

Ethnic consumer reaction to targeted marketing: a theory of intercultural accommodation. (Gender and Multicultural Issues in Advertising: Stages on the Research Highway)

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Marketers are increasingly recognizing the growing power of ethnic groups, and are responding with targeted marketing efforts. Targeted communications often draw on various references to the ethnic culture in an attempt to enhance communication with and gain the approval of the intended audience. However, research on how such accommodation efforts may be received is lacking. Drawing on a variety of disciplines, the authors develop a theory of intercultural accommodation to fill that gap. The proposed model views the consumer as having both affective and attributional responses to a targeted communication. The consequences of the response are proposed to influence the consumer's evaluation, comprehension, and recall of the message, and to influence behavioral intentions toward the communicator.

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"It's like they're kissing up to Hispanics to get your business."

"They couldn't care less about Hispanic consumers."

"This ad shows caring concern regarding all Americans."

"It seems that they will say whatever they can to appease the black community in order to sell their product."

"I feel they might support African-American events."

"They're just trying to make money from the black community."

How do ethnic group members feel about being the "target" of advertising? The preceding comments from consumers responding to an ad that carried a salute to Black History Month or to Hispanic Heritage Month reveal a potentially wide range of responses. Before we explore the responses, however, let us examine the importance of ethnic target marketing.

Ethnic Diversity in the Marketplace

Demographic shifts may act as a catalyst for social and cultural changes in both the private and commercial spheres. From a business perspective, many companies are discovering that previously ignored ethnic groups are growing in market power and that meeting their needs is an opportunity for success. Demographic trends among the largest ethnic groups reveal that each will continue to increase in significance as a potential target market. The African-American population is expected to reach 40 million by the year 2005, representing a \$280 billion target market (Miller 1993). The growth of the Hispanic-American market is even more significant to marketers. In 1960, the Hispanic population was estimated to be around seven

million. By 1980 it had doubled in size, and by 1990 had grown to around 21 million - a threefold increase during a 30-year period (Gill, Glazer, and Thernstrom 1992). The Census Bureau estimates that Hispanic-Americans, currently 9% of the population, will increase to 23% by the year 2050 (Associated Press 1993), and Hispanic purchasing power will increase commensurately from the 1990 estimate of \$134 billion (Nelson and Lukas 1990). Growth in the Asian-American market is small in absolute numbers but represents the highest rate of growth. Asian-Americans are expected to increase from 3% of the population in 1990 to 10% by the year 2050 (Associated Press 1993). Clearly, from demographic and economic perspectives, ethnic target marketing is an important issue.

Examination of current business trends indicates that the growth of ethnic target marketing is paralleling the demographic shifts in the American market. Examples abound of both successful and ill-fated ethnic targeting strategies. In the former category are the approaches used by marketing giants such as Kraft General Foods and Pepsi-Co, which have instituted special divisions within their marketing departments to develop targeted strategies for communicating to ethnic groups through traditional advertising media as well as through diverse channels such as ethnic event sponsorship (Cherkassky 1998; Reid 1994). Kraft not only solicits advertising ideas from its ethnic employees, but also is committed to supporting ethnic events such as Calle Ocho, an Hispanic street festival in Miami, and the Hispanic World's Fair in New York. Kraft also co-sponsors a cookbook with the National Council of Negro Women and, through Miller Brewing, a series of Kwanza greeting cards for the Thurgood Marshall Fund. Thus, the companies are supporting ethnic communities, and in so doing are building brand awareness. Their use of cultural symbols to reach ethnic consumers has been generally well received by those consumers. Many less well known companies also are recognizing the need to develop new market segments. What could be termed "microtargeting" is on the rise

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among companies as diverse as Oxford Health Plans in Norwalk, Connecticut, which targets Chinese-Americans (Santoro 1996), and DeMoulas/Market Basket in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, which caters to Hispanics and Asian-Americans (Lewis 1998).

Because of the interest and increased expenditure in ethnic targeting, some consulting firms are recognizing and answering the need for research on ethnic markets. Industry now has access to much-needed data on ethnic consumer media habits, values, and consumption practices through developments such as the Hispanic Monitor and Black Monitor from Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, and Hispanic Copy-Trac from Market Development Inc. (Wood 1988). Segmentation schemes are being developed that recognize that the Hispanic market, for example, is not a single entity, but rather a preliminary categorization that warrants further analysis of variables such as values, lifestyles, and country of origin. Even the term "Hispanic" lacks meaning because it may refer to ethnic origin, race, or both, and it serves as an umbrella term for immigrants from a variety of countries (Meyer 1990). Despite such difficulties in identification, marketers are attempting to reach consumers in the growing ethnic groups and need more accurate research data.

Some ethnic consumers may not be as receptive to targeting efforts as marketers would like, and not all ethnic targeting strategies have been successful. As is evident from the well-publicized outrage of ethnic and mainstream communities over R.J. Reynolds' Uptown Cigarettes and Powermaster malt liquor targeted at inner-city blacks (Sautter and Oretskin 1997), and the more recent Hispanic consumer reaction to TacoBell's Chihuahua campaign (Keough 1998), the use of ethnic cultural symbols in marketing communications is not without controversy.

It is fairly safe to assume that most marketers do not intend to offend their target markets. In fact, the growth in ethnic advertising agencies is testimony to the fact that many companies are investing in ethnic targeting in the hope of avoiding the stereotypical pitfalls that sometimes accompany intercultural communications. However, preliminary interviews with ethnic consumers reveal that merely being the target of marketing communications, no matter how unoffensively executed, is enough to prompt a wide range of emotional responses and attributions about the motives of marketers (Holland and Ball 1995; Holland and Gentry 1996). Given that the interpretation of the message lies within the individual and depends on various subcultural viewpoints (Langrehr, Langrehr, and Caywood

1997), marketers may not be able to predict accurately how consumers will respond to their targeting attempts. As Taylor and Stern (1997) point out, even positive portrayals of minorities may have negative consequences unforeseen by the sponsors or creators of advertising.

Though many companies are beginning to realize the potential of ethnic marketing, research in that area has lagged. Research examining issues associated with ethnic consumers has increased in recent years, but that emphasis does not reflect the growing power of those market segments. Most important, we have no unifying theory or model to relate the various types of research pertaining to ethnicity and consumption.

Previous Research on Marketing to Ethnic Consumers

Research on marketing to ethnic groups can be summarized broadly in three eras. Prior to the 1960s, ethnic groups were largely ignored. They were not considered viable market segments, and no effort was made to target them or conduct research on marketing to them (Kassarjian 1969). The second era began roughly in the mid-1960s and continued until about 1980. During that period, societal changes caused a reevaluation of the role of previously ignored consumer groups. As far as ethnic groups were concerned, marketers and researchers focused almost exclusively on African-Americans. Blacks began to appear more frequently and in higher status positions in advertisements (Kassarjian 1969). Research during the period was characterized by descriptive analyses of the differences between black and white consumers in their consumption patterns, media habits, and reactions to advertising (Sturdivant 1973). Little attention was paid to other ethnic groups, or to more fundamental questions such as why differences in consumption may exist or what values may influence ethnic consumers' reactions to marketing stimuli (Hirschman 1981a).

The third era began in the early 1980s and continues today. Research studies examine a variety of ethnic groups and attempt to look at differences in culture that may drive consumption patterns (Delener and Neelankavil 1990; Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Deshpande and Stayman 1994; Faber and O'Guinn 1991; Faber, O'Guinn, and Meyer 1986; Hirschman 1981a,b; 1982; 1983a,b; Koslow, Shamdassani, and Touchstone 1994; Meyer 1990; O'Guinn and Faber 1985; O'Guinn and Meyer 1983; Penaloza 1994; Taylor and Stern 1997; Webster 1992; Williams and Qualls 1989).

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Purpose

Though research in marketing to ethnic groups has made great strides in the last 30 years, critical gaps remain to be addressed. Ethnic target marketing is increasing in frequency and sophistication; however, little is known about how the ethnic consumer feels about the targeting efforts. What is lacking is a general model, applicable across a variety of ethnic groups, to explain and predict the ethnic consumer's response to targeted marketing efforts.

Our proposed model is designed to fill that gap. We need to understand how consumers react to targeting attempts and how their reactions affect the effectiveness of such attempts. Our central proposition is that the consumer's affective and cognitive responses to the marketer's targeting efforts will determine the outcomes of that effort. We introduce a conceptual model of intercultural accommodation that identifies the relationships among the constructs central to the targeting attempt and to the consumer's response. Within that framework, we propose a model of the antecedents and consequences of the consumer's affective and cognitive responses to ethnic target marketing. Before presenting the model, we provide definitions and a review of the theoretical foundation for the propositions.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnicity

The term "ethnicity" is generally agreed to refer to "people who perceive themselves as constituting a community because of common culture, ancestry, language, history, religion, or customs" (Riggins 1992, p. 1). Conzen et al. (1992) promote the concept of "the invention of ethnicity" in which ethnicity is "a process of construction or invention which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories" (p. 67). From that perspective, the modern-day immigrant as well as the third- or fourth-generation descendant is searching to maintain expressive symbols of ethnicity and cultural traditions, while at the same time adapting or renegotiating them to fit into present-day society. The process is not passive, but one that involves the creative energy of the ethnic group members to choose what is most important from their cultural past and to maintain and adapt it to meet current needs. The process is not mere symbolic expression, however, but rather represents the "deeper structures of racial and ethnic cultural solidarities which are rooted in a

constellation of attitudes and values, a shared world view" (Monk 1994, p. 81). Such a view is also consistent with that of McCracken (1986), who argues that North American society allows individuals to choose their cultural categories.

Evidence for that perspective can be found in blacks' return to an "African" identity that they never knew and Native Americans' increasing willingness to claim ethnicity once abandoned. For example, between the 1980 and 1990 census, the number of self-declared American Indians increased by 38% (Fost 1991). The increase has been attributed to "the middle-class Indian's urge to go home" as indicated by growing ethnic pride and a willingness to declare oneself Native American. Some scholars have dismissed such claims as a passing fad, a "Dances with Wolves phenomenon" (Fost 1991), but others (Gans 1979, 1992; Novak 1971, 1974) see them occurring among a variety of groups not only in the United States, but also around the world (Jongkind 1974, 1980, 1992). Because ethnicity is "directly concerned with group formation and thus with power relations...it is a powerful psychological reality whether based on authentic culture or not" (Fitzgerald 1991, p. 193).

Accommodation

What is meant by "accommodation"? The term is an extension of the definition developed in speech accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991), which indicates efforts on the part of communicators to make themselves more similar to the target to improve communication. In marketing, accommodation behavior can be manifested at various strategic levels. For example, in marketing communications, the domain of intercultural accommodation behaviors can include using spokespersons of similar ethnic background in advertisements, hiring ethnic salespeople, or using ethnic language, music, art, national flags, or other cultural symbols as part of the brand or promotion. From a distribution perspective, accommodation behaviors might entail placing a retail outlet in an ethnic community or franchising to ethnic proprietors. Intercultural accommodation can take place also at the organizational level in areas such as minority hiring practices or support of ethnic community causes or scholarships.

Another use of the term "accommodation" appears in the work of Anderson and Meyer (1988) and is referred to by O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik (1998). In that usage, accommodation effects "involve the appearance of media

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and mediated texts in the social action routines of everyday life" (Anderson and Meyer 1988, p. 165). The two definitions and related theories have some similarities. Anderson and Meyer's theory is based on the idea that "meaning is an achievement of interpretation located in the time and place of its accomplishment and not something that is delivered by content" (p. 6), and the interpretation takes place in a social action perspective. When a marketer borrows cultural symbols from ethnic consumers in an attempt to enhance communication with them, and when the consumer recognizes the symbols, makes attributions about their use, has an affective response to them, and changes his or her behavior as a consequence, interpretation of meaning through a mediated social interaction has occurred. In that light, there appear to be some similarities in the use of the term "accommodation" in the two theories. However, our model of intercultural accommodation is more directly an extension of the stream of accommodation research in sociolinguistics.

Intercultural

The term "intercultural" is used to convey the idea that communication is occurring across at least two cultures. In the United States, the organizational communication typically originates in the dominant Anglo culture and is targeted to one or more ethnic cultures: African-American, Hispanic-American, Korean-American, and so on. In the context of marketing, communication across cultures involves the same accommodation issues when it is directed at national subcultural groups as it does when directed at cultural groups across national borders. Intercultural accommodation involves communicators of one group borrowing cultural symbols from another group to appear more similar, enhance communication, and gain approval.

Research on Intercultural Communication

An examination of theories developed in other disciplines reveals a stream of research in sociolinguistics that may be useful for the current investigation. Particularly applicable are the studies examining the adaptation of one's speech patterns when communicating with members of a different ethnic group (Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991). Studies show that as the speech patterns of A become more similar to those of B, the likelihood that B will favorably evaluate A is increased. Developers of speech accommodation theory focused on behaviors limited to the sociolinguistic domain (verbal and nonverbal behaviors) such as speech rate (Webb 1970), accent (Giles 1973), and length of utterance (Matarazzo et al.

1968). Researchers found that when people were motivated to seek approval or improve communication, their speech patterns tended to converge with or become more similar to the other party's. When a communicator wanted to distance him/herself from the other, a pattern of divergence emerged.

Applications to Ethnic Targeting

Promotional communications are intended to communicate effectively and gain the approval of the targeted audience. Organizations seek to accommodate their customer groups to win their business and build brand equity. As in the context of some of the original intercultural speech research, communication across ethnic groups often involves accommodation to the targeted group's culture. However, in that attempt, companies may go beyond merely matching their target's speech or language styles and use cultural symbols to become more similar to and gain the approval of their audience.

Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone (1994) drew on speech accommodation research in their examination of Hispanic consumers' reactions to the use of Spanish language in advertisements, hypothesizing that "for accommodation to occur, Hispanics must perceive the choice and use of Spanish in the advertisement as an indicator of the advertiser's respect for the Hispanic culture and desire to break down cultural barriers through reduction of linguistic dissimilarities" (p. 576). They found that the use of Spanish language in advertising increased perceptions of the advertiser's sensitivity to Hispanic culture, and those perceptions were associated positively with affect toward the advertisements. Their results differed from those in a similar study by Faber and O'Guinn (1991), who found that for most people exposed to both English and Spanish language versions of an advertisement, there was no direct impact on attitude toward either the commercial or the brand.

Though both of the studies made valuable contributions to the marketing literature, they were within the traditional linguistic domain of speech research. The only aspect of accommodation under investigation was language use (English only, Spanish only, or a combination of English and Spanish) and the studies did not examine other aspects of accommodation such as cultural symbols or ethnic spokespersons in an advertisement. Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone (1994) investigated both the affective consequences of the accommodation attempt and the receiver's attributions about the accommodation attempt, but did not measure their effect on behavioral

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responses or any other potential consequences of accommodation. Faber and O'Guinn (1991) did not measure attributions, but rather attitudes toward the commercial, brand, and purchase intentions.

The Intercultural Accommodation Model

What is needed is a modified and expanded model that addresses the ethnic consumer's affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to intercultural accommodation of all types. Companies targeting an ethnic market do not limit themselves merely to the use of the group's native language in their advertisements (how would such accommodation apply to African-Americans or non-Spanish-speaking Hispanics?), but draw on a full range of communications tools and cultural symbols, such as ethnic music, actors, artwork, traditional dress, national flags, ethnic holidays, and so forth. An understanding of intercultural accommodation must be developed that goes beyond the limits of language choice.

The new framework must also provide insight on the factors that influence the strength and type of reaction to the marketer's accommodation attempt, as well as the consequences of that reaction. Targeted marketing efforts are designed to improve communication with and persuasion of the ethnic group in the hope of increasing positive results. The new model therefore must provide insight not only to the ethnic consumer's reaction to the accommodation attempt, but also to the potential results of that reaction. Finally, the new framework should be applicable across ethnic groups. The following sections provide theoretical background for such an expanded framework, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

Accommodation Response

The central issue in the model is the consumer's response to an intercultural accommodation attempt. The first construct in the response is whether or not the consumer notices the accommodation effort. Because of perceptual filters and information overload, many marketing messages simply go unnoticed. Further, even if the message is noticed, the consumer may not be aware that he or she has been "targeted" with the communication. The consumer may be unaware of the use of cultural markers in the message, and therefore may not recognize that an accommodation attempt has been made. It is important to identify which consumers have noticed the use of cultural symbols in the communication and which have not.

If the consumer notices the message and/or the accommodation attempt, the next step is to measure the reaction, which is likely to consist of two parts: a cognitive response and an affective response. In his work on attribution theory, Heider (1958) proposed that we understand a person's behavior and then evaluate the person him/herself in terms of the motives that we attribute to be the cause of his/her actions. Consumers who recognize the use of their cultural symbols in marketing communications may search for an explanation of the motives of the marketer or the source of the message. Those attributions are likely to affect the consumer's response to the accommodation attempt.

The idea that the consumer may evaluate and weigh the value or credibility of the source of a message builds on a firm foundation of research in social psychology. Those studies show that interpretations of source credibility have differential impacts on message evaluation and persuasion, depending on a wide variety of factors such as similarity in group membership, opinion, trust, respect, and attraction (for a review, see Simons, Berkowitz, and Moyer 1970). The perceived intent of the communicator also is weighed and may have varying effects on the receiver's response. For example, a stream of research by Jones and his colleagues (e.g., Jones and Baumeister 1976) demonstrates that receivers and observers of ingratiating behavior make attributions about the causes of the behavior and also experience affective responses based on those attributions. Smith and Hunt (1978) demonstrate that, like parties in face-to-face communications who make attributions about the motives of communicators, consumers make attributions about the motives of marketers in advertising.

In thinking about how ethnic consumers may react to marketing communications that use cultural symbols, we can draw parallels with a recent study of organizational advocacy advertising (Haley 1996). In that research, in response to advertising linked to social causes, consumer evaluations of source credibility and affective responses were linked to perceptions of the company's past involvement with the social issue being advocated. Campbell's (1995) work on borrowed interest appeals may be another parallel. In that study, consumers made attributions about the advertiser's intent when using an advertising theme that was inherently involving or arousing to the target audience. Those attributions, in turn, led to affective evaluations. In an extension to the current topic, then, it is reasonable to anticipate that consumers will make attributions about a company's use of cultural symbols and that those attributions will lead to an affective

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response.

In fact, previous research in the domain of intercultural accommodation (Giles et al. 1973; Holland and Ball 1995; Koslow Shamdassani, and Touchstone 1994; Simard, Taylor, and Giles 1976) indicates that ethnic consumers do make attributions about why the communicator is using their cultural symbols. The studies also provide evidence that the accommodation attempt evokes an affective response from the receiver in addition to the cognitive response. Hence, in the context of the intercultural accommodation model, the consumer's response seems likely to include an affective as well as cognitive component.

However, even consumers who do not consciously recognize the accommodation attempt may have an affective response, as numerous studies of the "exposure effect" suggest (Harrison 1977; Hill 1978; Matlin and Stang 1978; Zajonc and Markus 1982). In those experiments, subjects developed more positive affect toward objects they had seen previously, regardless of their recognition of the objects. A consumer may have an affective response to cultural symbols used in a marketing communication without recognizing the symbols or giving any thought to why the marketer used them.

Less clear is the relationship between recognition and cognition. For consumers who do not recognize the accommodation attempt, it seems unlikely that any attributions about the marketer's intent would be evoked. A consumer is not likely to question the motives for actions or stimuli that were not consciously noted. Hence, in the proposed model, recognition is assumed to be a necessary prerequisite for the cognitive response to occur. If the cultural symbols used in the communication are recognized, it is possible that the consumer will make attributions about the marketer's motives, and those attributions are likely to influence the consumer's affective response to the communication attempt. Therefore, two routes to affective response - one direct and one indirect - occur via recognition and attributions.

The relationships are summarized in the following propositions.

P1: Recognition of the accommodation attempt is (a) related positively to the formation of attributions and (b) not necessary for the formation of an affective response to the accommodation.

P2: The valence of the consumer's attributions about the

communicator's motives for the accommodation attempt is related directly to the consumer's affective response to the accommodation attempt.

Antecedents

For insight to the antecedents of consumer response, the proposed model draws from Friestad and Wright's (1994) work on the persuasion knowledge model (PKM). There appear to be strong parallels between the way consumers interpret persuasion attempts and the way they might interpret intercultural accommodation attempts. According to the PKM, an individual's persuasion knowledge develops throughout his/her life as a result of personal experience, "folk wisdom," and social interactions with friends, family, and coworkers. Similarly, many ethnic group members will have had experience with targeted ads. A person uses his/her knowledge of the topic at hand and of the agent producing the persuasion attempt, as well as stored persuasion knowledge to "cope" with the persuasion episode. Friestad and Wright use the term "cope" to mean "address" or "handle," without any implication of a negative encounter. Similarly, the agent or communicator of the message uses knowledge about the target of the message and the topic at hand, as well as persuasion knowledge, to design the persuasive message. The first four antecedents in the intercultural accommodation model are drawn from the PKM.

Accommodation Experience. Just as a consumer uses "folk wisdom" and accumulated experience to cope with persuasion efforts, the ethnic consumer must learn to cope with accommodation efforts. Consumers must rely on what they know, what they have been taught, and past experiences with companies' and individuals' use of their cultural symbols to handle the accommodation effort effectively. The more knowledgeable and experienced a consumer is in coping with accommodation attempts, the more likely he or she is to recognize accommodation efforts in various forms of communication.

Further, accommodation experience is a construct that may explain differential responses to targeted communications across ethnic groups. Given that some ethnic groups have been targeted more heavily and for a longer period of time than others - for example, African-Americans as compared with Hispanics (Wilkes and Valencia 1989) - it is likely that there are group differences in the level of accumulated experience in coping with intercultural accommodation. Whether at the group or the individual level, the level of accommodation experience may be a key influence on the consumer's

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response.

P3: Increased levels of accommodation experience increase the extent to which an accommodation attempt is recognized.

Attitude Toward Accommodation. A closely related construct is attitude toward accommodation experiences. It is the consumer's overall evaluation of past accommodation attempts, which may be either positively or negatively valenced. These experiences are likely not only to instruct the consumer in ways to cope with the accommodation but also to "color" the consumer's response to the current accommodation attempt. Again, a single model may be able to identify differences among ethnic group responses, given that the various groups have very different historical circumstances. In other words, the positive or negative nature of past accommodation experiences provides a corresponding positive or negative "frame" for reacting to the current accommodation experience, either on a group or an individual level.

P4: Attitudes toward past accommodation attempts are related directly to (a) the valence of the attributions about the agent's motives for the accommodation attempt and (b) the affective response to the accommodation attempt.

Agent Knowledge. The PKM presumes that the consumer uses persuasion knowledge in conjunction with knowledge about the "agent" or source of the message to cope with the persuasion attempt (Friestad and Wright 1994). Similarly, accommodation styles and motivations may vary from source to source, and specific knowledge about the communicator may help the consumer to form his/her response to the accommodation attempt. For example, an African-American consumer may attribute a marketer's salute to Black History Month as a sign of respect for the African-American community if the company has shown past support for the group. The current accommodation effort is added to the store of knowledge about the communicator, and the reaction is influenced by the whole. In other words, the consumer's past experiences with the specific communication agent influence the reaction to the current accommodation attempt.

However, consumers are not always familiar with the specific company sponsoring the message and may react to the advertiser on the basis of any available cues. Further, it is not clear who consumers consider "the source" of the message (Stern 1993). In the context of intercultural accommodation, that point is critical as the

consumer's reaction to the use of cultural symbols may differ according to whether the communicator is perceived to be of the dominant culture (Anglo) or of the same ethnic group as the consumer. In other words, if the sponsoring company is using Hispanic cultural symbols to communicate to Hispanic consumers and the source or "persona" is perceived as Hispanic, the target consumers seem likely to imagine that the company is justified in using their common cultural symbols in its communications. However, if an Anglo source or persona were borrowing Hispanic cultural symbols in an effort to communicate with those consumers, they would be likely to make negative attributions about motives ("they're just trying to win my business; they don't care about my culture"). Therefore, the attributions and affective response to the use of cultural symbols depend on whether the communicator is perceived as a member of the same ethnic group as the receiver or of the mainstream culture.

P5: In comparison with consumers who perceive the communicator to be of the dominant culture, consumers who perceive the communicator to be a member of their own ethnic group have (a) more positively valenced attributions about the use of cultural symbols and (b) more positive affect towards the use of cultural symbols.

Newness. Friestad and Wright's (1994) presentation of the PKM also provides insight to certain situational factors that affect a target's motivation to form new attitudes or revise current attitudes about the communicator. The "newness" of the communication acts as a flag to catch the consumer's attention and increase the likelihood that the accommodation attempt will be noticed and that the consumer will be motivated to react to it. Consumers are much more likely to notice and respond to novel than to common stimuli (Loken and Ward 1990). When consumers are faced with common or repetitive messages from marketers, they are unlikely to devote cognitive energy toward interpreting or reacting to them (Friestad and Wright 1994).

P6: The newness of the accommodation attempt will increase the likelihood that the accommodation attempt is recognized.

Strength of Ethnic Identification. In addition to motives to make or revise attributions, other antecedents may affect the consumer's accommodation response. Specifically, strength of ethnic identification is likely to affect whether or not a consumer notices an accommodation attempt, as well as the strength of the response when it is noticed. Several studies have documented variation in strength of

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ethnic identification among ethnic group members (Deshpande et al. 1986; O'Guinn and Meyer 1983; Webster 1994; Whittler, Calantone, and Young 1991). If people do not identify strongly with their ethnic group, ethnic group membership is unlikely to be a predictor of behavior or response to an advertisement (Hirschman 1981a; Williams and Qualls 1989; Yancey, Eriksen, and Juliani 1976). Also, the strength of ethnic identification may vary across ethnic groups as well as across individuals, again because of differences in historical circumstances of the ethnic groups.

Ethnic groups or individual members who identify strongly with their heritage are likely to have an emotional response to the use of cultural symbols in marketing communications. People automatically process self-relevant information (Bargh 1984), and a symbol of one's identity is likely to function as a strong semantic filter, leading the viewer to notice automatically any such symbols in the environment and also in advertising (Alba et al. 1980; Barsalou and Ross 1986). Previous research has provided evidence that consumers do notice and respond to the use of ethnic cultural symbols in advertisements (Holland and Ball 1995; Holland and Gentry 1996; Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone 1994). The following propositions relate to the influence of strength of ethnic identification on the intercultural accommodation response.

P7: The strength of ethnic identification is related directly to the likelihood that the accommodation attempt will be recognized.

P8: The strength of ethnic identification is associated directly with (a) the intensity of the attributions about the agent's motives for the accommodation attempt and (b) the intensity of the affective response to the accommodation attempt.

Attitude toward the Mainstream Culture. How a consumer feels about his/her ethnic identity is only one side of the coin. Definitionally, ethnic groups reside within a larger mainstream culture with which they share some cultural similarities and from which they may be culturally differentiated. An ethnic group member must navigate between those two cultural forces to conduct the business of life. Research on the potential influences of dueling cultures can be found primarily in the acculturation literature (e.g., see Berry 1980, 1990). Examples of the process in the marketing literature can be found in the work of Stayman and Deshpande (1989) and Williams, Qualls, and Grier (1995). That literature leads us to the

conclusion that to measure only the consumer's attitude toward ethnic identity would be to measure but half of the picture. To understand cultural issues in a multicultural environment, we must also measure the consumer's attitude toward the mainstream culture. The valence of that attitude is likely to influence both the consumer's affective and attributional responses to a mainstream or Anglo company's attempt to accommodate the ethnic culture.

P9: The attitude toward the mainstream culture is associated directly with (a) the valence of the attributions about the agent's motives for the accommodation attempt and (b) the affective response to the accommodation attempt.

Consequences

The proposed consequences of the consumer's response to intercultural accommodation attempts are similar to those found in studies of speech accommodation. Successful accommodation should result in more favorable evaluations of the communicator (Byrne 1961; Koslow, Shamdasani, and Touchstone 1994; Simons, Berkowitz, and Moyer 1970), enhanced communication effectiveness (Matarazzo et al. 1968), and reciprocal accommodative behaviors (Simard, Taylor, and Giles 1976). In general, a successful accommodation attempt is likely to result in the evocation of positive affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses toward the agent, whereas an unsuccessful accommodation attempt is likely to result in the opposite.

To the marketer, the goal of intercultural accommodation is to evoke a positive response from the consumer in terms of both positive affect and positive attributions about the motives of the marketer's use of cultural symbols. The key variables in the consequences of accommodation can be defined operationally as follows.

1. Evaluation of the communicator is the extent to which consumers develop or change their attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the company, and/or attitude toward the ad.
2. Communication effectiveness is the degree to which the consumer understands or remembers the message content.
3. Reciprocal accommodative behavior is the extent to which consumers express the intention to buy the brand, continue to deal with the company, to pass on favorable information about the company or its products.

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Those consequences are summarized in the following propositions.

P10: The consumer's affective response to the accommodation attempt is related directly to the consumer's evaluation of the communicator as measured by (a) attitude toward the brand, (b) attitude toward the company, and (c) attitude toward the ad.

P11: The consumer's affective response to the accommodation attempt is related directly to the effectiveness of the communication as measured by comprehension.

P12: The consumer's affective response to the accommodation attempt is related directly to the extent to which the consumer intends to engage in reciprocal accommodative behaviors

Competing Propositions on the Effects of Self-Referencing. In addition to the rather general expectations about the effects on the consumer's response to the targeted marketing effort, the marketing literature provides an indication of more specific expectations about the self-referencing aspects of targeted communication. Accommodation attempts that invoke the consumer's cultural heritage (such as the use of ethnic holiday symbols in a commercial), may trigger self-referencing. Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner (1993) provide evidence that affective responses produced by self-referencing can interfere with cognitive processing of feature information. In their study, positive affect associated with autobiographical memories inhibited recall of product features presented in the message. The authors attribute that effect to the richness of autobiographical memories which distract from the processing of feature information.

Though Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner (1993) did not test negative affect, their finding is likely to hold in the domain of cultural symbols used in an ad. Negative affect caused either by negative attributions about the company's motives or directly by the cultural imagery in the communication is likely to inhibit cognitive processing of message content through the discounting of the message as a result of counter-argumentation. Therefore, our model extends the work of Sujan and colleagues in predicting:

P13: Both positive and negative affect resulting from the use of cultural symbols in marketing communication will impede the effectiveness of the communication as measured by message recall.

However, in this context, an alternative hypothesis based on speech accommodation theory is equally plausible. Positive affect in response to the company's use of cultural symbols should enhance communication effectiveness and lead the receiver to reciprocal accommodative behaviors, such as paying more attention to the marketing message, which may counteract or compensate for any distraction caused by the self-referencing. Therefore, a competing proposition with some support in the literature (Schlinger and Plummer 1972; Szybillo and Jacoby 1974; Whittler 1989) is that positive affect in response to the use of cultural symbols should improve cognitive processing of information in marketing communications. The following competing proposition is offered

P14: Positive affect resulting from the use of cultural symbols in marketing communication enhances the effectiveness of communication, whereas negative affect reduces effectiveness, as measured by recall.

In summary, intercultural accommodation in the context of target marketing is expected to evoke both affective and cognitive responses from the consumer. Whether or not the accommodation is noticed and the intensity and direction of the response are posited to be influenced by the consumer's accommodation experience, attitude toward accommodation, agent knowledge, the newness of the accommodation effort, the consumer's strength of ethnic identification, and attitude toward the mainstream culture. The outcomes of the consumer's response are likely to be affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The nature and intensity of the consumer's response to the accommodation effort are posited to affect his/her evaluation of the company and its products, the effectiveness of the communication, and the consumer's reciprocal accommodative behaviors.

Conclusion

We provide a framework to focus research on the consumer's side of the target marketing equation. Once we understand the potential relationships among the constructs involved in the consumer's response, we can begin to predict the likely outcomes of the targeting attempt.

Our model of consumer response to ethnic target marketing works across more than one ethnic group. In the past, research in that area has been limited to a single subculture and associated with language use or the particular circumstances of the group's immigration or history. Our model provides insight to responses to target

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marketing that transcend the particularities of any one ethnic group. For example, Hispanics are likely to have had very different accommodation experiences than African-Americans, making the impact of accommodation quite different in the two subcultures. Our model will enable researchers to identify differences among ethnic groups that may be particularly useful for companies that target more than one group. Future exploration of the model may find application beyond ethnic groups to other types of subcultures constituted by age, taste, or other important cultural variables.

The conceptual model of intercultural accommodation also is applicable to aspects of ethnic target marketing other than advertising. It can be applied to a variety of targeting strategies involving distribution, product development, sales interactions, and corporate social responsibility. Most examinations of ethnic target marketing to date have been limited to the domain of advertising.

Our work also contributes toward improving firms' targeting efforts by delineating the complexity and variability of the underlying issues. Consumer response to the use of cultural symbols in marketing communication may be influenced by a variety of factors. For example, marketers may need to segment their markets and develop communications plans for consumers with varying levels of affiliation with their ethnic heritage. Further, high levels of ethnic identification may not necessarily lead to positive responses from the targeted consumers. People who identify strongly with their ethnic heritage may react more intensely to accommodation efforts, but their response may be either intensely positive or intensely negative. Marketers therefore may need to rely on more than one segmentation variable to predict a successful outcome for their targeting efforts. However, the question of how to measure and estimate the size of targets based on the new variables is yet to be answered. Marketers must seek new ways to define and reach ethnic segments whose characteristics are not identified in standard demographic counts.

Evoking strong affective responses, either positive or negative, may reduce the effectiveness of communication. Managers must be aware that their use of cultural symbols as a targeting technique may not always be received positively, and any negative emotion generated may be detrimental to the effectiveness of the communication. Further, managers must be extremely cautious in their use of cultural symbols. A blatant attempt to appear similar to their target audience or to embrace values or traditions associated with a particular group may negate the

intended results of the targeting effort.

In summary, our proposed model raises a caution that ethnic target marketing may be more complex than previously thought. The consumer's response may depend on a variety of factors that will have differential impacts on the effectiveness of the communication. The primary message of our work is that caution is necessary. Once we understand how consumers react to ethnic target marketing, we may be able to engage in intercultural accommodation more successfully, and perhaps less offensively. Both the consumer and the marketer would benefit from such understanding.

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