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Acculturation and consumer loyalty among immigrants: a cross-national study

Acculturation
and consumer
loyalty

1579

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of acculturation on immigrant consumers' loyalty. The authors posit that the acculturation orientation of immigrants determines their consumer loyalty to both ethnic and mainstream brands and stores.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a sample of Hispanic consumers in the USA and consumers from the former Soviet Union in Israel, this study tests a model in which two acculturation continua, original culture maintenance and host culture adaptation, serve as antecedents for immigrants' consumer loyalty.

Findings – Acculturation determines the extent of immigrants' consumer loyalty. Both acculturation continua are associated with distinct loyalty patterns that are similar across the two immigrant groups.

Research limitations/implications – Despite sampling limitations, the paper demonstrates that immigrants' acculturation orientation influences their loyalty to ethnic and mainstream brands and stores. Shared by ethnic consumers in two culturally diverse markets, this relationship transcends geographic boundaries.

Practical implications – The results provide insights for marketers with respect to the development of segmentation and positioning strategies and tactical implementations that address the preferences of ethnic consumers.

Social implications – This paper highlights the importance of understanding the unique needs of ethnic consumers and addressing them. Successful integration of immigrant consumers into the marketplace can also help in their integration into the host society at large.

Originality/value – Findings shed light on the commonalities and differences among immigrant groups in different national settings. The paper highlights the role of cultural transition as a key experience that affects immigrants regardless of specific environmental or situational circumstances.

Keywords Acculturation, Ethnic identification, Consumer loyalty, Ethnic brands, Ethnic stores

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Immigration and its accompanying process of acculturation play a role in shaping consumption behaviors. Immigration changes the ethnic profile of metropolitan areas, transforms the business landscape in these places and increases cultural diversity. Marketplace diversity dictates that most individual market transactions take place between marketers and consumers from different ethnic backgrounds (Jamal, 2003). The co-existence of ethnic and mainstream businesses offering competing goods and services requires marketers to understand how to win the hearts and minds of ethnic consumers and gain their patronage and loyalty. Often, ethnic consumers' preference to purchase from their own ethnic economy versus the mainstream economy is culturally driven (Wang, 2004). Thus, marketers must develop an understanding of the dynamics of immigration and their impact on immigrants' consumption practices (Askegaard and Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2011).

One such dynamic is cultural change resulting from contact among individuals from different cultures (Keefe and Padilla, 1987). This process is complex and multi-dimensional, involving the maintenance of aspects from the culture of origin, *ethnic identification*, and the adoption of host culture elements, *acculturation* (Berry, 1997; Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Mendoza, 1989). Given that consumption is primarily viewed as a cultural phenomenon, cultural change is likely to affect individuals' consumption (Laroche *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, the extent to which immigrants maintain their culture of origin or adapt to the host culture and the resulting consumption patterns all merit scholarly attention (Hui *et al.*, 1998).

While loyalty has received much attention in the ethnic consumer behavior literature (Saegert *et al.*, 1985), there are some gaps that this study attempts to bridge. First, most studies have examined consumer loyalty as an outcome of the strength of consumers' ethnic identity (Deshpande *et al.*, 1986; Donthu and Cherian, 1992, 1994; Wang, 2004; Wang and Lo, 2007). However, ethnic identification represents only one dimension of cultural change. Scholars have generally neglected host culture adaptation and its effect on immigrants' consumer loyalty. Phinney and Ong (2007) argue that such neglect has led to a partial understanding of immigrants' consumer loyalty and called for considering original and host orientations simultaneously. Second, the effect of acculturation on consumer loyalty from an intra-cultural perspective has been under-studied. Studies have generally focused on the differences between ethnic and mainstream consumers, especially Hispanics and Anglo-Americans. Relatively little is known about the potential of acculturation theory to explain this consumption phenomenon across countries and ethnic groups. Similar patterns might be able to validate the perspective of scholars who hold that at the individual level, acculturation and its behavioral outcomes is a universal phenomenon (Berry, 1997; Rudmin, 2010; Sam and Berry, 2010). Finally, most studies examined brand loyalty or store loyalty with brand loyalty presented as a generic concept. Such examinations do not fully capture the reality of immigrant consumers who navigate between ethnic and mainstream economies in the host country.

This paper tests a model using cultural change as a predictor of immigrants' consumer loyalty to ethnic versus mainstream brands and stores. The degree to which immigrants adopt elements from their host culture (i.e. acculturation) or maintain their original culture (i.e. ethnic identification) affects their loyalty to ethnic versus

mainstream brands and stores. We test the model on immigrants from Latin America in the USA (Hispanics) and immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel.

This study attempts to bridge the previously mentioned gaps in the literature in three ways. First, it examines the effect of the two dimensions of cultural change on consumer loyalty, thereby contributing to a deeper theoretical discussion about immigrants' consumption behavior in the context of cultural change. By doing so, we also move beyond a mere description of supposedly monolithic groups whose members exhibit similar consumption patterns. Second, it examines these relationships intra-culturally among immigrant groups from different countries of origin, cultures and host countries. In other words, it highlights the common experiences that immigrants go through as consumers in host marketplaces and lays the groundwork for generalizations about immigrants' consumption as part of their cultural transition. As a result of their varying levels of ethnic identification and acculturation, immigrants should show distinct consumer loyalty patterns. However, these patterns should be similar among immigrants across host cultures precisely because they share experiences inherent to the cultural adjustment process (Berry, 1997, 2009; Berry *et al.*, 2002; Rudmin, 2010). Third, the study extends consumer loyalty to include ethnic versus mainstream brands and stores. This extension also has practical implications for the development of marketing programs to effectively address the needs of distinct ethnic consumers within host countries.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical framework underlying our proposed model followed by the hypotheses derived from this review. Section 3 describes the procedures used to execute this study, and Section 4 presents the results. Sections 5 and 6 conclude the paper with a discussion of the theoretical contributions, managerial implications and possible directions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1. Acculturation theory

Global immigration waves are partial drivers of the complexity of domestic markets. Immigrants' contact with the host culture begins a process of cultural change and adaptation, which in turn affects their daily lives (Berry, 1997). Referred to as acculturation, this process occurs when groups of individuals from different cultures come into continuous contact, resulting in changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Redfield *et al.*, 1936). While acculturation might be a two-way street (Berry *et al.*, 2002), this paper focuses on the influence of the host culture on acculturating immigrants because acculturation affects minority groups more than the host group (Berry, 1997).

Contextual factors inherent in the immigrant group and its host society lead to varying degrees of acculturation (see a review in Berry and Sam, 1997). Nevertheless, individual-level acculturation is often viewed as a universal phenomenon. "[...] Although there are substantial variations in the circumstances of the cultural groups that experience acculturation, the psychological processes that operate during acculturation are essentially the same for all the groups" (Berry and Sam, 1997, p. 296). While this view acknowledges that context can affect immigrants' acculturation, it recognizes common underlying psychological processes during acculturation, thus

allowing for comparisons across cultural communities (Berry, 2009; Berry and Sam, 1997; Rudmin, 2010).

Two acculturation theories (*uni-dimensional* and *bi-dimensional*) discuss and explain immigrants' adaptation to host cultures attitudinally and behaviorally. The two differ in their conceptualization of the dynamics between individuals' original culture (culture of heritage) and the predominant cultural environment (host culture). Uni-dimensional models see acculturation as a linear process whereby individuals adapt to the host culture while simultaneously disassociating from their original culture (Cuéllar *et al.*, 1980; Salgado de Snyder, 1987). This perspective depicts acculturation as a movement along a bipolar continuum (un-acculturated to assimilated) with a midpoint that usually indicates biculturalism (Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990). Adherence to the culture of origin and immersion in the dominant culture are viewed as polar opposites (Cabassa, 2003; Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995). Thus, as individuals move along the acculturation continuum toward the dominant culture, they lose aspects of their original culture.

Uni-dimensional conceptualizations have been criticized for several shortcomings. First, they are simplistic and fail to recognize that in contemporary multi-cultural societies, adopting the host culture does not necessarily require a loss of original culture traits (Laroche *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, uni-dimensional models fail to recognize the complex cultural process that allows two cultures to co-exist within individuals (Cabassa, 2003). Methodologically, such models create measurement problems because the original and the host cultures are viewed as interdependent rather than orthogonal dimensions, and their scales fail to capture how individuals interact with both cultures as they acculturate (Cabassa, 2003; Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995).

A bi-dimensional conceptualization of acculturation (original and host cultures as independent) has emerged as an alternative. It sees the process as the dynamic maintenance of the original culture (i.e. ethnic identification) and a simultaneous adaptation to the host culture (i.e. acculturation) (Berry, 1997; Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995; Laroche *et al.*, 1998). Cultural maintenance involves the extent to which individuals maintain characteristics of the original culture (Berry, 1997) and ranges from strong adherence to the culture of origin to a total reluctance to maintain it. Adaptation entails the level of contact and participation of individuals with the host culture (Berry, 1997) and ranges from full participation and adaptation to the host culture to complete rejection of its values, attitudes and behaviors. The two dimensions allow individuals to develop orientations to both cultures and capture the realities and challenges that are built into the process of cultural change more effectively (Berry, 1997).

2.1.1 Dimensions of cultural change: acculturation versus ethnic identification. *Acculturation* is conceptualized as immigrants' acquisition of host-culture traits (Laroche *et al.*, 1998). It is viewed as the process of moving toward the host culture (Berry, 1997) and is manifested in the individuals' cognitive, behavioral and affective functioning (Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995). This perspective implies that acculturation is multidimensional and includes facets such as exposure to the host language, host language proficiency and its use in various contexts, as well as social interaction with members of the host culture in clubs, societies and organizations (Cuéllar *et al.*, 1980; Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995; Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Laroche *et al.*, 1998; Laroche *et al.*, 2005).

Ethnic identification is conceptualized as retention of one's culture of origin (Laroche *et al.*, 1998) as manifested through attitudes, values or behaviors typical in the original culture. The strength of ethnic identification refers to the extent of individuals'

commitment to the norms and values of a given ethnic group (Hirschman, 1981), as well as a sense of belonging and pride (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identification is multidimensional (Keefe and Padilla, 1987), with language, ethnic attachment and religious affiliation being the most dominant components in the literature (Laroche *et al.*, 2005), although endogamy, ethnic language media exposure, food preferences and participation in traditional celebrations and ethnic clubs/organizations have also been used (Laroche *et al.*, 1998). Researchers recognize religious affiliation (church membership, attending religious ceremonies, parochial education and religious preferences) as a component of ethnic identity (Laroche *et al.*, 1998; Phinney, 1990). Specifically, a study of Jewish ethnicity and consumption included religion markers in the ethnicity index because of the relatively strong association between the Jewish culture and religion (Hirschman, 1981). However, while religion is relevant for ethnic identification, we focus on a more general conceptualization including cultural aspects of daily life (e.g. language use, friendship networks and ethnic pride/identification), which entails common rather than group-specific dimensions. Our approach follows Laroche and colleagues (2005), who argued that adding specific dimensions to ethnic identity such as religious affiliation, holidays and celebrations might result in between-group variations because these dimensions involve the specificities of each culture. The degree to which specific dimensions of ethnic identity are practiced and adhered to vary across *and* within ethnic groups (Phinney, 1990); thus, a general approach allows applicability across ethnic groups. From a methodological perspective, Laroche *et al.* (2005) argued that specific cultural markers could have harmful impacts on tests of parameter variance in structural equation modeling (SEM) because of differences in dimensions or the use of non-comparable items. Finally, research has shown that Judaism is not part of the identity of FSU immigrants, many of whom self-identify as secular or as having no religion (Al-Haj, 2002). In the atheist FSU, most citizens did not practice a religion and did not consider themselves religious. Moreover, Jews were pressured to use Russian as their native language and adopt the traditions of the Russian culture to avoid discrimination (Persky and Birman, 2005). Similarly, Valencia (1985) argued that religion did not seem to be effective in measuring Hispanic identity because the strength of Hispanics' religious beliefs and practices varied. Thus, in this study, ethnic identification relies on cultural aspects that are related to country of origin rather than those related to religious affiliation.

In sum, researchers today agree that the bi-dimensional model with ethnic identification and acculturation as two independent continua provides a more comprehensive paradigm for cultural change, allowing individuals to maintain or reject their culture of origin while acquiring elements from the host culture. According to Phinney and Flores (2002), recognition of these dimensions is important in understanding the role of acculturative change in immigrants' lives because each may affect outcomes in different ways. Therefore, it is essential to consider the effects of each dimension independently (Phinney and Flores, 2002). This study examines how various consumer loyalty constructs are associated with acculturation and ethnic identification.

2.2. Hispanic consumer behavior

Empirical investigations underscore the increasing immigration from Latin America into the USA and the prominence of Hispanics in the marketplace. Early studies that compared Hispanic with non-Hispanic consumer behaviors (mainly Anglo-Americans)

found differences between these consumer segments with respect to price consciousness, brand loyalty, store patronage, the emphasis on product quality and differences in shopping styles (Saegert *et al.*, 1985; Segal and Sosa, 1983; Shim and Gehrt, 1996; Valencia, 1989; Yankelovich, Skelly and White Inc., 1984).

Studies have often highlighted brand loyalty among Hispanic consumers (Saegert *et al.*, 1985) but yielded conflicting findings. Some have found Hispanics to be brand loyal and strongly influenced by brand status (Guernica, 1982; Segal and Sosa, 1983); others reported no differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers (Fones, 1981; Medina *et al.*, 1996; Mulhern and Williams, 1994; Segal and Sosa, 1983). Hence, there might be some underlying factors that affect Hispanics' brand loyalty (Saegert *et al.*, 1985), and examining consumer loyalty among Hispanics through the framework of cultural change might help resolve these conflicting findings.

2.2.1. Acculturation and consumer loyalty. The marketing literature defines consumer loyalty in various ways (reviewed in Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978), with behavioral measures (e.g. repurchase patterns) among the most commonly used (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995). This approach to consumer loyalty presumes that consumers' preferences are reflected in their behavior, including purchase sequence, frequency of purchase, proportion of purchases and probability of purchase (Ehrenberg, 1988; Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). We focus on *behavioral loyalty*, defined as a commitment to consistently re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/store, leading to repetitive purchasing (Oliver, 1999).

As previously mentioned, little is known about consumer loyalty as an outcome of cultural change from an intra-cultural perspective. Acculturation underlies immigrants' consumption and, as previously shown, consumer acculturation studies are based on the premise that individuals at various acculturation levels make different purchase decisions (Martin, 2012). Early attempts to discover the cultural aspects that underlie Hispanics' loyalty focused only on the effect of ethnic identity (Deshpande *et al.*, 1986; Donthu and Cherian, 1992, 1994). Examining brand loyalty as a general concept, these studies categorized consumers according to the strength of their ethnicity. Thus, in these studies, strong Hispanic identifiers were more brand loyal than weak Hispanic identifiers (Deshpande *et al.*, 1986; Donthu and Cherian, 1992, 1994). These studies confirmed the existence of different segments within a single ethnic group based on the degree of ethnic affiliation and demonstrated that variations in the latter affected brand loyalty.

However, in the culturally diverse marketplace, ethnic and mainstream brands co-exist, making it important to distinguish between them. Immigrants going through a cultural transition look for ways to connect to their ethnic roots and maintain their social and cultural identity through ties to their home culture (Paswan and Ganesh, 2005). Ethnic brands are symbolic anchors to the home country that immigrants use to develop ethnic proximity (Guzmán and Paswan, 2009), which can help alleviate the difficulties associated with cultural transition and change. Accordingly:

H1a. Ethnic identification is positively associated with loyalty to ethnic brands.

H1b. Ethnic identification is negatively associated with loyalty to mainstream brands.

Immigrants' store loyalty has been under-studied, with only a few studies to date (Kaufman and Hernandez, 1991; Wang, 2004; Wang and Lo, 2007). In two studies on

Chinese immigrants' local consumption experience in Canada, the strength of ethnic identity determined the preference for Chinese stores, especially in grocery shopping (Wang, 2004; Wang and Lo, 2007). When choosing between mainstream and ethnic stores, Chinese ethnic identity was the dominant factor in determining which provider they would select. The authors explained that ethnic businesses allow immigrants to express their ethnic identity and membership in their ethnic group, and provide an opportunity for cultural bonding – all of which drive their preference for these venues. Kaufman and Hernandez (1991) provide a similar explanation in a study about Hispanic consumers' interaction with small, ethnic, neighborhood stores. They revealed that longevity and continuous consumer patronage for these ethnic stores were due to the fact that they were considered an integral part of neighborhood life. Despite the influx of larger supermarkets, they satisfied functional needs (ethnic food items) and in-culture social bonding needs that helped ethnic consumers preserve their Latino culture. In sum:

H2a. Ethnic identification is positively associated with loyalty to ethnic stores.

H2b. Ethnic identification is negatively associated with loyalty to mainstream stores.

Acculturation entails the adaptation of immigrants to the host culture and the adoption of its values and customs, including an adjustment to the realities of the host culture's marketplace (Laroche *et al.*, 1998; Peñaloza, 1994). Thus, for ethnic minority individuals, greater involvement with the host culture is followed by the adoption of mainstream values and customs, which, in turn, should increase the likelihood of mainstream behaviors (Cleveland *et al.*, 2009). This sequence has been substantiated in the literature. For example, a study of Asian-Indian US immigrants indicated that as their acculturation increased, they preferred American advertisements to Indian advertisements (Khairullah *et al.*, 1996). Kara and Kara (1996) found similar results in consumer choice behavior. In their study, highly acculturated Hispanics and Anglos were very similar but differed from low-acculturation Hispanics in terms of utilities placed on product attributes.

In the context of brand choice, brand preference is the consequence of a socialization process that can be passed down through generations or may be formed at susceptible moments such as a move to a new cultural environment (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002). In the socialization process, reference groups often function as socializing agents, providing the basis for social approval and, therefore, influence brand choice. In this vein, Maldonado and Tansuhaj (2002) view members of the host culture as the reference group for highly acculturated immigrants who strive to achieve social acceptance and approval. Such individuals are likely to choose brands associated with the host culture more often than ethnic brands as a way of making and maintaining a connection with the host culture. Therefore:

H3a. Acculturation is positively associated with loyalty to mainstream brands.

H3b. Acculturation is negatively associated with loyalty to ethnic brands.

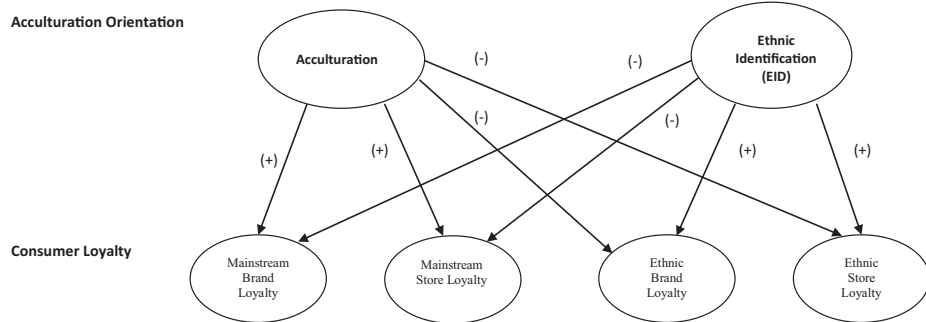
H4a. Acculturation is positively associated with loyalty to mainstream stores.

H4b. Acculturation is negatively associated with loyalty to ethnic stores.

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model and hypothesized relationships.

In sum, the preceding review implies that it is important to determine if the brand or store belongs to the host culture ("mainstream") or the culture of origin ("ethnic"). In

Figure 1.
Theoretical model and hypotheses



culturally diversified markets, immigrants must negotiate between choosing to patronize brands and stores from the host culture and those of their ethnic group. While immigrants are likely to encounter brands and stores from cultures other than their host or origin cultures, these are beyond the scope of this paper, an issue to be discussed in the concluding section. Many brand and store choices result from immigrants' tendency to retain their culture of origin or adapt to the host culture. As shown above, the distinction is necessary but has not been explored in depth in previous research. Consequently, this paper examines immigrants' loyalty to grocery stores and grocery brands, further divided into ethnic and mainstream stores and brands.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study tests immigrants' consumer loyalty to ethnic versus mainstream economies among first-generation Hispanic immigrants in the USA and first-generation FSU immigrants in Israel. Three reasons underlie the selection of these populations. First, the two groups are the largest ethnic groups in their host countries – Hispanics at about 16 per cent of the US population (US Census Bureau, 2010) and FSU immigrants at about 15 per cent of the Israeli population (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Second, both groups tend to maintain aspects of their original culture, which also unifies them as distinct ethnic groups within their host countries (Leshem and Sicron, 2004; Ogden, 2005; Romero, 2004; Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003). Third, both enjoy increasing purchasing power in their host countries (Singh and Bartikowski, 2009; Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003) and are considered lucrative targets for marketers.

We focus on first-generation immigrants for several reasons. First, focusing on one generation only helps to avoid potential cross-generational confound. Second, this generation is the least likely to be highly assimilated, and its consumption behavior should follow a purer tendency (Padilla, 2006). Finally, first-generation immigrants are the most likely to be dispersed along the assimilation continuum. Therefore, research on this generation can provide valuable insights for marketers about this consumer segment.

This study uses a convenience sample of 274 first-generation immigrants of Latin American origin from a metropolitan area in the southeastern part of the USA. As Hispanics tend to be cautious about participating in survey research (Franco *et al.*, 1984), we followed the recommendation to use personal interviews (Saegert *et al.*, 1985), with bilingual surveyors who were familiar with potential participants (Rogler *et al.*, 1981)

and were of a similar ethnic background (Marín and Marín, 1991). The sample included 61 per cent female, averaging 46 years of age ($SD = 15.5$) with 14.3 years ($SD = 3.6$) of formal education. Most participants came from Caribbean countries (41.6 per cent from Cuba; 3.3 per cent from Puerto Rico; 2.6 per cent from the Dominican Republic), followed by South American (13.9 per cent from Colombia; 8 per cent from Peru; 8 per cent from Argentina; 6.6 per cent from Venezuela), and Central American countries (8.8 per cent from Nicaragua; 4 per cent from El Salvador; 3.3 per cent from Honduras). Researchers acknowledge possible differences among Hispanic sub-cultures but have reported that Hispanics generally share common cultural, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that justify aggregating them into one group (Plath and Stevenson, 2005; Romero, 2004; Valencia, 1989). Examples of such shared characteristics include the Spanish language, Roman Catholicism (Valencia, 1985), familism and the pursuit of harmony in social relationships, *simpatía* (Triandis *et al.*, 1984) and shared sets of terminal (e.g. family security, exciting life, salvation) and instrumental values (Valencia, 1989), implying a fundamental pan-Hispanic culture among Hispanics regardless of their countries of origin. This perspective often leads researchers to collapse different Hispanic sub-groups into a single sample (Alvarez *et al.*, 2014; Chattaraman *et al.*, 2010; Plath and Stevenson, 2005; Seock and Sauls, 2008; Singh *et al.*, 2008; Wagner and Soberon-Ferrer, 1990), a convention we follow.

The second convenience sample included 278 first-generation immigrants from the FSU (61 per cent women) living in central Israel. To maintain consistency in procedures, participants were recruited based on personal contact and familiarity with the surveyors. Participants' average age was 38 years ($SD = 14.66$), and their formal education averaged 13.4 years ($SD = 2.7$). While FSU immigrants came to Israel from various republics in the FSU, they are considered a cohesive local and national ethnic community, and a distinct segment of Israeli society (Leshem and Sicron, 2004). They maintain the Russian language, close family ties and strong links to the Slavic-Russian culture, which they regard as an elite culture, characteristics that unify them as an ethnic group (Leshem and Sicron, 2004; Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003). While Russian culture is the key to the identification of most FSU immigrants, their Jewish identity is only formal and external, and does not play a role in their ethnic identification (Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003). This identity is a label given to them in their country of origin and does not imply a strong link to Judaism as a religion (Al-Haj, 2002; Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003). On the other hand, the development of an independent cultural system that includes elements of high and popular Russian culture, consumption of Russian-language media and ethnic patterns of leisure and entertainment attests to the importance of Russian culture in the lives of these immigrants (Leshem and Sicron, 2004). Like Hispanics in the USA, FSU immigrants in Israel provide an ideal group for testing the effect of acculturation on consumer behaviors.

3.2. Material

A structured questionnaire was developed to obtain data on acculturation, ethnic identification and consumer loyalty. Versions of the same questionnaire were available for participants to address their language proficiency (English and Spanish; Hebrew and Russian). We used back-translation to develop the proper versions of the original English version. The questionnaires were pre-tested by a sample of bilingual students from a variety of Spanish-speaking countries to ensure comprehensibility. The

researchers followed the same process to create the Hebrew and Russian 5-point (1 = strongly disagree/not at all to 5 = strongly agree/extremely often or almost always) set of items in the questionnaires.

3.3. Measures

3.3.1. Acculturation and ethnic identification. The survey used Cuéllar *et al.*'s (1995) 30-item Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II (ARSMA II). Designed to measure acculturation among individuals of Mexican origin, this scale has been widely used with Hispanics from different origins. It assesses cultural adaptation and maintenance through four constructs:

- (1) language use and preference;
- (2) ethnic identification and classification;
- (3) cultural heritage and ethnic behaviors; and
- (4) social interactions.

ARSMA II is a bi-dimensional scale that includes two subscales that measure orientation toward Hispanic culture (HOS) and toward mainstream American culture (AOS) separately. Ethnic identification (EID) was measured with 17 items that assess adherence to or maintenance of the culture of origin (HOS). This scale includes items such as "I associate with Latinos (Russians)", "I enjoy listening to music in Spanish (Russian)" and "My family cooks food from our country of origin". Acculturation was measured with 13 items that address adherence to mainstream American culture (AOS) and included items such as "My thinking is done in English (Hebrew)" and "My friends, while I was growing up were of Anglo (Israeli) origin". The English and Spanish ARSMA II have proven to be very reliable in their original use ($\alpha_{AOS} = 0.83$ and $\alpha_{HOS} = 0.88$) and demonstrated a strong correlation with generational status, which is considered a proxy of acculturation (Cuéllar *et al.*, 1995). In our sample, reliability was acceptable ($\alpha_{\text{ethnic identification subscale}} = 0.80$ [Hispanics] and 0.85 [Russians] and $\alpha_{\text{acculturation subscale}} = 0.86$ [Hispanics] and 0.78 [Russians]).

3.3.2. Brand and store loyalty. Cultural theorists view grocery shopping as socially and culturally embedded (Lo, 2009). This study uses grocery stores and brands as loyalty objects because they are generally associated with food preparation and consumption, which are cultural symbols (Edles, 2004). Acculturation research notes that food consumption is a central component in immigrants' experience and that the extent of their cultural retention or change is largely evident in their food consumption (Laroche *et al.*, 1998; Peñaloza, 1994). Thus, the study of food consumption provides a strong basis for identifying changes occurring during the acculturation process (Jamal, 1998).

Hispanics and FSU immigrants have similar attitudes toward ethnic food, which is central to their cultural existence in their host countries (Amit, 2007; Mueller, 2008). For both groups, grocery stores are the hub of socio-cultural activity that extends beyond their functional aspects (Mueller, 2008). The scales for brand and store loyalty were adapted from Mittal's (1994) scale for brand loyalty. As was done originally, we treated it as a reflective scale. These scales include items such as "For most grocery items, there are several Latino (Russian) brands which I repeatedly purchase", "I will purchase only in certain Latino (Russian) stores and not others" and "For most product categories in

the supermarket, there are certain USA (Israeli) brands for which I have a definite preference". Construct reliability in the original use of the scale was 0.76. The role of the brand loyalty construct in Mittal's (1994) study as part of an integrative model tested supported the nomological validity of this scale. In our study, the scale was reliable with respect to loyalty to ethnic brands (Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Hispanics}} = 0.80$; $\alpha_{\text{Russians}} = 0.83$) and mainstream brands ($\alpha_{\text{Hispanics}} = 0.77$; $\alpha_{\text{Russians}} = 0.81$), as well as loyalty to ethnic grocery stores ($\alpha_{\text{Hispanics}} = 0.89$; $\alpha_{\text{Russians}} = 0.83$) and mainstream grocery stores ($\alpha_{\text{Hispanics}} = 0.79$; $\alpha_{\text{Russians}} = 0.78$).

4. Results

Table I presents the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of the constructs for FSU and Hispanic respondents. As is evident, both groups report high levels of ethnic identification (orientation toward their original culture). Overall, FSU participants have little loyalty to ethnic brands, while Hispanics have little loyalty to ethnic stores. Both groups score at an average level on the other variables. We used SEM (AMOS; Byrne, 2001) to test the hypothesized relationships.

The first SEM step was to test the measurement model. The measurement model fits the data well, $\chi^2 = 2383.34$ (df = 486), with fit indexes exceeding 0.90 and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.08. The correlations between the constructs range from -0.37 to 0.77, indicating good discriminant validity. In addition, the shared variance of each pair of constructs did not exceed their individual levels of average variance extracted (AVE), supporting the discriminant validity of the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2006). Table II presents the factor loading of the items on their designated constructs, AVEs and composite reliability. Next, we tested the structural relationships between the constructs based on the hypotheses. Table III presents the regression weights for the FSU and Hispanic samples, and the fit measures of the hypothesized model.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
<i>FSU immigrants</i>							
1. EID	3.91	0.73					
2. Acculturation	3.34	0.87	-0.30**				
3. Ethnic brand loyalty	2.69	1.22	0.35**	-0.12			
4. Ethnic store loyalty	2.84	1.28	0.43**	-0.20**	0.68**		
5. Mainstream brand loyalty	3.30	1.11	-0.05	0.28**	0.27**	0.19**	
6. Mainstream store loyalty	3.43	1.12	-0.09	0.38**	0.08	0.08	0.49**
<i>Hispanic immigrants</i>							
1. EID	4.15	0.56					
2. Acculturation	3.40	0.77	-0.32**				
3. Ethnic brand loyalty	3.26	1.09	0.26**	-0.20**			
4. Ethnic store loyalty	2.51	1.21	0.33**	-0.32**	0.44**		
5. Mainstream brand loyalty	3.39	1.06	0.06	0.21**	0.46**	0.14*	
6. Mainstream store loyalty	3.52	1.09	-0.04	0.36**	0.15*	-0.05	0.54**

Table I.

Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of the study

Notes: All correlations above 0.14 are significant at the * $p < 0.05$ level; all correlations above 0.16 are significant at the ** $p < 0.01$ level

Factor	Items	FSU immigrants		Hispanic immigrants	
EID	EID_01	0.82**		0.73**	
	EID_02	0.87**	AVE = 0.69	0.67**	AVE = 0.52
	EID_03	0.80**	REL = 0.87	0.76**	REL = 0.76
	Acculturation_01	0.80**		0.81**	
	Acculturation_02	0.93**	AVE = 0.67	0.89**	AVE = 0.66
	Acculturation_03	0.71**	REL = 0.86	0.72**	REL = 0.85
Ethnic brand loyalty	Ethnic brand loyalty_01	0.54**		0.56**	
	Ethnic brand loyalty_02	0.94**	AVE = 0.67	0.89**	AVE = 0.61
	Ethnic brand loyalty_03	0.91**	REL = 0.85	0.85**	REL = 0.82
Ethnic store loyalty	Ethnic Store loyalty_01	0.54**		0.68**	
	Ethnic Store loyalty_02	0.88**	AVE = 0.64	0.92**	AVE = 0.79
	Ethnic Store loyalty_03	0.93**	REL = 0.84	0.93**	REL = 0.89
Mainstream brand loyalty	Mainstream brand loyalty_01	0.56**		0.53**	
	Mainstream brand loyalty_02	0.89**	AVE = 0.64	0.87**	AVE = 0.59
	Mainstream brand loyalty_03	0.90**	REL = 0.83	0.85**	REL = 0.80
Mainstream store loyalty	Mainstream Store loyalty_01	0.52**		0.50**	
	Mainstream Store loyalty_02	0.85**	AVE = 0.60	0.92**	AVE = 0.63
	Mainstream Store loyalty_03	0.88**	REL = 0.80	0.89**	REL = 0.83

Table II.
Standardized regression weights and fit measures of the structural models

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The structural model also fits the data well, $\chi^2 = 2,405.88$ (df = 490), with fit indexes exceeding 0.90 and an RMSEA of 0.08. While the level of RMSEA was on the high side, it is still considered acceptable. Explained variances were 19 per cent for ethnic brand loyalty, 32 per cent for ethnic store loyalty, 8 per cent for mainstream brand loyalty and 17 per cent for mainstream store loyalty. According to the model, among FSU immigrants, ethnic identification (EID) is significantly ($p < 0.05$, used throughout) associated with ethnic brand and store loyalty ($\beta = 0.43$; $\beta = 0.51$), supporting *H1a* and *H2b*. There is also a positive relationship between acculturation and mainstream brand and store loyalty ($\beta = 0.30$; $\beta = 0.41$), supporting *H3a* and *H4a*. Acculturation is negatively related to ethnic store loyalty ($\beta = -0.30$), supporting *H4b*. The data do not support hypotheses *H1b*, *H2b* and *H3a*.

Explained variances for the dependent variables in the Hispanic sample were 10 per cent for ethnic brand loyalty, 21 per cent for ethnic store loyalty, 8 per cent for mainstream brand loyalty and 20 per cent for mainstream store loyalty. Like FSU immigrants, EID among Hispanic immigrants is associated with ethnic brand and store loyalty ($\beta = 0.30$; $\beta = 0.30$), supporting *H1a* and *H2a*. Acculturation is positively related to mainstream brand ($\beta = 0.30$) and store loyalty ($\beta = 0.49$), and negatively associated with ethnic store loyalty ($\beta = -0.24$), supporting *H3a*, *H4a* and *H4b*. The data from the Hispanic sample do not support *H1b*, *H2b* and *H3b*.

In sum, there is a considerable level of similarity between Hispanics and FSU immigrants. In both cases, our findings support the positive association of ethnic identification with loyalty to ethnic brands and stores. In addition, for both groups, there is no support for the contention that ethnic identification is negatively associated with loyalty to mainstream brands or stores. Finally, for both groups, there is also no support for the hypothesis that acculturation is negatively associated with loyalty to ethnic

From	To	FSU immigrants	Hispanic immigrants
EID	Ethnic brand loyalty	0.43**	0.30**
EID	Ethnic store loyalty	0.51**	0.30**
EID	Mainstream brand loyalty	0.08	0.10
EID	Mainstream store loyalty	0.05	0.14
Acculturation	Ethnic brand loyalty	-0.02	-0.07
Acculturation	Ethnic store loyalty	-0.30**	-0.24*
Acculturation	Mainstream brand loyalty	0.30**	0.30**
Acculturation	Mainstream store loyalty	0.41**	0.49**
Fit measures	$\chi^2(df); p =$ NFI; NNFI; CFI; RMSEA	2,370.16 (486); 0.00 0.92; 0.92; 0.93; 0.08	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table III.
Standardized regression
weights and fit measures
of the structural models

brands. However, there is support for the negative association between acculturation and loyalty to ethnic stores.

5. Discussion

This study demonstrates that immigrants' consumption patterns are refracted through the prism of cultural transition and adaptation, and are an inseparable part of this continuous experience. Recall the issues of concern we wished to address, namely, use a bi-dimensional ethnic identification conceptualization to examine consumer loyalty; compare consumer loyalty across countries and segments, rather than comparing ethnic consumers with mainstream consumers in one country; and examine both brands and stores, as well as ethnic and mainstream ones.

The results show that ethnic identification predicts loyalty to ethnic brands and stores in both immigrant groups. Given that we focused on first-generation immigrants, a relatively high level of ethnic identification was apparent in both samples, which might explain their loyalty to ethnic brands and stores. An additional explanation is the tendency and desire of first-generation immigrants to preserve their cultural heritage in their daily consumption activities. It is likely that in the wake of the new experiences in the host country, immigrants have a *need* to maintain their cultural ties through interactions with cultural brands. Indeed, their preference for cultural brands is often accompanied by inflated positive views about them (Guzmán and Paswan, 2009). These views and preferences are driven by a sense of nostalgia and longing for everything the immigrants left behind, helping them make connections with their cultural roots and maintain their identity. In fact, ethnic brands and stores provide immigrants with the necessary bridge from their home culture to the host culture, at least until they become more acculturated both as consumers and as members of the mainstream society.

As expected, in both groups, acculturation is associated with loyalty to mainstream brands and stores. Such loyalty may be a behavioral manifestation of immigrants' adaptation to the host culture. However, findings show they are disloyal to ethnic stores. We offer practical and image-based explanations for this pattern. Mainstream grocery stores in ethnically diverse urban areas usually carry ethnic products (Wang, 2004), but have less variety than ethnic stores. Therefore, for acculturated individuals, the limited variety might be sufficient because they use these products alongside mainstream

products. As for image, individuals who seek acculturation and adaptation to the host culture might deliberately refrain from being seen in ethnic stores because this practice might stigmatize them by signaling to others their differentiation and segregation, and categorizing them as outside the host society (Padilla and Perez, 2003). For example, Peñaloza (1994) found that immigrant consumers sometimes reject their culture of origin to reduce ethnic differences and fit into the mainstream culture. Chattaraman *et al.* (2010) corroborated this explanation when they concluded that Hispanic-dominant consumers who were motivated by the need to acculturate and fit into the mainstream culture were more drawn to products and brands associated with American culture.

The similarities between the two immigrant groups with respect to the role of acculturation and ethnic identification in determining consumer loyalty show that some aspects of immigrants' consumption behavior can be viewed as common. Although the process of cultural adaptation may vary across host countries and among immigrant groups, this study examined the outcome of this process (i.e. the dominant acculturation orientation) at a given time. It showed that distinct acculturation orientations determine "typical" consumption patterns unique for acculturating immigrants, regardless of specific contexts. A possible explanation for the similarities between the consumption behavior of Hispanic and FSU immigrants may derive from acculturation-based processes that are shared by immigrating individuals regardless of special contexts. This possibility supports the perspective of acculturation as a universal phenomenon that immigrants share at the individual level (Berry, 1997, 2009; Rudmin, 2010). Thus, despite the variations in the circumstances surrounding the acculturation of each group, acculturating individuals share the same intrinsic, psychological processes that are, in turn, manifested in their decisions and behaviors.

This study has several limitations, which, along with extensions of the model, could be addressed in future research. The first limitation is related to the use of convenience samples that may hinder the generalizability of this study. For example, the two samples came from geographic areas that were densely populated by Hispanics or FSU immigrants. This critical mass of population inevitably creates a distinct profile of immigrants and somewhat limits the study's generalizability. Future replications and extensions should include more heterogeneous geographic areas nationwide. Second, the convenience sampling method resulted in the over-representation of females versus males in both samples. Although a set of comparisons between males and females across the study's variables showed no significant differences in the FSU sample and one statistically significant difference in the Hispanic sample (an outcome expected by chance alone), we controlled for gender in our analyses. Nevertheless, a more controlled sample in terms of gender representation is recommended for future studies. Similarly, five of the ten Hispanic sub-groups had a relatively small number of participants, which can be resolved in the future by using a larger sample size or applying a quota sampling method. Third, although this study uses the terms acculturation and ethnic identification to represent the two continua of cultural change, these dimensions cannot indicate exactly where individuals are in the acculturation process, just their dominant orientation. Perhaps these positions do not fully capture variations in acculturation. In the spirit of Berry (1997), future research might assign participants to four acculturation modes, with each sub-sample tested to fit the model. Such a multi-sample analysis is required to identify both paths that are invariant and paths that differ across samples. For example, ethnic classification can be based on communication patterns in various

social contexts in the host culture (Kim *et al.*, 1990). Researchers have used this classification that creates four groups of varying levels of host-immigrant ethnicities and found it to work well in various consumer behavior studies (Heslop *et al.*, 1998).

Nevertheless, this study provides a benchmark for future studies that examine the role of cultural adjustment in shaping immigrants' consumption patterns across host countries. A possible avenue for future study would be to incorporate religious affiliation in studies of cultural change and consumption behavior. Given variations across religions with respect to beliefs and practices, it might be necessary to distinguish affiliation (e.g. "I consider myself Catholic/Jewish") from practice (e.g. visits to church/synagogue, celebration of religious holidays and observance of religious customs/laws). In addition, future research should test the dynamics of cultural change and the resulting consumer loyalty patterns among second- and third-generation immigrants to provide insights about these dynamics in later generations. For example, highly acculturated immigrants such as second- and third-generation individuals show behavioral inconsistencies (Chattaraman *et al.*, 2010; Stayman and Deshpande, 1989) that are explained by retro-acculturation (the tendency of assimilated individuals to show a reconnection with their cultural roots through the increased use of in-culture elements) or situational ethnicity (consumption behavior that varies according to the cultural consumption context). Examining our model in different consumption scenarios across generations might reveal a complex relationship between acculturation and consumption, providing a more comprehensive understanding of these interrelated phenomena. Finally, in a reality of global culture and economy, ethnic consumers are likely to encounter brands and stores that belong neither to the host culture nor to their own culture and form loyalties to these. Future research should examine immigrants' interaction with "third-culture" brands and stores compared to those representing the host or their own ethnic economies.

6. Managerial implications

Immigration, an increasing global phenomenon, creates an ongoing influx of individuals from different countries and cultures that has implications for local consumer markets. Understanding the consumption of first-generation immigrants is important for marketers in host countries with respect to segmentation, positioning and product distribution. Businesses that operate in culturally diverse markets must realize that dimensions of cultural change determine immigrants' consumption behavior. This process creates distinct segments within one sub-culture. Understanding the characteristics of these segments will enable marketers to develop effective strategies that reach each segment effectively and gain their loyalty as consumers. Using insights from this study, marketers can formulate a unified segmentation strategy of immigrant consumers in the markets of interest that is based on level of acculturation.

As immigrants with different levels of acculturation exhibit distinct loyalty patterns that are generally similar in different national settings, marketers can develop unified marketing and positioning strategies to enhance the consumer loyalty of immigrants across markets. At the same time, tactical adjustments should be made locally to address elements that are unique to each sub-culture. One such general strategy can be stressing the cultural congruity between businesses or brands and their potential consumers in their marketing communication efforts. Tactical applications of such a strategy can be related to positioning that reinforces the cultural manifestation of

a brand, so that a given brand will be perceived as an integral part of the immigrants' home culture experience. Advertising and promotional campaigns that integrate mainstream national or global brands into the cultural experience of ethnic consumers will potentially generate a sense of bonding between consumers with a strong ethnic identification and these brands. Similarly, advertisers can make comparisons between mainstream brands and ethnic brands ("If you enjoy this ethnic brand, you might also like this mainstream brand") to help new immigrants learn about mainstream products that are comparable to those they used in their country of origin. While "ethicizing" mainstream and global brands is an overall positioning strategy that marketers can apply when approaching ethnic consumer markets, advertising is a tactical element that needs to be localized to resonate with the various acculturation segments and their corresponding cultural affiliation. Advertising campaigns should address the need of consumers with strong ethnic identification to connect with their home culture through the brands and products they purchase, as well as communicate cultural connections with the immigrants' home through in-store signage and promotional material.

The third managerial implication is related to the strategic decision to distribute mainstream and global brands in ethnic retail stores. The penetration of non-ethnic brands and products into ethnic stores can create a bridge for immigrant consumers into mainstream consumer markets. By offering global and mainstream brands in ethnic stores, which immigrants perceive as safe, familiar environments, marketers can take initial steps toward building awareness among ethnic consumers. This strategy can potentially enhance a smoother transition of less acculturated immigrant consumers into mainstream stores and facilitate their interaction with mainstream and global brands. In the same vein, incorporating ethnic products into mainstream stores can potentially attract immigrant consumers to these stores, which can help them build more confidence; familiarity; and, finally, strong, lasting relationships with these stores and the brands offered. Similarly, increasing the number of well-trained, bilingual employees in mainstream stores can provide the personalized, friendly component that can potentially contribute to the development of consumer loyalty and satisfaction among less acculturated consumers.

7. Conclusions

Findings from this study show that immigrants' consumer loyalty is shaped, for the most part, by the nature of their cultural adaptation process. This relationship is apparent in both immigrant groups, implying that the immigration experience and its related processes are similar in their essence and shared by immigrants across host countries. Such findings should help marketers understand the needs of culturally diversified consumer markets and develop strategies to better address the unique needs of each acculturation segment. While acculturation is a process of change that occurs over time, marketers play an important role in facilitating immigrant consumers' successful integration into the host marketplace through their consumption experience. As consumption and its related activities, by nature, involve interactions between immigrants and elements of the host culture, such actions may accelerate immigrants' integration and successful adaptation to their new country.

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