RACIAL-ETHNIC ASPECTS OF RETAIL MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: A TEXTBOOK CASE OF NEGLECT

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Abstract

This paper identifies and interprets the implications of the coverage of race and ethnicity in selected retail management textbooks. The coverage gap between textbook content on the racial and ethnic aspects of retailing and the aggregate consumption-patronage importance of various racial-ethnic minority groups is used to define the extent of neglect. Implications and challenges of changing the coverage are discussed. We conclude that retail management education would be better served by having retail management textbooks reflect more accurately the current realities of race and ethnicity as well as the trend towards a more culturally diverse retail marketplace of the 1990s and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Racial-ethnic minority groups in the United States comprise a substantial part of the retail marketplace as consumers. For the nation as a whole the overall proportion is now about 25-30%. Their numbers are increasing at a higher rate than those of the majority population. Indeed, in 20% of U.S. cities (36 of 182) with 100,000 or more residents, they now constitute a majority of the population. (U.S. Statistical Abstract 1989) While spending potential, in the aggregate, typically lags their population proportion by a wide margin, the numbers are nonetheless impressive. But despite the consumption and patronage influence represented by the market facts, textbook coverage of the groups and their importance in the retail marketplace is quite uneven and generally limited. Neglect of some relevant topics is rather commonplace in the textbook content. Indeed, according to Valencia (1989, p. 23) such neglect extends to marketing textbooks generally and amounts to what he calls "ethnic marketing myopia."

This paper illustrates the forms and extent of neglect by comparing the race-ethnic content of five widely-adopted retail management textbooks. Several relevant topical areas which receive limited coverage or are omitted entirely are identified. Representation of diversity in the people included in the text photographs is also compared. Implications for retailing management education and the challenges to authors of retailing management textbooks are also discussed briefly.

In the section following this introduction, some measures of the consumption importance and influence of the racial ethnic groups are summarized. Major emphasis is on Blacks and Hispanics because they are the two largest groups. More current literature is available on them than on other groups. This topic is followed by comparisons of textbook coverage and diversity of people included in text photographs. Implications are then presented with respect to related challenges facing retailing education and the authors of retailing management textbooks.

RACIAL-ETHNIC GROUPS AS RETAIL MARKET SEGMENTS

In population size and spending power, the numbers are impressive. In 1989 there were over 30 million Blacks and about 20 million Hispanics. (U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1989) Together they now comprise about 20% of the total U.S. population and both are growing at a faster rate than the majority population. Estimates are not as current for Asian-Americans, Native Americans and others (Pacific Islanders, Asian-Indian Americans [Indian Subcontinent], Southeast Asians, etc.). But in total they represent at least several million more consumers. However, limited availability of other published data, differences in culture,
language and recency of immigration also make many Asian groups generally less accessible, in regional or even local terms, than groups of Blacks and Hispanics. (Kern 1988)

It also should be noted that the income proportions of most of these groups, in the aggregate, are smaller than their population proportions. Yet the spending potential is enormous. Aggregate annual income of Blacks is now estimated to be $240 billion and that of Hispanics at $160 billion. (Author's estimate; Hamilton 1989) For these two groups in aggregate terms, this amounts to over 13% of U.S. personal income—about 8% for Blacks and 5% for Hispanics. (Dingle 1987; Hamilton 1989) Moreover, distinctiveness in socially- and culturally-based preferences, patronage behavior and in other dimensions of marketplace behavior can be identified as useful bases of market segmentation. In addition, proportionate retail expenditures in some product categories are equal to or even greater than either the income or population percentages. This is true for Blacks in such product categories as health and beauty aids, especially hair and skin care products, cosmetics, soft drinks and other beverages, as well as several categories of food and household products. For Hispanics this would apply to certain makes of domestic passenger cars and to other product categories in which consumption patterns reflect a stronger cultural focus as in the case of many food products, beverages and some personal care items. Such consumption patterns and relationships translate into substantial market opportunities for many types of retailing based on geographic concentration of consumers, race/ethnic segment appeals, patronage loyalties and specially targeted consumer benefits. There is a preponderance of evidence that social- and cultural distinctiveness of these groups will persist indefinitely. Yet in general, details about these race/ethnic group or market segment characteristics are not illustrated and discussed to an equivalent extent in most of the widely adopted retail management textbooks.

**COMPARISONS OF TEXTBOOK COVERAGE**

Most textbooks in retailing management are uneven in their coverage of the racial/ethnic aspects of the subject. This pattern is summarized and discussed in this section of the paper.

**Selection and Review of Textbooks**

The retailing management textbooks chosen for comparison were selected based on their recent publication dates (1987 or later); acknowledged market position (in their second or later edition) and market exposure (adoptions in many four-year institutions). The five textbooks included under these criteria were:

- Berman and Evans, 4th ed. (1989)
- Davidson, Sweeney and Stampfl, 6th ed. (1988)
- Morgenstein and Strongin, 2nd ed. (1987)

These books are likely to be considered representative of the "state of the art" in topical coverage as judged by their recency of publication and acceptance in the academic marketplace.

Retailing textbooks by authors not included in the listing (1) did not meet one or more of the criteria, (2) were not available when the comparisons were made, (3) or were not considered to be comparable as to the primary targeted segment of four-year college/university users.

**Summary of Comparisons**

The main categories of race-ethnic content are summarized in Exhibit 1.

Some coverage of key topics and issues is omitted from all five textbooks. This is not surprising. Very likely this could be said of topics of universal importance such as consumer behavior, merchandising planning and even retail pricing. But the range of coverage as well as omissions is quite large.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (Year)</th>
<th>Main Title</th>
<th>Topic/Coverage</th>
<th>Place - Chapter in consumer behavior</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berman and Evans (1989)</td>
<td>&quot;The Diversified Minority Growth-Market Segments&quot;</td>
<td>No Separate Reading</td>
<td>YES 16 lines (1.3pp)</td>
<td>(2.5pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolezler and DeLisser (1989)</td>
<td>&quot;Demographic and Special Consumer Markets&quot;</td>
<td>No Separate Reading</td>
<td>YES 27 lines (2.3pp)</td>
<td>56 lines (2.5pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson, Sweeney &amp; Stampfl (1980)</td>
<td>&quot;Demographic and Special Consumer Markets&quot;</td>
<td>No Separate Reading</td>
<td>YES 27 lines (2.3pp)</td>
<td>56 lines (2.5pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason &amp; Mayes (1987)</td>
<td>&quot;Demographic and Special Consumer Markets&quot;</td>
<td>No Separate Reading</td>
<td>YES 27 lines (2.3pp)</td>
<td>56 lines (2.5pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morganstein and Strongin (1987)</td>
<td>&quot;Demographic and Special Consumer Markets&quot;</td>
<td>No Separate Reading</td>
<td>YES 27 lines (2.3pp)</td>
<td>56 lines (2.5pp)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Topics**

- Acknowledges race/ethnic diversity
- Corrects "melting pot" perspective of assimilation
- Reports race/ethnic demographics
- Discusses applicable forms of market segmentation
- Offers retail mix strategy guidelines for reaching race/ethnic groups
- Gives examples of retailer responses to at least one race/ethnic group
- Mentioned in market area analysis
- Referred to in HRM topics
- Included in discussion of franchising
- Table/graph of race/ethnic demographics
- At least two other illustrations provided of race/ethnic content

1. Examples could include, but are not limited to: apparel and discount merchandising; automobile retailing; brand and store loyalty; downtown shopping patterns; central city, regional or other geographic concentrations of racial/ethnic groups; role of word-of-mouth publicity; fragmentation and other media characteristics; retail firm dominance in the Black enterprise sector; national, regional or local media campaigns of selected retail/service firms such as Burger King and McDonald's.
For example, Davidson, Sweeney and Stampfl (1988) provide over 10 pages of tabular and text material; Berman and Evans just over one page. But even length and "yes" answers regarding selected topics do not capture the variations in quality and clarity of coverage. As an example, only Lewison and DeLozier (1989) recognize that the myth of the melting pot and assimilation should be challenged and corrected. None of the present coverage fully reflects the readily available trade and business periodical literature on racial/ethnic aspects of the retail marketplace.

In turning to Table 1, the lack of diversity in the people photographed is even more marked. But with the exception of Davidson, Sweeney and Stampfl (1988) even Caucasian women are "underrepresented" relative to their importance as retail customers. In Mason and Mayer (1987) there is only gender diversity. In all of the books, the percentage of individuals from racial/ethnic minority groups is below their representation in the retail marketplace.

IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

In most topics or subjects presented in retail management textbooks, authors generally attempt to reflect current theory and practice in their presentations. Such is not the case, generally, with respect to racial/ethnic aspects of retailing. This has important implications for retailing education and poses some challenges to the authors of retail management textbooks.

Implications for Retailing Education

To the extent that the coverage does not adequately reflect diversity, students of retailing are not being made aware of important aspects of the environment which they will encounter as consumers, managers or other roles in the business system. Besides awareness, important opportunities are being missed for encouraging greater sensitivity to and understanding of racial/ethnic differences and diversity. For any glaring omission it could be argued that there is some degree of miseducation.

Our suggestions to teachers of retailing include the following:

1. Supplement text coverage of racial/ethnic content with articles from Advertising Age, American Demographics, Black Enterprise, and other publications which do provide coverage of the relevant racial/ethnic content.

2. Use examples from local newspapers and, when available, from other media targeted to the various racial/ethnic communities in the area.

3. Mention the omission to publishers' sales representatives and editors when the matter of topical coverage is discussed.

4. Write to authors and convey interest in and sensitivity to the coverage of racial and ethnic content.

Implications for Authors of Retail Management Textbooks

The coverage of racial and ethnic aspects carries with it more discretion than is likely for most other topics. There are after all varying degrees of interest which teachers and students have in such coverage. The issue probably turns on the idea of balance, author interest and, inevitably, space limitations imposed by editors and publishers. We think that this discussion has indicated that the issue at least deserves some rethinking. Based on what currently exists in the retail marketplace, there is a marked coverage gap. Given what is being predicted for the workforce and the society in the 1990's and beyond into the 21st century, more attention to race and ethnic diversity in retailing is well-deserved. A major challenge, then, is to have authors respond by including more material on racial and ethnic aspects of retailing in future editions.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on content comparisons in five widely adopted retail management textbooks, there is a noticeable coverage gap with respect to the racial/ethnic aspects of the retail marketplace. This presents authors with challenges and opportunities to more
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Diversity in Text Photographs That Include People</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number That Include People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-American females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not counted because gender/race or persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not distinguishable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Caucasian female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent non-Caucasian male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent non-Caucasian female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent total non-Caucasian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Berman and Evans [1989]
\(^2\)Davidson, Sweeney and Stampfl [1988]
\(^3\)Lewison and DeLozier [1989]
\(^4\)Mason and Mayer [1987]
\(^5\)Morgenstein and Strongin [1987]
adequately reflect the diversity in order to help students become more aware of and, hopefully, sensitive to such issues. For the sake of understanding and accuracy it would seem desirable to narrow and, eventually, eliminate the coverage gap on race and ethnicity in retail management textbooks. With more accurate and representative coverage of racial/ethnic content, students can be helped to prepare for the more culturally diverse marketplace that they will encounter throughout the 1990s and beyond.

REFERENCES


