Editorial

As brands worldwide engage with consumers in increasingly multicultural circumstances, we are told that the better understanding of attitudes and preferences of particular cultural groups by marketers is becoming essential. For example, the continuing high levels of immigration into the USA (with between 1–1.5m immigrants arriving every year over the last 15 years) has led to specific targeting opportunities.¹ Indeed, 10.3m ‘undocumented’ illegal immigrants are now being specifically targeted by US marketers.² The US ethnic targeting literature reflects this concern, with Hispanics — as one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups — receiving particular attention. With the growing importance of immigration and controversies over multiculturalism in Europe, this is an issue that should be on European marketers’ agendas also.

But as David Berkowitz and colleagues point out in their contribution to this issue of the Journal, US research findings in relation to Hispanic brand preference are inconsistent. Indeed, their careful study found no difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers in terms of store brand preference. Of course, they suggest, this might be the result of growing assimilation of Hispanic households into US society. Or that previous observed differences might have been exaggerated. But their most telling explanation for the continued perception that differences exist, to my mind, is that — not unreasonably — not all Hispanics are the same. The issue is around levels of analysis.

The strength of Hispanic ethnic

identification varies — perhaps to the extent that the within-group differences in brand preference may outweigh any between-group differences. Rajeev Kamineni’s contribution to this discussion focuses on the comparative brand perceptions and materialistic tendencies of young Australians and non-Australians. He finds a greater difference between males and females in respect of materialistic tendencies than in relation to the country of origin level of analysis.

These results may prompt suggestions that we need ever more micro levels of measurement and analysis, to capture the within-group differences. Henry Greene and George Milne have an alternative (but not necessarily irreconcilable) world view. They suggest that we should not just be content in drilling deeper into our data warehouses for detailed geodemographic differences in consumer attitudes; we should also be looking for variations at different — perhaps larger — scales: ‘For example, cross-country skiing is more popular in Minnesota than in Alabama. Pizza is more popular on the east coast than in the mid West ... yet there is no framework for database marketers that capture these phenomena.’ This the authors call ‘exographics’ and the metrics might range from crime rates to precipitation to urbanicity, depending upon the domain and the sector of interest.

Once one understands the value that different segments of consumers attribute to the ways in which brands are delivered, then — among other things — it is possible to learn to price those brands more realistically. Value-based

pricing has been the Holy Grail in business-to-consumer pricing — yet the majority of firms still price on the basis of cost-plus, or in relation to a competitor's price. Even in business-to-business markets, where we might expect suppliers to better understand the value their customers place on their branded products and services, the cost equation dominates. Aiyappa Pasura and Lynette Ryals explore the likely benefits of value-based pricing for ICT companies; not least among these the prospect that value-based prices in this sector could be between 25 and 50 per cent higher than current pricing levels.

Of course, some consumers may wish to reject brands altogether. Caroline Graham Austin, Christopher Plouffe and Cara Peters explore the concept and characteristics of 'anti-commercial consumer rebellion'. Such consumers, they argue, play an increasingly important role directly and indirectly in affecting overall brand preference. 'If managers', they argue, 'can uncover, measure and moderate (or perhaps more modestly mitigate) sources of anticommercial consumer rebellion in

their target markets, [they may become] more ethical in their business practices, while achieving greater congruency with emerging consumer attitudes.'

This issue's final paper reminds us of the importance of emotion in these decision processes, irrespective of cultures or ethnic groups. Jon Morris and colleagues present an important paper which reconsiders the role of emotion in the process of persuasion and behavioural intent, in particular in relation to the well-established Elaboration Likelihood Model. Distinguishing between 'cognitive elaborators' and 'cognitive misers' in relation to responses to television advertising, Morris and his team demonstrate that even cognitive processing has an emotional core.

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References

- 1 Pew Hispanic Research Center (2005) 'Rise, peak and decline: Trends in US immigration 1992–2004', <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=53>
- 2 Vance, D. L. (2005) 'The undocumented: Fresh market tapped for growth', *Marketing News*, 15th October, pp. 11–12.