A theory-based measure of acculturation: The shortened cultural life style inventory

Dawn Lerman [a,*], Rachel Maldonado [b], David Luna [c]

[a] Graduate School of Business Administration, Fordham University, 113 West 60th Street, New York, NY 10023, USA
[b] Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA 99004, USA
[c] Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College, CUNY, New York, NY 10010, USA

Abstract

This paper describes a model of acculturation for classifying minority consumers into distinct categories depending on their attitudes and behaviors toward their minority culture and toward the majority culture. These categories are assimilation, segregation, and integration. The model differs from previous models of acculturation in consumer research in that it does not assume a linear progression toward assimilation. The acculturation categories identified by the model can be used to segment minority markets. A reduced version of a previous scale based on that acculturation model is developed and validated in two empirical studies in a consumer research setting. Our scale can be used by managers to segment minority populations.
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1. Introduction

Recent waves of immigration have increased the focus on acculturation as an important factor for understanding consumer behavior and segmenting minority markets (Gorney, 2007). Research suggests, for example, that acculturation has a moderating effect on attitudes toward advertising (Deshpande et al., 1986) and the models featured in advertising (Ueltschy and Krampf, 1997) as well as on the comparative persuasion of TV commercials in different languages (Roslow and Nicholls, 1996). Acculturation also appears to moderate a variety of subcultural influences on behavior, including spousal or family roles in consumer decision making (Ganesh, 1997; Ogden, 2005; Webster, 1994), the weights given to attributes in the choice process (Kara and Kara, 1996), coupon usage (Hernandez and Kaufman, 1991), brand loyalty (Podoshen, 2006), the purchase of prestige products (Deshpande et al., 1986) and

conspicuous consumption (Chen et al., 2005) as well as consumption patterns in general (Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983).

This abundance of research might suggest that the role of acculturation in consumer behavior has been firmly established in the literature. Instead, researchers have started to recognize the limitations of prior acculturation studies and the challenge of acculturation research in general (see, for example, Ogden et al., 2004). Chief among concerns is the issue of measurement. Instead of adopting a single measure of acculturation, researchers have relied on a variety of measures, which, while seemingly demonstrating a high level of external validity, are not strongly grounded in theory and have not been rigorously tested. These measures have included length of stay in the country, type and extent of interpersonal communications with members of the culture, media usage, language(s) spoken, reference group influences, extent or likelihood of intermarriage, and cultural identification, among others (see, for example, Kang and Kim, 1998; Laroche et al., 1998; Peñaloza, 1989; Valencia, 1985).

A solution for this problem may be found in the cross-cultural psychology literature or, more specifically, in the Cultural Life Style Inventory (CLSI), a measurement scale

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 212 636 7358.
  E-mail address: lerman@fordham.edu (D. Lerman).

developed by Mendoza (1994) and inspired by Berry's (1980) model of acculturation. While the Berry model has been well recognized in the marketing literature (see, for example, Askegaard et al., 2005; Holland and Gentry, 1999; Ogden et al., 2004; Podoshen, 2006), the CLSI has not been adopted by researchers. One reason may be its 28-item length. Shorter scales are normally preferred in consumer research as they allow researchers to include a wider variety of measures in their studies without adversely affecting response rates or inducing fatigue. This is particularly important for measures used as covariates, as most of the questionnaire is typically reserved for the main constructs of interest (Richins, 2004).

In this paper, we advocate using the CLSI as a segmentation tool in marketing, as it demonstrates a high level of reliability and validity and is based on a theoretically sound model of acculturation. We recognize, however, that the length of the scale makes it disadvantageous for use in many consumer studies. With this in mind, we have identified a highly reliable and valid short version of the CLSI, resulting in an easy-to-administer, theory-based measurement tool that has the potential to dramatically increase our understanding of the role of acculturation in consumer behavior and decision-making.

2. Acculturation and its measurement

2.1. The acculturation construct and current measurement tools

Consumer acculturation has been defined as the process of adapting to a different consumer cultural environment (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2001; Peñaloza, 1994). This process can result in a variety of lifestyle patterns which have been acknowledged in the business press (e.g., Grow, 2004). Specifically, some immigrants meld into the dominant culture, some adapt while retaining much of their own culture, and some retain their own culture and do not interact with the dominant group. These non-linear patterns are also reflected in recent statistics. For example, although 90% of the children of U.S. Hispanic immigrants report that they speak English very well, 97% of Mexican-American children and 76% of children of other Hispanic origins also speak Spanish. Media patterns clearly reflect this trend, as the Spanish-language network Univision experienced 44% audience growth from 2001 to 2004 and 16% ad revenue growth in 2001 alone (Grow, 2004).

Membership in a specific ethnic subculture has long been recognized as a strong influence in shaping people's needs and wants, and can be predictive of several consumer behaviors (Deshpande and Stayman, 1994). The size and growth of minority communities are pressuring marketers to find segmentation tools to use in targeting and influencing consumer behavior in these markets. However, the diversity within these communities requires that such tools break down large ethnic subcultures into meaningful lifestyle distinctions. Only then will marketers be able to design targeted marketing programs to serve the diverse needs of such communities (Gorney, 2007).

There seems to be a divergence in researchers' understanding of how minority communities adjust to a different consumer cultural environment. Typical assimilation models assume that upon moving to a new environment, individuals will lose their ethnic identity and become increasingly like the new culture. In contrast, acculturation models recognize that while changes may take place over time, individuals may not necessarily become more like the new culture. Studies of immigrant adaptation patterns indicate that while some later generations show a decline in some indigenous cultural practices, many ethnic group members retain a strong identification with and commitment to their ethnic group (Berry, 1980; Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Phinney et al., 1992; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992). Similarly, some members develop a strong and favorable relationship with the dominant society while others have little or no desire to interact with the dominant society. The resulting behaviors give rise to distinct adaptation or lifestyle patterns (Phinney, 1990; Phinney et al., 1992). These distinct lifestyles or patterns are known as acculturation categories and represent different segments within an ethnic market.

Acculturation category determination depends on whether one's behavior reflects the cultural traits and characteristics of one's culture of origin and/or those of the dominant or host culture. In other words, acculturation outcome depends on the extent to which one participates in dominant society and/or in ethnic-related behaviors. Several overlapping dimensions of ethnic identity and acculturation have been studied, the most popular of which is language use (Quester and Chong, 2001). This includes how well ethnic members speak the dominant language, how often their ethnic language is spoken at home, and in which language they prefer to speak if given a choice (Valencia, 1985). Other language use situations include language used at work, in school, while shopping, and when speaking with relatives, or the language of preferred media (Hui et al., 1992).

Language has been shown to have good validity as a behavioral measure (Laroche et al., 1991), but language measures alone may not be appropriate for all acculturating groups and should be combined with other behaviors. Examples of other behavioral areas include place of residency (ethnicity of neighborhood), celebration of holidays and special events, social interaction activities, ethnicity of friends, intermarriage and spousal ethnic identification, and the amount of direct versus indirect dominant culture contact (Gentry et al., 1995; Jun et al., 1993; Laroche et al., 1991; Lee, 1994; Valencia, 1985).

2.2. A theoretical model of acculturation

Berry offers a particularly useful model with which to investigate consumer acculturation (Berry and Kim, 1988) by categorizing people based on the value they place both on maintaining their minority cultural identity and on developing a relationship with mainstream society. The traditional view of immigrant assimilation into the dominant culture is represented in this model, but the model also recognizes three other possible outcomes of the acculturation process: segregation, integration, and marginalization.

2.2.1. Assimilation
Individuals in this category relinquish their cultural identity and opt to move into the larger society (Berry, 1980; Berry and Kim, 1988). As a result, they typically engage in dominant