

# ETHNICITY AND SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

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## OVERVIEW

In the marketing literature, consumer ethnocentrism has become synonymous with a perceived moral obligation to support products made domestically. Empirical evidence indicates that ethnic identity, rather than national affiliation, is of greater importance to members of ethnic minorities. The trend toward ethnic awareness and expression of one's ethnicity through purchase behavior points toward the need for further research on the distinctive shopping characteristics of ethnic groups.

This study was concerned with developing a measure of the degree to which consumers shop from within their ethnicity and to construct profiles of shopping orientations for six ethnic groups: Black, Hispanic, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Korean. A preliminary regional study and a nationwide mail survey of the groups revealed a great diversity in shopping orientations. Blacks were found to possess shopping orientations that were more distinctive than the other five ethnic groups observed. This group also expressed the greatest tendency to shop from within their ethnicity (i.e. seek Black-owned businesses, Black salespeople and obtain information from media targeting Blacks). Hispanics were found to be least distinctive in their shopping patterns. Analyses of the three Asian groups examined (Japanese, Korean and Chinese) revealed differences in shopping behaviors that question the validity of classifying Asians as a single monolithic group.

In this study, consumers' ethnicity was found to influence their shopping orientations. Ethnicity is a candidate characteristic that lends itself well to market segmentation strategies.



## ■ Ethnicity and Shopping Behavior

Popular analogies of the United States' cultural makeup have moved from the traditional "melting pot" scenario to the more ethnically distinctive "tossed salad" or "cultural mosaic" (D'Innocenzo and Sirefman 1992; Karp 1976; Moynihan 1970). These new models highlight the resurgence of pride in ethnic identity. This trend is not particularly new. Glazer and Moynihan (1975, p. 3) recognized that "[t]here has been a pronounced and sudden increase in tendencies by people . . . to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness and identity and on new rights that derive from this group character . . ." The trend toward ethnic awareness is continuing, emphasizing the need to account for cultural diversity when crafting marketing strategy and advertising (*Advertising Age* 1991).

A national study of Hispanic-Americans found that this subculture places a higher priority on ethnic affiliations than on nationalistic concerns. The project concluded that "Hispanic-Americans are ardent in their desire to preserve their ethnic identity and traditions. . . . most consider themselves 'Hispanic first, American second'" (Yankelovich, Skelly and White 1984, p. 5). In a comparative study of Black versus White consumers, Williams and Qualls (1989) found that over 86% of Blacks identified either with their ethnic group first and as Americans second, or that ethnic and national identity were equally important (p. 276). In contrast, over 71% of Whites considered national identity more important than ethnic affiliation.

The growing interest in minority markets follows the increasing population trends in such markets and an increase in the number of ethnically-targeted publications (Edwards 1994). Recognizing the trend toward ethnic awareness among consumers, retailers have begun to tailor their products to target the more financially lucrative inner city ethnic groups (Miller 1994). J.C. Penney has targeted Blacks and Hispanic customers in selected geographic areas with products that appeal especially to these subcultures. Other big retailers have also made similar attempts, e.g. Dayton Hudson Corp's Afro-centric specialty boutiques and Wal-Mart's communion dresses for the large Catholic Hispanic population in Florida (Ortega 1993). Shoppers can now get a black Barbie doll with

obviously black features (Edwards 1994). New interest in the shopping patterns of Blacks as a growing target market has been expressed (Miller 1993b). Cosmetics manufacturers have also launched aggressive efforts to attract ethnic markets. Revlon is introducing products with darker tones for "women of color." Celebrities such as Gloria Estefan and Tia Carrere have appeared in advertisements (Miller 1993a). Advertising to the Asian- American market in some native languages is also becoming an important development in ethnic marketing (Tong 1994). This carries all of the problems of transporting advertisements across cultural boundaries, perhaps more intimidating a task than Tong (1994) implies: "[d]oing this is not impossible, it just means more than hiring a translator" (p.9).

What are the implications of these developments? The distinctive needs and wants of ethnic groups, combined with the increasing ethnic awareness of consumers, make mass marketing strategies harder to implement (Miller 1993c). Another problem with targeting ethnic minorities is that there is very little empirical information available to aid strategy development. Clearly, research that leads to managerially relevant and actionable findings is especially welcome in this new area.

This report presents the results of an exploratory study designed to develop a profile of shopping orientations for six ethnic groups and to create a new scale to assess shopping activities motivated by ethnic factors.

### *Consumer Research on Ethnic Subcultures*

The size, rising income and geographical concentration of the Hispanic market has made it a research target of marketing academics and practitioners in recent years (Bellenger and Valencia 1982; Segal and Sosa 1983; Guernica and Kasperuk 1982; Loza 1988; Garcia 1988; O'Guinn and Meyer 1984; Faber, O'Guinn and McCarty 1987; Albonetti and Dominguez 1989; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983; Webster 1992). Hispanics were found to possess distinctive shopping behavior on a number of dimensions. They continue to be employed as subjects for theory development. For example, past studies on Hispanics demonstrated situational influences on ethnically-oriented behavior (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989) and the applicability of distinctiveness theory in an advertising context (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994).

Not all work on ethnic consumption behavior has focused on Hispanics; many studies involved comparisons of some ethnic group to a generic "White" group. Hirschman (1980) compared Whites and Blacks on a number of social activities and group memberships. Williams and Qualls (1989) assessed differences between how Blacks and Whites re-

spond to advertising featuring celebrity endorsements. A similar comparative approach was undertaken by Valencia (1989) and Wallendorf and Nelson (1986) to evaluate ethnic influences on social values. This stream of research has found that ethnic subcultures possess distinctive sets of behaviors. However, little work has been done using established multi-item measures as criteria for observing such differences between ethnic groups. The current study is an exploratory attempt to address the distinctive aspects of shopping behavior using established measures.

### *Shopping from Within the Ethnic Group*

A second objective of the study is to develop a measure of *Ethnic Choice Orientation* (ECHO) or the degree to which consumers conduct shopping activities from within their ethnic group. We seek to integrate the concept of consumer ethnocentrism (the perceived morality of buying domestic vs. imported products) into the problem of measuring ethnically-oriented shopping preferences. Substantial research has been invested into the development of a measure of consumer ethnocentric tendencies, or CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma 1987). The CETSCALE measure was shown to be a strong predictor of willingness to buy and purchase behavior in three separate national samples (Netemeyer, Durvasula and Lichtenstein 1991), although its consistency across product lines appears somewhat unstable (Herche 1992).

Up to this point, ethnocentrism research has focused on the international aspects of the construct; in particular, the perception of foreign products. The term "ethnocentrism" is, however, not limited to national constraints. Our research extends this concept to the ethnicity domain. We propose that in heterogeneous cultural and ethnic settings, ethnocentrism will impact consumer shopping behavior such that within a given subculture similar search/shopping behaviors are likely to emerge across consumers. Such behaviors may be motivated by ethnic factors. For example, Black consumers may prefer to buy products from Black-owned businesses whenever possible. Similar strong preferences are observable within Korean and Chinese ethnic communities. Whenever such buying prejudices exist, we anticipate that pre-purchase information search activities are more likely to rely on sources with ethnic identity congruence. We also hypothesize that consumers' ethnic intensity will be positively correlated with preferences for outlets belonging to people with similar ethnic identities.

In summary, this study seeks to provide information on how consumers from different ethnic backgrounds vary in their shopping behavior and to develop a measure of the degree to which consumers prefer to shop from within their ethnic groups.

## ■ Method

### *Measures*

Shopping orientations were measured using established multi-item instruments. Because shopping is a multi-dimensional activity, numerous measures were taken. The selected measures were chosen for their application to the questions associated with ethnic shopping, for their strong psychometric properties and for the rigor with which they were developed.

The scales presented in Table 1 were included in the questionnaire. Details on these scales are provided in the cited sources. Additionally, the ranges of possible response values are presented with clarifying comments as needed.

The measure for ethnic choice orientation (ECHO) was developed via a number of iterations on student samples. An initial pool of forty-six items was generated by the researchers. The iterative process involved administering the items, assessing the dimensionality, reliability and validity, modifying the items for clarity and consistency of response and re-administering the items to a different sample of students. The preliminary version of the ECHO scale was then administered to a regional sample, and final verification of the completed ECHO was conducted on a national sample. The resulting five-item ECHO measure revealed encouraging evidence of unidimensionality, reliability and validity.

The first large-scale survey involved construction and administration of a questionnaire including the surviving ECHO items (from the student studies) and several established measures of shopping orientation. The questionnaire was administered by undergraduate students to a regional convenience sample of 422 midwesterners who were not attending any college at the time of the survey. The "non-student" criterion was established in order to differentiate the sample characteristics from the student samples used in the initial phase of the measure development. Each interviewer was given a quota of respondents that was split evenly by gender.

The questionnaire for the second survey was developed from the version used in the regional study. It was sent via mail to a stratified random sample of 6,000 respondents from across the United States. Each stratum was made up of 1000 members of one of six ethnic groups: Blacks, Hispanics, Chinese, Japanese, Italians and Koreans. These groups were chosen due to their prominence in prior research and their sizable buying power in United States markets. Moreover, we also sought to evaluate ethnic differences within the Asian community which is often viewed monolithically in the United States.

**TABLE 1. SCALES USED TO MEASURE SHOPPING ORIENTATIONS**

ORIENTATION	RANGE OF RESPONSES	ORIGIN
Ethnocentric Tendencies Perceived morality of buying imported products	17-119	Shimp and Sharma (1987)
Shopping Enjoyment	3-21	O'Guinn and Faber (1989)
Satisfaction With Retailers	5-35	Gaski and Etzel (1986)
In-Shopping Preference	3-21	Hawes and Lumpkin (1984)
Financial Optimism	2-14	Darden and Perreault (1976)
Shopping Mall Usage	3-21	Hawes and Lumpkin (1984)
Self-Confidence in Shopping	2-14	Hawes and Lumpkin (1984)
Local Shopping Conditions measures the degree to which respondents enjoy shopping at various types of outlets	N/A	Five items developed for this study
Social Shopping	4-28	Developed in this study
Consumer Assertiveness	10-70	Richins (1983)
Ethnic Choice Orientation	4-35	Developed in this study
Importance of Convenience	11-77	Saegert and Hilger (1985)
Strength of Ethnic Ident.	1-5	Hirschman (1981)
Neighbor. Ethnic Concen. Represents the percent of neighborhood consisting of the respondents' ethnic group	0-90	Developed in this study
Information Seeking	7-28	Bearden et al. (1989)

Names and addresses of the respondents were obtained from a commercial list broker. As successfully done by others (Saegert, Hoover and Hilger 1985; Deshpandé *et al.* 1986), last names were used to identify ethnic affiliations for all groups except Blacks. Names and addresses for Black respondents were acquired from the subscription list of a magazine specifically targeted at Black readers. Return postage was pre-paid with pre-addressed envelopes provided. Respondents were given an opportunity to participate in a contest for cash prizes as an incentive to participate. To enhance response rates, a follow-up reminder was sent one week after the questionnaire was mailed.

## *Response Rates Vary by Ethnic Group*

The response rates, summarized in Table 2, varied by ethnic group. This could be an artifact of the subcultural aspects of participating in a mail survey, oversampling of some of these ethnic minorities, or other unknown factors. The participation rate was roughly half of what could have been expected from a "generic" national sample, given the methodology employed, based on the prior experience of the researchers and published research (Yu and Cooper 1983).

The high rate of nonresponse can be attributed to at least two non-cultural factors. First, the wide scope of the research questions at hand required a lengthy questionnaire. Although there was no indication of a respondent fatigue problem in the pilot studies, this could have gained salience when respondents filled out the surveys at home without the presence of a researcher. A second factor involves sampling frame error. Many questionnaires were received from respondents indicating that they did not belong to one of the six groups of interest in this study. This is likely due to non-Black subscribers to the magazine from which we obtained our list for Blacks. This would also explain the very low number of returns received from Blacks as well.

The small sample size gives rise to two major concerns: the ability of the samples to represent the populations in question and the consequent reduction in the power of statistical tests on such data. Given the random nature of the national sample and the lack of a systematic pattern in the responses, there does not appear to be evidence of nonresponse bias. Regarding the second concern, if statistical tests are significant, one can consider the sample size as adequate.

In order to obtain a minimum sample size for Black respondents, the returns from the regional study (for Blacks only) were combined with the national sample, resulting in the addition of forty-four responses. The potential for the introduction of bias in the national sample resulting from this action was evaluated by comparing the demographic characteristics for each group. No statistically significant differences were observed.

## ■ Findings

An exploratory factor analysis conducted on the five ECHO items revealed that over 61% of the variation was captured by a single factor. A second factor with an eigenvalue of greater than one did not emerge, thereby attesting to the unidimensionality of the measure.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Coefficient  $\alpha$ . The result, .84, showed that respondents tended to answer all the five items in a consistent manner.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FOR NATIONWIDE STUDY BY ETHNIC GROUP

	BLACK	HISPANIC	CHINESE	JAPANESE	ITALIAN	KOREAN
Delivered <sup>a</sup>	896	897	897	897	897	897
Usable Returns	27	96	85	107	106	70
Rate <sup>b</sup>	2.9%	10.7%	10.6%	11.9%	11.8%	7.8%

<sup>a</sup>620 non-deliverable questionnaires were attributed equally to each group

<sup>b</sup>based on deliverable responses



The validity of the measure was established by correlating the ECHO responses with Shimp and Sharma's (1987) CETSCALE. Since both constructs capture the acceptability of symbols and products from "outsiders," one would expect a high correlation between the two. The results confirm that the two constructs are indeed related. We obtained a correlation coefficient of .39 ( $p < .0001$ ) between the two measures.

The discriminant validity of the ECHO was shown by correlating the composite (summed) scores for the measure with a composite measure of social desirability (Ballard, Crino and Rubinfeld 1988). The correlation coefficient, .06 ( $p < .06$ ), showed that there is no tendency to respond to the ECHO items in a manner that would be approved by others.

A summary of the profiles of the various ethnic groups is presented in Table 3. In spite of the small sample size for each ethnic group, a variety of statistically significant differences in shopping orientations between the six ethnic groups was observed. We discuss below the most notable contrasts in detail.

The perceived appropriateness of purchasing imported products (ethnocentric tendencies) were highest among Hispanics and Blacks and lowest for the Japanese. Since many Asian households may have relatives living overseas who are dependent on United States markets, their openness to imports may be explainable. Koreans, however, did not reveal the same characteristics.

Blacks, Chinese and Koreans appeared to be the most optimistic about their future financial conditions, and the Japanese sample was the most pessimistic. The negative perceptions of the Japanese might reflect the poor economic conditions being experienced in Japan as it suffers through its first recession in decades. The degree to which "home" country conditions might impact an ethnic group in the United States was not investigated in this study, nor has it been suggested as a predictor of attitudes.

*Wide Range of Ethnic Choice Orientations* Ethnic choice orientations (ECHO) were found to be strongest among Blacks. The mean response for that group (17.4) was much higher than the mean for Koreans (13.2) and substantially greater than the mean for Italians (10.0). An explanation may lie in the fact that Blacks in this study reported the highest level of ethnic identification (4.37 out of a possible 5). Moreover, the percentage of respondents' neighborhoods comprised of people with similar ethnicity was highest for Blacks (62%). The correlations between ECHO and (a) strength of ethnic identification and (b) neighborhood ethnic concentration were .30 ( $p < .0001$ ) and .15 ( $p < .0001$ ) respectively. These correlations suggest that a tendency for those who strongly identify with

**TABLE 3. PROFILES OF SHOPPING ORIENTATIONS BY ETHNIC GROUP  
(Mean Responses)**

CATEGORY	BLACK	HISPANIC	CHINESE	JAPANESE	ITALIAN	KOREAN
Ethnocentric Tendencies <sup>+</sup>	63.94	65.96	46.65	45.39	58.41	56.93
Enjoyment <sup>+</sup>	13.27	11.42	12.62	12.08	10.59	12.99
Satisfaction w/Retailers	23.03	23.28	24.06	23.57	22.37	23.13
In-Shopping Preference <sup>+</sup>	13.63	14.60	12.49	12.73	13.83	11.90
Financial Optimism <sup>+</sup>	9.76	9.21	9.73	8.42	8.41	9.60
Mall Usage	13.76	12.61	13.02	12.65	11.00	13.40
Shopping Self-Confidence <sup>+</sup>	10.40	10.23	10.20	9.10	10.13	9.86
Social Shopping <sup>x</sup>	15.69	16.82	15.51	14.56	15.42	15.27
Assertiveness <sup>+</sup>	46.63	47.05	45.79	46.40	48.65	44.35
Ethnic Choice Orientation <sup>+</sup>	17.35	13.56	11.68	10.97	9.99	13.16
Importance of Convenience	37.88	39.37	36.62	37.05	37.81	37.39
Strength of Ethnic Identification <sup>+</sup>	4.37	3.72	3.75	3.47	3.06	3.74
Neighborhood Ethnic Concentration <sup>+</sup>	62.00	37.13	16.27	24.76	25.67	15.36

<sup>+</sup>differences significant at  $\alpha = .01$

<sup>x</sup>differences significant at  $\alpha = .05$

Note: Vertical comparisons are not valid because there are different ranges for each of the measures.

their ethnic identity to express those feelings through their shopping behaviors.

To determine how effective a model based on shopping orientations could correctly identify the ethnic identity of the respondents, a discriminant model was created using the measure of ethnocentrism (CETSCALE), the ethnic choice orientation scale developed in this study (ECHO), and the shopping orientation measures described in Table 1. The results, reported in Tables 4 and 5, show that several of the variables were effective in classifying respondents into ethnic groups (these variables had the greatest differences in responses between ethnic groups). The ECHO measure was the most effective, followed closely by the CETSCALE. The classification matrix reported in Table 5 shows that Hispanics were the hardest to classify for the model. It often misclassified them as Blacks and Italians. Blacks were the most distinctive in their shopping orientations with nearly 60% correctly classified.

**TABLE 4. DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS RESULTS**

VARIABLE	F-STATISTIC	P-VALUE
ECHO	18.6	.0000
CETSCALE	13.1	.0000
Information Seeking	7.7	.0000
In-Shopping	5.1	.0001
Mall Usage	5.4	.0001
Shopping Enjoyment	4.6	.0004
Optimism	4.3	.0007
Assertiveness	3.6	.0033
Shopping Competence	3.4	.0053
Complaint Behavior	3.3	.0055

Note: This table shows the variables which differed most between the six ethnic groups. Only statistically significant ( $\alpha = .01$ ) relationships are reported.

TABLE 5. CLASSIFICATION MATRIX

ACTUAL MEMBERSHIP	PREDICTED MEMBERSHIP					
	Blacks	Hispanics	Chinese	Japanese	Italians	Koreans
Blacks	58.6%	12.9	4.3	11.4	4.3	8.6
Hispanics	22.1%	27.4	4.2	7.4	26.3	12.6
Chinese	10.7%	8.3	33.3	19.0	11.9	16.7
Japanese	9.3%	5.6	15.9	45.8	15.0	8.4
Italians	4.7%	19.8	10.4	14.2	46.2	4.7
Koreans	13.0%	11.6	15.9	10.1	7.2	42.0

Proportion Correctly Classified by Model = 41.8%

Proportion Correct Expected by Chance = 17.2%

Note: This table can be read as follows: 58.6% of the Black respondents were correctly classified by the model, 12.9% were classified as Hispanic.

## ■ Conclusions

Although the results presented in this study should be considered tentative and exploratory given that the profiles reported are based on small samples, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, of the six ethnic groups studies, Blacks appear to be the most oriented toward expressing their ethnicity in their attitudes toward shopping. Blacks identified with their ethnicity most intensely. Moreover, we found that Blacks place a relatively greater importance on their ethnic identification than do their counterparts with respect to their buying attitudes. These conclusions suggest that this group should be most reachable with marketing strategies that are tailored specifically to highlight their ethnicity. Factors such as ethnically distinct product lines, store ambiance aspects such as ethnically appropriate background music and decor and compatible ethnicity of sales personnel are likely to impact Blacks most effectively. Conversely, Hispanics would not be expected to be as responsive to such strategies.

The question of the diversity of the Asian community can be answered by observing the pattern of responses reported in Table 3. The dependent measures could be classified into two categories: attitudes toward products from "outsiders," and shopping orientations. The findings suggest that with respect to ethnocentrism and ethnic choice orientations (the "outsider" measures), the Koreans are distinctive in their attitudes from the other two Asian groups. Their shopping orientations, however, are not particularly different from that of the Chinese and the Japanese. We suggest that further research be done on these three groups, looking at the potential reasons why the pattern of responses in this study was found.

The design of this study reflects an attempt to learn about the shopping orientations of several ethnic groups. Since most studies on ethnicity tend to be either non-comparative in nature, or evaluate at most two groups, the results presented here are a substantive contribution. The low response rate, combined with the fragmentation of coverage associated with a stratified sample of six groups, leaves the representation of some groups at a very low rate. The findings should be viewed as tentative given the limited data from which the conclusions were generated.

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