see them on TV I think it's easier for you to speak to them and realize. So I think it's important. I think media is the first party… if we saw more people on TV…I think that would change something". |
| | Creation of a Common in-group and enhancement of cross-ethnic communication | "In the long term it can have an impact on the way they interrelate with other races. If it's done for a long time, slowly it tells that it's ok to live with other races and interact with them at a normal level – maybe go out, or maybe just be more social with them. With time it will make them think you know, it's fine. I don't have to stick only with my British colleagues. It's ok to hang out with other races" |
| | Perceptions of normality drawn from advertising imagery | "When I look at this ad [multicultural advertisement] I infer the sentence that 'the world is a village'. We are a big family." "There was this advertisement… the man was white and the woman was African American or Asian. That makes you feel that if they are advertising it and showing to the world, then it is ok to have this kind of family" "I think that could change the perception because people can judge based on advertisements. And you might feel like ok if it's in an advert, then that's something normal" (Paulina, Polish, 5 years in the UK). |
| 4.3. **Are you in or out: Placing ethnic marketing in the social inclusion discourse** Theoretical concepts addressed: subjective social inclusion and inclusive marketing (Licsandru & Cui, 2018); distinctiveness theory (Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; McGuire et al., 1978) | Social inclusion discourse | Acceptance (e.g. "Social inclusion means they accept you in the society… to live and act. And work. And have friends"); Belongingness (e.g. "You feel it at home. That is the feeling of being included"; "The big thing about not feeling included is you not thinking you belong."); Comfort ("I don't think I would feel comfortable if I entered a shop and everybody starred at me. (…) I think the sense of inclusion is when you are not the person that stands out negatively"); Respect and social recognition ("to feel included I think is the most important. I think it's the recognition from work, from the neighbourhood. You see there is respect for you"); Equality ("feeling equal", "being treated equally"). |
| | Multi-ethnic marketing creates perceptions of an inclusive society | [the availability of multicultural marketing communications shows the] "understanding and tolerance of British government "if I go to a new country and I see for instance that they have like big publicity outdoor and everything that have more mixed people I do feel more comfortable in the country, especially if it is the first time I am there". [multi-ethnic advertisements] "send the message that we are in an inclusive society". "the whole thing about inclusion is not about saying Black belong, or Asian belong. It's about saying: this is the society, everybody belongs. So I think you need to guarantee that everybody is going to have everybody portrayed". In fact, using models of distinct ethnicities within the same advertisement shows how "the world is actually meant to be, everyone together". "It's about showing what the society is. When you go outside, what do you see? That's what should be portrayed in commercials, you know". |

**4.4. The downside of ethnic congruence in mono-ethnic marketing**
Theoretical concepts addressed: illusory correlations (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976; Tajfel & Wilkes, 19-63); self-presentation (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009).

**Ethnic group misunderstood as religion**

"I mean ... well obviously ads that are going to include people of different ethnicities together I suppose are going to be somewhat better because they are more representative of the society".

"Definitely you feel included. When you see your religion or your ethnicity represented by these brands or being promoted by these brands or you definitely feel that you are part of this community, and they have respect for you. Definitely you feel more included. It's only in the last couple of years I've noticed it".

"Yeah, in a non-direct, indirect way it tells the society that it is more open. Not in all areas obviously, but when it go to the media, national media, then it sends a message that the society is open".

"You see like different ethnic groups, everyone just coming together, like accepting the different colour of different races of people".

"I think when they (the British) see that I think subconsciously tells them that this is an inclusive society. Or we are British an inclusive society. I think it just tells in a way it sends home the message that we are an inclusive society. I think that s it".

"I think it shows what type of country it is and if it's a big American brand and if you have Asian models in it, it shows there is a certain level of tolerance and acceptance in that country".

"When I was looking for internship here I found that they put people from different countries on their websites for mandarin speaking people. It was the first time I saw that that ethnicity is part of the communications. When I saw this message I felt that oh in this company I would be more included or a part of it, a member of this group. They are friendlier to me".

"Because it just shows different people of different cultures altogether. An equal play and they came with a message that equality is acceptance so like accepting people for who they are and then showing this romantic couple here from completely different areas of the world, who just accepted each other for who they really are., they are happy about it. I think this is one of my favourite"[Adidas ad]. "Everyone together. No discrimination. Because we say we are not practicing discrimination. It's not something that we are doing directly. At times we practice it subconsciously... at times unconsciously. By social exclusion".

"I think it will make them good about being included in this society and feel that their opinion matters. You will see quite a few advertisements will do that and they make you feel included".

"Yeah, this is also nice... everybody has the same chance of becoming those... the ruler of the world... it's very important to highlight the equality of opportunity. [referring to The Sun]"

"Umm in terms of inclusion definitely the of the ad that has a variety of races. Although I do understand they can't always do that honestly, it's sensible, but when they do include several races it sends a stronger message to the society".

"They don't say look this is a black people here. They say these are all people, they are all wearing our clothes. We respect you, we respect your community, and maybe there is no Asian man in it ok. But it's still moving in the right direction".

"I think in terms of ads they are telling you... their way of saying you're welcome to buy from us. Or their way of saying we created this product having you in mind. Not just one race. We have you in mind. This is for you".

"but also like sometimes is good to have someone of a different colour a different background. Because you know the brand is open to you, they are extending themselves to other communities and other ethnicities".

"They use different races to advertise their product. You kind of see they are making an effort to kind of portray different inclusion. Probably because they need the market".

"what if they put an ad for me because I speak Arabic and they put something from Coran ... and I am Christian from Syria? It's not for me although it's my language and everything but it's not for me. It's not my culture".

"Sometimes it feels not fair as treating everybody speaking this language as the same. Because I speak this language, they think I'm from a particular culture. But I am not ... this is not very pleasant".

"I don't remember if it was on the street or in the media... they had a veiled woman posing as model in Marks and Spencer advert which was targeting like... they call it Muslim women... but not all women are veiled, my mother is not veiled for example... so this is... this is targeting a religion. A religion is not an ethnic group" (Moustafa)

"If I see a veiled woman on the poster then im sure that whoever did it wants to speak to me but I will not... or if they put the photo of a guy with a gown and a beard and he looks like a typical radical Muslim. I think they want to target Muslim people. I'm a Muslim and I feel they want to target me. But I won't relate to it because this is not the image that I have. I'm not too religious for example. So I won't relate to it. But it won't offend me".

"When I see something like this [coca cola ad in US Super Bowl], I respect the intent of including others but I don't like to associate the Islamic scarf with the Arabs for example. I don't like to equate being Arab with being a Muslim. I think this is not right. But at the same time i cannot demand that everyone in the word understands that".

"Because they know that some Arabic countries are religious. And that doesn't relate to me. The language [Arabic] yes... I read it and everything... But it's not my culture".

"Sometimes I don t care. Sometimes it feels not fair as treating everybody speaking this language as the same. Because I speak this language and they think I'm from that culture and I'm not... this is not very pleasant. But from their point of view they are socially including Arabs. It feels that these people are ignorant. It feels, because it's not like ohohoho I get angry and stuff, but you feel like it's not fair"

**Vernacular language as a form of mono-ethnic marketing**

"doesn't put the language skills of foreigner in a good light", being "annoying" and "patronizing". "This use of an ethnic native language for adverts in the UK appears to have a negative impact on how "this particular group is later going to be perceived by the society", "extremely irritating and patronizing"

"I think advertisement should be in English. (...) You have to have commonality of language. In Pakistan we have an education crisis, a cultural crisis and the reason is language. Because we have so many languages. People don't speak a common language. So I think there should be one, I mean you can speak whatever language you want to speak at home but there should be one common language of communication when you are out of the house".

"I don't think that an advert that is in a different language and no translation would do anything to any ethnic group whatsoever. Even if two languages sort of like co-exist they should actually show that co-existence. Not just use one language".

: "if (the ad) was written I'd probably focus more on the English one then the Chinese one. I mean I'd look at it to try to figure out what they are saying but at the end I'd be thinking - oh, I can't read it. I don't understand what the advertisement is about".

"In the US maybe because you have a large Spanish speaking population and an English speaking, if you do have both languages ok. It does make sense in the US. In the UK, for you to guarantee that they are going to reach many people, you will have to have like 100 languages, that wouldn't make sense. I don't think languages change that much".

"If anything it would probably make me feel embarrassed because it is like a big red sign that people are not integrating, they are not learning the language they are not speaking it so

we are translating it for them. And it kinda feeds into this racist mentality that we have people coming in this country and they don't speak the language and … so I think probably just be in English".

| | |
|---|---|
| Cultural appropriation, stereotypical representations of cultural elements | "*assuming he's British, it's almost like dressing him with a Victorian jacket, this sparkly jacket with the long hair, white wig, it's just the same. Sometimes it could be very offensive you know, cause it's stereotyping. Sometimes it's very important to understand the culture of a country as it is, those stereotypes sometimes present wrong ideas I would say*". |
| | The common "small Chinese eyes" stereotype often used in advertising "is kind of the feeling of foreign people. They always think that we have very long and small eyes. But actually this is not very preferable in China". |
| | "No, if you go back to India you hardly find someone wearing turbans. You will see our dressing style is more or less the same. We have an ethnic day that we dress up in sarees and proper ethnic dress. Otherwise that is not… we don't really wear that attire the whole year, it's not so comfortable". |
| | "When I saw it [Bombay chips ad] I said like Nooo, no one in India looks like that, no one has that hair. This is not Bombay. I am from Bombay and it's very like…sort of stereotype with him standing like that and smiling. It's like a typical Indian dance I think". |
| | "Yeah, the stereotypical image of London, taxis, double-deckers, old men with a little girl, probably granddaughter, businessmen, business woman, big ben… This is the stereotypical image of London but when you actually go there it's very different. Very international, see more tourists than actual English people, you do see a lot of people like these, but you also see a lot of foreign people". |
| | "They are talking about pop chips… they could have had a family or kids… not this stereotypical south Indian hero. With big moustaches and flashy kurta". |
| | "Yeah… and they could have had a thousand ways of showing that. Everybody likes Chinese food. You don't need to make a face like that to like Chinese food. It's quite offensive". |
| | "Cause the Chinese, Japanese, Korean cultures… we all look kind of similar from British people point of view but it's really different when you actually get into it. It's just like how we see European cultures similar but when you actually visit it's really different from country to country. So when they target Chinese market it just feel still very foreign to us. Yeah, I think even if they show Korean models in television British people would still think they are Chinese". |
| | "A little bit annoyed, really, annoyed but I don't blame them cause there are just so many Chinese people… really one third of the world population is Chinese it's likely to assume to all Asian looking people … East Asian looking people are Chinese. Statistically speaking it's completely understandable. Still little bit annoyed". |
| | "When I see this is like they want to describe Asian people as someone who are keen to eat a lot which is not good. In our culture is not a good thing. We are trying to promote more the people who can control their own desire. But this would make me feel offended if they try to build the Asian image like this". |
| | "Maybe they don't even realize what they are doing with the good old days. Maybe they have the right intentions but because they are not from an ethnic background they don't know how ethnic people think and if they had people from ethnicity working there, ore people, then it could be a lot more relevant". |
| Triggering exclusionary feelings | "This one is so patronizing – remember the good old days back home. I can't believe, it is so patronizing; Is that real? They essentially say this is not your home. And that would send you back and that would make you think – am I part of this community if I read that? Obviously, the message has to be targeted to the Asian community. They can use Asian models and stuff. But I just think the text is really not inclusive". |
| | "No, cause again it's just phone company and money transfer company. So it's the idea basically that I come here and then I go to job and then I just call my wife back in Poland and I want to send the money that I earn back home. It's not the right type of message". |
| | "I just think it's a typical British ad. That's their world. As an international I wouldn't feel very at home. It feels like it's their world you know. It's not like I feel I'm a part of the story. It may be different if I saw a Black person there. Even if it's not a Black person but somebody of a different race with them it would make me think there are people like me who travel there". |
| Whiteness/exclusionary brands | "*They are not creating that benchmark that ralph Lauren for example do.*" |
| | "Yeah very white kind of ad… I don't like it… it may be true but again if you want to portray London especially, you put the ALLLL there. Because in London is not like this anymore and it hasn't been in a long time". |
| | "Tommy Hilfiger for ex he himself said that he doesn't want to feature Indian models or models of other ethnicities on his brand because he didn't want … he wanted to maintain the elitism that his brand represented. But he has like a millions stores in India. And that sends a conflicting message. Because if he has Indian models on the brand it shows that the brand is open to you". |
| | "if you look at Abercrombie and Fitch they only have white models and they all have a particular height and they all look in a particular way and they try to say that others need to look that way to wear their clothes. So it's definitely not inclusive. Even at their store they have a particular height and figure to work in their store. You need to look like a model, reach that super high benchmark and you need to look a certain way and I feel that s not… you need to be open to everyone of different colour and heights and everything". |
| | "They have this kind of like the American elite and they show that picture of people going golfing and yachting etc. and it kind of implies that you need to look like that…I know the clothes are expensive so you sort of need to have that wealth and look like that blonde model to fit into that picture than Ralph Lauren is showing on the campaign. That isn't inclusive. Maybe inclusive to the American elite and not to the rest of the world. But they do operate all over the world". |

| Theme / Theoretical concepts | Sub-concept | Quotes |
|---|---|---|
| 4.5. *"Target me, not my ethnicity!" - Importance of natural portrayals of ethnicity in marketing communications* **Theoretical concepts addressed:** *normalization of marketing to vulnerable consumers* (Tsai, 2011) | | Just portray commonly looking people in common contexts who "*just happen to be of distinct ethnicity*". |
| | | "*When you see ads with white models you don't write 'white' next to it or you don't write 'equality'. It's just about them. So make it about them, make it the same here*". |
| | | "*It's natural. You know? It doesn't feel that it has to be a black persona and a white person, it's just natural. This is the right way to do it I think. It's not about race at all. It's a simple commercial and they just try to mix two people. And also this is not the stereotypical black, he's not the stereotypical white, doesn't have blonde hair, blue eyes*". |
| | | "*equality is love*" and "*equality is acceptance*" – "*I think it's a bit too in your face*". |
| | | "*Equality is love is just like, I don't know, it seems a bit cynical to me… oh look what a good brand we are. Oh look you're all different*". |
| | | "*people who are out there in the media, they are seen, they are heard… that's what I'd like to see, people, normal people, and not making a big deal out of the thing that they are Polish. Not making it a Polish spectacle. Just have the normal people working in normal jobs, normal contexts, with all the normal people, who just happen to be Polish. And that's what I'd like to see*". |
| | | "*This feels like it's natural… it doesn't feel… That's the thing. It doesn't feel artificial. It doesn't feel that they put it together there just because they had to put it together. Because that's how you are supposed to do things now. This is the way it should go. It's not about creating acceptance. It's about instigating the acceptance that already is and trying to get more*". |
| | | "*Marks and Spencer they do show role models, they show a diverse commercial and everything, but it's not about the celebration. It's about portrayal. It's about showing these people, whereas in Benetton it is about the celebration of this, the happiness, the naturality of it. You know like it's normal people, it's not even that super top models, super gorgeous… no… it's even normal people sometimes… you know? That's a big difference*". |
| | | "*look we put up a group of people of different colour. This is equality, we are so social just. Why don't you just make a normal ad and just put people of colour on it and don t make it like it's a big thing?*" |
| | | "*There is no cultural appropriation going on, they are not trying to like embellish on cultural aspect of a certain race. They are naked they are covered in a blanket. There is no culture guide on terms of hair style maybe, well, but again that's what people look like and this one is just cute (children ) and again they are all naked so there are no cultural traces or anything embellished. It's just people doing funny faces, children, everyone loves children*". |
| | | "*Obviously the message is good – equality. It's about equality but because it's so glaring, so in your face it still feels these are different types of people and they are making it really apparent they are from different ethnicities. But in that first one (only Indian) he is just a model and his ethnicity is irrelevant – this is an Asian man but he is a model so I prefer the first one*". |
| 4.6. *Show me all your money! Persuasion knowledge in ethnic marketing communications* **Theoretical concepts addressed:** *persuasion knowledge model* (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994); *intercultural accommodation theory* (Holland & Gentry, 1999); *perceived brand globalness* (Strebinger et al., 2017) | Mono-ethnic marketing and the manipulative intent | "*they know that Chinese people buy that. And for me I feel little bit disgraceful. (…) That's because not many British people buying it and the Chinese people who are buying it they don't understand English, they don't speak English and purely they look at your pocket. They want your money. They want you to buy their product*". |
| | | "*It shows that whoever is doing it recognizes that there are ethnic groups outside the mainstream market group and that they want to reach it. Whether it's good thing…Because it's an advert and it involves marketing and it's purely for profit then I don't want to give too much credit and say this is a great thing because maybe the person who did it is still racist but this is what sells and he happily did it. It doesn't mean anything bad or good about the society but it shows you that there is a big portion of consumers who might relate to it*". |
| | | "*The message and the person who is putting the ad want to get money. He's not interested in understand cultures and stuff*". |
| | | "*It seems like all of the commercials places want to attract the Chinese tourists because they always spend a lot of money to buy some luxury products. It's actually very common if you go to luxury shops and you can see a lot of Chinese people working in this place*". |
| | Negative brand associations and brand image transfer | "*if the brand is only targeting Chinese people it seems they try to cheat us. The media is telling us that they are targeting Chinese because our taste is really poor. We are rich but have poor taste. So in this case I wouldn't like the brand, I would believe what we read in the media*" |
| | | "*One reason for Chinese people to buy these brands is because we want to transfer the image of western global countries to our identity. If the brand is only targeting Chinese people you will lose these customers. Chinese people want to become more international, more global. Multicultural would be more effective because they would think this brand is preferred in so many countries*". |
| | | "*So only Chinese language for me I would think it's not a good brand. But if you put Chinese people among people from other countries I would think this is a global brand. And this would make it more effective. I don't think this works for people from other countries. I think this is because Chinese people think the quality of Chinese products is low*". |
| | | "*For me being targeted is not nice. From my experience I know most of the Chinese business are providing low quality. So I would think less quality*". |
| | | "*In the UK if a brand only uses Chinese image I would think it's a low-quality brand. And I would think maybe I will find the same product in China. Why shall I buy here? Or make me think the quality in the UK is the same like in China. So why would I want to buy it here?*" |
| | | "*[African beer] It's kind of two way to be honest. It's a tendency to think that goods from Africa in terms of standard they don't always match international standard and again that might be a bias, let me go for something else. It makes me think of what standardization is being used. My comment would be different if it's food. I went to a supermarket and I bought fresh food from Africa. I'd be happy to buy it*". |
| | | "*I think some people prefer NOT to see some Chinese models. To my knowledge this people they want to buy this luxury brands so they have some kind of privilege. So they want to experience that kind of uniqueness… unique in here. So if you write in Chinese words maybe they think … maybe this I can also buy in China … it's not unique here*". |

Note: Pratt (2009) recommends providing "power quotes" (the most compelling bits of data that effectively illustrate the author's points) in the body of the paper, and "proof quotes" (the part of the data that only bolster points the author has already made in the body of the paper) as additional data in tables. For completeness and coherent comprehension, both "power quotes" and "proof quotes" are included in this table.

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