

Cultural Adaptation and Consumer Disidentification in the US

Melvin Prince¹ and Lynn Kwak

Alexander Josiassen (2011) initiated research on the consumer disidentification (CDI). More specifically, in his investigation of 2nd generation Turks in the Netherlands, he introduced the concept of acculturation as an antecedent to consumer disidentification among this ethnic group. Josiassen's study showed that acculturation negatively affects CDI. The present replication research among American 2nd generation US immigrants confirmed Josiassen's findings with respect to CDI. It also confirmed his findings that acculturation positively affects consumer ethnocentrism (CET). In elaborating his model, the US study found that (a) national disidentification (NDI) is inversely predictive of acculturation, and (b) acculturation is negatively predictive of consumer xenocentrism (XEN). Replication of the Netherland CDI model in the U.S. results in an acceptable measurement fit and structural fit.

Keywords: consumer disidentification, ethnocentrism, national disidentification, cross-cultural, xenocentrism

¹ Melvin Prince, **Marketing Department, Southern Connecticut State University**, New Haven, Connecticut USA 06515, Phone 203-392-7024, E-mail: Princem1@southernct.edu

Lynn Kwak, **Marketing Department, Southern Connecticut State University**, New Haven, Connecticut USA 06515, Phone 203-392-6209, E-mail: Kwake1@southernct.edu

Introduction

This is a companion, complementary article to “Does the Netherlands-Based Consumer Disidentification Model Work in the US?” which appeared in a previous issue of this journal. Recent trends in the US involve widespread national disidentification exemplified in collective behavior protests and recently developed counter-culture ideologies. This phenomenon of disidentification in its national focus extends to established institutions including law enforcement and legal structures. Second generation immigrants, in particular experience identity conflicts over national identity. Identity conflicts arise when one or more collectivities are incorporated with an individual’s self-concept. This implies an attraction towards others conditioned by culture (Prince, Davies, Cleveland and Palihawadana 2016). It would not be unusual for adversarial attitudes toward the host country to arise within this social group.

Spillover of national disidentification may result in rejection of domestic products. Josiassen (2011) studied consumer disidentification and its antecedents including acculturation. Acculturation levels reflect family influences experienced by second generation immigrants. These depend upon time spent in the US by parents who are first generation immigrants. Other factors in acculturation include the amount of family contact and the degree of family cultural conflict (Bostean & Gillespie 2017). Acculturation is a central concept that mediates national disidentification and consumer disidentification.

The present article tests Josiassen’s findings about the role of acculturation in a consumer context. His study was conducted among second generation immigrants in the Netherlands. No research to date has replicated findings on the impact of acculturation. However, this is a principal aim of the current study among second generation immigrant consumers in the US. Additionally, this study has extended his model in the following way: it introduces the concept of xenocentrism as a third consumer predisposition that includes consumer disidentification and consumer ethnocentrism.

Consumer xenocentrism has been found to affect purchase intentions for foreign and domestic products independently of related traits such as consumer ethnocentrism. This relationship exists regardless of consumer assessments of relative product quality (Diamantopoulos, Davydove, & Arslanagic-Kalajdzic 2019). This sheds additional light on the functions of acculturation in the determination of attitudes toward domestic and foreign products. Another extension to Josiassen’s work is the revealing of another important antecedent of acculturation, namely national disidentification. In sum, this study replicates the landmark study of consumer disidentification with respect to the impact of cultural adaptation on buying predispositions.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Acculturation may be defined as cultural change that ensues based on contacts with dissimilar agents and the mainstream culture. The concept is broader than the degree of individual assimilation of the dominant culture. In general, acculturation takes place by openness to elements of the new culture in search of basic necessities, allowing for retention of native culture elements once necessities are satisfied (Mendez-Pounds and Gonzalez 2018). Second generation immigrants, in particular, combine their identities between their subgroups and the host country-related national identity.

Acculturation among second generation immigrants has a strong effect on consumer preferences. This process entails coping with acculturation stressors which influence product attitudes and consumption behaviors (Bostean and Gillespie 2017). Sources of stressors include context of exit, context of reception, and country of origin kinship ties. Context of exit refers to whether departure from a foreign country was voluntary or involuntary. Context of reception involves experienced discrimination or acceptance by members of the host culture. The relation between experienced rejection and acculturation attitudes has been found to be positively associated with acceptance by the majority group (Sixtus, Wesche, Tsantila, and Kerschreiter 2019). Finally, kinship ties in the country of origin affect the pace and progress of acculturation (Gil, and Vega 1996).

Identification with the host country is more likely to occur among those primarily interacting with host country persons (Josiassen 2011). The impact of acculturation favoring host versus heritage cultures has been measured in a study of product consumption among consumers varying in their acculturation levels. Positive acculturation involved biased attraction toward the host culture; negative acculturation involved biased attraction to the heritage culture (Kizgin, Jamal, and Richard 2015). Different levels of acculturation reflect the subjective balance of attitudes between in-groups and outgroups (Tajfel 1981). Consumer ethnocentrism represents a strong positive valence for mainstream culture product acquisition and consumption. Hence, acculturation attitudes would be expected to be predictive of consumer ethnocentrism.

Since acculturation minimizes dissimilarities between an individual and the dominant culture, it may be expected that acculturation generally leads to positive consumer ethnocentric tendencies. Thus, acculturated consumers will be more likely to assume the trappings of the indigenous population. We propose the following:

H1: Acculturation has a positive effect on consumer ethnocentrism.

Acculturation involves learning traits of the mainstream culture, and considering the mainstream culture rich and precious (Laroche, Kim, Hui and Tomiuk 1997). Minimization of such learning negatively influences evaluations of aspects of a dominant culture. In such cases, perceived dissimilarities between the individual and

the host society will meet with lesser acceptance and receptivity (Josiassen 2011). Therefore, H2 follows:

H2: Acculturation has a negative effect on CDI

Xenocentrism refers to individuals who prefer and value another culture to the one in which they are immersed (Gaur, Bathala & Diaz 2015). Factors in xenocentrism are: cultural admiration of another society and marginalization from dominant in-groups (Prince, Davies, Cleveland and Palihawadana 2016). Xenocentrism is characterized by outgroup favoritism, while consumer ethnocentrism is characterized by in-group favoritism (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos 2016). From the standpoint of social identity theory, lesser acculturated individuals are associated with status inferiority perceptions, and social alienation from the host society is characteristic of xenocentric consumers. Consequently:

H3: Acculturation has a negative effect on xenocentrism

National disidentification can have negative consequences for socio-cultural adjustment and social participation (Ogbu 1993). This negative relationship can be more extreme when there are perceptions of procedural unfairness in their dominant group experiences (Jasinskaja, Lahti et al 2009). National disidentification involves explicitly distancing oneself from the host society. This is likely to obstruct acculturation. As a result, heritage identity and host national identity are polarized under varying conditions of national disidentification (Mailiepaard & Verkuten 2018).

Strong national disidentification implies rejection of host group membership, and assumption of an adversarial position. National disidentification leads to self-imposed restrictions involving socialization with dominant groups, individuals and institutions. It also motivates individuals to participate in communities where disidentification is the norm, resulting in a contagion effect. Individuals experience an intense sense of belonging to an out-group from mainstream society. Therefore:

H4: National disidentification has a negative effect on acculturation

Method

Procedure

In order to test the empirical generalizability of Josiassen (2011) in the U.S. context, this research targeted U.S. adult residents, aged 18-65, who were second-generation immigrants. The second-generation immigrant classification refers to people born in the United States, with at least one first-generation (immigrant) parent. MTurk participants

were the sampling frame in exchange for a small payment. MTurk sampling has been found to be reliable for consumer research studies; it is more representative of the general population parameters than traditional convenience samples found in published articles (Goodman and Paolacci, 2017). To further enhance the quality of our data in this study only MTurk workers with intellectual capabilities (i.e., a 90-100% Human Intelligence Task [HIT] approval rating and 100 or more approved HITs) were recruited to participate in this research (Hauser and Schwarz 2016).

The survey was completed online by 301 second-generation U.S. immigrants in an average of 7.5 minutes. The sample was diverse. It was divided equally by females and males, the majority of whom were single (60%), and 79% of participants had at least some college education. Median household income was \$50,000. The majority of respondents (33.9%) were Caucasians, followed by Hispanics (24.6%), Asians (24.6%), African-Americans (8%), others (6.3%), and Middle Eastern (2.7%).

Construct Measures

Consumer disidentification, consumer ethnocentrism and acculturation scales were adapted from Josiassen (2011). Other measures were ethnocentrism (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2016) and national disidentification (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2007).

Results

The research model was assessed by a two-step process generation of (1) a measurement model, and (2) a structural model. Measurement statistics of construct reliability and validity were examined. All five of the model constructs exhibited adequate indicator reliability and validity scores on Cronbach's alpha (Table1). Composite reliability is a more widely accepted measure of internal inconsistency than is Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha assumes that all indicators are equally weighted (Chin 1998). Another indicator, Rho_A composite reliability, measure, scored above .70, the minimal standard. Average variance abstracted (AVE) scores were acceptable as well. Each of the constructs explained more than half of the variance stemming from their indicators. The average variance extracted (AVE) for consumer disidentification was 0.516. This indicates that the consumer disidentification construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Starstedt 2017). The AVE for national disidentification was .662.

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach	Rho_A	Composite	AVE
Acculturation	0.750	0.753	0.858	0.669
Consumer Disidentification	0.808	0.837	0.863	0.516
Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.872	0.894	0.911	0.720
Xenocentrism	0.858	0.877	0.898	0.640
National Disidentification	0.869	0.897	0.906	0.662

Discriminant validity was analyzed. This concept tests whether a model differentiates among constructs. In this test latent variable correlations of the square root of AVE values are shown. The Fornell and Larcker method employed tests whether the variance shared between the construct and other constructs is less than the average variance between each construct and its measure. Based on Table 2, all constructs shown on the diagonal clearly exceed their shared variances with other constructs. The test showed that both consumer disidentification and national disidentification were distinct from each other and from all other constructs.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity: Fornell Larker Test

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Acculturation	0.818				
2. Consumer Disidentification	- 0.360	0.719			
3. Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.274	0.039	0.849		
4. Xenocentrism	- 0.262	0.413	0.041	0.800	
5. National Disidentification	- 0.559	0.556	0.096	0.549	0.814

Table 3 Latent Variable Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Acculturation	1.000	-0.360	0.274	-0.262	-0.559
2. Consumer Disidentification	-0.360	1.000	0.039	0.413	0.556
3. Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.274	0.039	1.000	0.041	0.096
4. Xenocentrism	-0.262	0.413	0.041	1.000	0.549
5. National Disidentification	-0.559	0.556	0.096	0.549	1.000

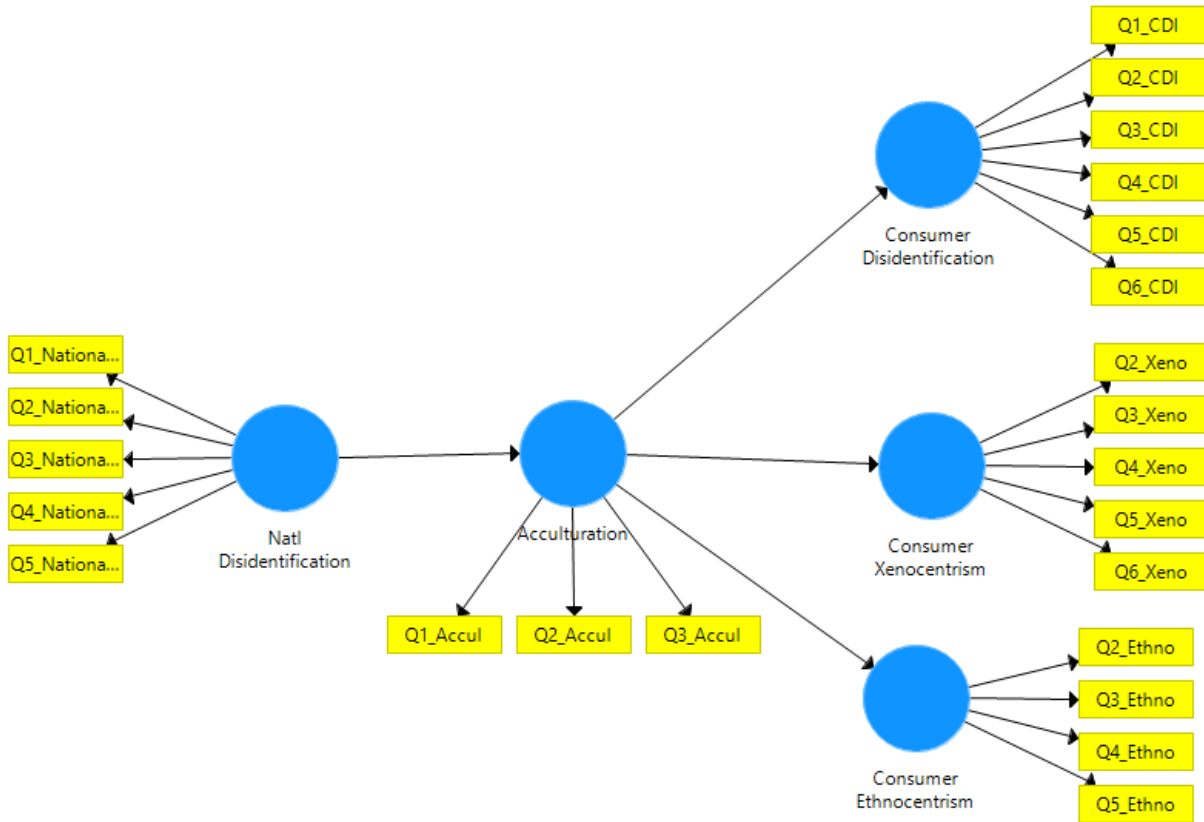
Correlations between latent variables in the model are shown in Table 3. National disidentification and consumer ethnocentrism are uncorrelated. However, the correlation between national disidentification and xenocentrism is significant and positive (0.549). The correlation between acculturation and consumer disidentification is significant and negative (-0.360). These findings foreshadow effects found in the path analysis.

Table 4 Summary of Research Hypotheses

	Path	Mean	S.D.	t-stat	P-value
Acculturation → consumer disidentification	-0.360	-0.370	0.056	6.483	0.000
Acculturation → consumer ethnocentrism	0.274	0.278	0.046	5.955	0.000
Acculturation → xenocentrism	-0.262	-0.274	0.051	5.123	0.000
Natl disidentification → acculturation	-0.559	-0.556	0.050	11.067	0.000

A bootstrapping procedure with a re-sample of 5,000 replications, was used to test study hypotheses. Relationships between consumer acculturation and (a) consumer ethnocentrism and (b) CDI were tested for path coefficients and their significance levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Consumer Ethnocentrism-Disidentification—Xenocentrism Model



All four hypotheses were confirmed. H1: The relationship between acculturation and consumer ethnocentrism was supported (0.274, $p < 0.000$). H2: The relationship between acculturation and consumer disidentification was supported (-0.360, $p < 0.000$). H3 resulted in a negative relationship between acculturation and xenocentrism (-0.262). H4: A negative relationship was found between national disidentification and acculturation (-0.559, $p < .000$).

Discussion

This replication study tested whether acculturation is a significant antecedent of consumer predispositions. Consistent with a study among Turkish 2nd generation immigrants, our US sample confirmed that acculturation is a positive predictor of consumer ethnocentrism and a negative predictor of CDI (Josiassen 2011). National identification engenders greater acculturation levels. In turn, higher levels of acculturation are consistent with integration and assimilation into mainstream culture. Social identity is culturally transformed in the process and consumer-related psychological and behavioral outcomes develop. Another consumer predisposition, xenocentrism, was also predicted by lower levels of acculturation. This previously unexplored finding fits with the general thesis that the acculturation process is central for consumer preferences for domestic vs. foreign products.

Managerial Implications

For targeting and positioning marketers should use acculturation level as a criterion for market segmentation. In general, acculturation levels correspond to immigrant generations, with each succeeding generation becoming more highly acculturated. For more highly acculturated ethnic segments, marketers may introduce new products that meet mainstream cultural requirements. Strategies may involve advertising messages that depict heritage cultural values (Kizgin, Jamal and Richard 2018). Lesser acculturated ethnic segments are more likely to prefer heritage ethnic products. This represents entrepreneurial opportunities to cater to such targets with culturally authentic products. This is because product preferences can be predicted by such means. Moreover, acculturation segmentation would aid in generating more effective marketing strategy designs. Acculturation segmentation will avert dire marketing mistakes. For example, media mix strategies that are receptive at lower levels of acculturation may be inappropriate at higher levels. Creative strategies that encourage integration and assimilation would be beneficial for some segments but disadvantageous for others. However, advertising styles can reflect cultural values derived from the culture of origin regardless of acculturation levels.

Research Implications

Values are fundamental drivers of consumer behavior. Future research should explore relations between values and consumer disidentification. Using the Schwartz Values paradigm, research can investigate connections between two specific value orientations—self-enhancement and conservation—on consumer ethnocentrism and CDI. Individuals prioritize their values which motivate attitudes and behavior. Values also define goals that transcend specific situations (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987). Another avenue for research includes ethnic identification which is context-specific for individual ethnicities. Ethnic identification implies the felt similarity between an ethnic group and an individual. It refers to the extent to which traits from the original culture are maintained. Ethnic identity is a sub-set of cultural identity, which includes ethnic and national identities, as well as their interplay (Sabatier 2008). Research by Feitosa, Joseph, Lacerenza, and Salas (2016) concluded that ethnic identity is a multi-dimensional construct. It is an antecedent of CDI, and may be expected to be a predictor of CDI. Social identity theory holds that individuals who strongly identify with their ethnic group will hold favorable attitudes toward similar groups., Therefore, levels of ethnic identity should inversely correlate with levels of consumer ethnocentrism (Negy, Shreve, Jensen, and Uddin, 2003).

References

- Benet-Martinez, V., and Haritatos, J. (2005). Bicultural identity integration (BII): Components and psychosocial antecedents. *Journal of Personality*, 73(4), 1015-1050.
- Balabanis, G. & Diamantopoulos, A. (2016) Consumer ethnocentrism as determinant of foreign product preference: A system justification perspective. *Journal of International Marketing*, 24(3), 58-77.
- Balabanis, G., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2016). Consumer xenocentrism as determinant of foreign product preference: A system justification perspective. *Journal of International Marketing*, 24(3), 58–77.
- Bostean, G. and Gillespie, B. J. (2018). Acculturation, acculturative stressors, and family relationships among Latino immigrants. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 24(1), 126-138
- Dimantopoulos, A., Davydova, O. & Kalajdzic-kalajdzic, M. (2019) Modeling the role of consumer xenocentrism in impacting preferences for domestic and foreign brands: A mediation analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 587-596.
- El Banna, A. E., Papadopoulos, N., Murphy, S. A., Rod, M., and Rojas-Mendez, J. I. (2018). Ethnic identity, consumer ethnocentrism, and purchase intentions among bicultural ethnic consumers: “Divided loyalties” or “Dual allegiance”? *Journal of Business Research*, 82, 310-319.
- Feitosa, J., Joseph, D. L., Lacerenza, C, N, and Salas, E. (2017) Ethnic identity: Factor structure and measurement invariance across ethnic groups. *Psychological Assessment*, 29(9), 1129-1141.
- Gaur, S. S., Bathula, H. & Diaz, C. V. (2015) Conceptualizing the influence of the cultural orientation of Latin Americans on consumers’ choice of US brands. *European Business Review*, 27(5), 477-494.
- Gil, A. G. and Vega, W. A. (1996). Two different worlds: Acculturation stress and adaptation among Cuban and Nicaraguan families. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 13, 435-456.
- Gonzalez, N. and Mendez-Pounds, J. (2018) The impact of acculturation and cultural values on Hispanic immigrants’ parenting. *Contemporary Family Therapy* 40, 56-67.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M. & Sarstedt, M. (2017) *Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling: PLS SEM*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Liebkind, K. & Solheim, E. (2009) To identify or not to identify? National disidentification as an alternative reaction to perceived ethnic discrimination. *Applied Psychology: An international Review*, 58(1), 105-128.
- Josiassen, A. (2011) Consumer disidentification and its effects on domestic product purchases: An empirical investigation in the Netherlands. *Journal of Marketing*, March, 124-143.

- Kizgin, H., Jamal, A. and Richard, M-O (2018) Consumption of products from heritage and host culture: The role of acculturation attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Business Research*, 82, 320-329.
- Laroche, M., Kim, C., Hui, M. & Tomiuk, M. (1997) A multidimensional perspective on acculturation and its relative impact on consumption of convenience foods, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 10(1,2) 33-56.
- Kizgin, H., Jamal, H., and Richard, M-O. (2015) Consumption of products from heritage and host cultures: The role of acculturation attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Business Research*, 82, 320-329.
- Maliepaard, M., & Verkuyten, M. (2018) National disidentification and minority identity: A study among Muslims in western Europe. *Self and Identity*, 17(1), 75-91.
- Mendez-Pounds, N. and Gonzalez, J. (2018). The impact of acculturation and cultural values on Hispanic immigrants' parenting. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, (40), 56-67.
- Negy, C., Shreve, T. L., Jensen, B. J., and Uddin, N. (2003). Ethnic identity, self-esteem, and ethnocentrism: A study of social identity vs multicultural theory of development. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 9(4), 333-344.
- Prince, M., Davies, M., Cleveland, M. & Palihawadana, D. (2016) Here, there and everywhere: A study of consumer centrism. *International Marketing Review*, 33(5), 715-754.
- Sabatier, C. (2008). Ethnic and national identity among second generation immigrant adolescents in France: The role of social context and family. *Journal of Adolescence* 31: 185-205.
- Schwartz, S. H. and Bilsky, W. (1987) Toward a universal psychological structure of human values. *Journal Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 550-562.
- Sixtus, F., Wesche, J. S., Tsantila, K., and Kerschreiper, R. (2019). How positive and negative contact experiences relate to identification and acculturation of persons with a migration background: Differentiating between majority, minority and religious group identity, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49, 904-923.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verkuyten, Maykel and A.A. Yildiz (2007), "National (Dis)identification and Ethnic and Religious Identity: A Study Among Turkish-Dutch Muslims," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33 (10), 1448-62.