DEPTH OF DIVERSITY: TEACHING THE UNIVERSAL AND TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF MULTICULTURAL MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic diversity is a multicultural marketing trend that has been widely validated by consumer behavior research and practice. However, targeting diverse ethnic segments by broadening multicultural market representation is not economically sustainable, strategically viable or historically valid. Instead, a depth of diversity approach is developed to teach ethnic consumer behavior. The proposed depth of diversity instructional module complements and enriches prevailing breadth of diversity methods. Whereas breadth of diversity methods profile demographic variables, depth of diversity probes anthropological values. In particular, the depth of diversity module explores ethnicity as an inclusive human construct defined by a holistic universal dimension and a historic temporal dimension. This plumbing of multicultural depths yields more inclusive and original ethnic brand ideas.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic diversity trends in the United States have spawned more widespread adoption of multicultural marketing programs. Once avoided ethnic minority consumers are now regarded as demographically vibrant and economically valuable. Consumer behavior research and practice validates the contribution of ethnic consumer understanding to multicultural marketing success (Chung & Fischer, 1999; Lamont & Mulnar, 2001; Xu et al., 2003; Askegaard et al., 2005). Ironically, despite the rapid rise of ethnic consumer purchasing power, media access and customized ethnic brand strategies, the multicultural marketing literature has waned.

A literature review finds two important syntheses of ethnic marketing best practices a decade ago. The first is Rossman's (1994) comprehensive multicultural marketing assessment and the second is Halter's (2000) contemporary ethnic brand identity strategy. In terms of academic scholarship, the most seminal recent research includes Cui's (2001) historical compilation of ethnic consumer marketing, Burton's (2002) critical multicultural marketing theory, Pires and Stanton's (2002) examination of ethical concerns with ethnic marketing, Forehand and Deshpande's (2002) ethnic self awareness advertising, and studies of ethnic consumer socialization (Dimonfte et al., 2003; Xu et al., 2003).

Moreover, despite the prominence of ethnicity in consumer behavior courses, marketing educators have also left multicultural themes a decade ago (Penaloza, 1991) – with few exceptions (Jones, 2003).
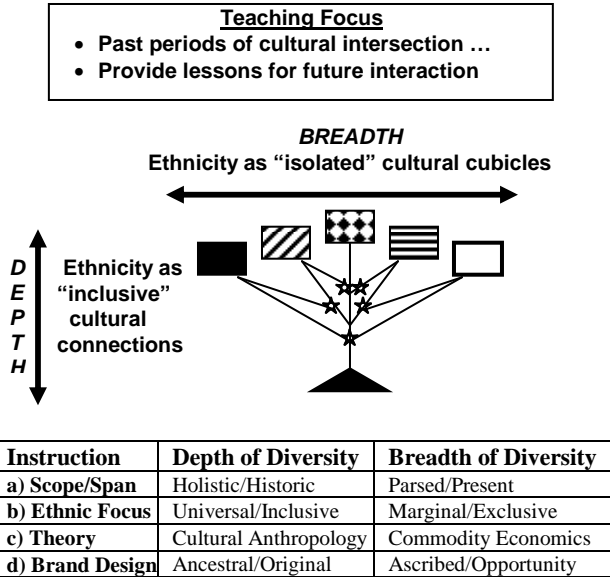
Perhaps fading interest in ethnic consumer research signals a maturation of the concepts advanced to provide multicultural marketing insight in companies and classrooms. Recognizing this stasis in academic multicultural marketing research, this paper draws upon course instruction experience to offer a fresh view of ethnic consumer diversity. The proposed depth of diversity rationale deems targeting U.S. ethnic consumers with wider classification schemes as economically unsustainable, strategically unviable, and historically invalid. Presently, the official number of U.S. Census race and ancestry categories exceeds 100, with nearly 30 reported in the American Community Survey (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). Instead of limiting consumer diversity to an objectively defined racial spectrum, the proposed depth of diversity module trains students to discover subjectively defined sources of ethnic and brand identity. Conceptually, this exploration of ethnic depth is structured by the Sheth & Mittal (2003) "Matrix of Personal and Environmental Characteristics." That matrix guides the pedagogical task of combining ethnicity's anthropological origins (environmental/human traits) and consumption outcomes (market/personal context).

ETHNIC PEDAGOGY FORMULATION

The depth of diversity module aids marketing educators in *defining, distinguishing,* and *delivering* ethnic consumer behavior skills. First, instructors must *deepen the definition* of ethnicity as a universal consumer behavior property that evolves along a temporal dimension to chronicle identity based on holistic place and historical time coordinates. Next, instructors should *delineate distinctions* between ethnic depth considerations and students' typical exposure to ethnic breadth method characteristics. Depth of diversity portrays ethnicity as an inclusive exposure to historical episodes, as well as holistic cultural connections with other ethnic traditions. Breadth of diversity, on the other hand, profiles ethnicity as an isolated exposure within cultural cubicles. Depth of diversity approaches endow both mainstream and minority consumers with equally

relevant ethnic traditions. This differs from breadth of diversity practices that marginalize ethnicity as an exclusively minority trait (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Contrasting Depth and Breadth of Ethnic Diversity

Teaching Focus
- **Past periods of cultural intersection …**
- **Provide lessons for future interaction**

BREADTH
Ethnicity as "isolated" cultural cubicles

D
E
P   Ethnicity as "inclusive" cultural connections
T
H

Instruction	Depth of Diversity	Breadth of Diversity
a) Scope/Span	Holistic/Historic	Parsed/Present
b) Ethnic Focus	Universal/Inclusive	Marginal/Exclusive
c) Theory	Cultural Anthropology	Commodity Economics
d) Brand Design	Ancestral/Original	Ascribed/Opportunity

Finally, marketing educators can prepare to *deliver depth of diversity skills*. Three pedagogical vectors align the depth of diversity method's holistic scope and historic span – people, product, and process. These intersecting vectors plot the ethnic value match of people/customers, products/commodities, and process/commerce. The people vector pertains to the ethnic group explored from a cultural anthropology perspective, but also addresses customer demand considerations from an economics and marketing perspective. Product pertains to the ethnic artifacts from a cultural anthropology perspective, but also addresses company offering or supply considerations from an economics and marketing perspective. Process pertains to ethnic representation, rituals, and shared symbolism from a cultural anthropology perspective, as well as the economic and marketing practice of branding (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
Depth of Diversity Pedagogical Vectors

Ethnicity Time/Place Vectors	Cultural Anthropology Purpose	Market Economics Practice
a) People	Values	Demand
b) Product	Artifacts	Supply
c) Process	Meaning	Brand

Instructional *delivery* of ethnic depth skills is more precisely guided by a sequence of anthropological stages (see Figure 3). The universality of earth origin for every ethnic group serves to holistically anchor ethnic value exploration. Ecological conditions in the locations where ethnic groups originated are directly linked to both early ethnic meanings and existing ethnic markets. Cursorily, these representations are found in the Celtic clover for Irish American brands, the good fortune fish for Asian American brands, the lime hue affinity of Latino American brands, as well as sun and gold images for certain African American brands.

FIGURE 3
Depth of Diversity Instructional Progression

A. PEOPLE: Evolution of Ethnic Identity/Culture
1. *Earth/Place:* "Mother Earth" Land Origin
   "Old Country" *ecological* ethnic identity
2. *History/Time:* "Father Time" Evolution –
   "Old Country" *episodic* ethnic identity
3. *Culture/Ethos:* "Destiny's Child" Core Character
   "Old/New Country" *embedded* ethnic identity
4. *Values/Logos:* "Identity's Name" Shared Narrative
   "New Country" *expressed* ethnic meanings
B. PRODUCT: Evolution of Ethnic Artifacts/Crafts
1. *Form:* "Old Country" artifact/craft materials & tools
2. *Function:* "Old Country" artifact/craft role & utility
3. *Facilitation:* "New Country" artifact/craft meanings
C. PROCESS: Execution of Ethnic Brand Strategy
1. *Taste:* Physical/aesthetic cultural preferences
2. *Tailor:* Modern ethnic market patterns targeted
3. *Triangulate:* Match "People" & "Product" values
   with market "Processes" for brand architecture

Ultimately, the holistic pedagogical understanding of ethnicity culminates by specifying a core character as the collective cultural *ethos* and shared identity values as the cultural *logos*. This collective cultural identity and expression of ethnic meanings is revealed in shared narrative that unites the people uniquely, and often originates with a creation myth. Ethnic *values* indicate the meanings and modes through which cultural identity is conveyed. As a cultural conveyer, logos values are expressed through language, rituals, as well as orientations towards nature and others. Although most ethnic group value structures share common planks, the order and prominence varies. For instance, the universal value of family might be nuanced for African ethnic groups as affirming ancestors, for Asian ethnic groups as affirming elders, for Latin ethnic groups as affirming extended relatives, and for European ethnic groups as affirming offspring.

In a complementary manner, the depth of diversity module's historical span *directs instructional delivery*

towards ethnic origins and frames the project's progression. This historical continuum is divided into 'old country' ancient/ancestral motherland existence and 'new country' American/acculturated homeland experiences. As part of this old country to new country transition, the migration paths and ports of entry are accorded special importance. Whether discussing Ellis Island for European Americans, Angel Island for Asian Americans, Goree Island as a West African departure point for African American slaves, or Southwestern United States border towns as Latin American gateways, the coming to America narrative is punctuated by each ethnic group's old country to new country transition.

Experientially, these rich ancestry accounts afford a retrospective view of ancient ethnic civilizations that cannot be learned from current ethnic consumer characteristics. The vividness of ancient ethnic cultures transports students to a time when the absence of modern media made myths and material crafts more meaningful. The validity of these forgotten worlds cuts through the clutter of modern ethnic consumer images to acquaint students with ethnic identity anew. Moreover, digital online media permit rapid access to representative ethnic history content. Yet, these temporal explorations are not intended to remain in the past. Rather, the historical search is a learning expedition to validate ethnic beliefs and vitalize ethnic brands. Students are instructed to mark important historical eras with important heroes, events, and institutions that emerged during their ethnic group's evolution.

The temporality of depth of diversity instruction insures historical congruence across each of the three pedagogical vectors – people, product, process. Old country ancient or traditional civilizations are associated with the earth/place, history/time, and identity/ethos factors of the people vector. Values, on the other hand depicts the ethnic group's new country transition and community. For the product factor, old country history is drawn upon to learn authentic artifact forms and traditional culture functions. However, facilitation characterizes the collective modes and symbolic meanings of products or services by new country ethnic communities. Similarly, the process vector traces taste factors to old country roots but primarily teaches students to tailor new country ethnic tastes with a unique brand architecture that triangulates people and product vectors for a contemporary market setting – including promotion and retailing.

ETHNIC PROJECT FINDINGS

The depth of diversity module's competencies were found to be *cultural versioning* and *chronic visioning.*

Cultural Versioning – Ethnic Identity Inclusion

The depth of diversity module was found to provide a multicultural marketing approach with more universal appeal than the traditional breadth of diversity methods which focus primarily on U.S. minority consumers. This outcome is described as *cultural versioning* because a more inclusive set of ethnic traditions was represented than is typically evoked for multicultural markets. Specifically, students were more willing to explore value patterns for ethnic groups different than their own and students who are not classified as belonging to a minority group demonstrated greater interest in ethnic cultural discovery. Figure 4 presents excerpts from a student project focused on German American ethnicity. The content depicts this expanded cultural versioning because a non-minority European American ancestry was explored to create a valid ethnic brand targeted towards contemporary German American households during the holidays.

FIGURE 4
Student Project Excerpt: "Cultural Versioning"

A. TRADITIONAL GERMAN ETHNIC VALUES
   ("Old Country" – Ancestral)
■ "Volk" symbol of 19th century unified German people
■ Shared culture/language beyond citizenship
■ "Volkish mysticism" – connection of land & people
■ Themes: love/cruelty, struggle/war, giants/fairies
■ Grimm Brothers' tale Norse myth & "Volk" culture
■ "Volk" is part of the people, arts, beliefs, and soul
■ Traditions: German holidays, festivals and rituals

B. MODERN GERMAN ETHNIC BRAND STRATEGY
   ("New Country" – American)
■ Special Christmas Market (Weinachtsmarkt)
■ Dates to Middle Ages for friends on winter eves
■ Beer is every day, but wine for special occasions
■ Gluhwein ("Glow Wine") tradition in holiday season
■ Hot spiced red wine & calming medicinal properties
■ Enhances modern German American holiday depth

Chronic Visioning -- Ethnic Brand Innovation

The depth of diversity module was also found to provide temporal dimension insights that are largely unattainable with conventional breadth of diversity methods. These advantages are described as chronic visioning because the temporal view gives students a glimpse of historical ethnic rituals and symbols with contemporary multicultural marketing potential. By engaging in vicarious time-travel, students experienced a discontinuous break with their present ethnic identity which allowed them to mine historical periods for multicultural branding ideas. Brand ideas retrieved through chronic visioning were shown to be viable for the present American market ethnic group whose ancestors originated them, as well as for other non-ancestral multicultural market segments. Figure 5 verifies this chronic visualization finding for an ancient Yoruba beauty ritual known as "scarification." Students used chronic visioning to probe beneath current cosmetic styles and practices by revisiting an African tradition originating many centuries ago. The resulting brand innovation ("Skinned") targets contemporary urban youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

FIGURE 5
Student Project Excerpt: "Chronic Visioning"

BRAND NAME: Skinned; Red box / Black logo.
PRODUCT: Permanent/temporary scarification
SLOGAN: "If you decorate me, I will be beautiful."
    (African Proverb: "Ukinipamba nitapendeza")
LOGO: West African symbol "Gye" (Supreme God)

A. HISTORICAL ETHNIC CRAFT:
Involves scratching, etching, cutting to leave designs, pictures, or words in the skin.
 * Ink rubbing – rubbing ink in fresh cuts
 * Skin removal/skinning - creates desired texture
 * Packing – cut/pack wound to form keloid bumps

B. CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC BRAND:
 * Offer non-surgical synthetic appliqués
 * Offer multiple colors & design variety

SUMMARY

This paper proposes a fresh and insightful method for teaching ethnic consumer behavior, diversity, and multicultural marketing topics. Unlike the prevailing methods for teaching ethnic consumer diversity as a broad spectrum of minority demographic archetypes, the proposed depth of diversity module informs pedagogy with holistic scope and historic span. Holistically, the depth of diversity module equips future students with a more inclusive and universal view of ethnicity that embraces mainstream and minority consumers' cultural traditions. Historically, the depth of diversity module transports students into ancient and traditional time periods. These vicarious temporal experiences enable students to channel insights from prior ethnic civilizations into brand strategy ideas for present and future markets. Therefore, the depth of diversity module provides marketing educators with timely and tenable method for preparing future multicultural marketers.

References Available on Request