



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres)

## Investigating links between cultural orientation and culture outcomes: Immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel and Germany

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Cultural orientation  
Acculturation  
Consumption  
Unique products  
Fashion

## ABSTRACT

Marketers are justifiably interested in ethnic consumers; formulating effective ethnic marketing strategies requires insights into these consumers' attitudes and behaviors. However, prior research provides few insights into how different cultural environments might shape the consumption behavior of consumers with the same cultural heritage. To address this knowledge gap, the present study examines the cultural orientation and relevant consumer outcomes (i.e., desire for unique products and fashion consciousness) of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who move to Israel and Germany. The results reveal differences in the cultural orientations of immigrants to Israel versus Germany, as well as different relational patterns between cultural orientation and the proposed consumer outcomes. These findings provide both theoretical and managerial implications.

## 1. Introduction

Continuing migration into highly developed regions, especially but not exclusively into North America and the European Union, prompts acculturation processes at individual levels. Acculturation, or the acquisition of aspects of a mainstream (i.e., host) culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1998), shapes consumers' self-identities, attitudes, and behaviors (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Immigrant consumers, even from the same generation or family, do not necessarily acculturate the same way though (Berry, 1997). They choose, or perhaps are confined to, particular acculturation paths, which largely determine which products they buy and consume (Gbadamosi, 2012; Reilly & Wallendorf, 1987; Segev, Ruvio, Shoham, & Velan, 2014). For example, acculturation paths depend on the degree to which migrants withstand a host culture's assimilationist pressures (Padilla, 2006; Sánchez & Fernández, 1993).

Prior research provides robust evidence that consumers' respective ethnic identities, coupled with the extent to which they adopt a mainstream cultural environment, influence their consumption behaviors (e.g., Jamal & Shukor, 2014; Jun, Ball, & Gentry, 1993; Peñaloza, 1994). For example, Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu (1986) show that Hispanic consumers in the United States who strongly identify with their culture of origin use Spanish language media more heavily and express more negative attitudes toward mainstream businesses than

those who identify weakly with it. Segev et al. (2014) examine and confirm an acculturation–brand loyalty link, using data from Hispanic consumers in the United States and Russian immigrants in Israel.

Despite such advances in understanding the relationship between acculturation and consumer behavior, no research reveals how different cultural environments might distinctly shape the consumption behavior of consumers from the same cultural heritage. Most studies instead focus on a single group of consumers from one culture (Peñaloza, 1994) or groups of consumers from different cultures (Laroche, Kim, Tomiuk, & Belisle, 2005) who move to another, single mainstream culture. However, continuing migration makes it pertinent to consider how new mainstream cultures that embed migrant consumers from the same heritage culture might shape their consumption behaviors. Specifically, how does cultural orientation (toward the mainstream and heritage cultures) shape the consumption behavior of consumers from the same heritage culture in different cultural environments? Cultural orientation, or a person's connection to and orientation toward a cultural group's members, beliefs, values, and practices (Phinney, 1990), could affect consumption-related outcomes and inform firms' efforts to develop successful ethnic marketing strategies (Pires, 1999).

The present research investigates the links between the cultural orientation of immigrants from the same cultural origin in different host cultures and several relevant consumption outcomes in the apparel category, which represents a tangible reflection of consumers' self-

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Received 1 April 2015; Accepted 1 August 2016

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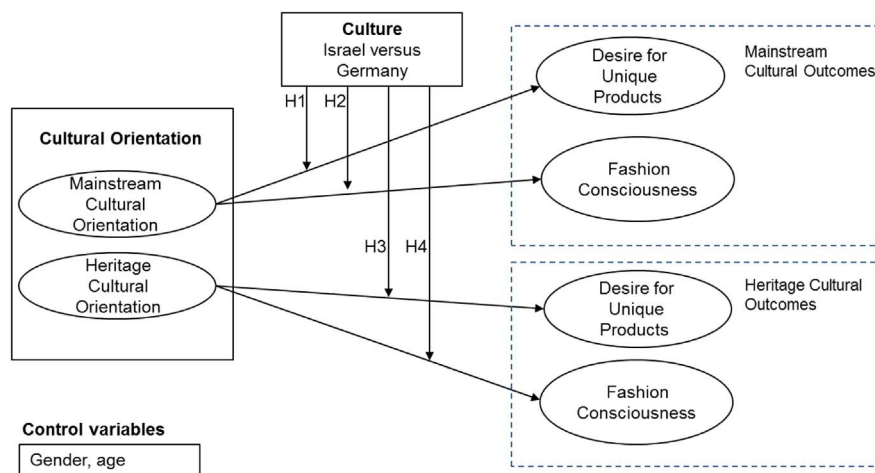


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

identity and acculturation (Chattalas & Harper, 2007; Jamal & Shukor, 2014; Seock & Sauls, 2008). The two focal outcomes pertain to mainstream culture and heritage culture, in terms of desires for unique products or being fashionable. Drawing on a framework by Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, and van de Vijver (2014), this study tests the proposed model and hypotheses (see Fig. 1) with two samples of Russian-speaking consumers from the former Soviet Union (FSU) that migrated to either Israel or Germany. The sample comparison reveals cultural orientations toward mainstream versus heritage cultures. These samples also support tests of the effects of a mainstream or heritage culture orientation on outcomes in different cultural environments.

These issues are important both conceptually and practically. Conceptually, to gain a better understanding of the effects of macro differences in host culture environments on the micro consumption behavior of ethnic consumers from the same cultural origin, international marketing scholars need to study these orientations in distinct cultural environments. This research investigates the hypothesized links using a model that previously has not been examined empirically in marketing; the parsimonious model should spark new empirical research. Practically, effective ethnic marketing demands knowledge about what drives consumer buying behavior, particularly in relation to fashion products.

## 2. Research background

### 2.1. Cultural orientation and contextual influences

When “groups of individuals sharing different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact”, acculturation occurs (Redfield, Linton & Herskovitz, 1936, p. 149). Acculturation refers to the degree to which people learn and adopt the norms and values of a culture that differs from the one in which they grew up (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Acculturation is conceptually similar to, but differs from, cultural orientation: The former entails the actual adoption of mainstream culture norms, values, and behaviors, whereas the latter refers to how immigrant consumers think and feel about mainstream and heritage cultures. Acculturation hence involves behavior; cultural orientation is a precursor of behavior. Because the two concepts are conceptually related, acculturation literature is highly relevant for understanding the consumption behavior of immigrants in new cultural environments.

Research on acculturation tends to be based on Berry's (1980) widely accepted framework of two major dimensions: cultural maintenance and cultural adoption. Cultural maintenance refers to the extent to which immigrants retain specific characteristics of their heritage culture. Cultural adoption is the extent to which characteristics of a mainstream culture become part of the behavior and attitudes of the acculturating people (Lerman, Maldonado, & Luna, 2009). The

distinction between mainstream and heritage culture also suggests four acculturation paths: (1) integration, or the simultaneous maintenance of heritage culture (i.e., culture of origin) and acquisition of new (i.e., mainstream) culture; (2) assimilation, or the devaluation of the heritage culture and strong identification with the mainstream culture; (3) separation, with the maintenance of heritage culture and rejection of mainstream culture; and (4) marginalization, or rejection of both cultures (Berry, 1997). These paths define a person's own cultural identity.

Various researchers (e.g., Berry, 1997; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) emphasize that these individual cultural paths are influenced by contextual factors, particularly the acculturation climate in the host country (e.g., immigration history, current immigration policy). Acculturation paths interact with the attitudes of receiving society members toward migrants and vary across national contexts. For example, Dimitrova et al. (2014) show that Turkish immigrants exhibit varying acculturation levels in different European countries, and Yagmur and Van de Vijver (2012) indicate that Turkish immigrants in Australia integrate better into mainstream society than their counterparts in various European countries. In other words, people from the same heritage culture may differ in their adjustment to a new cultural environment, depending on that environment. A close connection then might arise between immigrants' cultural orientation and receiving countries' immigration climate. This study examines a specific group who immigrate into Israel and Germany. Therefore, a comparison of these countries is pertinent, to depict their relevant similarities and differences as they relate to immigration history and current immigration policy.

### 2.2. Research context: immigration in Israel and Germany

Both Israel and Germany are important destinations, in terms of the many immigrants they have received in the past 50 years. Between its establishment and the end of 2012, about 3.1 million immigrants arrived in Israel. In 2014, > 25% of the living Israeli population was born outside the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Germany is the second most popular migration destination in the world, receiving > 10% of all permanent immigration in Europe (OECD, 2014). In 2013, 16.5 million immigrants lived in Germany, accounting for 20.5% of the total population (Destatis, 2013).

In both countries, Russian-speaking immigrants account for a substantial share of the total immigrant group. Since the breakup of the FSU and the liberalization of emigration regulations at the end of the 1980s, emigration from the FSU increased considerably. The most prominent receiving countries have been Israel, Germany, and the United States (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya, & Vitkovskaya, 2005). Between 1990 and 2013 > 1.2 million emigrants from the FSU came to Israel, and two-thirds arrived between 1990 and 1999 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). In the same period, Germany absorbed

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