



# Consumption of products from heritage and host cultures: The role of acculturation attitudes and behaviors

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## ABSTRACT

Prior research ignores the specific role of acculturation attitudes in predicting acculturation behaviors and consumption choices across public and private life domains. The study uses self-administered questionnaires to collect data from 530 Turkish-Dutch respondents. The findings underscore the overall significance of investigating domain-specific (public vs. private) acculturation attitudes and subsequent acculturation behaviors. Enculturation (acculturation) behaviors function as a mediating variable in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and consumption of food and entertainment products from the heritage (host) culture. The study is one of the first to investigate the simultaneous effects of acculturation attitudes and acculturation behaviors on the choice to consumer foods and entertainment products from both heritage and host cultures. The article provides managerial implications and future research directions.

## 1. Introduction

International migration levels are rising in the U.S.A. (Jamal, Peñaloza, & Laroche, 2015) and in Europe (Eurostat, 2015) and large ethnic-minority subcultures exist across the Western world (Jamal, 2003). The issues of cultural differences, interaction and change are at the heart of ethnic marketing research and practice (Jamal et al., 2015).

Consumer research uses the assimilation or melting pot model (Gordon, 1964; Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) — which assumes that each ethnic minority group will blend into the host society — to determine whether immigrants' consumption patterns reflect their culture of origin or their culture of residence. However, empirical studies show that the assimilation process is more than a linear progression from one culture to another (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Joy, 1996) and that assimilation is only a small part of the total acculturation phenomenon (Gentry, Jun, & Tansuhaj, 1995), which refers to the notion of culture change that takes place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people and environments (Laroche & Jamal, 2015).

Consumer research implicitly acknowledges that immigrants engage not only in acculturation but also in enculturation, which is the process of learning one's own culture (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Cleveland, Laroche, Pons, and Kastoun (2009), for example, re-

port that immigrants “reside in a two-culture world—over time acquiring characteristics of the dominant culture, yet maintaining strong ties to their culture of origin” (p. 208). However, and despite the potential for navigating between two worlds, the authors do not find any research that simultaneously investigates the effects of acculturation and enculturation on consumption choices. The authors address this research gap by simultaneously investigating the effects of acculturation and enculturation on immigrants' consumption choices.

Moreover, the mechanisms involving enculturation and acculturation do not operate in a social vacuum but occur in the context of intra-group relationships (Horenczyk, 1997; Jamal & Chapman, 2000). Jamal (2003) reports that the extent to which immigrants navigate between two cultural worlds depends on the attitudes they hold toward heritage and host cultures. Josiassen (2011) shows that the immigrants' perception of rejection and devaluation by the host society, along with strong identification with religious and ethnic groups, can trigger dis-identification with the host consumer culture. However, the consumer research literature remains silent on the explicit role of acculturation attitudes toward host and heritage cultures in explaining acculturation behaviors and consumption patterns.

Moreover, prior treatment of acculturation attitudes remains problematic. For example, the widely cited articles by Berry and his col-

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leagues (Berry, 2005; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989) consider acculturation attitudes as “an individual's preference about how to acculturate” (p. 704). Others see acculturation attitudes as referring to preferences given to the cultures involved in the process (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006a, 2006b). However, prior research does not elaborate, in conceptual terms, how and on what basis acculturation attitudes are formed and how they can actually shape behavior.

Drawing from the Fishbein (1967) model of measuring attitudes, this study considers consumer attitude as a function of the presence or absence and evaluation of beliefs and/or attributes (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). This helps identify and discuss the importance and desirability of specific salient beliefs involving host and/or heritage cultures. Acculturation attitudes are learned predispositions which can motivate consumers to act. While the prior acculturation literature argues for a distinction between acculturation attitudes and acculturation behaviors (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006a, 2006b; Berry, 1997), it generally remains silent in explaining the acculturation attitude-behavior link. This research contributes by investigating simultaneously the causal link from acculturation attitudes to acculturation behavior.

The social psychology literature (Quarasse & van de Vijver, 2004) acknowledges the impact of public and private life domains on acculturation/enculturation including psychological and sociocultural adaptations. The private-life domain involves personal spheres like child-rearing practices, marital preferences, and family interactions, whereas the public domain involves social life (educational and professional lives). However, prior consumer research only implicitly acknowledges the distinction between public and private domains by, for example, using language-based items to measure acculturation, so we do not know the extent to which immigrants' preference for heritage (host) cultural maintenance (adaptation) across private- and public-life domains can impact their consumption patterns.

This shortcoming is addressed by investigating variations in attitudes about the heritage and host cultures, acculturation/enculturation preferences, and consumption choices across both private and public life domains. In doing so, this work joins a stream of research that argues in favor of capturing variations in immigrants' preferences for adaptation and cultural maintenance across both private- and public-life domains (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Unlike prior research, attitudinal predispositions toward maintaining cultural traditions in marriage and child rearing are treated as part of the private domain. Such attitudinal predispositions are seen as antecedents to subsequent preferences for acculturation or enculturation and, ultimately, for the choice to consume heritage or host culture products in the private- and public-life domains.

Finally, there is a sizeable Turkish diaspora to European countries, such as the Netherlands, where Turkish-Dutch people are the most visible minority-ethnic group (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007). Scholarly work like that of Josiassen (2011), demonstrates that second-generation Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands struggle to combine their subgroup with their host's national identity. Those who want to maintain strong links with their Turkish heritage have a stronger propensity for disidentification with typical Dutch consumers. The current study complements this research stream.

Inspired by theories of attitudes (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Fishbein, 1967), consumer acculturation (Askegaard, Arnould, & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Laroche & Jamal, 2015), and domain-specific models of acculturation (Quarasse & van de Vijver, 2004), acculturation attitudes and acculturation behaviors are investigated in predicting consumption choices across the private- and public-life domains.

This paper is organized into four parts. First, the literature related to acculturation, attitudes toward host and heritage cultures and domain-specific models of acculturation is reviewed. Then the methodology is outlined and findings are reported. Finally, the theoretical, practical and policy implications of the findings and present suggestions for future research are discussed.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Acculturation

Acculturation refers to the phenomenon that results when different cultures meet and interact (Schwartz et al., 2010). Prior research (Berry, 1980, 1997; Gentry et al., 1995) identifies four modes of acculturation: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The assimilation defines the individual's preference for adopting the host culture's values and traditions over a period of time while gradually losing interest in maintaining one's heritage culture. In contrast, the separation strategy finds an individual placing value on holding onto their heritage culture and avoiding interactions with the host culture. Integration occurs when there is an interest in maintaining one's heritage culture while having daily interactions with the host culture (Berry, 1997). Finally, marginalization occurs when the individual feels rejected by the host culture but also has no aspirations or desire to maintain the heritage culture.

Peñaloza's (1994) seminal work identifies conflicting sets of acculturation agents (e.g., family, friends, media, social and religious institutions), each aligned with the heritage and host cultures, which have effects on consumer acculturation outcomes. Subsequent work identifies entrenched subcultures (Wamwara-Mbugua, Cornwell, & Boller, 2008), and global consumer culture (Askegaard et al., 2005) as additional acculturation agents. The underlying assumption is that immigrant consumers continuously negotiate and renegotiate identity projects based on their understanding of and willingness to adopt or reject the push (pull) effects associated with multiple acculturation agents.

### 2.2. Bidimensional acculturation

Two acculturation models (unidimensional and bidimensional) explain how immigrants learn a new culture in attitudinal and behavioral terms (Segev, Ruvio, Shoham, & Velan, 2014). The unidimensional model assumes that the immigrant adopts the host culture while decreasing or losing emphasis on aspects of the ethnic heritage culture (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006a, 2006b). The adaptation to the host culture and the loss of the heritage culture are non-sequitur outcomes of immigration in which an individual maintains the home culture and simultaneously acquires the host culture (Chattaraman, Rudd, & Lennon, 2009). Immigrants may consume both home- and host-culture-related offerings (Askegaard et al., 2005).

Acculturation measurements have largely moved from unidimensional to bidimensional models (Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2012). The bidimensional acculturation model considers adjustment to the home culture and the host culture as independent processes (Berry, 1997) in studying immigrants' consumption patterns (Chattaraman et al., 2009; Cleveland et al., 2009).

### 2.3. Public- and private-life domains

Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2006a, 2006b) argue that immigrants may “seek economic or work assimilation and linguistic integration, while maintaining separation in family and marriage” (p. 145). The private-life domain is a personal-value-related domain, whereas the public domain constitutes the functional areas of life (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003, Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006a, 2006b). For example, matters that relate to marriage and socialization of children belong to the private-life domain, whereas behavioral tendencies like language use and social interactions belong to the public-life domain (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2008). An immigrant may prefer to consume traditional cultural items (e.g., foods, music, dress and celebrations) while at home but mainstream cultural items while in the public domain. In other words, an immigrant may seek to maintain her heritage culture in the private domain (life within the family and personal spheres of life), but may seek to assimilate culturally when in a public domain

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