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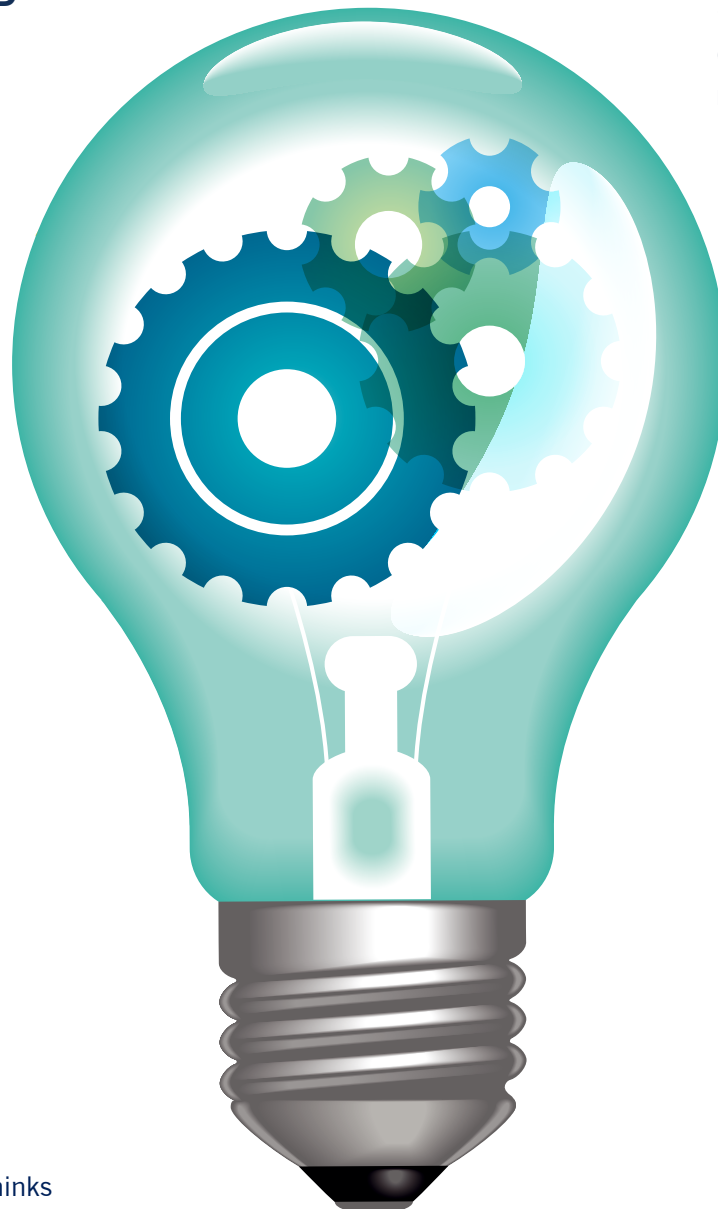
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Consumer responses to ethnic targeted marketing

by Anne-Sophie Lenoir and Stefano Puntoni

Marketing is impacted more than ever by demographic change, to the extent that practitioners targeting ethnic groups should re-think their approach depending upon the strength with which different generations identify with their cultural heritage.

Marketing, by definition, must always adapt to societal changes in order to ensure that the advertising pitch is suitable for the target audience. This can take various forms, from the cultural or linguistic context in which a campaign is set, or the identity of the spokesperson, through to the copywriting content. When a campaign is developed for a specific ethnic group the balance between success and failure becomes even finer due to the diversity of cultural identities identifiable within ethnic minorities.

Whilst research identifies that consumers of certain backgrounds are more likely to react positively to advertising when a campaign appeals to their sense of identity and cultural heritage, there has so far been little exploration into the different reactions within ethnic minorities. Our investigations reveal an important distinction, between first generation minorities who were born in another country and then re-located, and second generation minorities who were born in the country to which their parents re-located. The distinction lies

in their reaction to advertisements depending upon the identity of the spokesperson and the context in which the campaign is set.

Our research reveals that the cultural baggage of the second generation is more complex, being influenced both by the cultural heritage of their parents' country and the mainstream culture of the "host" country in which they have been raised. By contrast, first generation ethnic minorities retain a stronger bond with the cultural roots that they established before being re-located.

Cultural identity

As a result, the cultural identity of the second generation is more latent and needs to be activated in a different way from the more salient, pronounced identity of the first generation, which requires less influencing in advance of the main advertisement.

It is here where careful media planning (as well as the creation of culturally-sensitive content) becomes essential for effective targeted marketing.

Our investigations centred firstly upon consumers of Chinese heritage living in a major Dutch city, with an even representation of first generation and second generation cultural groups. The two groups were presented with two different advertising campaigns – both featured an advertisement delivered by a Chinese spokesperson for a telephone service provider.

However, one campaign included a preceding advertisement for the Hong Kong Tourism Board, which was strategically placed in order to activate the participants' Chinese cultural identity. The second campaign comprised more random, culturally unspecific advertisements with no ethnic connection to the main telephone service. The participants in this test were asked to score their attitude to and identification with the two campaigns in relation to the person delivering the message and the resultant level of trust and interest in the company advertising its services.

A second test focused upon Turkish heritage consumers, also living in a major Dutch city and again with a balance between first and second generation immigrants. They were questioned about a series of symbols of Dutch and Turkish culture, before then being asked to rate an advertisement for a charity, the organisation itself, and their desire to support it and the



spokesperson. The spokesperson varied from one with a Turkish name to one with a Dutch name.

We found that the first generation group reacted more positively to the advertisement featuring a same-heritage spokesperson and, as a

what they have to say and who will deliver the message. From a media planning perspective, they should give considerable thought to the timing of their campaign and the linguistic and cultural context in which they wish to set it.

“...marketers should resist the temptation to view ethnic minorities as a homogenous group from which they will elicit the same reaction...”

result, developed more positive attitudes towards the institution or company responsible for the advertisement, whereas the second generation group reacted in a similar manner to adverts featuring same-heritage and majority spokespersons.

Marketing implications

What, then, are the implications of this investigation for marketing professionals aiming to sell their product, service and/or institution to ethnic minorities? Based upon our findings, we strongly recommend that marketers consider the approach and content of their campaigns, depending upon the generational status of their target audience.

From a copywriting perspective, they should consider very carefully

Above all, marketers should resist the temptation to view ethnic minorities as a homogenous group from which they will elicit the same reaction, regardless of their cultural identity. Comprehension of and adaptation to the generational status of ethnic minority consumers and the strength and complexity of their cultural heritage are crucial to the process of successful marketing. ■

This article draws its inspiration from the paper *The impact of cultural symbols and spokesperson identity on attitudes and intentions*, by Anne-Sophie Lenoir, Stefano Puntoni, Americus Reed II and Peeter W.J. Verlegh (2013), and published in the *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 30 (2013) 426-428. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2013.07.001>

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Head to RSM Discovery to watch a video of Anne-Sophie Lenoir discussing the marketing implications of this research. [WEB http://bit.ly/1bl7q3K](http://bit.ly/1bl7q3K)

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