

## SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY

### Acculturation and Consumer Behavior: Building Cultural Bridges Through Consumption

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#### SESSION OVERVIEW

This Special Session focuses on one of the most characteristic phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—immigration and *acculturation*. By presenting findings from four countries, it aims to advance acculturation theory and provide consumer behavior researchers with a forum to share ideas, perspectives, and theories relating acculturation to consumption. Since the acculturation-consumption link remains under-researched, scholars are likely to be interested in a cutting-edge forum on it. The session will also offer a networking opportunity for scholars pursuing acculturation research. By bringing together researchers who study the wide range of behavior of different ethnic minorities around the globe, the session can *contribute* to the consumer behavior field by advancing the theory on acculturation. The *likely audience* will include researchers interested in studying acculturation and cross-cultural consumer behavior.

The four papers span a wide range of consumers' acculturation aspects. The *first paper* on Indian UK immigrants argues that religion's role in acculturation is often oversimplified; it demonstrates that religion, through acculturation, should be seen as a normative political ideology. The *second paper* on US Hispanic immigrants investigates the relationships between acculturation and consumer attitudes and behaviors. Its findings suggest that individual and environmental factors affect immigrants' chosen acculturation strategy and that acculturation levels determine consumers' loyalties to brands/stores. The *third paper* extends acculturation theory by integrating a historical perspective into it. It argues that the host and the original countries' historical relationships affect immigrants' consumers' acculturation. It compares consumer identity construction of French Algerian and Turkish immigrants. The *fourth paper* on Israeli Russian immigrants argues that being immigrants involves a sense of distinctiveness from the host country's population, which may be accompanied by negative feelings of being outsiders rather than positive feelings of being unique. Consumers' need for uniqueness among immigrants was found to be associated with acculturation motivation and ethnic identification.

#### EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

##### **“Acculturation, Religion and Consumption in Normative Political Ideology”**

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Calls for studies into religion's influence on consumption (e.g., Douglas and Craig 1992) have not produced a significant response. We address these calls by considering how religions and related acculturation tensions affect consumption. We advance existing theories within a group of second-generation Indians living in Great Britain who have experienced, to varying degrees, segregation on the basis of their ethnicity and, more importantly, religious identity. Specifically, differing religions as acculturation agents result in consumption choices that reflect differing acculturation and political/ideological outcomes. This is illustrated by exploring these themes through the ultimate expression of Western culture; individuality expressed through materialistic consumption, a choice supported by previous research into aspects of these

themes (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; White and Dahl, 2007). Consumption can be identified with specific cultural-religious meanings (McCracken 1986). Religion's meaning and effect on consumption must be considered in the context of social (formal laws, informal social norms) and personal choices (individuals' religious adherence and their need to express a religious identity; Cosgel and Minkler 2004a/b). Hence, how an individual uses consumption to express their strength of and identification with religion will ultimately express their identification with their ethnic group, their acculturation level and political/ideological outcomes.

We followed Venkatesh's (1995) qualitative ethno-consumerism framework and interpretivist studies (e.g., Holt and Thompson 2004). The sample consisted of 16 British-born Indian women from a British university. All were self-identified as second generation Indian, aged 18-25, and consisted of six Hindus, six Sikhs and four Muslims. Participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions over 13 months, each on two separate occasions.

All participants' behaviours were typical of a dialogical acculturation model by switching behaviours to adapt across contexts and had similar acculturation levels on language, food and media consumption, and clothing. All had experienced difficulties over their ethnic and religious identities and acknowledged sharing similar amount of time in engaging with their religious identity and related behaviours. All noted the complexity of their religious identity within their own acculturation identity. Of particular interest was how Hindus and Sikhs religious identity reflected Cosgel and Minkler's (2004) social choice, in contrast to Muslims' personal choice.

Hindu participants viewed their religious identity only as an aspect of their life, engaged on a selective basis when needed. Religious-consumption was limited to specific festivals or family gathering. Life in Britain represented an easy transition without acculturation tension. In contrast, religion for Sikhs produced a stronger sense of religious identity, albeit one that didn't adhere closely to Sikh religious teachings. Religious orientated consumption was minimized; instead their families used conspicuous consumption to reinforce a public image of acculturation success; a public display that centred on their interactions around their local Gurdwara (a Sikh religious building). Muslims expressed a distinct distancing from Western-cultural consumption narratives. Materialistic behaviours were dismissed as un-Islamic. Their narrative reflected an acculturation paradox. Whilst they rejected aspects of their parents' Indian culture towards materialistic consumption, they attempted to forge an Islamic identity that rejected Western-cultural values of consumption whilst accepting the more liberal aspects of British society. The latter was behaviourally strongest of all participants on the basis of religious identity. Their behaviours reflected aspects of White and Dahl's consumer identity and dissociative influence (2007) and Crockett and Wallendorf's (2004) on political ideology in consumer behaviour. Why these differences emerged partly lied in participants' choices to access their religion's teachings and how they negotiated and understood their acculturation experiences. In sum, religion's affect on acculturation and consumption is more complex than previously thought. Normative and political ideologies need to be considered with acculturation and religion's consumption impacts.

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### "A Comprehensive Model for Hispanics' Acculturation: Antecedents and Impacts on Store and Brand Loyalty"

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Global immigration and cultural diversification highlight the importance of acculturation. Immigrants bring cultural characteristics from their native countries, while adapting to new cultures changes attitudes and consumption behavior (Berry, 1980). Consumer behavior acculturation studies are scarce, lack integration, and tend to be theoretical rather than empirical (Ogden, Ogden & Schau, 2004). We integrate concepts from acculturation and consumer behavior literature and our empirical study identifies individual and environmental factors affecting acculturation, uses a bi-dimensional acculturation concept, and explores the impact of the chosen acculturative strategy on US Hispanics' consumption. *Acculturation* refers to social/psychological changes resulting from contacts between individuals from different cultures during which immigrants acquire attitudes, behaviors, and cultural identity of host and integrate them with their original cultures' (Herskovits, 1936). Acculturation theories address immigrants' adaptation to host cultures. A bi-dimensional model of acculturation includes original culture maintenance (OCM) and host culture adherence (HCA) (Berry, 1980), which provide a better fit to the acculturation reality, allowing individuals to maintain or neglect their original culture while participating in the host culture (Cabassa, 2003).

We include ethnic identity, adaptability to change (individual level) and intercultural peer contact (environmental level) as antecedents. *Ethnic Identity* refers to individuals' affiliation with a cultural group. While ethnic identity and acculturation are related and affect immigrants' adaptation, research on their relationship is inconsistent. Some view ethnic identity as influenced by acculturative changes in the new culture over time (Ward, 2001). Others argue that ethnic identity affects acculturation (e.g., Peñaloza, 1994). While acculturation is a process of change, ethnic identity may or may not be static (Ogden, et al., 2004). Hence, we view ethnic

identity as an antecedent of integration into the host culture. *Adaptability to change* refers to individuals' ability to cope with and adapt to changes. It affects cultural adjustment and change-accepting immigrants should adapt more to the new culture (Valdes, 2002). *Intercultural Peer Contact* refers to the extent of immigrants' contact with peers from the host culture, who can inhibit or accelerate acculturation (Searle & Ward, 1990)

Notably, Hispanics may (Segal & Sosa, 1983) or may not (Saegert et al., 1985) be more brand-loyal than others. We broaden loyalty to include brands and stores, add an orientation dimension (Hispanic/General Market), and argue that assimilators will prefer General Market (GM) brands/stores and acculturating individuals will prefer ethnic ones.

## Methodology, Findings, and Conclusions

A sample of 208 Hispanic-origin individuals in the Miami area provided data. English and Spanish questionnaires were used with scales for intercultural peer contact, ethnic identification, adaptability to change, acculturation, and brand and store loyalty.

Individuals with conational peers and strong ties with them used OCM acculturation strategy. As conational peers satisfy immigrants' need for a social framework in the host country, they discourage immigrants from seeking friendships with host-culture individuals. Ethnic identity was associated with OCM but not HCA acculturation strategy. Individuals' sense of pride, belongingness, and satisfaction with their original culture reduced their adoption of the host culture. Tolerance to change facilitated the utilization of HCA acculturation strategy and decreased the use of OCM strategy. The data mostly supported the proposed relationships between the two acculturation strategies and consumer behaviors. Hispanics, who adhered to the host country exhibited loyalty to Anglo stores and brands and disloyalty to Hispanic stores (but not Hispanic brand). Two possible explanations for this finding: practically, GM stores in the study's region sell a variety of Hispanic ethnic products that might satisfy the basic needs of assimilated individuals; at the image level, assimilators might deliberately refrain from being seen in ethnic stores, which might signal their differentiation and segregation and categorize them as outsiders to the dominant society. Hispanics high on OCM should be loyal to Hispanic stores and brands, and will not associate OCM with loyalty to Anglo stores and brands.

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**"How Do Historical Relationships Between The Host and Home Countries Shape The Immigrants' Consumer Acculturation Processes?"**

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Following the deaths of two second-generation immigrants of *banlieue*, weeks of rioting in the Paris region forced the French media to pay more attention to the country's minorities. We believe that these minorities, marginalized as such, experience 'dominated consumer acculturation' (Üstüner and Holt, 2007). Much like the rural-to-urban migrants that Üstüner and Holt studied, these minorities live in a society that undermines the building blocks of their identities: their ethnicities. In Üstüner and Holt's study the form of domination was based on social class. The rural-to-urban migrants constituted the lowest class in the city and therefore were bearing a heavy class-based social stigma. Additionally, the consumer acculturation processes they experienced were more problematic than previously argued in the literature.

Several studies have investigated the socio-historic patterning of consumption (see Arnould and Thompson 2005). In particular, there is an evolving consumer research literature which focuses on consumer acculturation and identity construction of immigrants. Peñaloza's (1994) studied the consumption experiences of Mexicans in the US and provided a dynamic approach to acculturation models. Oswald (1999) saw acculturation as a form of cultural swapping and argued that immigrants borrow cultural elements of the home and host country. Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) argued that the transnational consumer culture is also an acculturative agent. While this literature contributed to our understanding of consumer acculturation it did not consider the historical, social, and cultural context within which acculturation takes place. Üstüner and Holt's study (2007) is an exception, which argued that migrants are not the sole acculturation agents: social and historical factors also matter. Coining the term 'dominated consumer acculturation' Üstüner and Holt demonstrated how class-based domination shaped rural-to-urban migrants' acculturation to their new social setting.

We extend Üstüner and Holt's critical approach to acculturation and argue that social-class is only one form of domination. Most immigration today takes place from less developed, mostly colonized countries, to more developed, mostly colonizing countries. The forms of domination these immigrants face in their host countries are not limited to social-class. There are historical tensions between the host and home countries, stigmas associated with each other's cultures. Accordingly, we are interested in uncovering the ways in which such a cultural history shapes immigrants' collective memories and consumer identities. We ask two questions: How is the colonial social memory represented in immigrants' personal identities and expressed through consumption? What are the impacts of tensions on immigrants' acculturation process?

This research considers both the generational and ethnic differences among immigrants to answer these questions. It com-

pares consumer identity construction processes of second-generation Algerian immigrants (with a colonial past) to that of Turkish immigrants (without a colonial past, but with recent tensions with France). While Algerians' social memory carries mixed feelings and memories about France and the colonial period, Turks' does not. While Turkish immigrants do not have a similar cultural history and institutional memory, tensions have emerged between France and Turkey over Turkey's historical relationships with Armenians and Kurds and over its demand to become an EU member. The study then compares acculturation processes of second-generation immigrants. If communitarian allegiances are based on regional, village, or ethnic ties and historical narratives for first-generation immigrants, for second-generation ones, however, they often take the form of emotional/nostalgic attachments to a particular origin or to a 'second-hand memory'. This attachment is more mythic than real, and often a corresponding reinforcement of the division between 'them' and 'us'. This is particularly the case in a context of exclusion and stigmatization, like in the *banlieue*. While this study is a work-in-progress, we will present the first comparative analysis at the conference.

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**"Unique or Different: The Role of Consumers' Need for Uniqueness in the Acculturation Process"**

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Uniqueness holds a positive connotation in Western societies. It involves a feeling that sets individuals apart from the crowd, but in a manner that is appreciated by others. Tian et al. (2001, p. 52) defined consumers' need for uniqueness (CNFU) as "the trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self-image and social image". CNFU is a means for satisfying NFU by using possessions creatively, making unpopular consumption choices, and avoiding buying and consuming commonly used products. According to Tian et al. (2001), all individuals use these consumption behaviors to some extent to establish a unique social image. Immigrant

consumers often feel different from the population in the host country on the acquisition and use of consumer goods. Such distinctiveness is often accompanied by a feeling of being outsiders rather than by being unique. Thus, consumption is culturally-bound, which requires immigrants to adapt their behavior to the host country's consumer culture (Ownbey & Horridge 1997; Peñaloza 1994). Hence, the issue of reference groups becomes more complex for immigrants. The original ethnic community has its own language, customs, and consumption behavior whilst the new host community exerts pressure on immigrants who want to build a new life and develop a sense of belonging to adopt its consumption style (e.g., Deshpande, Hoyer & Donthu 1986; Xu et al. 2004). Under these conditions, expressing uniqueness is a challenge.

Immigrants can overcome this challenge by acculturating as a means of creating a unique self-image. By adopting the consumption behaviors of the host population, immigrants can set themselves apart from their original ethnic group, but in a manner that is approved by the majority host population. In this case, a strong motivation to acculturate will be positively associated with CNFU that is benchmarked against the original ethnic group. Alternatively, immigrants can take the opposite approach for establishing a unique identity. They can express their ethnic identity in order to distinguish themselves from the majority host population. In this case, individuals will acquire, use, and display possessions that highlight their ethnic group. Choosing to express uniqueness in this manner will be appreciated by the original ethnic group but may result in social and even legal sanctions from the majority host population. We argue that immigrants' CNFU is associated with their motivation to acculturate and with consumer behavior. Consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) and ethnic identity serve as predictors of CNFU, which serves as an antecedent to acculturation strategies. Innovative shopping and the desire to purchase unique products were used as consequences of acculturation strategies. All constructs were tested in relation to the host community (the general Israeli population) and to the original culture (the former Soviet Union-FSU).

### Method, Findings, and Conclusions

Information was gathered using a closed-end questionnaire from a convenience sample of 177 adult immigrants from FSU. Structural equation modeling was used to test the model.

Individuals with a strong FSU identity display their uniqueness in the FSU community. No relationships were found between identification with the Israeli community and CNFU. On the other hand, susceptibility to influence from the Israeli community was associated positively with uniqueness manifestations in the FSU community and the general Israeli population. No relationships were found between susceptibility to influence from the FSU community and CNFU. The expression of CNFU in the FSU community was associated positively with the original culture maintenance strategy of acculturation and host culture adherence. CNFU's projection in the Israeli community was negatively related to the original culture maintenance strategy of acculturation and had no relationship with host culture adherence. High host-culture-adherence individuals had a strong desire for unique Russian products and a high level of shopping innovativeness for Israeli and Russian products. Immigrants who chose to preserve their original culture demonstrated a strong desire for unique products and innovative shopping for Russian products only. In sum, immigrants do fuse the formation of their unique identity with their chosen acculturation strategy, which ultimately affects their consumer behavior.

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