

A CROSS CULTURAL COMPARISON OF CONSUMER TENDENCIES AND SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

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Continued growth and change in the cultural and demographic diversity of the United States signals vastly different values, norms, experiences, and perceptions across the various consumer groups targeted by marketers. In this paper, the authors employ the Marketing Lens Model as a philosophical base and empirical tool to investigate proposed cultural differences in the brand loyalty, alienation from the marketplace, change seeking tendencies, and believability of television advertising exhibited by Navajo Indian and Anglo consumers. Results of the study showed that the two consumer groups differed significantly on three of the four constructs. Post-hoc analyses were conducted to explore possible gender differences in participant responses. Managerial implications, limitations, and avenues for further research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

For decades people from all over the world, representing an array of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, have viewed the United States as a land of hope and opportunity. That influx of immigrants forever changed the demographic fabric of this country and the United States was often referred to as a "cultural melting pot." Such a perspective of cultural diversity implies that, upon entering the United States, the cultural values and beliefs of people from different cultures are somehow blended into one predominant cultural value system.

In the past few years, it has been recognized that the "melting pot" label is indeed a startling misnomer. The inadequacy of a "melting pot" analogy was already visible at the onset of the twentieth century, when most immigrants came to the United States through east coast points of entry from primarily European countries. To recognize this, one only need

acknowledge the white ethnic neighborhoods (e.g., Irish, German, Polish) in America's major east coast cities, neighborhoods that survive even today. The analogy became more inappropriate still later in the century – and still today – as the icons representing hope and opportunity increasingly became located in places other than New York City...perhaps a Golden Gate Bridge here, a Los Angeles "Hollywood" sign there, an Alamo here and a south Florida beach there...as our immigrants increasingly came from Asian and Central/South American countries.

As suggested by Shim and Gehrt (1996), who described the cultural makeup of the United States as an "ethnic mosaic," and by Panko (1997) who visualized this country's cultural diversity as "America's rainbow," the demography of the U.S., which is more diverse than ever before, is composed of myriad cultures. And, of course, all the cultural diversity brought about by "modern day" immigration overlaid that coming forth from two important sub-cultures that were already here; to wit, African Americans, whose ancestors arrived at the hands of slave traders, and American Indians,

who, of course, were here long before the first Europeans arrived.

We now understand that cultural groups in the United States are likely to retain their ethnic identity and to preserve their cultural traditions and that those cultural traditions and values often translate into distinct consumer perceptions, needs, and behaviors in the world of marketing. The Marketing Lens Model (Bristow 1998) can help marketers better understand those cultural consumer behavior differences.

The Marketing Lens Model and Consumer Behavior

The Marketing Lens Model (MLM), with its roots in the work of Brunswik (1952), is based upon the thesis that a consumer's life experiences, knowledge, and expectations have a significant impact upon his/her perceptions of the environment (see Figure 1). In short, the model suggests that members of different cultural groups will view the world through distinctly different cognitive lenses, lenses that are shaped, in part, by cultural values and beliefs (i.e., the right side of the MLM). Each group's cognitive lens will subsequently significantly impact how group members perceive products, interpret marketing activities (i.e., the left side of the MLM) and, finally, the manner in which those consumers will respond to persuasive marketing communications.

In the past, the MLM has been used to measure and compare various consumer groups' perceptions, rankings, and ratings of specific product attributes across an array of product classes (i.e., Bristow 1998; Bristow and Amyx 2001; Amyx and Bristow 1999; Bristow and Asquith 1999). Such work has shown that along with divergent cultural traditions and values come distinct consumer experiences, expectations, product expertise and knowledge, and, ultimately, consumer perceptions and behavior (French, Jordan and Tempest 1990; Shim 1996; Muller 1996; Bristow and Asquith 1998). More specifically, the marketing literature shows that for products and services ranging from automobiles to higher education, consumers from different cultural

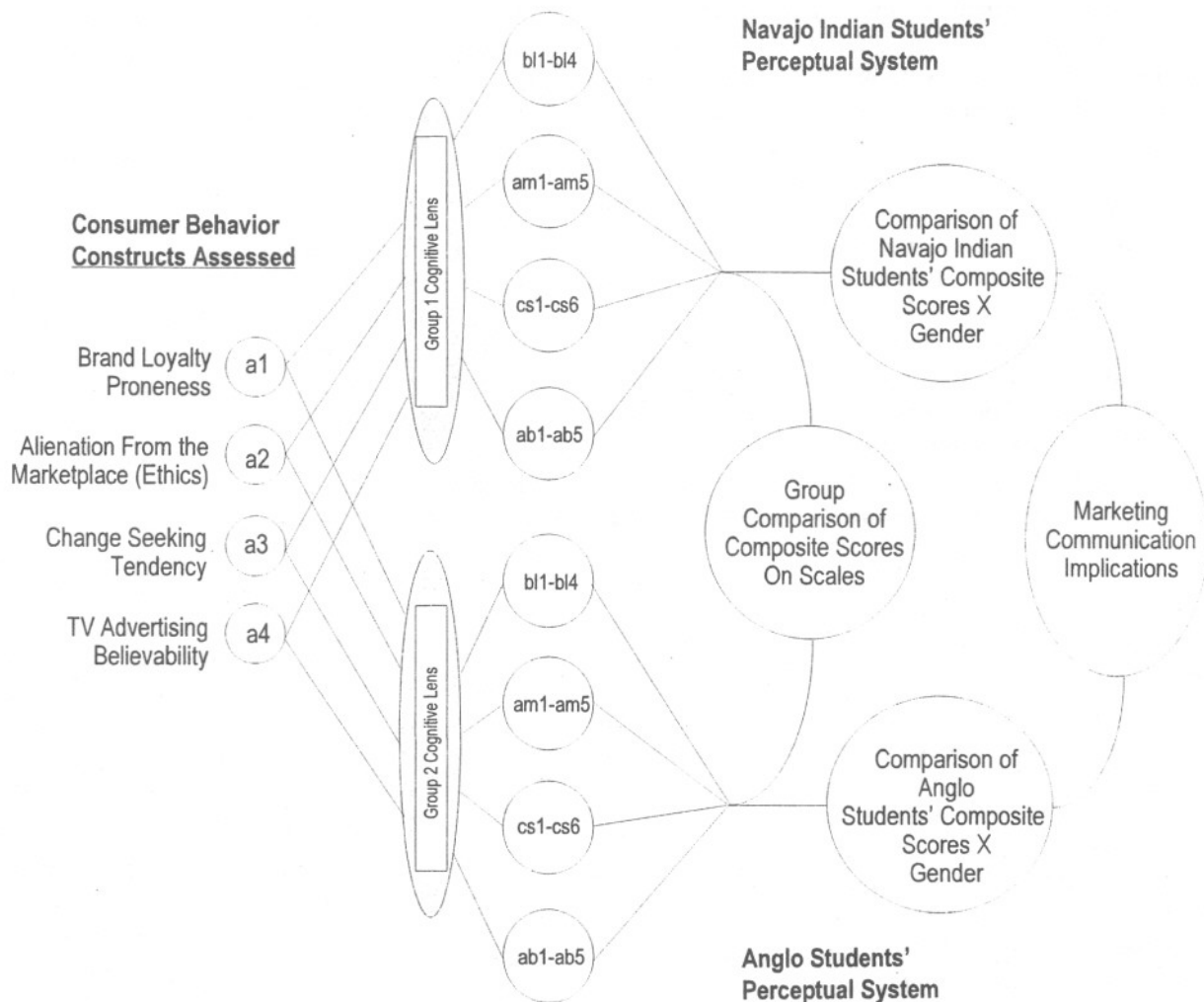
groups value and/or desire differences in product attributes (e.g., Bristow and Asquith 1998, 1999; Bristow and Amyx 1998; Amyx and Bristow 1999).

It seems clear from the research noted above that consumers make unique assessments of individual product attributes, evaluate products overall differently and, hence, express different product preferences based partly on variation in their cultural values, norms, expectations, and lifestyles. It is plausible, given these reported differences in product evaluations and preferences, that consumers with different cultural heritages similarly exhibit varying generalized propensities to behave in certain ways based on their cultures. For example, consumers' novelty seeking, acceptance of new brands or products, perceptions and/or reactions to promotional messages, trust/distrust of marketing/business activities, or myriad other attitudinal and behavioral patterns may well be determined in part by the cultural group to which they belong. In the study reported herein, the authors employed the Marketing Lens Model to empirically investigate cultural differences in consumers' brand loyalty, alienation from the marketplace, novelty seeking tendencies and evaluation of the degree to which information included in television commercials is beneficial to consumers.

THE STUDY

As noted earlier, the demographic makeup of the United States is more diverse than ever before and continued growth in the cultural diversity in this country is projected in the coming years. The U.S. Census Bureau (2001) predicts that in the year 2010, some 40 million blacks, 2 million American Indians, 14 million Asian American/Pacific Islanders, and nearly 48 million Hispanics will live in the United States. By the year 2050, those numbers are predicted to swell to 61 million blacks, 5 million American Indians, more than 33 million Asian Americans, and over 100 million Hispanics. While black, Asian American, and Hispanic consumer groups have been studied somewhat extensively, American Indians, who represent a powerful,

FIGURE 1
The Marketing Lens Model



KEY:

- a1- a4 = Consumer behavior scales used in the study
- bl1-bl4 = Composite scores on brand loyalty scale
- am1-am5 = Composite scores on alienation from the marketplace scale
- cs1-cs6 = Composite scores on change seeking tendency scale
- ab1-ab5 = Composite scores on TV advertising believability scale

growing, rapidly changing and very diverse consumer market, have received relatively little attention in the marketing literature.

As evidence of the relative paucity of attention given to American Indians in the marketing literature, consider the following quote from a popular consumer behavior textbook (that had previously introduced Hispanics as a nationality-based subgroup):

The major racial subcultures in the United States are Caucasian, African-American, Asian-American, and American Indian. Although differences in lifestyles and consumer-spending patterns exist among these groups, the vast majority of racially oriented consumer research has focused on consumer differences between African-Americans and Caucasians. Only recently has particular attention been given to Asian-American consumers (Schiffman and Kanuk 1997).

With that lack of attention in mind, this study was designed to empirically assess predicted cultural differences between Navajo Indian and Anglo consumers on four separate constructs: 1) brand loyalty, 2) alienation from the marketplace (perception of ethics in business), 3) change seeking tendency, and 4) perceptions of the beneficial nature of information presented in television advertisements. These four particular constructs were selected for several reasons. First, as will be discussed shortly, all four can be assessed by applying previously documented multi-item measurement scales. More importantly, however, the four constructs represent substantively different areas of the aforementioned myriad of consumer attitudinal and behavioral tendencies; they are more than minor variations on a single theme. Brand loyalty is a very different concept from perceptions of business ethics, which in turn is a very different concept from novelty seeking behavior, and so on. Together, then, the four constructs sample divergent areas of the growing set of known consumer traits and characteristics.

In order to assess the predicted cultural differences, four existing marketing scales, each of which demonstrated adequate internal reliability (Cronbach Alphas ranged from a low of .75 to a high of .88) were used in the study. The Loyalty Proneness Scale (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Burton 1990; Cronbach Alpha = .88) was used to measure brand loyalty. High scores on the scale indicate a consumer's tendency to repeatedly buy the same brands while low scores indicate a consumer who is generally not brand loyal. To assess consumer perceptions of ethics in business, selected items from the Consumer Alienation from the Marketplace Scale (Allison 1978; Cronbach Alpha = .75) were used. Items from the business ethics factor of that scale that also possessed stability and simple structure (Bearden et al. 1983) were incorporated in the study. Low scores on the scale indicate a consumer who believes that businesses tend to be unethical while high scale scores suggest a consumer who perceives businesses as having high ethical standards. The Change Seeking Index (CSI Short Form; Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1994; Cronbach Alpha = .84) was used to measure participants' tendencies to seek variation in their lives. The higher the participant's score on the CSI, the greater is his/her need for an environment that features variety and change. Finally, selected items from the Beliefs About TV Advertising scale (Alwitt and Prabhaker 1992; Cronbach Alpha = .86) were used to assess the degree to which participants believed that television advertising was beneficial to the customer. High scores on the scale indicate a consumer who believes that TV advertising is beneficial. All scale items were presented using a 5-point Likert type format.

Participants

Participants in the study were 282 students (160 females and 122 males) enrolled in a variety of courses across various colleges at one of two universities, one located in the southwestern and the other in the upper mid-western region of the United States. The sample was comprised of 134 Navajo Indian and 148 Anglo students.

Methodology

A survey format was used in the study. During regularly scheduled class periods, with the permission of the professors of record for each class, the primary researchers asked students to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Students were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that their anonymity would be preserved. In order to maximize the heterogeneity of the sample, data were collected at various times of the day across a five day period at each of the universities included in the study. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were engaged in a question and answer session and were thoroughly debriefed.

Results

The data collected in this study were subjected to descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques to test each of four research propositions presented below.

RP₁: **Cultural differences exist in the level of brand loyalty reported by consumers.** Based upon earlier work in this area (i.e., Bristow 1998; Bristow and Amyx 2001; Amyx and Bristow 1999; Bristow and Asquith 1999), the authors predicted that Navajo and Anglo consumers would differ significantly in the degree to which they exhibited loyalty to a specific product brand. Participant composite scores on the loyalty proneness scale could range from a low of 4 to a high of 20. As expected, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, ANOVA procedures revealed that, in general, Navajo participants were significantly more brand loyal ($\bar{x}$ = 12.35) than were Anglo students ($\bar{x}$ = 11.12). Interestingly, given the scale mid-point of 12, consumers from each cultural group exhibited only moderate brand loyalty (please see Table 1). This finding is consistent with earlier work suggesting that consumers' brand

loyalty to products may be waning (Sebastian and Bristow 2000; Anschuetz 1997; Shimp 1997).

In order to further explore the observed cultural differences in consumers' loyalty proneness, the authors conducted post-hoc analyses to investigate the impact of gender on the construct. While ANOVA procedures (see Table 3) revealed no significant differences between the loyalty proneness exhibited by Navajo and Anglo female consumers, significant differences in brand loyalty were observed between Navajo females ($\bar{x}$ = 11.83) and Navajo males ($\bar{x}$ = 13.38). In addition, Navajo males exhibited greater brand loyalty than did their Anglo counterparts ($\bar{x}$ = 11.02). There was no statistically significant difference in the level of brand loyalty exhibited between Anglo male and female consumers.

RP₂: **Cultural differences exist in consumers' perceptions of ethical behavior in the marketplace.** Using the Marketing Lens model and the underlying theory of the cognitive lens developed by Brunswik (1952), the authors predicted that cultural differences would be observed in consumers' perceptions of the ethical side of business activities. ANOVA procedures were used to analyze participants' composite scores on the Consumer Alienation from the Marketplace scale. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the analyses revealed that, overall, Navajo consumers tended to consider businesses more likely to act in an ethical manner ($\bar{x}$ = 13.88) than did Anglo consumers ($\bar{x}$ = 12.35). Considering that composite scores on the scale could range from a low of 5 to a high of 25 (with a midpoint of 15), and that higher scores on the scale indicate that consumers perceive that businesses are likely to behave in an ethical manner, the observed mean scores indicate that, for the most part, students from both cultures tended to

TABLE 1
Mean Composite Scale Scores

Scale	Cultural Group	Mean Scale Score		Mean Scale Score		Mean Scale Score
Brand Loyalty Proneness	Navajo	12.35	Navajo Female	11.83	Navajo Male	13.38
	Anglo	11.12	Anglo Female	11.23	Anglo Male	11.02
Alienation from the Marketplace	Navajo	13.88	Navajo Female	13.38	Navajo Male	14.87
	Anglo	12.35	Anglo Female	12.30	Anglo Male	12.42
Change Seeking Tendency	Navajo	22.38	Navajo Female	21.98	Navajo Male	23.18
	Anglo	22.63	Anglo Female	22.57	Anglo Male	22.67
TV Advertising Believability	Navajo	14.93	Navajo Female	14.72	Navajo Male	15.36
	Anglo	12.36	Anglo Female	13.98	Anglo Male	13.86

TABLE 2
Cultural Differences in Composite Scale Scores: ANOVA Results

Dependent Measure	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p<
Brand Loyalty Proneness	between	106.245	1	106.245	8.91	.003
	within	3338.326	280	11.923		
	total	3444.571	281			
Alienation from the Marketplace (Ethics)	between	163.014	1	163.014	18.08	.000
	within	2524.110	280	9.015		
	total	1687.124	281			
Change Seeking Tendency	between	4.245	1	4.245	.322	.571
	within	3651.482	280	13.182		
	total	3655.728	281			
TV Advertising Believability	between	72.297	1	72.297	5.36	.021
	within	3777.423	280	13.491		
	total	3849.720	281			

view business as somewhat less than ethical.

The ANOVA procedure was also used to conduct post-hoc analyses of possible gender differences in consumers' alienation from the marketplace. The analyses revealed several interesting findings. For instance, as shown in Table 3, Navajo females, as compared to Anglo females, tended to view

businesses as being more likely to make ethical business decisions (Navajo female $\bar{x}$ = 13.38; Anglo female $\bar{x}$ = 12.30). Navajo females also rated businesses as less ethical in their decision-making ($\bar{x}$ = 13.38) than did Navajo males ($\bar{x}$ = 14.87). Finally, the analyses showed that Navajo males tended to view businesses as being more ethical ($\bar{x}$ = 14.87) than did Anglo males ($\bar{x}$ = 12.42). No significant differences were observed between Anglo male and

TABLE 3
Gender X Cultural Differences in Composite Scale Scores: ANOVA Results

Cultural Group/Gender	Dependent Measure	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p<
Navajo Female/ Anglo Female	Brand Loyalty Proneness	between	14.509	1	14.509	1.180	.279
		within	1942.866	158	12.297		
		total	1957.375	159			
	Alienation from the Marketplace (Ethics)	between	46.600	1	46.600	5.215	.024
		within	1411.800	158	8.935		
		total	1458.400	159			
	Change Seeking Tendency	between	13.763	1	13.763	.961	.328
		within	2233.097	156	14.315		
		total	2246.861	157			
	TV Advertising Believability	between	21.230	1	21.230	1.623	.205
		within	2066.963	158	13.082		
		total	2088.194	159			
Navajo Female/ Navajo Male	Brand Loyalty Proneness	between	71.465	1	71.65	5.35	.022
		within	1763.050	132	13.356		
		total	1834.515	133			
	Alienation from the Marketplace (Ethics)	between	65.878	1	65.878	5.51	.020
		within	1578.211	132	11.956		
		total	1644.090	133			
	Change Seeking Tendency	between	42.561	1	42.561	3.07	.082
		within	1802.500	130	13.865		
		total	1845.061	131			
	TV Advertising Believability	between	12.107	1	12.107	.713	.400
		within	2242.289	132	16.987		
		total	2254.396	133			
Navajo Male/ Anglo Male	Brand Loyalty Proneness	between	157.089	1	157.089	14.25	.000
		within	1322.526	119	11.021		
		total	1479.615	120			
	Alienation from the Marketplace (Ethics)	between	170.631	1	170.631	10.58	.000
		within	1045.901	120	8.716		
		total	1216.533	121			
	Change Seeking Tendency	between	7.183	1	7.183	.621	.432
		within	1375.429	120	11.558		
		total	1382.612	121			
	TV Advertising Believability	between	63.769	1	63.769	4.507	.036
		within	1697.740	120	14.148		
		total	1761.508	121			
Anglo Male/ Anglo Female	Brand Loyalty Proneness	between	1.468	1	1.468	.143	.706
		within	1502.342	146	10.290		
		total	1503.811	147			
	Alienation from the Marketplace (Ethics)	between	.530	1	.530	.088	.767
		within	879.490	146	6.024		
		total	880.020	147			
	Change Seeking Tendency	between	.396	1	.396	.032	.859
		within	1806.026	145	12.455		
		total	1806.422	146			
	TV Advertising Believability	between	.613	1	.613	.059	.809
		within	1522.414	146	10.427		
		total	1523.027	147			

female ratings of the ethical decision-making of businesses.

RP₃: **Cultural differences exist in the level of life change/variation sought by consumers.** Based upon the theoretical underpinnings of the Marketing Lens Model, the authors predicted that the cultural experiences and/or values of consumers would influence the likelihood that those consumers would seek change and/or variety in their lives. U.S. Census data shows that as of the year 2000, some 140,000 American Indians are enrolled in colleges and universities across the nation (Statistical Abstract of the United States 2003). This information, when considered in conjunction with the work of Deyhle (1995), Dawson (1994), Bristow and Amyx (1999) and others, provides strong evidence to suggest that Navajo college students could be predicted to exhibit high levels of change seeking tendencies. For example, those researchers reported that, as they make the transition from the reservation and close-knit, tradition-bound familial settings on the reservation to collegiate and post-collegiate environments, many Navajo Indian young adults struggle to maintain their traditional cultural roots while pursuing career paths that lead to new careers in cities and communities around the world.

A demographic comparison between Navajo and Anglo consumers provides further support for the prediction that one group might be more likely than the other to seek change. Statistics show that in the year 2000, the average Navajo person's income was less than \$5,600 (Sanghani 2000) and that the median household income for Navajos living on the reservation was approximately \$20,000. By comparison, the average national median household income in the United States was some \$42,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). In addition, statistics showed that while slightly less than 8 percent of Anglos

lived below the federal poverty level, more than half of all Navajos living on the reservation did so. Furthermore, as of the year 2000, approximately 22 percent of Navajo households on the reservation had telephone service while fewer than 50 percent of the Navajo homes featured complete kitchens (Sanghani 2000). Similarly, Dawson (1994) and Watson (2000) reported that fewer than 50 percent of Navajos living on the reservation had complete plumbing. Such statistics, when coupled with the increasing number of American Indians pursuing college degrees and related careers off the reservation, served as the basis for the third research proposition.

The participants' composite scores on the Change Seeking Index (CSI Short Form) were analyzed using the ANOVA procedure. As shown in Table 1 and 2, the analyses revealed that, contrary to what the authors predicted, no significant differences were found between Navajo and Anglo consumers with regard to their tendency to seek change and/or variety in their lives ($\bar{x}$ change seeking index scores = 22.37 and 22.63, respectively). When one considers the range of possible composite scores on the CSI (low = 6, high = 30), the composite scores of the two groups in the study show that, for the most part, the participants scored above the mid-point on the scale.

Perhaps, in retrospect, when the demographic make-up of the sample in the study is considered, this lack of support for the predicted cultural difference is not surprising. That is, despite the obvious cultural differences, the two groups did share at least one important demographic characteristic – over 70 percent (202) of the participants were between 18 and 26 years of age and, as most demographic studies have shown, individuals in that age range are often described as innovators, risk-takers, and so on. In order to further explore this area, the authors conducted post-hoc analyses to investigate possible gender differences in the participants' change seeking scores. As shown in Table 3, the ANOVA procedure showed that Navajo females scored lower on the change seeking index ($\bar{x}$ = 21.97) than did their Navajo male counterparts ($\bar{x}$ = 23.18). No

additional significant gender based differences were observed in participants' change seeking scores.

RP₄: Cultural differences exist in consumers' belief that television advertising is beneficial to the customer. As part of the research program, which focused on promotional and communication implications for marketers seeking to target different cultural segments of the marketplace, the authors sought to investigate possible cultural differences in the groups' perceptions of a communication medium that was common to both groups and to the demographic make-up of each group. Informal discussions with students at universities across the nation, involving students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, as well as more formal statistical evidence, shows that fewer young adults are reading newspapers and that many such consumers are heavy television viewers (Belch and Belch 2001). This research also shows that television is a communication medium with which students – regardless of ethnicity or cultural background – are very familiar. Accordingly, the authors of this manuscript used the Beliefs About TV Advertising scale (Alwitt and Prabhaker 1992) to investigate possible cultural differences in the degree to which participants believed that television advertising was beneficial to the customer.

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, ANOVA analyses revealed that, consistent with the authors' prediction, cultural differences were observed in the participants' beliefs regarding the benefits of television advertisements. More specifically, in general, Navajo consumers were more likely to believe that the information provided in television advertisements was beneficial to consumers ($\bar{x}$ = 14.93) than were Anglo consumers ($\bar{x}$ = 13.91). The authors also conducted post-hoc analysis to

investigate possible gender differences in the two groups' perceptions on this measure. ANOVA procedures (see Table 3) revealed that Navajo males rated the information in television advertisements to be more beneficial to consumers ($\bar{x}$ = 15.36) than did Anglo males ($\bar{x}$ = 13.86). No other gender differences regarding the benefits of television advertisements were observed.

Discussion and Implications

This research provides several insightful implications for marketers. As suggested by theories underlying the Marketing Lens Model, marketers can be assured that as significant changes and growth in the cultural diversity of the U.S. occur, so too is the diversity of consumer needs, perceptions, and expectations changing. Those marketing managers who subscribe to the idea that the cultural diversity of this country more closely resembles a cultural and ethnic mosaic than a cultural melting pot have come to appreciate and understand the importance of identifying and addressing the marketing related perceptions of each targeted cultural group.

In this paper, the authors examined four fundamental research propositions related to marketing communications and promotions. Those propositions focused on predicted cultural differences in consumers': 1) brand loyalty, 2) alienation from the marketplace, 3) change seeking tendency, and 4) perceptions of information included in television advertisements. The results of the study showed that Navajo consumers tended to exhibit greater loyalty to a product brand than did Anglo consumers. Further, it was found that Navajo females were more brand loyal than were Navajo males, who were in turn more brand loyal than Anglo males. These findings hold important implications for those marketers targeting such groups. For example, the marketer targeting Navajo consumers might be advised to consider marketing strategies that include brand extensions and/or family branding. In addition, marketers targeting this segment of the population might develop competitive strategies based upon these findings. For example, given the Navajo participants' greater brand loyalty, a marketer who faces a new

competitor in the marketplace might choose to create promotional campaigns that emphasize the history or tradition of the current brand being purchased by the Navajo consumer. Perhaps, in the face of such a competitive environment, and given the Navajo consumers' tendency to perceive the information included in television advertisements as being beneficial to the consumer, the marketer might choose to refrain from consumer-oriented sales promotions and instead focus on advertising messages that remind buyers of the past performance of the product/service. Professional selling presentations targeting Navajo consumers could be tailored to focus on specific features, advantages, and benefits that have satisfied the needs of those consumers in the past.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study represents an effort to compare two different cultures, the authors realize that inherent differences may also exist due to regional peculiarities between the upper mid-western and southwestern U.S. Future research comparing Anglos and Navajos may consider using respondents from the same geographical proximity to minimize any potential regional effects.

The respondents in this study consisted of a convenience sample. Future research should include respondents from the general populations of each culture to obtain greater representation and generalizability. For example, if a wider demographic range of respondents were collected, comparisons between education level, age, and occupation could be added to the analysis.

Then, too, it would be myopic to think of American Indians as necessarily comprising a single sub-cultural group. Just as there are significant cultural differences across Latin groups on the basis of heritage (e.g., Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans), so also might the different nations of American Indian demonstrate variation in consumer tendencies. Accordingly, as the literature investigating American Indians as consumer groups evolves, at some point it would be most instructive to compare sub-groups or

nations of Indians to one another, perhaps uncovering important consumption related differences between Navajo and Sioux, between Seminole and Cherokee, and so on.

Finally, constructs for comparison included measures of brand loyalty, marketplace alienation, tendency to seek change, and attitudes toward television advertising. These constructs represent only a handful of possible consumer behavior measures for making cross-cultural comparisons. Future research could further explore cultural differences through the Lens Model by examining such variables as locus of control, need for cognition, new product innovation/adoption behavior, product involvement, and attitudes and behavior patterns of other advertising or promotion media (e.g., print media), just to name a few. Given that the Navajo, and other American Indian cultures as well, are an understudied people with significant growth and marketing potential, the opportunities for future research appears to be a rich and bountiful area for future exploration.

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