

Chapter 47

Unveiling Culturally Diverse Markets: A Typology of Youth in Flanders, Belgium

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ABSTRACT

Although culture is often recognized as a multi-leveled construct, it is mostly examined at the macro (national) level, for instance, by cross-national comparisons on specific cultural dimensions. Consequently, the heterogeneity within culturally diverse societies such as that found in Flanders is often overlooked. Therefore, this study examines cultural variability among ethnic minority and majority youngsters in Flanders at the personal level by mapping their personal values and self-construal. By doing so, a typology of a culturally diverse youth market is formed based on the similarities and differences in the personal values and self-construal among ethnic minority and majority youngsters. This typology is used to examine the advertising beliefs and attitudes of distinct subgroups and to assess the relevance of values and self-construal for both advertising research and the emerging practices of ethnic and diversity marketing.

INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades the traditional view of culture as fixed, defined, and constrained by geographical boundaries (Triandis, 1995) has been challenged; for instance, by the emergence of new technologies and an ongoing global migration resulting in pluriform societies (Ting-Toomey, 2010). Belgium has become a multicultural society due to various immigrations following World War II, consisting primarily of guest workers and the share of non-Belgian nationalities continues

to grow steadily. Particularly in Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region, ethnic-cultural diversity has increased from 4.7% to 6.8% and from 27.3% to 31.5%, respectively, during the decade 2001-2011. In addition to European nationalities (e.g., Dutch, French, Italian and Spanish), Moroccan and Turkish nationalities comprise the largest non-European communities (Federal Public Service Economy, 2012).

While the multicultural reality is gaining recognition and the purchasing power of ethnic minorities is increasing, an ongoing fragmentation

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of the consumer market is challenging traditional segmentation techniques. Consequently, marketers are starting to request a better understanding of ethnic-cultural minorities even though ethnic marketing and communication practices are, relatively speaking, slowly gaining ground in Flanders (Koeman, Jaubin, & Stesmans, 2010). In line with other studies (e.g., Blanton, 1993; Romer, 2002), it has been discovered that Flemish marketers are reluctant to employ ethnic or diversity marketing strategies due to a general lack of knowledge about the values, aspirations, and preferences of minority groups. Marketing and advertising professionals in Flanders consider ethnic marketing as a minefield in which each misstep could have detrimental consequences rather than opportunities. This fear is mostly grounded in the heterogeneity among ethnic minority consumers regarding ethnic origin, language proficiency, religion, and levels of acculturation (Koeman, Jaubin, & Stesmans, 2010).

Although culture is often recognized as a multi-leveled construct, mostly it is examined at the macro (national) level; for instance, in traditional studies the consumption patterns of ethnic minorities are often compared with their mainstream counterparts, which overlook the heterogeneity within cultures and barely explain the behaviors of individual members of cultures (Gudykunst, 1997, 1998). More recently, scholars have examined the complexity of cultural variance among ethnic consumers, highlighting the significance of ethnic identification and processes of acculturation in predicting consumer behaviors (e.g., Peñaloza, 1994; Hui, Laroche, & Kim, 2006). However, empirical evidence on the relative explanatory power of socio-demographic and cultural-specific features remains limited. In addition, (ethnic) consumer responses to advertising remains understudied, as most extant advertising literature on cultural differences still encompasses cross-cultural content analyses (see Okazaki and Mueller (2007) for an overview), often revealing differences in individualistic/collectivistic value appeals (Alden, Hoyer, & Slee, 1993; Taylor,

Miracle, & Wilson, 1997; Zandpour, Chang, & Catalano, 1992; Mueller, Okazaki, & Morikazu, 2008; Nevett, 1992; Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010). Therefore, this contribution proposes to complement the existing literature examining the relationship between cultural-specific features and advertising beliefs and attitudes among a culturally diverse market.

The first part of this study examines cultural differences and similarities among 12 to 19 year-olds of Flemish¹ and other ethnic backgrounds by describing their personal values (what they find important) and self-construal (how they define themselves in relationship to each other), according to ethnic cultural backgrounds. In the second part, we employ a cluster analysis in order to come to a workable typology and assess the explanatory power of personal values and self-construal in the prediction of advertising beliefs and attitudes as well as some consumer preferences. Before we investigate the specific research questions and methodology of this study, some key concepts and theoretical insights underlying this study are described.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: FROM MACRO TO MICRO LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Cultural Variability and Personal Values

Values are considered as deeply rooted, abstract motivations which guide, justify, or explain the beliefs, attitudes, norms, and behaviors of individuals (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Therefore, values are often used to describe differences in personal motivations as well as differences between cultural groups or cultures (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). The conceptual boundary between personal values and cultural values is a thin line, as 'values' at times refer to cultural beliefs, and on other occasions to personal beliefs

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